

OMBAK PUTIH

To the Scents of the Spice Islands aboard Ombak Putih

Ambon to Ternate | The Banda Islands and the Spice Islands

The Moluccas are the original Spice Islands, a magical destination, beautiful, remote and unspoiled, where cloves and nutmeg were once worth their weight in gold.

The Banda Islands are quite simply one of Indonesia's highlights, with a perfect jungle-clad volcanic cone, excellent coral reefs and amazing marine life to snorkel.

At dusk in the harbour there is a good chance of seeing the Mandarin Fish, arguably the world's most stunning fish, small but jewel-like.

Further north come white sand islands with vibrant coral reefs, and mountains clad in forest and clove plantations that plunge spectacularly into the sea.

LENGTH	DEPARTURE PORT	ARRIVAL PORT	HIGHLIGHTS
12 days / 11 nights	Ambon	Ternate	Gunung Api, Banda Neira, nutmeg







Your route

STOP 1

Day 1

On the first day of your adventure, you will be collected from your hotel after breakfast by out tour leaders and taken directly to the boat which will be waiting at anchor in Ambon Harbour. As soon as everyone is settled in and the captain gets clearance from the harbour master, we will raise anchor and head south the open sea crossing to the legendary Banda Archipelago.

STOP 2

Days 2 to 5

Today we will wake up in the Banda Islands.
Famous for their natural beauty and cultural heritage, and the well-preserved remnants of an extraordinary history of imperialist rivalry, these islands are quite simply one of Indonesia's highlights.
Banda was originally the world's only source of nutmeg and mace, valued for their rarity and high cost by aristocrats and elites.
Since conditions of wind and tide will determine the order in which we visit various Banda islands, our activities here can't be assigned to a particular day.
Here's what we aim to cover.
In the capital Banda Neira.
It's a pleasant stroll through the quaint colonial outpost's characterful streets, inspecting notable residences, a museum, forts, churches and a waterfront market.
Just across the harbour is Banda's perfect, jungle-clad volcanic cone Gunung Api ('Fire Mountain' – 640 metres).
The fit and ambitious might make an early morning ascent up a challenging track to the top for stunning views.
We choose from some of the other small islands of the Banda archipelago – Lonthor, Ai, Run, Hatta – each of them with its own remnants of old plantations, Dutch cemeteries and fortifications.
The tiny outlying island of Run was the subject of an unbelievable real estate deal when in 1667, under the Treaty of Breda, it was ceded by the English to the Dutch in exchange for Manhattan.
Yes, the Manhattan where New York stands.
On Lonthor we will enjoy the tranquil beauty of nutmeg groves, where the shapely fruit-bearing trees grow in the shelter of towering, gigantic kenari or native almond trees.
We will observe the age-old technique of harvesting by hand, and can taste (and buy) baked goods, condiments and jams flavoured with fresh mace and nutmeg.
The fruit enclosing the nutmeg seed is sold dried and has a unique and intense flavour.
It is a delicacy rarely obtainable outside the Banda Islands.
We will also climb up to fortress Hollandia and go on to meet the last of the perkeniers – the smallholder farmers who managed the plantations for the Dutch, on land parcels known as 'perken'.
You'll learn of more recent wars and eruptions that shook these lovely islands, and value even more their current peace and tranquillity.
There are some excellent coral reefs nearby and we should see some amazing marine life whilst snorkelling.
Ironically, in the less-than-pristine waters of the harbour we have a good chance of seeing (at dusk) arguably the world's most stunning fish, the small but jewel-like Mandarin Fish.
Leaving Banda we will navigate through the Sonnegat ('Sun's gap') between Neira and Gunung Api, possibly escorted by kora-kora – the big Moluccan galleys used traditionally for ceremony and warfare, propelled by banks of warrior-oarsmen.

STOP 6

Day 6

We wake up and go ashore on Nusa Laut, an island rarely visited by outsiders.
It is home to a Christian community that was founded after early missionaries planted their faith here at the same time that Islam was spreading through the archipelago.

STOP 6

Day 6 (continued)

On Saparua we land beside Dutch Fort Duurstede (1691), stormed in 1817 in a revolt led by Ambonese Kapitan Pattimura, a national hero and martyr.
His story is told by vivid museum dioramas.
Brightly painted bemo mini-buses will take us to a morning market before we sail to nearby.
A highlight here is a lunchtime feast of wonderful local dishes – freshly prepared by villager hosts from forest, garden and sea produce.
It's your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to try papeda, the most famous and unusual of the many sago dishes in this region.
Our next destination is the Island of Manipa.

STOP 7

Day 7

Manipa Island is said to have magical powers, because none of the Portuguese, Dutch or WW2Japanese who occupied the surrounding islands ever landed here.
The spell doesn't apply to Indonesian ships, so we land at Uwe township for lessons in village technology.
Its gardens produce cashews, while the leaves of forest Melaleuca cajuputi are pot-distilled to make a volatile oil called kayu putih or cajeput.
It's famed throughout Indonesia as a universal panacea: cosmetic, antiseptic, insecticide, decongestant, analgesic, expectorant, anti-spasmodic, stimulant and tonic.
We also view production of the traditional Moluccan food staple, sago, a nutritious flour washed from the fibrous trunk of the sago palm.
Sago can be baked into easily transportable dry cakes, which Wallace often subsisted on, while the palm also provides building material and thatch.
After an afternoon snorkelling, we will cruise on towards BelangBelang.

STOP 8

Day 8

Deserted, white-sand BelangBelang is a real beachcomber's paradise, where we can launch our full flotilla of watercraft, kayaks and paddle boards.
At Obi Latu, mountains clad in forest and clove plantations plunge spectacularly into the sea.

STOP 9

Day 9

We will wake up off the western coast of Bacan, another of Indonesia's historic spice sultanates.
We go ashore to explore the forested slopes where Wallace made some of his greatest zoological discoveries, including the Moluccan Cuscus, the Standardwing Bird of Paradise, and the huge and magnificent Golden Birdwing Butterfly.
Alfred Russel Wallace described the latter species as the "finest butterfly in the world".
We will also keep a close watch for these and a host of other animals, some of them endemic to these islands, including parrots, cockatoos, lorikeets, hornbills, the elusive cuscus and the endangered black macaque – the only monkey in Maluku.

STOP 9

Day 9 (continued)

It's the wrong side of the Wallace Line for monkeys; these ones were introduced hundreds of years ago from North Sulawesi.

STOP 10

Day 10

Today we will visit the Guarici Archipelago, a chain of islands with white sandy beaches, vibrant coral reefs and some lovely local villages.
We will spend a full day here snorkelling, swimming and pay a visit to one of the villages to meet the local people.
The islands are part of a government-controlled conservation area, designed to protect the reefs and the many beautiful marine species that live there.

STOP 11

Day 11

Today we will wake up just across from Ternate off the coast of Halmahera, with the mighty peaks of Ternate and Tidore as our dawn backdrop, ready to head ashore to the village of Dodinga after breakfast.
This is the very place where Alfred Russel Wallace was staying when, in a fit of malarial delirium, he came up with the idea for the mechanism for evolutionary theory.
He promptly wrote to Charles Darwin when he recovered and set in motion the formalization of the theory of Evolution by Natural Selection.
Dodinga is a pretty little riverside village with friendly people, colourful houses and the ruins of an old Portuguese fort, and its importance in the history of science i cannot be understated.
After spending some time with the villagers, some fresh coconuts and enjoying their hospitality, we will head back to the boat for lunch and then go off for an afternoon of snorkelling and relaxation.

STOP 12

Day 12

We reach the island of Ternate.
This colourful city was the centre of the spice trade for several centuries, and the imprint of the Dutch and the Portuguese can still be seen.
In fact, its warehouses are still filled with fragrant piles of clove and nutmeg.
Nearby is the splendid 17th-century, pagodastyle royal mosque, and the Sultan's Palace with its rich collection of heirlooms.
There's a choice of forts to visit from the turbulent colonial era, such as well-restored Fort Tolukko (Portuguese, 1540).
Wallace rented a house on Ternate for three years and used it as his base for the exploration of the Moluccas.

THE VOYAGE

About the voyage

On this 12-day cruise will transport you back in time as you discover the colonial history of Indonesia and its role in the international spice trade during the 17th century. Along the way you will wind your way through dramatic volcanic islands interspersed with stops at pristine white-sand beaches where you can swim and snorkel in waters rich in marine life. You will also visit historic outposts and island villages and the rich cultures of the local people and experience the marketplaces and inhale the aromas of the spice plantations in this most beautiful and untouched part of the world.

SNORKELLING

Snorkelling on this trip

Whether it's swimming with whale sharks and manta rays, or leisurely gliding along a stunning tropical reef surrounded by myriad fish and corals, snorkelling lies at the very heart of what we do. We do it well and we do it often - usually twice a day for an hour or more at a time. No matter if you are a novice or a seasoned pro, our tour leaders will ensure that you have everything you need to have some of the best underwater experiences of your life.







FLEXIBILITY

Be prepared to be flexible

Our mission is to provide the best experience possible for our guests given the current conditions and when unexpected opportunities for adventure may present themselves along our cruise routes. Sometimes weather conditions, tides or other local factors dictate that we need to vary from the published route, and at times there are special opportunities to explore and discover new locations, events and activities. These explorations will always be a definite enhancement to the published itinerary and will be undertaken after discussion and agreement among guests. Ultimately, the boat captains and your tour leader will make decisions to maximise trip safety and your overall enjoyment, so please come prepared to be flexible!

THE MORE YOU KNOW, THE MORE YOU SEE

Our tour leaders are a wealth of information on the regions we visit and will prepare you for each activity with on board talks and presentations to give you a greater understanding of the different experiences you will have each day. They will also act as your cross cultural bridges to all the people we meet along the way, so feel free to ask them to translate when talking to local Indonesian people on your travels.































