

SAMAMBAIA

Raja Ampat South and Banda Sea

Sorong to Ambon | Raja Ampat, the Banda Islands and Ambon

From Raja Ampat to the Banda Sea, this route joins the biggest marine biodiversity on the planet to volcanic islands rising from deep water.

The Dampier Strait is action packed, a fish soup that is still alive and surrounds you, with manta rays common.

Misool has reefs covered in soft coral in every colour you can imagine, and Koon has giant trevally, enormous giant groupers and schools of hundreds of batfish.

The Banda Islands bring good chances of large pelagics, often schooling hammerheads, and a hard coral reef regrown over an old lava flow.

The trip ends with muck diving in Ambon Bay, hunting rhinopias, frogfish and harlequin shrimps.

LENGTH	DEPARTURE PORT	ARRIVAL PORT	HIGHLIGHTS
12 days / 11 nights	Sorong	Ambon	Manta rays, Koon, Banda Islands







Your route

STOP 1

Embarkation

Arrival with plane to Sorong.
You will be picked up by crew members at the airport.
Embarkation in the port of Sorong.
A general orientation follows.

STOP 2

Raja Ampat

After an initial general dive briefing, we will do our check dive with you at an easy and protected dive site.
Check dive in the sense of you checking your gear and weights, making sure the camera housings are proper sealed and our guides checking your buoyancy.
No skill demonstrations are required.
We will offer three easy dives to start with close to the Dampier Strait.
But easy don't mean not attractive.
You will get a very good impression what lies ahead of you the next few days: the biggest marine biodiversity on this planet.

STOP 3

Dampier Strait

The dive- and snorkel sites in the Dampier Strait stand for action packed dives in our favourite kind of fish soup, the one that is still alive and surrounds us in the water.
Encounters with Manta Rays are very common here.
The reef of the island of Kri is the current world record holder with the highest number of fish species ever counted by a scientist in a single dive, Dr.
Gerry Allen came up with 374 different fish species counted.
Again: in one single dive.
Dive sites here are exposed to current so it's all about the right timing to get the most out of it.
And we know how to time it here.
Popular dive sites here: 'Kap Kri', 'Chicken', 'Sardine', 'Mike's Point' and 'Blu Majik'.

STOP 4

Misool, Farondi

This is a very exciting part of SE Misool.
A lot of life and colours.
Combined with a very special topography.
Caverns, caves, swim thru's.
And if you happen to hit this area at the right time (which changes every season) you will find yourself amidst a bloom of small silvery fish, Silversides, and the hunters are just nearby: Mobula Rays.
In the dozens.
There's four popular dive sites here.
We've got another six spots that are hardly ever dived.
A nice big variety to pick and choose from.

STOP 5

Misool, Fiabatjet

Right in the heart of the No-Take-Zone. 'Tank Rock', 'Nudi Rock' & 'Whale Rock' are the famous and commonly dived sites here.
There is five more dive sites in the very proximity which are as good, if not even better.

STOP 5

Misool, Fiabatjet (continued)

We prefer to go a bit off the beaten track here.
The reefs are covered in soft coral in all colours you can imagine.
Surrounded by most colourful reef fish.
More Fusiliers than one could possibly count.
Jacks, Trevallys, Barracudas, Sharks.
And if you happen to dive here on a day with bad visibility.
Just face the reef.
It's packed with macro life.
Several species of Pygmy Seahorses, Nudibranchs, tiny Crustaceans, every niche in these reefs is filled with life.

STOP 6

Misool, Boo

The first dive site today is called 'Magic Mountain'.
Yes.
It is magic.
Situated in a 'No-Take- Zone', which was ten years ago established by our friends of the Misool Eco Resort, the amount of biomass is just off the scale.
Blacktip, Whitetip and Grey Reef Sharks.
Napoleon Wrasses.
Stonefish.
Wobbegong Sharks.
Barracudas.
Not to forget about the Mantas who come in to get cleaned.
You will have a hard time focussing on a particular scene on this reef.
It's happening everywhere.
Magic.
We will offer two more day dives around the eastern part of the island of Boo.
One of the signature dive sites of this area is 'Boo Windows', a spectacular swim through gave the dive site it's fame, the marine life surrounding it will keep us busy watching during the whole dive.
Another great dive site in this area is 'Hidung Boo' where you might sea the biggest sea fans you've ever seen in your life.

STOP 7

Koon

At the south-eastern tip of Seram there is a little island named Koon.
It's basically three dive sites in one, performing best always at one spot, depending on the current.
The name of the site says it all: 'Too Many Fish'.
You will have a hard time to focus on what to look at.
A fish soup of Fusiliers and Surgeonfish is divided by hunting Giant Trevallys and Jacks, enormous Giant Groupers are all of a sudden looking at you whilst a school of hundreds of Batfish is passing by.

STOP 7

Koon (continued)

Mobula and Manta rays might fly by.
Leopard Sharks like to relax in overhangs of the wall on the north side.
Macro life is plenty as well.
Hairy Shrimp, Pygmie Seahorses, Tiny Frogfish, Robust Ghostpipefish.
This dive site literally has it all.

STOP 8

Banda Islands (days 8 and 9)

The famous Spice Islands, the island group around Banda Neira, which is also historically very interesting.
Wars were fought over these islands by colonial powers as these islands used to be the only islands in the world were nutmeg grew.
A historical walk through the town of Banda Neira with it's museum and two forts is a must.
An interesting option for ambitious challenge seekers is to climb the vulcano Gunung Api, which raises 'only' 600 m above sea level.
Which in the tropics however turns into a strenuous climb.
The diving here is very diverse and spectacular.
As these volcanic islands raise up to the surface surrounded by deep sea water, the chances for sightings of large pelagics are very good.
In the past we've often encountered schooling hammerheads here.
A dive site called 'Lava Flow' is one of the most pristine hard coral reefs you will ever see.
After the last eruption of Gunung Api in 1988 a flow of lava made it's way down into the ocean and destroyed the whole reef.
What has grown back ever since will boggle your mind.
In the harbour of Banda Neira we've got a beautiful Mandarin Fish dive waiting for you.
Other highlights include: 'The Cathedral', 'Batu Kapal' and 'Karang Hatta'.

STOP 10

Nusa Laut

In the early morning we will arrive at the island of Nusa Laut, which is a great example for how active conservation by the local community can not only preserve the reefs but actually make them even better.
We see here for many years a proper growth in biomass.
We have four spectacular dive sites here, either wall or slope diving.
Great variety of reef fish as well as large schools of jacks.
Bumphead Parrotfish like to pass by here also.
A lot of macro life can be found in the wall as well.

STOP 11

Ambon Bay

We will offer two more dives in the bay of Ambon.
Both of these dives will be muck dives.
World class critter hunting.
That's what Ambon is famous for.
Rhinopias, Frogfish, Ghostpipefish, Harlequin Shrimps and if you are really lucky: the Psychedelic Frogfish that has been very recently found here again.

STOP 12

Disembarkation in Ambon

Depending on your flight schedule, our crew will check your luggage in for you in advance so you can rest on board and let us shuttle you 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 Sorong to Ambon. 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

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 best time to dive Raja Ampat is October to April, with near flat seas, warm sunny days and the occasional rain shower. The first dives are often around Wai island, about two hours by boat from Sorong. Some dives are timed for slack tide and the currents can occasionally be challenging, but the stronger currents bring better visibility, blooming corals and more fish activity.

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.

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.





