

Know Before You Go - Palau Islands, Micronesia

General Destination & Trip Information

- Arrival airport: Roman Tmetuchl International Airport, Palau (ROR)
- Departure airport: Roman Tmetuchl International Airport, Palau (ROR)
- Embarkation: Malakal Harbour @ 17:30
 Disembarkation: Malakal Harbour @ 10:00

Flights and Transfers

The liveaboard price includes transfer between Koror Airport (depending on flight arrival/departure time) or local hotels and Palau Siren on embarkation and disembarkation day only.

Guests arriving on early morning flights on the embarkation date need to book a hotel for the night of the day before and arrange their own transfer from the airport. Our operations team will provide pick up and transfer from the hotel to Sam's Tours in the afternoon for Palau Siren embarkation at 17:30.

If you are staying at a hotel in Koror before or after your liveaboard, your hotel will usually arrange airport transfers although there may be an additional charge and you will need to confirm your departure transfer times on check-in.

A limited number of Koror resorts offer day passes for guests with evening departures. Day passes can only be purchased directly at the resort and use of the facilities, without room use, before transferring to the airport in time for your flight check-in. Palau Siren will provide a transfer from the vessel to the resort upon disembarkation at 10:00(am) but, arrangements for transfer from the resort to the airport will be the guests' responsibility.

Advice on International Flights

There are numerous international route possibilities to Koror although from the UK, Europe and the US, at least one connection is required. Most flights arrive and depart late evening, or in the very early hours of the morning, after Palau Siren's embarkation and disembarkation times. With this in mind, we recommend arranging flights to arrive at least one day before your liveaboard departure so that you can start your diving holiday well-rested.

United Airlines operates direct flights from Guam to Koror six times a week and from Manila to Koror twice a week.

China Airlines operates direct flights from Taipei four times per week and Hong Kong Airlines operates three flights per week to Koror.

Transit via Guam

As Guam is a U.S. Island Territory all passengers, including transit passengers, are subject to US immigration checks. If you are a non-US citizen you will need to apply for an ESTA under the US Visa Waiver Program or acquire a US visa to be able to transit via Guam. Citizens of 37 countries, including the UK, most European nations, Australia, New Zealand and Japan are eligible for an ESTA under the visa waiver program and should apply online at least 72 hours before travel.

Please refer to the US Department of Homeland Security's ESTA information page for further details and application: esta.cbp.dhs.gov/

Visa and Passports

Passport holders of most Western countries are granted a 30 day tourist visa on arrival in Koror at no extra charge. United States citizens are granted a 1 year visa upon arrival.

All visitors are required to present a valid passport and a return/onward airline ticket to travel to Palau. Please make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months from the date of entry into Palau.

Visa and passport regulations can change at short notice; therefore, we advise that guests check with their nearest Palauan embassy or consulate for any updates or changes to visa procedures and application times.

Entry Requirements

All travellers are required to present a completed Palau Entry Form upon arrival. The form can be accessed and filled in online 72 hours or less before arrival here: https://palautravel.pw/

Once the form has been completed online, an email confirmation will be sent with a copy of the completed form and a unique QR code. Each traveller must present a copy of their completed Palau Entry Form or Unique QR Code upon arrival at the Palau International Airport.

All visitors will receive a <u>Palau Pledge</u> stamp in their passports which they are required to sign as a pledge to act in an ecologically and culturally responsible way during their time in the country.

Insurance

Insurance which covers scuba diving is mandatory aboard all of our vessels. Under our <u>Terms and Conditions</u>, all guests are also required to carry full travel and cancellation insurance. We cannot be held liable for delays occurring during the cruise, nor any delays or cancellations of flights, accommodations, tours and transfers that we organise on your behalf.



Your insurance must cover all of your scuba diving and snorkelling activities, including costs that may be incurred for recompression chamber treatment and emergency air evacuation. We strongly recommend purchasing diving-specific insurance to cover any diving-related eventuality.

Master Liveaboards act as a referrer for DAN World which offers short-term diving accident cover for up to 30 days, and for DiveAssure who offer dive and travel insurance policies, including short-term and multiple-trip policies. Dive Assure's comprehensive 'Dive & Travel Plus' plan has been specifically developed for diving liveaboard holidays and covers expenses in the event of missing your liveaboard departure due to flight delays or missed connections, and also provides cover for lost diving days if for any reason the boat is required to abort the cruise; for instance, due to a guest injury, mechanical breakdown of the ship, air supply failure, inclement weather conditions, etc.

Please consult our insurance webpage for details and direct links to DiveAssure and DAN World booking portals: www.masterliveaboards.com/insurance.

Diving Information

The diving itinerary focuses mostly on the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a day spent at Peleliu Island in the south. The Rock Islands have narrow channels and current flows that change with the tides making their navigation more ideally suited to skiffs.

Because of the Southern Lagoon's UNESCO status, Palau Siren and the rest of the liveaboard community in Palau are mandated to use specific mooring areas and/or anchorage points scattered throughout the area. This means the boat will remain at anchor for much of the time throughout the itinerary.

Palau Siren has two fibreglass "skiff" tenders that accompany the liveaboard on each trip and are used to transfer guests to and from the dive sites. Entry into the water is by giant stride from the side of the skiff although, if preferred, backward-roll or seated entry is also possible. Exit from the water at the end of a dive is via a ladder onto the skiffs. Our dive tender drivers are happy to assist guests who need help with their equipment and exiting the water.

To comply with local regulations in Palau, all divers must dive with a guide at all times.

Due to depths and strong currents at various sites in Palau, *some of the diving is not suitable for inexperienced divers.* Your cruise director will be able to advise you whilst on board and may recommend that guests with insufficient training or experience sit out certain dives.

Guests' experience level

It is recommended that guests wishing to fully participate in Palau Siren scuba diving activities have **PADI Advanced Open Water*** certification, or equivalent, and experience diving in currents.

- A minimum of 30 logged dives is mandatory on standard itineraries.
- A minimum of 50 logged dives is mandatory for <u>spawning itineraries</u>.



*We are unable to offer Advanced Open Water certification on Palau Siren. Divers with Open Water certification will be limited to a maximum dive depth of 18 metres which may exclude them from full participation in some dives unless they have additional deep diving training.

Open Water Divers can complete a PADI Deep Adventure Dive on board (charges apply) which allows diving to a maximum depth of 30 metres and can be credited towards Advanced Open Water certification elsewhere.

You will need to provide copies of your certification card(s) as part of your pre-embarkation <u>API</u>, and may also be asked to show them, and a record of your logged dives as proof of experience when you board.

Any divers who do not fulfil the recommended minimum requirements, or who the crew feel have insufficient experience in certain conditions, may be denied participation in some or all dives during the liveaboard.

If you have any questions or concerns about the diving conditions, or whether diving in Palau is suitable for you, please contact our reservations team.

Water Temperatures and Exposure Suits

The warm tropical waters of Palau are pleasant throughout the year averaging 27°C (82°F). Most guests find that a 3mm shorty wetsuit is suitable and many dive with just a skinsuit or rash guard and shorts. For guests who tend to get cold easily, especially after repetitive dives, we recommend you bring the wetsuit you feel most comfortable in.

Diving Equipment

- Rental wetsuits on Palau Siren are 3mm shorties.
- Gloves are not permitted when diving anywhere in Palau.
- Use of a dive computer is compulsory on all dives available to rent on board.
- All divers are required to carry an SMB on all dives please bring your own.
- Reef hooks may be required on some dives available to purchase on board.

Diving equipment is available to rent for an additional charge, but is subject to availability, and must be pre-booked. Weight belts and weights are provided free of charge.

Equipment rental and Nitrox costs can be viewed under 'Extras' on the Palau Siren page of our website: www.masterliveaboards.com/boats/palau-siren.

Cylinders

- A single 11 litre (AL80) cylinder (often referred to as 12L) is provided free of charge.
- 13 litre (AL100) cylinders (often referred to as 15L) must be requested in advance and are subject to availability and an additional charge.
- All cylinders have convertible valves that can accommodate DIN and INT regulators.
- 3L, 6L, 8L and 10L cylinders are not available on Palau Siren.
- Side-mount divers need to bring their own clips and straps.
- Twin Tanks: Palau Siren does not have manifolded twin cylinders and we can not allow cylinder valves to be removed and replaced with a twin-valve manifold.



Guests wishing to dive with twin, back-mounted tanks can use two unconnected 11L cylinders and will only be charged for the second cylinder. However, they will need to bring their own backplate, bands, harness and regulators, and will be charged for the second cylinder.

Rebreathers & Technical diving

Generally, rebreather or technical diving is only possible on dedicated technical or WWII wreck itineraries.

However, Palau Siren is not equipped to fully support rebreathers or technical divers. Booster pumps, CCR and pony/bailout cylinders are not available on board and CO² scrubber (Sofnolime) is not readily available in Palau so rebreather divers need to bring their own.

Where it has been agreed that rebreather divers will be on a trip with open-circuit divers, they will be required to dive with the normal groups or pay to hire an additional tender and a private guide to comply with local regulations regarding diving with a guide.

Extended bottom times/decompression dives are not possible and dive times will be limited to a maximum of 60 minutes unless by prior agreement, and a private guide and additional tender have been arranged. However, the itinerary and daily schedules, meal times, etc. will be based on the majority and not adjusted to accommodate extended dive times.

Rebreather / technical dive guides are subject to availability and MUST be booked and paid for in advance.

Diving Safety

All divers must use a dive computer and carry an SMB on all dives.

All divers are responsible for their own dive profiles and must stay well within the limits of their dive computer, certification and experience at all times. We strongly urge all guests to dive conservatively, follow the advice and instructions of the cruise director and guides, and make a safety stop at the end of each dive.

Fit to Dive

All divers are responsible for ensuring that they are fit to dive and are required to provide a completed medical statement before their liveaboard departure. Guests who are taking medication, or have any medical conditions or symptoms that could be restrictive to diving need to obtain a doctor's evaluation and clearance to dive before embarkation, ideally before travelling.

The medical statement is available in English, German, Mandarin and Spanish and can be downloaded from the Master Liveaboards' website at www.masterliveaboards.com/forms.

If you are unable to complete the medical statement as directed, or provide a current doctor's certificate (less than a year old) clearing you to dive, you accept that you may not be allowed to dive.



Flying after Diving

Current studies indicate that you should wait at least 18 hours after multiple days of repetitive diving before flying. However, we recommend 24 hours between your final dive and flight departure time. Please keep this in mind when you book your onward international flights.

Diving Emergencies

There is only one hyperbaric chamber for emergency treatment of decompression illness in Palau, which is located in Koror at Belau National Hospital. However, in some cases, evacuation to Manila or Guam may be necessary. We strongly encourage all guests to dive well within their certification, experience and comfort limits and ensure their insurance will cover all possible emergency evacuation and treatment costs.

As stated in our Terms & Conditions, dive insurance and travel insurance are mandatory.

Destination Information

Time Zone

The local time in the Republic of Palau is UTC +9 hours.

Money Matters

The official currency of the Republic of Palau is the US Dollar. Most established hotels, shops and restaurants accept Visa and Mastercard credit cards or traveller's cheques. Occasionally, smaller family-run businesses will only accept cash.

There are several U.S. operated banks and plenty of ATMs in Palau, making cash readily accessible. However, the exchange rate used in banks and ATMs is not very favourable, so we advise obtaining USD cash before arrival in Palau.

E-cigarettes and vapes

The importation, possession, use and sale of all e-cigarette and vaping products in Palau is prohibited by law. Individuals who are caught violating the ban will be fined \$1,000.

Sunscreens

On 1st January 2020, the Republic of Palau introduced a complete ban on sunscreens which contain ingredients that are known to be environmentally toxic.

The regulations to reinforce the ban mean it is illegal to bring products containing reef-toxic ingredients into the Republic of Palau and illegal for local businesses to sell them. Any sunscreens that do not comply with these regulations will be confiscated upon entry into the Republic of Palau.

The official Palauan Government's Regulations Governing Reef-Toxic Sunscreens which includes a complete list of prohibited ingredients can be downloaded here: <u>Banned Reef-toxic Sunscreens Information</u>.



Please ensure that any sunscreens you bring with you are reef-safe and compliant with these regulations. i.e. contain only mineral-based active ingredients such as non-nano zinc oxide and titanium oxide.

"<u>Pura Vida Palau</u> - Reef Safe Sunscreen" is produced locally and uses plastic-free packaging. By buying this product, you will not only help to protect the reefs of Palau but also support a local company with a good cause. Stream2Sea also supports the Palau Pledge with their plant-based, reef-safe <u>Palau Pledge SPF30 sunscreen</u>

We also suggest long-sleeve rash guards / full-length skinsuits, hats, sunglasses, lightweight protective clothing (e.g. long-sleeved tops, full-length dresses, skirts, trousers) and utilising shade as easy and environmentally friendly ways to further protect yourself from sun damage.

Climate and Weather

Palau is 7 degrees north of the equator and enjoys a warm tropical climate all year round with temperatures averaging around 27°C (82°F). As a tropical island nation, Palau is subject to rainfall throughout the year but more frequently between July and October. However, diving is excellent year-round with the high season considered to be November through May.

Health

Healthcare facilities are readily available in Palau but are not free. The Belau National Hospital is a professionally staffed hospital with an experienced barotrauma team. It is located in the capital city of Koror, along with several other private health clinics.

Visitors arriving from countries affected by cholera or yellow fever are required to show proof of immunisation upon arrival.

We recommend you consult your doctor, health care professional or travel clinic at least 4 weeks before departure for up-to-date medical travel advice and vaccination requirements.

When on land, we recommend guests take sensible precautions with local food and drink bottled water only to reduce the possibility of stomach upsets. We also advise using insect repellent and covering exposed skin to reduce the risk of insect-borne diseases.

Language and Religion

Palauan and English are the official languages of the Republic of Palau and both are widely spoken. Tagalog (Filipino), Japanese and Mandarin are also quite common.

The population is predominantly Christian with approximately 70% following either the Roman Catholic or Protestant faiths. Modekngei is a mix of Christianity and ancient Palauan customs practised by around 10% of the population. Islam and Judaism are also found in Palau.

Communications

Mobile phone coverage in Palau is with PNCC (Palau National Communications Company) which may not be compatible with some international mobile network providers. While some phone carriers say they are compatible with Palau, in reality, many are not.



Data-only visitor SIM cards can be purchased from the PNCC Offices in Koror, which are open 08:00-16:00 (8 a.m. - 4 p.m.), Monday - Friday only. Further information can be found on the PNCC website, here: https://www.pnccpalau.com/visitors

Internet access is available in most major towns and at resorts/ restaurants.

Drones

Drones can be used around the Palau Islands, as long as they have been registered and a permit obtained in advance from the Palau National Aviation Authority. The permit is free of charge and the application process takes 2 - 3 days.

Applications can be submitted by email to the PNAA (pnaa@palaunet.com), or online via the Palau Visitors Authority website: https://palau.travel/drone-registration/

Fishing

Although fishing is allowed in some parts of Palau, there are strict regulations controlling where and who may do so. Operators are required to have a fishing licence and a fishing permit is required for each person.

As a scuba diving liveaboard vessel, Palau Siren is licensed to conduct diving and snorkelling activities only. Therefore, fishing is NOT permitted on Palau Siren or from the dive tenders.

General Trip Information

Advanced Passenger Information (API)

There are certain details we need for administrative purposes before guests arrive, including obtaining the <u>permits</u> required for each trip. All guests can submit their information via our secure online portal at <u>www.masterliveaboards.com/portal</u>.

Forms

All guests are required to complete the following forms before or upon arrival: medical statement, liability releases, and standard safe diving practices statement, which can be found at www.masterliveaboards.com/forms.

To save some time, and to ensure you have no pre-existing conditions that could affect your diving, you can download the forms from the above link, fill them in, and bring them with you. By completing and signing the forms, you are confirming that you have read, understood, and agree to the conditions outlined in the forms.

If you are unwilling or unable to complete all of the forms as instructed, you accept that you may not be able to take part in certain aspects of the holiday you have booked with us.

Life on Board

The main features of the vessel can be viewed on the Palau Siren page of Master Liveaboards' website: www.masterliveaboards.com/boats/palau-siren.



Safety and dive briefings on board Palau Siren will be provided in English. If you or any of your companions do not speak or fully understand English please let us know well in advance of your arrival.

Accessibility

Due to the layout of the boat, Palau Siren may provide challenges, or be unsuitable for guests with limited mobility. Please contact us for further details if you have any concerns.

Accommodation

All cabins on Palau Siren are double occupancy with a choice of twin or double bed cabins. Single occupancy may be available on request and is subject to a supplemental charge.

Cabin Facilities

All cabins have individually controllable air-conditioning and private en-suite bathrooms with centrally heated hot water. Other facilities include towels, bathrobes and a lockable safety box.

Electricity

Both 220V and 110V universal sockets are available onboard and there are USB power outlets in common areas. Nevertheless, we do advise guests to bring their own adapters if in doubt of compatibility.

Food and Drink

Meals are provided on a full board basis including a light breakfast, full breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks with unlimited drinking water, tea, coffee, fruit juices and soft drinks. We offer a choice of International and locally inspired cuisine and can cater to most special dietary requirements with advance notice.

Local beer (lager), wine, and spirits are available from our cocktail bar for an additional fee.

Should you have any specific dietary needs, allergies, or special requests, please advise your sales consultant at the time of confirming your liveaboard trip to ensure we are able to make provisions for your needs.

Please note: It can be very difficult to find low-fat and some other special dietary items that are common elsewhere. While we always do our best to accommodate dietary requests, our ability to do so is somewhat dependent on what local suppliers have available in-store; please consider bringing some of your own foods if the lack thereof may constitute a health risk or seriously compromise your enjoyment of your holiday.

Clothing and Footwear

For your time on board Palau Siren, we recommend casual, lightweight and comfortable clothes; A sweater is advised for the cooler nights, particularly after multiple dives. We ask guests to respect the wishes of others by donning clothing for meal times. Most guests prefer to walk barefoot on board our vessel although island visits may require sturdy sandals or cross-trainers.



Palau Siren is equipped with laundry facilities and our housekeeper is happy to launder your clothes during the trip for a small charge.

Staying Connected

While local SIM coverage and international roaming (if supported by your network provider) make 3G internet available in most areas (around 90%) of the Rock Islands, please be aware that signal strength may be weak, or non-existent in some areas.

Wi-Fi internet access is available on board Palau Siren (charges apply) although we can not guarantee internet connectivity will be available at all times.

Underwater Photography and Videography

Palau Siren offers specialised features for photographers and videographers which include:

- Indoor and outdoor workstations for the preparation and maintenance of cameras
- Individual storage drawers for cameras and peripheral items
- Large rinsing tanks with frequently changed fresh water.

Our crew are thoroughly trained in the handling of delicate camera equipment and will provide assistance when entering and exiting the water if needed.

Smoking

Smoking on board is permitted in designated outdoor areas only.

PLEASE NOTE: The possession and use of e-cigarettes and vapes is illegal in Palau.

Fishing

Fishing is NOT permitted on Palau Siren.

As a scuba diving liveaboard vessel, Palau Siren is licensed by the local authorities to cruise and conduct diving and snorkelling activities only. Therefore, we can not allow guests to fish while on board the main vessel, or from one of the skiffs even if they have a permit.

Environmental considerations

Although there are recycling programs and facilities in place in Palau, they are limited. In addition to respecting the <u>Palau Pledge</u>, we ask our guests to consider the following to help with our mission to reduce our environmental impact.

Batteries

While some batteries may be available to purchase on board, please bring extras if your personal dive equipment may require a unique size, or need a lot of replacement batteries during your trip. We kindly request that you take spent batteries home so that they can be recycled or disposed of properly. Alternatively, consider using rechargeable batteries as there are plenty of sockets to plug in a charger on board.



Water Bottles

We are dedicated to becoming single-use plastic-free across all of our fleets. Plastic straws and stirrers have been banned on all of our boats and we do not provide single-use plastic bottles on board.

If you own a sports bottle, we simply ask that you bring it with you, or you can purchase one on board. If you don't have one and you don't want to purchase one, we have plenty of cups on board that you can use to ensure you remain well hydrated.

Plastic bags and wrappers

We do not provide plastic bags for purchases made on board, although reusable canvas bags are available for sale. Please help us minimise plastic waste by removing plastic wrappers and packaging from items before travelling. If you bring plastic bags with you, please reuse them, and take them home.

Toiletries

We kindly ask that guests consider the type of products they are bringing with them and, where possible, to bring only environmentally friendly toiletries for use on board, and to take partially or unused products home with them.

Sunscreens

Please be reminded that *sunscreens that contain reef-toxic ingredients are illegal in Palau and any such products will be confiscated.* Please ensure that any sun-protection products you bring with you are <u>reef-safe</u> and do not contain any banned ingredients. Further information about Palau's ban on conventional sunscreens and the environmental impact of the prohibited ingredients can be reviewed on the International Coral Reef Initiative website: <u>icriforum.org</u>.

Payments on Board

Marine. Park and Port Fees

Marine, park and port fees are dependent on the duration of your trip and include the cost of state permits for the areas covered and other local taxes; please refer to your itinerary details for further information. The applicable amount will be added to your invoice to be paid on board Palau Siren before disembarkation.

PLEASE NOTE: Effective from 20th December 2024, **permits for the Rock Islands are valid for 5 days only**. This means that two permits are required for all itineraries.

Guests doing back-to-back trips may need to pay the full fees on both trips.

IMPORTANT: Guests joining a 7 night liveaboard itinerary who already have a permit with 3 or 4 days remaining validity MUST inform us 2 days before embarkation, otherwise they will be charged for an additional permit.

If you will be doing any activities in Palau before or after your liveaboard which require a state permit, and the total number of days including your time on Palau Siren exceeds 10 days, you will need to pay for additional permits.



Optional Extras

Palau Siren offers a range of services and optional extras to make your stay on board even more enjoyable. We offer some land excursions and use of kayaks throughout your cruise free of charge. Full details of onboard extras and costs can be found on the Palau Siren page of our website:

All payments on board for equipment rental, nitrox, courses, alcohol and other miscellaneous items **are subject to 10% GST** (Goods and Services Tax) which will be added to your bill as a separate charge.

All prices on board are quoted in USD; however, we can also accept cash payments in GBP, EUR and AUD although a cash handling fee will be levied on non-USD payments.

We also accept payment by credit card (Mastercard or Visa) for which there is a 3% surcharge.

As banking facilities in Koror are limited, guests are advised to bring between 300-400 USD additional to marine park & port fees, for any incidentals, optional extras and crew gratuities.

Tipping

We believe that tipping is a matter of personal choice. Should you feel that your crew has made your holiday extra special, they would certainly appreciate a tip. Please note that we are **only able to accept tips in cash**. For this purpose, you can use the envelope provided by the cruise director. He/she will ensure the tips are divided equally amongst all crew members, including the captain and dive guides.

Safety on Board

Emergency Management & Equipment

All Palau Siren crew members have been extensively trained in emergency management procedures. A thorough boat safety briefing will be provided by your cruise director at the start of your trip, during which all guests will be requested to participate in a life jacket drill. Further practice scenarios may be performed during your cruise to assist our crew in keeping their skills sharp. Each yacht is equipped with modern safety features such as automated life rafts, EPIRB, satellite communication and emergency pumps.

First Aid

Palau Siren is equipped with a fully stocked medical first aid kit for treating minor injuries and ailments, as well as for assisting trained medical professionals in remote locations. Each yacht has a full complement of medical-grade oxygen which can be administered to divers through DAN kits or unit-specific attachments.

You will also find on board an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), which has been proven to greatly increase the survival rate in the eventuality of cardiac fibrillation. Our dive teams are all qualified emergency responders. Should you feel unwell at any point during your cruise, please seek the advice of your cruise director who will be able to assist you.



CCTV on board

As part of our commitment to the safety and security of our guests and crew members, all Master Liveaboards vessels are equipped with CCTV cameras which are located in the following areas:

- Engine room
- Dive platform
- Dive deck
- Sun deck
- Lower deck corridors
- Galley (kitchen)
- Communal indoor area(s), i.e. salon, camera prep area

We wish to assure all guests that the placement of all CCTV cameras is for the safety of all on board and that they are not set up or intended to invade privacy in any way.

Extending your holiday

Extending your stay in Palau can be made exceptionally easy when you book with Master Liveaboards. We can offer hotels, excursions and tour packages, which can be arranged for before and/or after your liveaboard.

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