

SCUBASPA ZEN

Raja Ampat - Banda Islands

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

This is the Forgotten Islands, a remote and largely undeveloped chain across Raja Ampat and the Banda Sea that only a handful of boats ever visit.

Diving means drifting along steep walls, past huge sea fans, vibrant soft corals and barrel sponges, and meeting reef sharks, hammerheads, mobula rays and sea snakes, often in exceptional visibility.

Raja Ampat adds pygmy seahorses, black mantas, endemic walking sharks at night and pinnacles crowded with millions of tiny fish.

At Koon Island the sandbanks stretch almost to the horizon at low tide, and strong currents bring schooling jacks, barracuda and sharks.

LENGTH	DEPARTURE PORT	ARRIVAL PORT	EXPERIENCE
11 days / 10 nights	Sorong	Ambon	Intermediate to advanced







Your itinerary

DAY 1

Arrive in Sorong

Guests are met at the airport or hotel by the crew and taken to the harbour to board.
After a short rest while the spa opens for information and bookings, the Cruise Managers introduce the crew and give the boat briefing, followed by a buffet welcome dinner in the al fresco restaurant.

DAY 2

Batanta

Up to 4 dives

The bays of the Batantas offer excellent macro photography at sites such as Algae Patch and Black Beauty, and a chance of reef mantas at Dayang Manta.

DAY 3

Farondi Islands

Up to 4 dives

The Farondi islands make many divers' lists of favourite Raja Ampat sites, with tunnels, caverns and colourful walls.
Jellyfish Lake is worth a visit for snorkelling with dozens of jellyfish, though the hike is challenging, and Tomolol Cave, a set of water filled caverns, is a possible land excursion, near red ochre paintings estimated at three to five thousand years old.

DAY 4

Wayil Batan

Up to 4 dives

A 30 kilometre wide channel with medium to strong currents.
Gorgonian Passage is one of the best sites for macro divers, and another spectacular site has several pinnacles rising from the deep, covered in millions of tiny fish crowding the soft corals.
In the afternoon an easy hike climbs to a viewpoint over a salt water lagoon shaped like a heart.

DAY 5

Pelee Island

Up to 4 dives

A short early cruise reaches Pelee, with the first dive at Kaleidoscope Ridge, one of the best sites in Misool, named for the bursts of colour among its soft corals and fish, and good for mobula rays and wobbegong sharks.
Toblerone is known for its swim through and large hard coral gardens.

DAY 6

Fiabacet

Up to 3 dives and a night dive

Fiabacet, three small rocks eight nautical miles east of Wayil Batan, has some of the most beautiful reefs in Raja Ampat, with pygmy seahorses and nudibranchs, black mantas and with luck oceanic mantas on the pinnacles.
A night dive at Romeo may find the endemic walking sharks, and the chefs prepare a barbecue dinner as the yacht sails to Koon Island.

DAY 7

Koon Island

Up to 4 dives

The sandbanks of Koon stretch almost to the horizon at low tide, a Maldives like landscape, and the gateway between the Banda and Arafura Seas gives strong currents with diverse fish and coral.
Dives highlight swimming among millions of fish, schooling jacks, barracuda and sharks.

DAY 7

Koon Island (continued)

Up to 4 dives

Lunch is a barbecue between dives, and a beach barbecue dinner follows while the yacht sails to Banda Neira.

DAY 8

Banda Neira

Up to 3 dives

Start with morning yoga or a walk around the picturesque village beneath the active Banda Api volcano.
Batu Kapal is a small rock with coral, sponge and sea fan formations on its walls, and white tip and grey reef sharks in the deeper areas.
Pohon Miring is one of the top sites in Banda, with swim throughs full of sea fans, huge sponges, a plateau of small critters and amazing visibility.

DAY 9

Pulau Suanggi

At least 2 dives

Pulau Suanggi is the gateway to the outer reefs of the Banda Sea and the first chance for big fish, with an early sunrise dive for the elusive hammerhead shark.
Deep cool upwellings draw reef sharks, silky sharks, tuna and shoals of fish, and above water there are brown boobies, red footed boobies and frigate birds.

DAY 10

Laha, Ambon

Up to 3 dives

The last site is Laha, about three kilometres inside the bay on Ambon's northern coast and the best macro site in Ambon, known for frogfish, juvenile fish, ghost pipefish and rhinopias.
After lunch the crew helps rinse the gear and pack, the Cruise Managers settle the bills, and the day ends with farewell cocktails at sunset and dinner.

DAY 11

Departure

After a final breakfast and farewells to the crew, guests are escorted to the airport for their departing flight.

THE TRIP

Raja Ampat to the Banda Sea

The Forgotten Islands are the south east Moluccas, remote islands far from population centres. Diving here means drifting along steep walls, swimming past huge sea fans, vibrant soft corals and barrel sponges, and meeting reef sharks, hammerheads, mobula rays, barracuda, sea snakes and dense schools of fish, often in exceptional visibility. Land excursions range from the colonial charm of Banda Neira to the villages of the Maluku coast. The expedition runs once a year, timed for the best sea conditions in the northern Banda Sea and eastern Maluku.

In the south Maluku islands such as Nil Desperandum and Terbang you can meet hammerhead sharks, while Dai has walls with colourful soft corals and Lelar has a current swept channel busy with reef fish.

THE DIVING

How the diving is organised

The dive centre is a dedicated dive boat with plenty of room, well equipped dive stations, several entry points, a toilet and shower and a sun deck platform. Dives are tailored to each diver's level, with beginners and experienced divers both looked after, and up to four dives a day are possible. Courses run from introductory dives to advanced and Nitrox certification, with multilingual instructors.

Dives are limited to 40 metres. A dive computer is compulsory, diving alone and decompression dives are not allowed, and night dives and dives deeper than 18 metres are for advanced certified divers. Many sites have strong currents, so good buoyancy control is needed.







THE SPA

Treatments at the quiet end of the boat

The five star spa sits at the stern, the quietest part of the yacht, and welcomes couples as well as solo guests. The menu offers Balinese, Swedish, Shiatsu, sports, hot stone and Hawaiian Lomi Lomi massage, aromatherapy, foot reflexology, a back and shoulder massage, facials, body scrubs and masks, an after sun aloe vera treatment, a foot scrub, and a Dive Delight massage designed for after a dive.

The products are made exclusively in Bali for the boat, from organic ingredients, botanical extracts and essential oils. Yoga is held every morning on the sun deck.







ON THE TABLE

Food, drink and celebrations

Breakfast and lunch are buffets, and dinner is an à la carte menu served in the al fresco restaurant on the main deck. Live cooking evenings blend Asian, Mediterranean and Continental cuisine, and the chefs share the recipes so you can recreate them at home. Special diets are looked after.

The bar, next to the restaurant with views from the bow, serves wines, champagnes and handcrafted cocktails, with a happy hour every day. Beach barbecues are held on a deserted island, and the team plans birthdays, engagements and anniversaries, from a private dinner under the stars to sunset cocktails.







PACKAGES

Choose how you spend the cruise

Every guest chooses one of three packages. Dives cannot be swapped for spa treatments, and the dive package is for certified divers only.

Scuba

Up to 26 dives over the cruise, with spa treatments bookable on board for an extra charge when there is space.

Scuba and spa

14 dives and 7 spa treatments over the cruise.

Spa and active wellness

11 spa treatments and guided snorkelling. A Discover Scuba Diving course can be added if you would like to try diving.

CONDITIONS

Season, water and what to expect

The Banda Sea has crystal clear water and sheer walls hung with soft corals, sea fans and sponges, in dive sites that only a liveaboard can reach. Surface water is 26 to 29 degrees, but upwellings can bring cool water of 21 to 22 degrees, so a full 5 mm wetsuit is recommended. The season runs from March to April and from September to October, and October brings a chance of schooling hammerhead sharks.

INCLUDED

What your trip covers

INCLUDED IN THE TRIP PRICE

- Suite accommodation with three meals a day
- Welcome drink, drinking water, coffee and tea
- Airport transfers at the start and end of the cruise
- Yoga classes every morning
- Snorkelling, with equipment included
- A barbecue on a deserted island and the excursions in the programme
- The diving or spa treatments of the package you choose
- Wi-Fi, with a 1 GB allowance per person

NOT INCLUDED

- International and domestic flights
- Service and administration charge and the national park and port fees, shown on our trip listings
- Dive and travel insurance
- Dive equipment rental
- Drinks from the bar and extra spa treatments
- Crew gratuities, which are optional