

SAMAMBAIA

Banda Sea and Alor

Ambon to Maumere | Ambon, the Banda Sea and Alor

The critters of Ambon Bay, with rhinopias, frogfish and ghostpipefish, open a route across the Banda Sea.

The Banda Islands are historic spice islands, where volcanic walls rise from deep water and schooling hammerheads are often seen.

Further on, the Snake Islands have dozens of sea snakes in a single dive, and Nil Desperandum has steep walls with big pelagics.

Alor brings action packed current drifts with oceanic sunfish and thresher sharks, and Beangabang is a sheltered bay with some of the best macro life in the region.

Whales and dolphins are often seen while crossing the Banda Sea.

LENGTH	DEPARTURE PORT	ARRIVAL PORT	HIGHLIGHTS
12 days / 11 nights	Ambon	Maumere	Banda Islands, Snake Islands, Alor







Your route

STOP 1

Embarkation in Ambon

Crew members meet you at the airport and you embark in the port of Ambon.
After a general dive briefing there is a check dive at an easy, protected dive site, where the guides check your buoyancy and you check your gear, weights and camera housing seals.

STOP 1

Embarkation in Ambon (continued)

No skill demonstrations are required.
Two more muck dives follow in the bay of Ambon, one in the afternoon and one at sunset.
Ambon is famous for critter hunting, with Rhinopias, frogfish, ghostpipefish, harlequin shrimps and, if you are lucky, the psychedelic frogfish.

STOP 2

Suanggi

A small island in the Banda Sea that can only be reached by liveaboard, and a haven for birds and fish.
The dives explore a pristine hard coral reef with pelagics such as schools of barracuda or tuna, fusiliers and bannerfish.
Hammerhead sharks have been seen here in the past.

STOP 3

Around Banda Island

The Spice Islands are historically significant as the only place where nutmeg grew, which led colonial powers to fight over them.
You can walk through the town of Banda Neira, with its museum and two forts, and the more ambitious can climb the volcano of Gunung Api, which is strenuous in the tropical heat.
The volcanic islands attract large pelagics, and schooling hammerheads are often seen.
The diving includes a reef that was destroyed by lava in 1988 and has regrown impressively, a mandarin fish dive in Banda Neira's harbour and walls and slopes around the islands.

STOP 4

Gili Manuk, the Snake Island

Divers may see dozens of sea snakes on a single dive.
They are venomous but usually peaceful and sometimes curious.
The site also has plenty of reef fish, pelagics and thousands of nesting seabirds.

STOP 5

Nil Desperandum

An atoll with steep walls rising from deep water.
If the weather allows, the whole day is spent here, with fans and sponges, some sloping sections and big pelagics.
Schooling sharks have been seen here before.

STOP 6

Pulau Nila

About five miles from Nila, an atoll offers prettier wall growth and passing pelagics.
Nila island provides shelter for the night's anchorage and a possible night dive.
You may also visit a village at the foot of an active volcano, where the residents live from clove harvests.

STOP 7

Romang

The Romang island group offers gentle slopes with relaxed diving, huge gorgonians, large barrel sponges, reef fish and occasional reef sharks or tuna.
Nearby is a site with overhanging walls and abundant fish.
Because a long overnight crossing follows, there are three day dives only.

STOP 8

Reong

A small island off Wetar and the last stop before the Banda Sea crossing.
The fishy wall dives have caverns and overhangs where nurse sharks rest during the day.
The shallows have hard coral that snorkellers will enjoy.

STOP 9

Beangabang and Alor

Beangabang is a protected bay said to have better macro life than the famous Lembeh Strait.
There can be cold upwellings, but critter lovers enjoy extended bottom times.
The boat then moves to Alor for action packed current drift dives on slopes and walls, with potential for big animals.
Past sightings include oceanic sunfish, tuna and thresher sharks.

STOP 10

Pulau Rusa and Pulau Kambing

A sloping area with boulders and plenty of fish, shaped by strong currents.
Sunfish may appear while snorkelling.
It is a secret spot that few divers have visited.

STOP 11

Serbete and Adonara

The day starts with a morning dive at a pretty, easygoing, protected wall south of the small island of Serbete.
Two more macro focused dives follow at secret spots south of the island of Adonara.

STOP 12

Disembarkation in Maumere

Depending on your flight schedule, the crew checks your luggage in for you in advance, so you can rest on board until you are taken to the airport when your plane is ready to leave.

THE TRIP

How a Samambaia cruise works

This is a sample itinerary for a eleven night cruise from Ambon to Maumere. It is just to give you a general idea and is subject to change with the weather and other conditions. Popular dive sites are named, and the crew has secret spots as well, which you learn about during the cruise.

The decision on the itinerary is made by the Cruise Director as the boat cruises, and is based on the weather, the dive conditions, the requests of guests and the schedules of other liveaboards, which the boat tries to stay away from. There are some constants on every cruise:

- Three day dives of at least one hour each
- One sunset or night dive, unless the boat has a serious number of miles to cover overnight
- Scenic rides through lagoons and coves in the tenders
- Trekking to breathtaking viewpoints
- Visits to secluded beaches
- Excursions to traditional villages
- Whale watching
- Water action such as wake boarding and water skiing

This sample runs from Ambon to Maumere. The same waters are also cruised in the opposite direction, from Maumere to Ambon.

THE DIVING

Diving and snorkelling

HOW THE DIVING WORKS

The Cruise Director leads the diving programme and four dive masters go with guests on the dives, usually with one guide to every four divers. All dives are no decompression dives within your certification level, and solo diving is not allowed. Nitrox is included.

Every diver carries a GPS marine rescue device for the whole trip, the dive staff are trained in Emergency First Response and oxygen is on board. Two tenders take the divers to the sites and the crew looks after the transfer of dive gear by speedboat.

THE AREA AND THE CONDITIONS

The Banda Sea route passes volcanic islands and limestone pinnacles formed from ancient coral reefs, along migratory routes used by whales and dolphins. Some areas of the Banda Sea are cooler, with water at 20 to 25 C.

At Lucipara the visibility is over 120 feet, about 36 metres, with very mild currents, vertical walls and barrel sponges big enough for a diver to fit inside. At Gunung Api the banded and olive sea snakes gather around warm volcanic vents and are curious but docile, and on the west coast of Wetar there are drop-offs, colourful reefs and a good chance of pelagics.

Banda Neira was the only source of nutmeg and mace for centuries, and the old fort, the governor's house, the church and the nutmeg plantations are still there. At Lava Flow, the hard coral garden that has grown back since the Gunung Api eruption has very large table corals and extensive staghorn coral. The dive under the Banda Neira pier is known for mandarin fish, cockatoo waspfish, flying gurnards and frogfish.

Alor and Solor are a group of 18 volcanic islands and one of the best diving destinations in Asia. Tourism is little developed and few divers have explored the waters. Whales and dolphins pass through the channels between Flores and Alor, and whales can be seen from the boat by their spouts in the season.

Strong currents run through the narrow straits between Pantar and Alor and between Lembata and Pantar, and every tide brings strong upwellings. The coral reefs are mostly on the northern coast of the Solor and Alor group, while the southern coast, especially around Lembata, is mostly rocky with little coral. The area has many muck diving sites with unusual creatures such as pegasus sea moths and devilfish, and cruises can visit the traditional whaling villages of Lamalera and Lamakera.

WATER TEMPERATURE

Water temperature across Indonesia is typically 26 to 30 C all year. During the monsoon, from December to February, it is about 27 to 29 C. A 3 or 5 mm wetsuit is usually enough, and a hood helps to avoid ear problems.

SNORKELLING

Indonesia's warm waters suit snorkelling, and the day by day notes point out the places where snorkelling is a good option.







ON BOARD

Food, service and the team

CUISINE

Meals blend continental, Indonesian and Italian dishes, cooked with fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Expect Indonesian favourites such as nasi goreng, satay and rendang alongside Italian pasta, pizza and tiramisu. The chef cooks for dietary needs, including vegan and gluten-free.

SERVICE AND THE TEAM

The Cruise Director and the instructors guide the diving, and the crew is made up of the captain, four dive masters, a chef engineer and a cook. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the boat, although the mobile signal depends on the itinerary. An inflatable kayak is included, and there is one free wakeboard trial.

DECK PLAN

The upper deck has the sun deck and the speedboat. On the main deck are the restaurant, the dive deck, the camera room and the wheelhouse.

INCLUDED

What is included

- Nitrox
- Weights and weight belts
- 12 litre tanks
- Inflatable kayak
- Beer, soft drinks, juices, Italian coffee, premium tea and snacks
- Transfers between the airport and the harbour in both directions
- Guided diving with the Cruise Director and dive masters

Not included are flights and hotels, wine and spirits, massages and laundry. The boat leaves before 1 pm on the first day, and on the last night it returns to the end harbour so guests can catch early domestic flights.



