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BANDA

Diving Itinerary 8-10 nights

Please note that this is a sample itinerary. Each cruise will be adapted as necessary based on weather, wind and sea conditions as well as tailored to guests' preferences.

A BANDA DIVE TRIP IN A NUTSHELL

Banda promises a world of diving delights for even the most experienced divers. The world's healthiest, untouched coral reefs, an inordinate number of fish species, as well as plenty of hammerhead shark hotspots, make Banda a true diver's Aladdin's cave.

- Perfect 40+m visibility
- Macro heaven along the coast of Ambon
- Incredibly diverse fish population
- The world's densest population of sea snakes near Manuk volcano
- Breathtaking array of larger pelagics
- Rich in Indonesian-Dutch history
- THE area for hammerheads!
- Nutmeg plantations and local markets to visit onland

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ABOUT THE REGION

The Banda Islands, also known as the Spice Islands, located in the Indonesian province of Maluku, are a volcanic group of ten small volcanic islands in the Banda Sea.

Until the mid-19th century the Banda Islands were the world's only source of the spices nutmeg and mace, produced from the nutmeg tree. The spices were used as flavorings, medicines, and preserving agents that were at the time highly valued in European markets. They were sold by Arab traders to the Venetians for exorbitant prices. The traders did not divulge the exact location of their source and no European was able to deduce their location.
Prior to 1500, no European had ever landed on the shores of Maluku, and the nutmeg and mace trading has only been handled through Asian traders.

After the first Portuguese and European vessel, under the stewardship of Francisco Serrao, arrived in Maluku in April 1512, the balance of power that had remained quite stable and little changed over the centuries, changed abruptly. The building of a series of forts set a new precedent in Maluku. The forts were built to ensure security as an Asian trading centre and to protect goods and people so they would not be arbitrarily seized by a local ruler.

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The islands have had a long and fascinating history. Topside, the Banda Islands boast climbable volcanic mountains which are covered in lush green vegetation.

The 10 small volcanic islands are 200 km from the nearest port town of Ambon. Banda's tiny volcanic islets are surrounded by deep waters that create perfect conditions for crystal-clear diving: visibility reaches 40 m from February-May.

Banda's incredibly diverse fish population and its breathtaking array of larger pelagics, majestic hammerhead sharks, and giant tuna, mean that when you go diving in Banda Sea you will never be disappointed. This area is also home to the world's largest population of Napoleon wrasse, these beautiful creatures accompany you on almost every dive here.

There is nowhere better in Indonesia for the chance to see large pelagic fish life and large numbers of sharks, combine that with some deep indo/Dutch history, old abandoned forts, nutmeg plantations and local markets. Exploring Banda with Fenides Liveaboard is a unique mix of diving, luxury, culture and relaxation.

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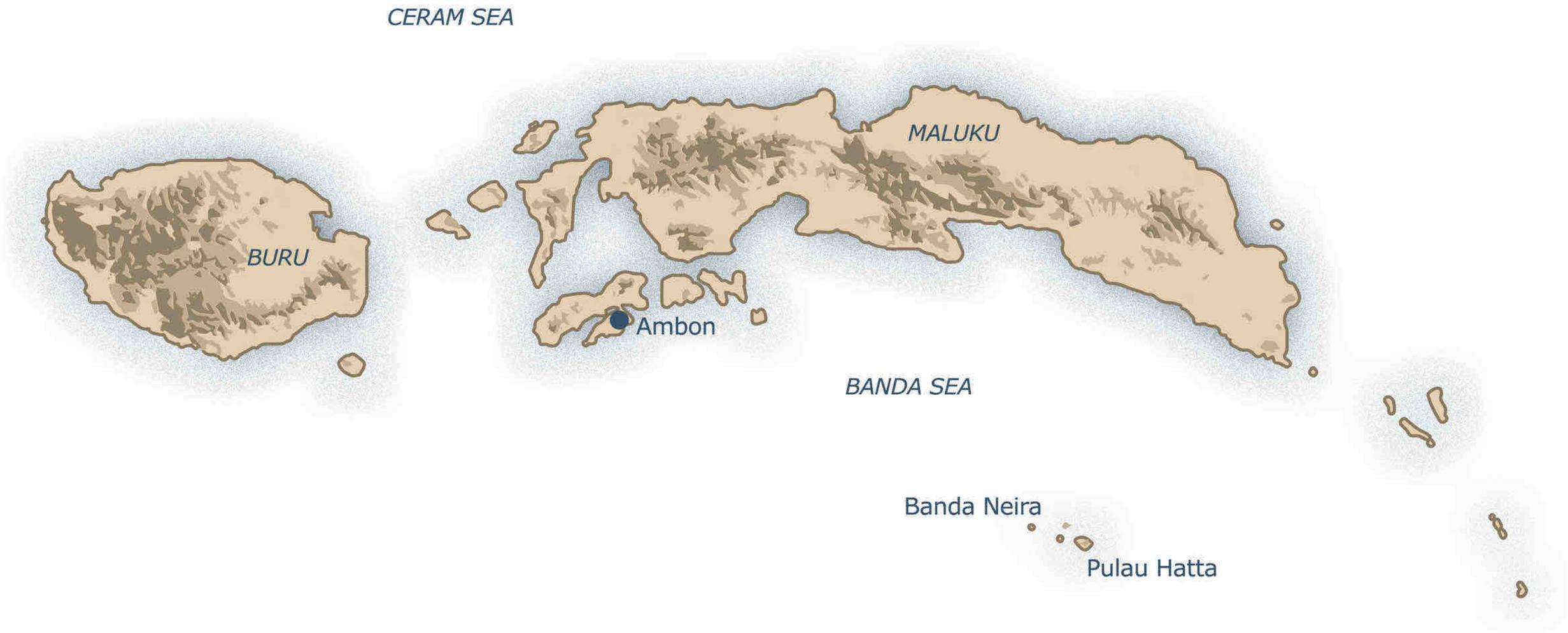

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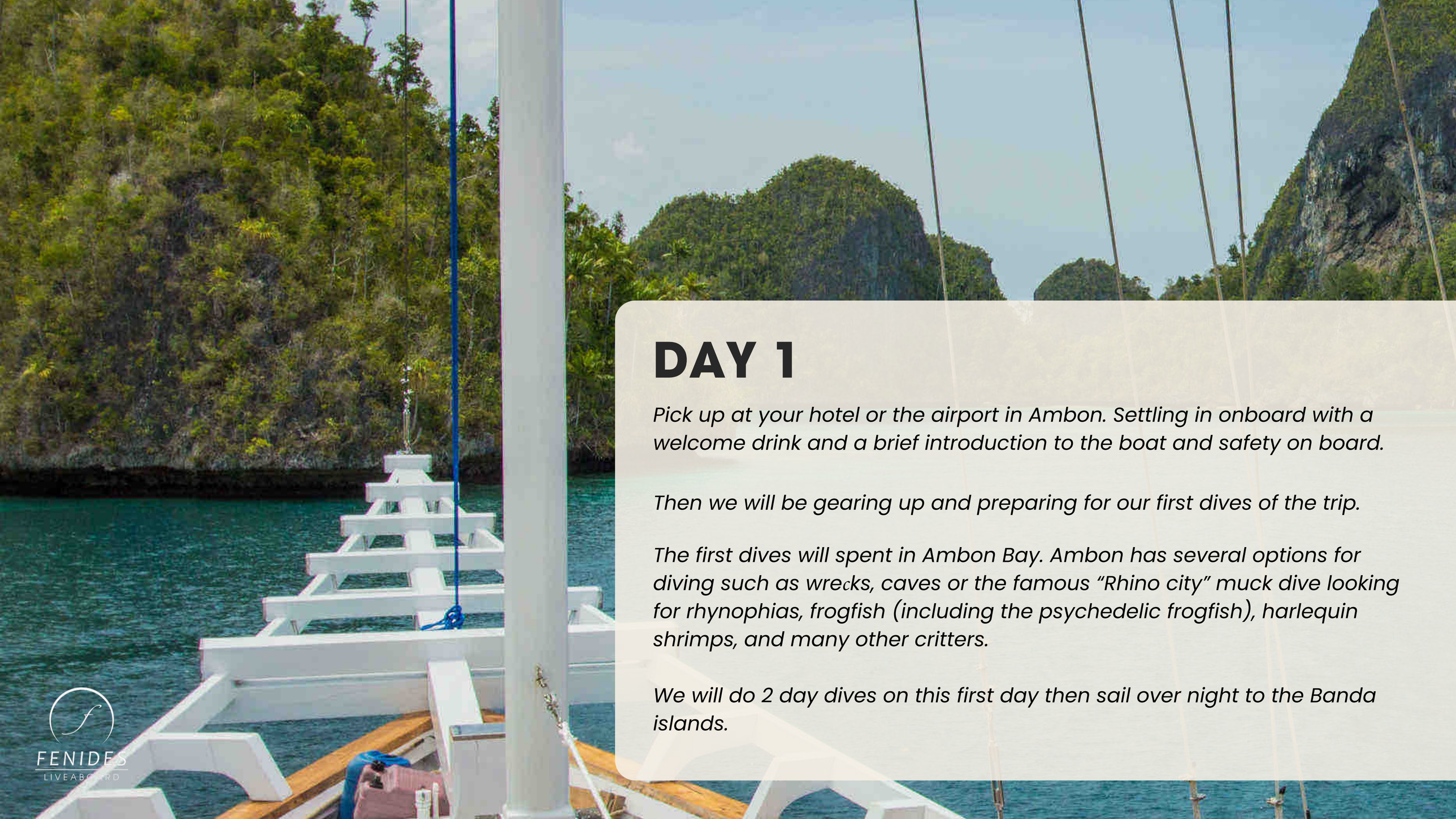

DAY 1

Pick up at your hotel or the airport in Ambon. Settling in onboard with a welcome drink and a brief introduction to the boat and safety on board.

Then we will be gearing up and preparing for our first dives of the trip.

The first dives will spent in Ambon Bay. Ambon has several options for diving such as wrecks, caves or the famous “Rhino city” muck dive looking for rhynophias, frogfish (including the psychedelic frogfish), harlequin shrimps, and many other critters.

We will do 2 day dives on this first day then sail over night to the Banda islands.

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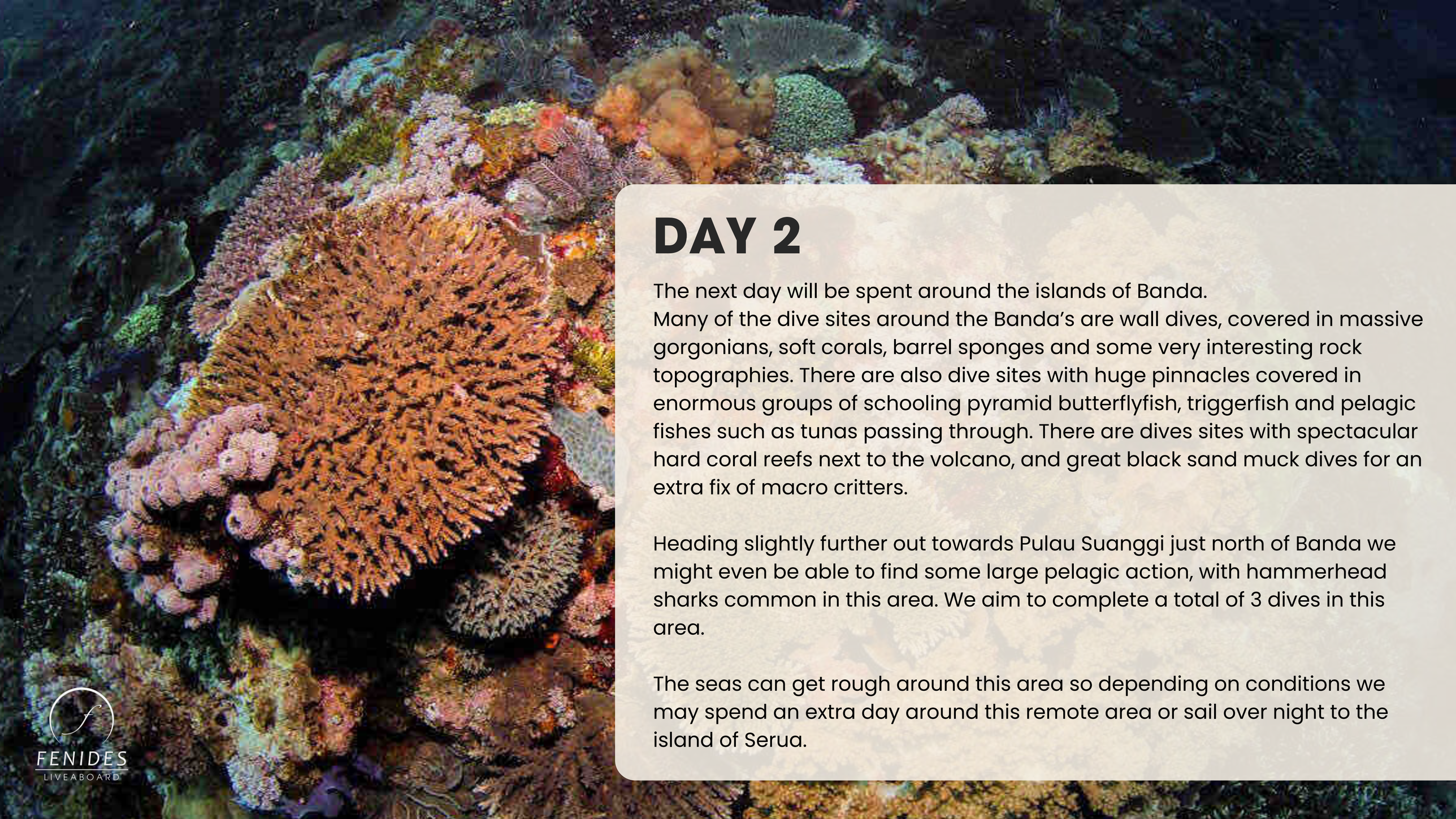

DAY 2

The next day will be spent around the islands of Banda.
Many of the dive sites around the Banda's are wall dives, covered in massive gorgonians, soft corals, barrel sponges and some very interesting rock topographies. There are also dive sites with huge pinnacles covered in enormous groups of schooling pyramid butterflyfish, triggerfish and pelagic fishes such as tunas passing through. There are dives sites with spectacular hard coral reefs next to the volcano, and great black sand muck dives for an extra fix of macro critters.

Heading slightly further out towards Pulau Suanggi just north of Banda we might even be able to find some large pelagic action, with hammerhead sharks common in this area. We aim to complete a total of 3 dives in this area.

The seas can get rough around this area so depending on conditions we may spend an extra day around this remote area or sail over night to the island of Serua.

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DAY 3

Arriving at Pulau Serua early morning is quite a sight with smoke bellowing from this active volcanic pinnacle.

Continuing on our hunt for big fish our dives here centre around searching for hammerhead sharks. There are a few dive sites possible depending on conditions including “Italian mayhem” and “Hummer City”.

We will do 3 dives in this area before relaxing through the late afternoon and for spectacular sunset views and cocktails.

It is even possible to visit the remote village living on the active volcano. They are completely cut off from main land apart from a once monthly cargo boat that they trade with. Normally they let us try some of their rice wine and offer customers the chance to buy some of there locally grown spices.

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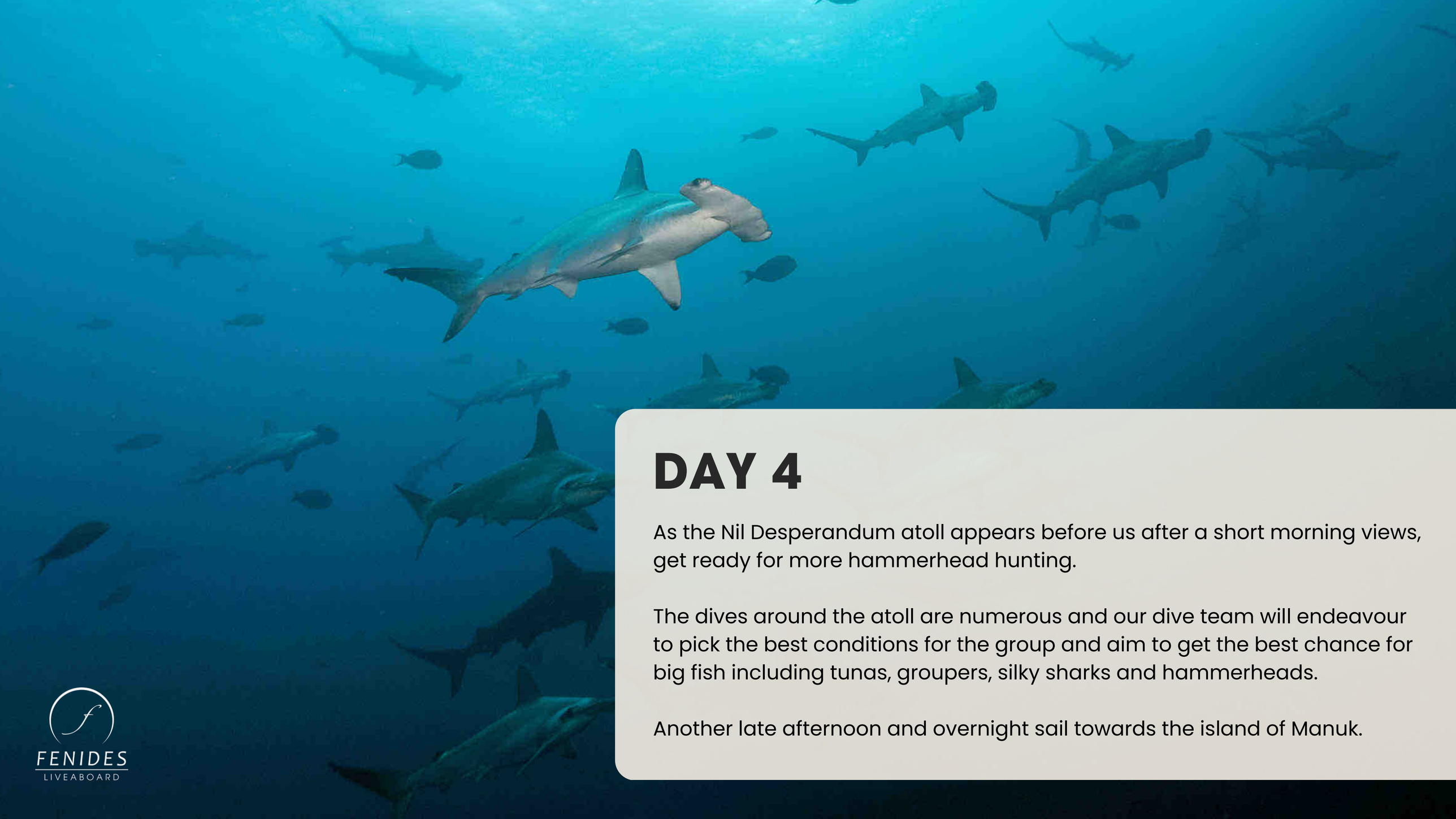

DAY 4

As the Nil Desperandum atoll appears before us after a short morning views, get ready for more hammerhead hunting.

The dives around the atoll are numerous and our dive team will endeavour to pick the best conditions for the group and aim to get the best chance for big fish including tunas, groupers, silky sharks and hammerheads.

Another late afternoon and overnight sail towards the island of Manuk.

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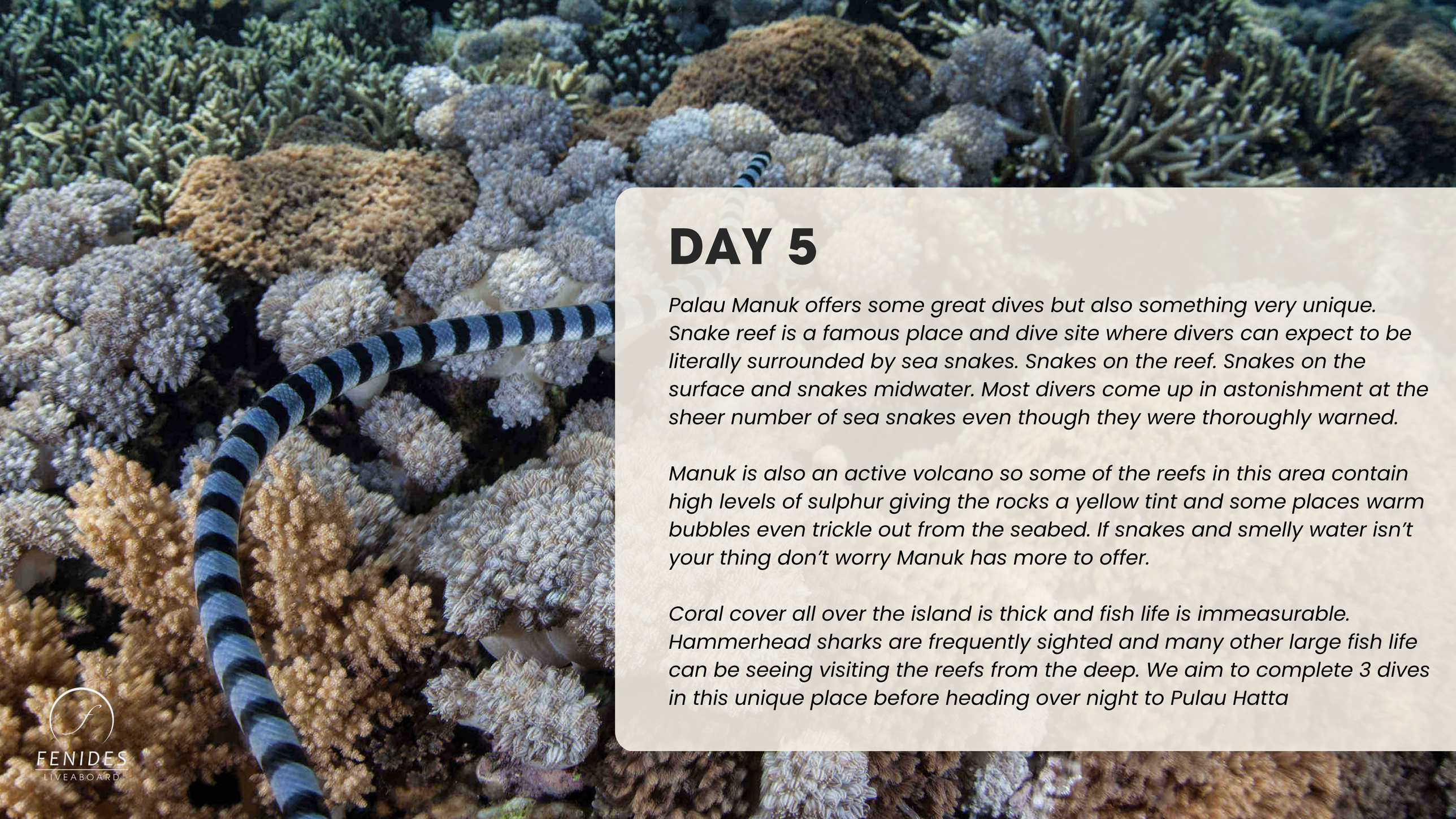

DAY 5

Palau Manuk offers some great dives but also something very unique. Snake reef is a famous place and dive site where divers can expect to be literally surrounded by sea snakes. Snakes on the reef. Snakes on the surface and snakes midwater. Most divers come up in astonishment at the sheer number of sea snakes even though they were thoroughly warned.

Manuk is also an active volcano so some of the reefs in this area contain high levels of sulphur giving the rocks a yellow tint and some places warm bubbles even trickle out from the seabed. If snakes and smelly water isn't your thing don't worry Manuk has more to offer.

Coral cover all over the island is thick and fish life is immeasurable. Hammerhead sharks are frequently sighted and many other large fish life can be seeing visiting the reefs from the deep. We aim to complete 3 dives in this unique place before heading over night to Pulau Hatta

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DAY 6 - 8

More chances for Hammerhead sharks await and Pulau Hatta is no exception.

Back in the main Banda chain we will explore the walls of Tanjung Buton and Hatta Wall. Along with frequent shark sightings. Mobula rays are common as are large tuna and mackerel.
"Pohon Miring" is a literal fish soup and has something for everyone and "Lava Flow" is a black volcanic Macro dive full of wonderfully weird creatures.

As we spend 3 days in this general area we have the opportunity to do some night dives and spend our evenings in the calm protected bay areas of the island chain.

The main Banda chain consists of the large islands of Pulau Hatta, Banda Nera, Pulau Suanggi, Pulau Ai and Pulau Run. Each island offers something different and with over 30 known dive sites around these islands we are surely not getting bored!

It may also possible to experience a little bit of local culture and history from the Spice Islands as weather permitting we can spend some time walking around the village of Banda Naira and visit one of many tourist attractions like, the local museum or the Old Dutch fort, the old colonial governor’s house, the local fish market, and a nutmeg plantation.

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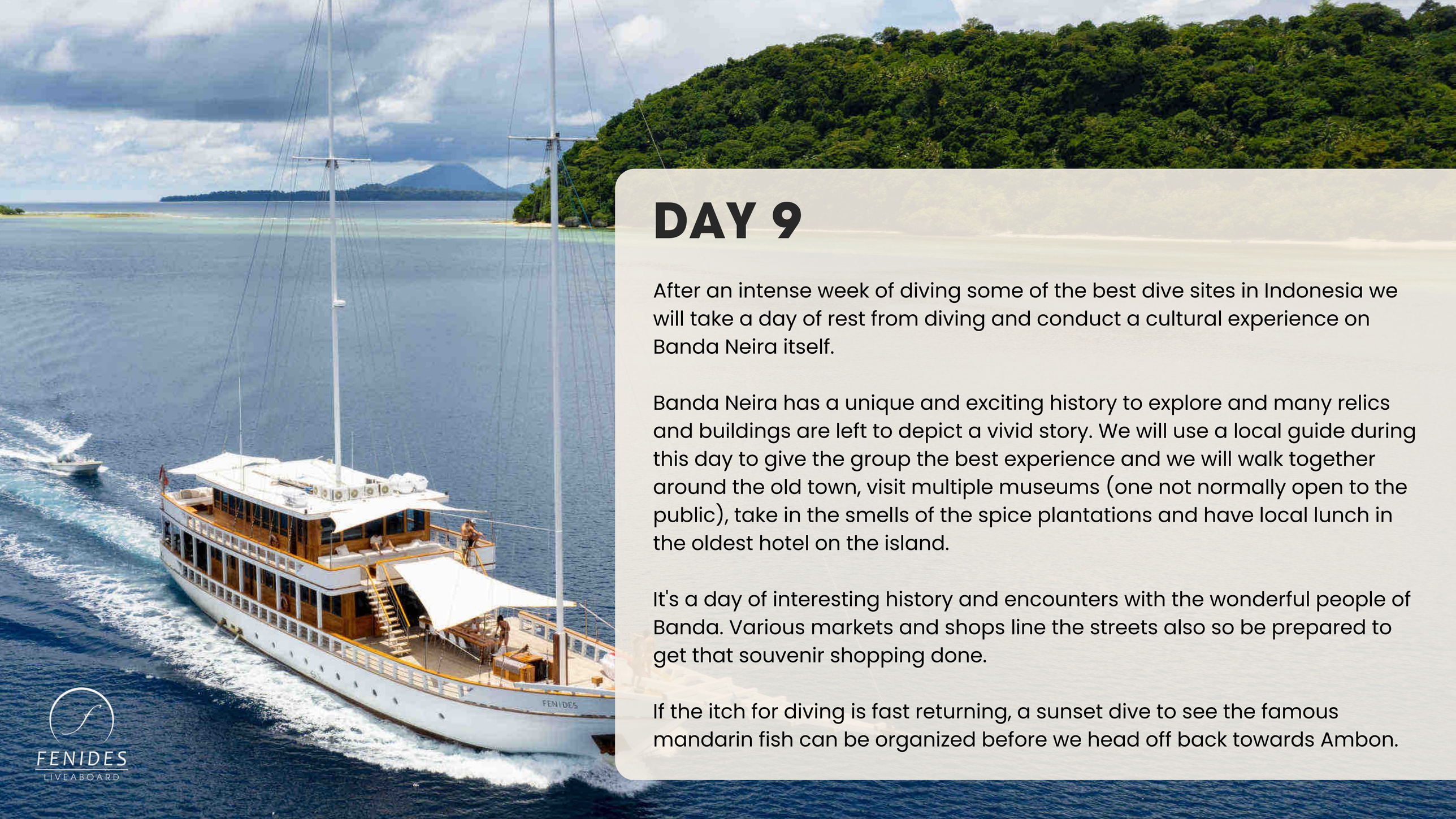

DAY 9

After an intense week of diving some of the best dive sites in Indonesia we will take a day of rest from diving and conduct a cultural experience on Banda Neira itself.

Banda Neira has a unique and exciting history to explore and many relics and buildings are left to depict a vivid story. We will use a local guide during this day to give the group the best experience and we will walk together around the old town, visit multiple museums (one not normally open to the public), take in the smells of the spice plantations and have local lunch in the oldest hotel on the island.

It's a day of interesting history and encounters with the wonderful people of Banda. Various markets and shops line the streets also so be prepared to get that souvenir shopping done.

If the itch for diving is fast returning, a sunset dive to see the famous mandarin fish can be organized before we head off back towards Ambon.

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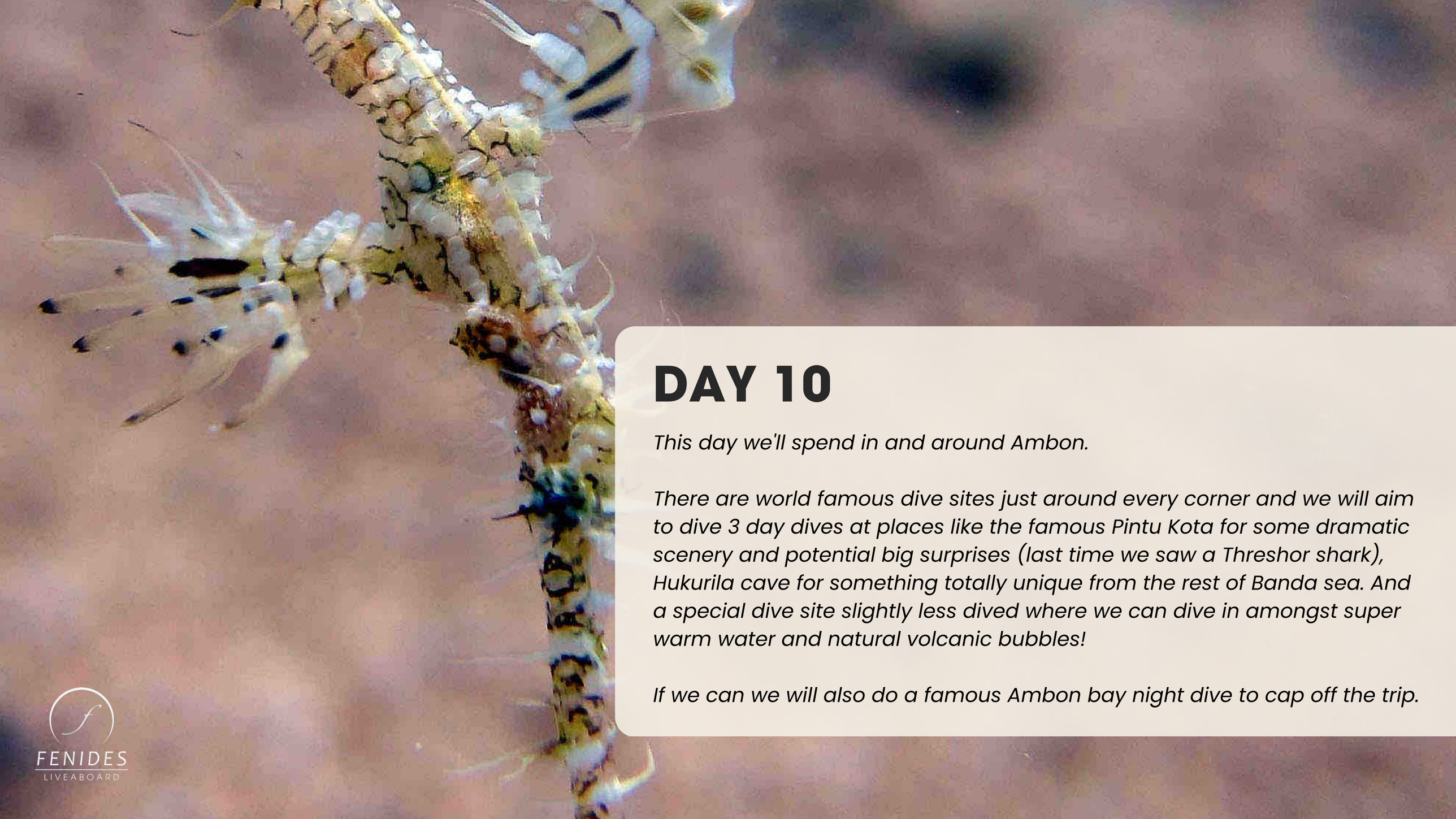

DAY 10

This day we'll spend in and around Ambon.

There are world famous dive sites just around every corner and we will aim to dive 3 day dives at places like the famous Pintu Kota for some dramatic scenery and potential big surprises (last time we saw a Threshor shark), Hukurila cave for something totally unique from the rest of Banda sea. And a special dive site slightly less dived where we can dive in amongst super warm water and natural volcanic bubbles!

If we can we will also do a famous Ambon bay night dive to cap off the trip.

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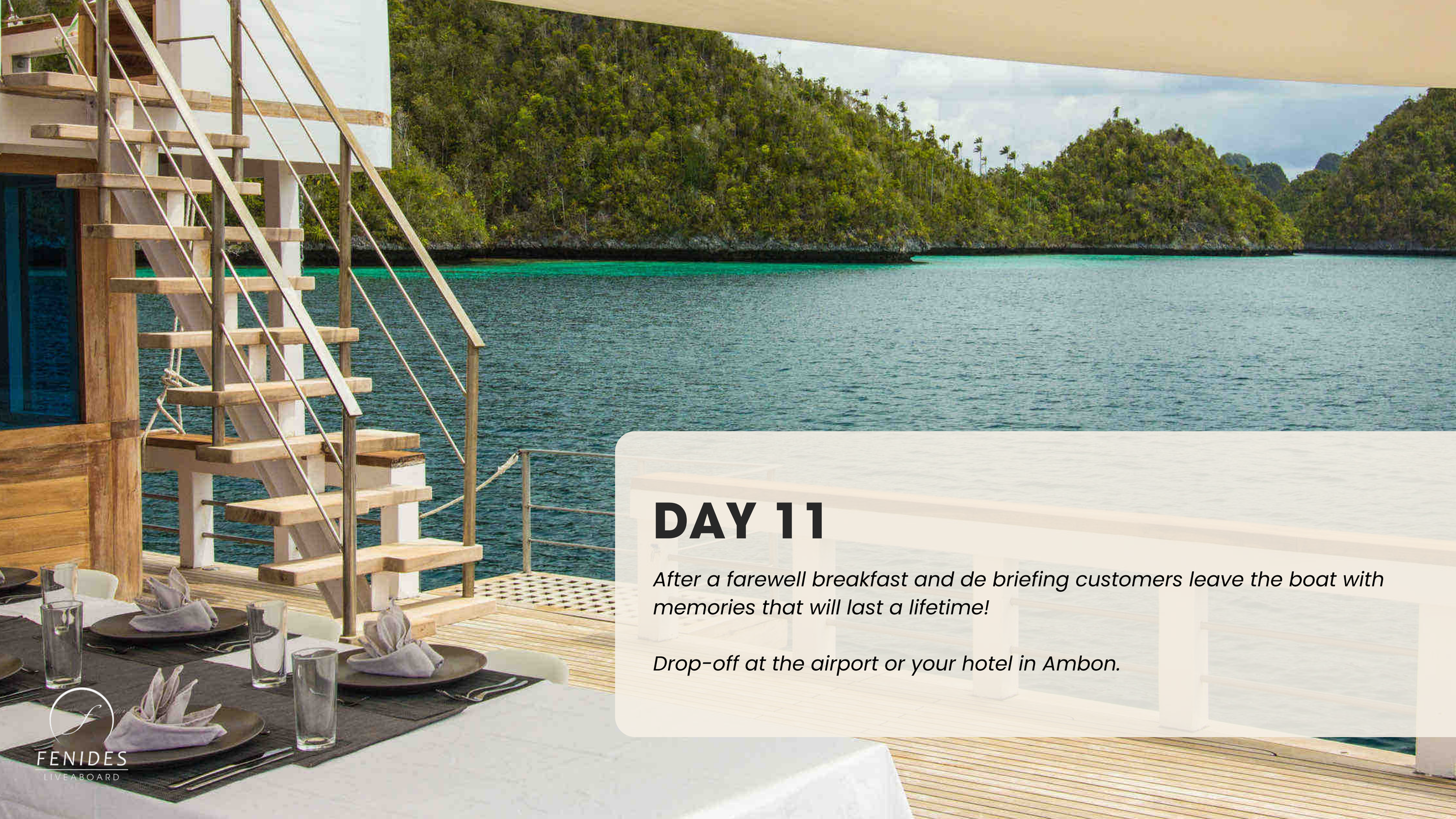

DAY 11

After a farewell breakfast and de briefing customers leave the boat with memories that will last a lifetime!

Drop-off at the airport or your hotel in Ambon.

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