SeaTrek The Spice Islands To Raja Ampat (Ambon-Sorong)

Cruising in the wake of Wallace

12 Days/11 Nights
Your Time With Us

Ambon To Sorong
Ports of Call

CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS

This 12-day trip aboard the six-cabin Katharina combines the magic of the Banda Archipelago Spice Islands –the ancient and original home of nutmeg and mace– with the biodiversity of beauty of Raja Ampat, home to some of the richest and most diverse coral habitats on the planet. On this cruise you will discover the colonial history of Indonesia and its role in the international spice trade during the 17th century; explore the remote villages of Ceram and surrounding islands; see birds of paradise in their natural jungle habitats; search for and swim with manta rays; and swim, kayak, paddle and play on pristine white-sand beaches; and snorkel through vibrant coral gardens rich in all manner of tropical marine life.

SNORKELLING WITH SEATREK

Whether it's swimming with whale sharks & mantas 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 at SeaTrek. 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.

WANT TO ADD ON A WILDLIFE OR CULTURAL EXCURSION TO YOUR TRIP?

Our four-day orangutan programme that features in our Orangutans & Dragons itinerary can be worked into any of our SeaTrek cruises throughout the year, regardless of length or location, so just let us know if this is something you would like to do when visiting Indonesia and we will happily arrange it for you.

For textile enthusiasts, we also have two five-day land tours across Flores Island in June each year that form our Ancient Villages, Textiles, Dragons, and Vibrant Coral Reefs tour, which will visit many traditional weaving villages and take you deep inside these unique cultures.

We are also a wealth of information on other great destinations and wildlife and cultural excursions in Indonesia that can be added on to your SeaTrek cruise.

The possibilities are endless so all you have to do is ask.

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 maximize 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.

NOTE: We require all guests to arrive in Ambon the day before the departure date. Please contact us for details on how to do this. We will happily make all the arrangements on your behalf.

ITINERARY

DAY 1

- You will be picked up from your hotel after breakfast and taken straight to the boat. Once settled into your cabin, our cruise director will familiarise you with the vessel's facilities and safety procedures.

- Ready to start our adventure, we will depart for the island of Saparua, where we will visit a 17th Century Dutch fort, before enjoying our first snorkelling session near a small uninhabited island.

- In the evening, we will begin our voyage to the Banda Islands, the original source of nutmeg, and where in the 15th and 16th centuries, this aromatic spice spurred exploration and shaped colonial empires.

DAY 2 - 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.

DAY 2 - 5

- 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.

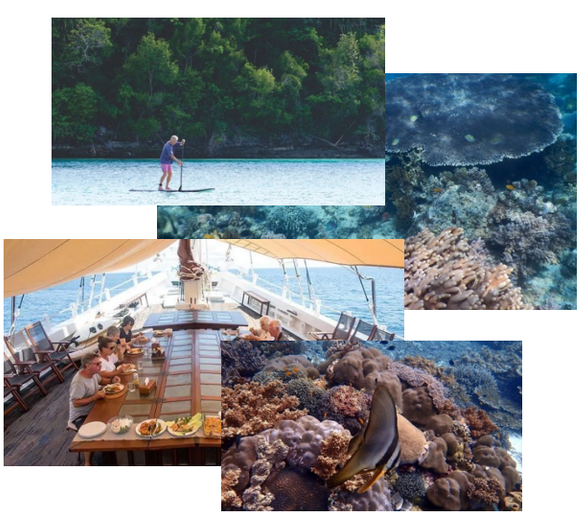
DAY 2 - 5

-We will also climb up to fortress Hollandia and go on to meet the last of the perkeniers – the small-holder 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



DAY 6

- We will wake up at Watubela island, of the coast of Ceram, and go ashore to walk through some inland lakes, as well as some trekking, snorkelling, kayaking, stand-up-paddle-boarding and beach activities.

- In the evening, we will cruise onwards through the night towards Raja Ampat.

DAY 7

- After breakfast, we will don our snorkelling gear for a swim through the Gorgonian Passage, an area rich in large corals and abundant fish life.

- Later that afternoon, we will depart to nearby Wayil island for another snorkelling adventure on a beautiful reef that is home to sea turtles and eagle rays. Tonight we will have a beach BBQ under the stars

- Later that evening we will depart for Kapatcol village for our early morning bird of paradise encounter.

DAY 8

- Today we will rise around 4 am and have a quick breakfast and go ashore, where local guides will be waiting for us to take us through the forest to hopefully see the Lesser bird of paradise as they dance around in their 'lekking' trees.

- On the way back, we have time for a stroll around the village and possibly a visit to the school and to learn about the way Nature Conservancy is working with the village to empower with local women with a fishing practice called 'sasi'.

- In the afternoon we will snorkel on a rich and vibrant local coral reef.

DAY 9

- This morning we will wake to see the sunrise over the picturesque chain of islands that makes up the eastern part of the Misool archipelago. The topography is typical of 'karst dissolution,' featuring a great number of tiny islets whose bases have been eroded over time by the relentless motion of the tides.

- After an early breakfast, our tenders will take us into the heart of the bay to see this partially submerged cave where it is possible to swim and snorkel while gazing up at the cavernous grotto adorned with astonishing stalactites. We will then move on to the mysterious jellyfish lake and swim amongst the many thousands of stingless animals.

- In the afternoon, we will use our tenders to explore more of this impressive maze of karst islands, both above and below the surface, complete with mysterious skull cairns in sea-cave cemeteries, and prehistoric cave paintings, estimated to be anything between 3,000 to 5,000 years old.

DAY 10

- After breakfast, we will snorkel at

the famous “Fish Bowl” at Yenuba village, one of the most diverse and rich sites in all of Raja Ampat with many hundreds of species and fish of all sizes.

- During lunch, we will cruise to nearby Gam Island where we will visit a replica of Victorian naturalist’s jungle house, built by SeaTrek in partnership with the local village. AR Wallace was the co-discoverer of the theory of natural selection with Charles Darwin, and spent many years in this region.

- Later that afternoon we will go snorkeling once more.

DAY 11

- Today sees an early start as we head off into the forest in search of the incredible Red and Wilson’s birds of paradise. The walk takes about 40 minutes, and as we arrive at the bird site at dawn, if we are lucky, we will see the incredible mating displays of these birds in the canopy of the rainforest. This is a David Attenborough moment if ever there was one.

- We will be back on the boat by 9am when we can enjoy a proper hearty breakfast as we make our way to Mayalabit Bay and a beautiful forest walk to explore the “Blue River, where we can swim in the jungle.

DAY 12

- Today is the last day of our adventure and we will wake up anchored in Sorong and have one last hearty breakfast on board before saying farewell to our crew and your fellow travellers before making our way to the airport or hotel for the next phase of your journey.