

Raja Ampat & Spice Islands, Indonesia

Sorong to Ambon - 12 Nights Itinerary

- **Embarkation:** Sorong Harbour, West Papua at 12:30-13:00*
- **Disembarkation:** Jembatan Amerika Negeri Laha, Ambon at 10:00

Flights and Transfers

- **Domestic Arrival airport:** Sorong Airport (SOQ)*
- **Domestic Departure airport:** Pattimura International Airport Ambon (AMQ)

Domestic flights to Sorong and from Ambon are not included.

For your convenience, a free transfer will be provided from Sorong Airport, or your hotel in Sorong to the harbour on embarkation day, and from Jembatan Amerika Negeri Laha to Ambon Airport or hotels in the Laha and Ambon city areas on the day of disembarkation.

Advice on International Flights

We recommend booking your international flights into and out of Jakarta International Airport (CGK) for the easiest domestic connections to Sorong and from Ambon. We advise you to spend at least one day in Jakarta either side of your liveaboard dates to ensure you are on time for your flight connections and to allow for any possible changes to flight schedules.

Our team can help to arrange hotel accommodations and domestic flight connections between your international arrival and departure and the embarkation and disembarkation locations.

Domestic Flights

As domestic flight schedule changes, delays and cancellations are common occurrences in Indonesia, ***we strongly recommend*** making arrangements to ***arrive in Sorong the day before embarkation*** and book a hotel for the night.

This will not only ensure that you are well-rested before the start of your liveaboard itinerary but will also allow time to make alternative flight arrangements should there be any changes to the ones you have booked.

We regret that we are unable to delay the liveaboard's departure for late arrivals as this disrupts other guests and impacts the itinerary schedule and diving possibilities. Additionally,

if your delayed arrival is after the liveboard has departed, *you may be charged for the cost of arranging a speed boat transfer, or for additional fuel costs* related to Indo Master having to return to port.

Should you choose to arrive in Sorong **on the day of embarkation, your flight arrival must be no later than 12:00 (midday)**. Depending on what time your flight arrives on embarkation day, we can organise use of the day facilities at the Swiss-Belhotel until 12.00.

Diving Information

Some of the diving on this itinerary is not suitable for inexperienced divers due to depths and strong currents. Your Cruise Manager will be able to advise you whilst on board and may recommend that guests with insufficient experience sit out certain dives.

Minimum dive certification and experience:

Divers are required to have **PADI Advanced Open Water certification***, or equivalent, with a **minimum of 50 logged dives**. We also recommend having experience diving in currents as many of the locations included on this itinerary are exposed, and currents can often be strong.

Guests who do not fulfil the minimum certification and experience requirements, or who our crew feel have insufficient skills for certain conditions may be denied participation in some or all dives.

It is a mandatory requirement for all divers to have insurance which covers scuba diving activities, including emergency evacuation and recompression chamber costs.

Itinerary Details

Participation in this liveboard itinerary is subject to acceptance of our Terms & Conditions as outlined here: www.masterliveboards.com/terms-conditions.

Marine Park & Port Fees: 230 USD per person (payable onboard only).

Marine park fees are subject to change without notice. The applicable amount at the time of departure will be added to your onboard extras to be paid prior to disembarkation.

The fees for this itinerary cover the cost of Raja Ampat entry permits* and other local charges and taxes for the areas visited during the liveboard itinerary.

*If you already have a Raja Ampat entry card the cost may be deducted from the amount payable on board, if the period of validity covers the entire duration of the time spent in Raja Ampat. You will need to send us a copy of the card no less than 4 days before the start of your liveboard and also bring it with you for additional verification on board.

Number of scheduled dives: Up to 34

This itinerary involves some long-distance travel and, whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather and sea conditions can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specific area or dive site in good time.

Water Temperature and Exposure Suits

The warm tropical waters of Raja Ampat are pleasant throughout the year with little variation in temperatures which average around 27° to 29°C (80° to 84°F). In The Banda Sea water temperatures across the area range from 26°C (78°F) to 30°C (86°F).

For the majority of divers, a 3mm wetsuit will suffice while others find they are comfortable diving with just swimwear and a hooded vest or rashguard. However, those who are prone to feeling cold after prolonged or multiple dives may prefer a 5mm wetsuit, or to use additional layers.

Included land visits

Due to the distances covered on this itinerary, land visit(s) will generally only be offered when the vessel is in the Banda Islands. Here you will have the opportunity to visit the nutmeg plantations as well as see the influence of colonialism from the days of the Dutch settlers and traders.

The following is an example of the day-to-day itinerary.

Safety and dive briefings are conducted in English. If you or any of your group do not speak or fully understand English, please contact us.

Day 1: Embarkation is followed by introductions and boat and safety briefings after which you can settle into your cabin and assemble your equipment with help from the friendly crew and relax before dinner is served.

Day 2: Breakfast followed by a check dive, and up to 3 subsequent dives, as outlined below.

Days 3-11: Your Cruise Manager will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a night dive. A typical diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 3
- Snack
- Briefing for Sunset or Night dive
- Dinner

Day 12: For your last full day on board, we usually schedule 2 morning dives* before Indo Master cruises back to port, where she will remain at anchor overnight.

Day 13: Following breakfast on board, disembarkation and transfer to the airport is scheduled between 8:00 and 10:00.

*We kindly request that guests check their flight departure times to ensure that they leave a minimum of 18 hours and ideally 24 hours between their final dive and their flight home.

Following is a sample of dive sites which we may visit during your time aboard Indo Master. While we wish to show you the very best diving possible, a number of factors determine the exact route the yacht takes and which dive sites we are able to visit. ***Weather, tides, currents***

and sea conditions all play a part in the Cruise Manager's decision of which route the Indo Master takes and which sites are chosen to dive.

The safety of our guests is paramount and we always do our best to offer diving at alternate locations, should we be unable to visit any of the sites listed below. Dive sites we may visit include, but are not limited to:

Dampier Strait

Located in the remote far east of the Indonesian archipelago, the Strait is a large passage of water between the islands of Gam & Waigeo in the north and Batanta in the south. This area offers some of the best diving in Raja Ampat, with its dense hard coral reefs and large fish schools that characterise the area. Your dive team will check currents and choose sites based on the optimum conditions each day.

Tapokreng

On the southwestern shore of Waigeo Island, Tapokeng is considered to be the best muck diving location in the area. A sandy slope covered with patches of algae provides a wonderful playground for a wide variety of critters and for divers to delight in. Mantis shrimps, snake eels, peacock razorfish, rhinopias, sea moths and much, much more are all here just waiting to be discovered.

Manta Sandy

The two large bommies situated in the middle of a sandy bottom at just 18 metres are a world-renowned cleaning station which attracts many reef manta rays of a variety of shades and sizes. Divers can rest on the bottom and watch the action taking place around them. Even if the mantas are not performing their show, there is still a plethora of marine life to watch including Bumphead parrotfish and black-tip reef sharks. The reef itself has many smaller creatures such as dragonets and various kinds of pipefish.

Cape Kri

One of the most well-known sites in the Dampier Strait and a world record setter, with 374 species of fish seen during one dive. The steep slope swept by nutrient-rich currents attracts an amazing variety of fish, such as Napoleon wrasse, bumphead parrotfish, and pinnate batfish. In the blue, myriad bignose unicornfish and Bluestreak fusiliers are closely watched by giant trevallies and dogtooth tuna, whilst black-tip reef sharks, pickhandle barracuda, and pipefish are all regular residents as well.

Blue Magic

A must-dive in Raja Ampat, this long finger-shaped seamount starts at 8 metres and drops down to 30 metres. Everywhere you look, it teems with marine life, colour and movement. The top is covered with hard and soft corals, where schools of jacks and barracuda hang out. Oceanic & reef manta rays can be seen hovering above the cleaning stations, while grey reef sharks cruise in the blue. While waiting for some action, interesting camouflaged fish can be found such as the wobbegong sharks, and, for the keen-eyed, pontohi pygmy seahorses.

Sardine Reef

This underwater hill is swarming with fusiliers, snappers and sweetlips, schools of bumphead parrotfish, banner fish, barracuda and trevally that feast on the nutrients in the water. Rock-mover wrasse, dragonets and jaw fish are amongst the smaller fish species seen here, whilst white-tip and black-tip reef sharks cruise around looking for prey. This is a perfect location to watch the food chain in action.

Mike's Point

Approaching the tiny limestone island known as Mike's Point, eagles can be seen resting in the treetops. Underwater, the site offers varied topography with one side full of overhangs and crevices whilst the other has "steps" dropping down to the deep with a field of whip corals adorning the slope. With the right current, this site is outstanding, and the island can be circumnavigated in one dive seeing sweetlips, batfish, jacks, Spanish mackerel, grey reef sharks, and Wobbegong sharks.

Yangeffo & Penemu Islands

Located west of Gam, these mushroom-shaped islands are surrounded by turquoise waters filled with corals and provide a range of dive sites for us to choose from including:

Melissa's Garden

This site is home to some of the best hard coral gardens in Raja Ampat. They come in a great variety of sizes and colours. In its shallow waters, vast fields of blue-tipped staghorn corals are inhabited by myriads of damselfish, whilst blacktip reef sharks patrol the area. On the slopes, trevallies and Napoleon wrasse cohabit with schools of fusiliers, whilst on the sandy bottom you can almost always spot a mushroom coral pipefish.

Mayhem

This dive spot is notorious for its strong currents, making for an exhilarating dive. The seamount, reaching up to 12 metres below the water, boasts big bommies that are home to glassfish and wobbegong sharks. The top of the reef is teeming with large shoals of fusiliers and surgeonfish that cluster together, whilst bluefin trevallies patrol the area. Divers will also be able to spot whitetip reef sharks, who prefer to live in the white sandy areas around the seamount.

Citrus Ridge

A spectacular reef named after the orange, pink, yellow, and green soft corals that carpet the whole area. The up-current side offers sensational encounters such as roaming grey and blacktip reef sharks, schooling jacks and a vortex of blackfin barracuda. On the lee side, jawfish bob out of their ground holes, wobbegong sharks rest lazily beneath table corals, twinspot gobies graze on the sandy bottom, while crocodile fish calmly await their prey.

Misool Islands

There are numerous small islands surrounding one of the four largest islands in Raja Ampat, Misool, including Daram, Farondi, Boo, Wayilbatan, Kalig and Warakaraket to name just a few.

Each offers some of the most dramatic underwater scenery of the region, from steep walls with huge gorgonian fans to gentler slopes with hard and soft corals.

Andiamo

A diverse, exposed, two-island reef with walls, overhangs, pinnacles, ridges and a shallow plateau. With a high variety of marine life, it is no wonder this site is one of the most famous dive sites in Misool. Thick schools of fusiliers cruise over hard and soft corals, where we can find Wobbegong and epaulette sharks hiding. Pickhandle barracuda and blackfin batfish form large schools along the reef. Look for reef octopus hiding in the wall's crevices. The wall is adorned with giant gorgonian sea fans.

Boo Windows

Comprised of two rocks that stick up from the eastern edge of the island of Boo, this dive site is a coral garden paradise. Prone to strong currents, diving here can be very thrilling as it attracts trevally, Spanish mackerel and dog tooth tuna amongst others. Near the surface the tides and water have eroded various holes in the rocks, creating swim-throughs and shallow rocky formations, blanketed by orange soft corals that make for great photography opportunities. Pickhandle barracuda, snapper, grouper, Napoleon wrasse, turtles, batfish and rabbitfish are often seen in the waters surrounding the islands.

Gorgonian Passage

Also known as Neptune's Fans Sea, this passage is situated in the channel that runs between the Wayilbatan and Wayil Islands. It features huge sea fans along the walls providing homes to a variety of pygmy seahorses, including Bargibanti and Denise's. Other attractions are countless types of sweetlips and various smaller marine creatures, such as peacock mantis shrimp and juvenile convict fish on the shallow sandy bottom.

Karang Bayangan aka Magic Mountain

Arguably one of the best dive sites in Indonesia, Magic Mountain is a dome-shaped seamount with a finger-shaped rocky outcrop densely covered with gorgonian fans and soft corals. You can witness enormous schools of fusiliers, surgeonfish and batfish circled by dogtooth tunas, giant trevallies, grey reef sharks and whitetip reef sharks. On top of these incredible encounters, a cleaning station for oceanic and reef mantas can potentially make this one of your best dives ever. However, due to its exposed location, diving here is very much dependent on sea conditions.

Nudi Rock

A nudibranch-shaped island and an iconic dive site, Nudi Rock is part of a 0.8 mile ridge with walls, pinnacles and sandy plateaus. Marine species vary from macro to large pelagics which can all be seen at this striking site. Blacktips, whitetips, grey reef sharks, and schooling blackfin barracuda can be spotted, whilst hiding amongst the corals are crocodile fish, nudibranchs, porcelain crabs, and the elusive soft coral pipefishes.

Koon Island

Lying as it does between the Ceram and Banda Seas, the area surrounding Koon Island is said to be the largest coral fish breeding location in eastern Indonesia and, as a WWF conservation area, is a designated 'no take' zone. Its position between shallow and deep seas attracts a variety of pelagics such as pompanos, Spanish mackerel, dogtooth tuna, and rainbow runners. The reef surrounding the island boasts a great diversity of topographies with white sandy bottoms, walls, steep slopes and a long plateau. We will have a full day of diving in this area, with three dives in this huge site.

Due to the island's location, currents are to be expected and can vary from moderate in some areas and strong in others. The vibrant and lively walls are covered in all kinds of coral as well as sponges, gorgonians and sea squirts. Nooks and crevices provide refuge for a plethora of critters ranging from robust ghost pipefish to spotted and giant morays as well as orangutan crabs which can usually be found sitting amongst the bubble corals.

The shallowest parts of the reef are only 5 metres deep making them ideal for a safety stop amongst fields of spotted garden eels or observing the myriad of colourful small fish dancing around the corals.

The Spice (Banda) Islands

The Banda Islands comprise a group of small volcanic islands which include Banda Besar, Banda Neira, Gunung Api, Hatta, Pisang, Batu Kapal, Ai, Run and Nailaka. These islands boast fantastic diving, with up to 40 metres of visibility and some magnificent landscapes, both above and below the surface.

On land, from the top of Fort Belgica, built by the Dutch in 1611 and located in the historical town of Banda Neira, enjoy the view of Gunung Api, a 640-metre-high active volcano. Clove, nutmeg, mace and cinnamon are still the main spices that are grown on the islands. There are numerous dive sites that we may visit, including:

Pohon Miring

Stunningly covered with colourful soft corals and gorgonian fans, a swim-through will take you through a sheer wall covered in Leather corals. Numerous big Napoleon wrasses inhabit the reef and dogtooth tuna patrol the blue waters.

Batu Kapal

Located not far off the northern tip of Pisang Island, this tiny islet's name translates as Ship Rock, so called for its appearance which, above the water's surface, resembles a boat.

Batu Kapal is considered one of the top dive sites in the Banda Islands, offering exhilarating diving with strong currents and visibility that can range from 30 metres to 40+.

Starting at a depth of 8 metres, a series of pinnacles with steep walls form valleys that are 45-50+ metres deep. The walls are decorated with vibrant yellow soft corals; curtains of red tooth triggerfish, pyramid butterflyfish, fusiliers and surgeonfish merge into a multicolour fish soup. On the rocky and sandy bottom, you can spot large groups of long-nose emperor fish hunting alongside bluefin trevallies and opportunistic Napoleon wrasses. Look in the blue for grey reef sharks, while blackfin barracudas hover above the reef.

Lava Flow

In 1988, the volcano on Neira Island erupted and the lava flow destroyed the jungle and reefs in its wake. While only a few trees have grown on the basaltic rock, underwater it's a totally different story! From 3 metres to almost 40 metres, an extensive hard coral garden completely blankets the solidified lava flow and features some of the largest colonies of staghorn and table corals in the country. Adding colour to the vista, masses of anthias and damselfish dart amongst the corals; cuttlefish are also a common sighting and, if you're lucky, they may even put on a special display for you.

Banda Jetty

Famous for the mandarin fish that can be observed at sunset, which you can see just by looking from the jetty. In many places, these fishes are elusive, small and shy but, here, it's the opposite. Once they have finished their mating business, a wide array of critters awaits to be discovered on the black sand, including colourful nudibranchs, octopus, cockatoo waspfish and frogfish.

Ai Island

West of Banda Neira and Gungung Api, **Pulau Ai** is an isolated, low-lying island surrounded by deep water and featuring steep limestone walls. Currents can be strong around the island but these attract large pelagic species; Large numbers of barracuda, trevally and tuna all school here.

On the south side of Ai Island **Batu Udang**, also known as Shrimp Rock, starts as a gently sloping reef to 13 metres then becomes a very steep slope down to a depth of around 55 metres. Red-toothed and black triggerfish swarm across the entire reef while Hawksbill Turtles can be found resting on the ledges or feeding on sponges. Longfin Batfish, Black and White Snapper and Napoleon Wrasse are just some of the larger fish that reside here.

The deeper sections feature brown, yellow and green soft corals and large lobe corals and are where you will find white-tip reef sharks, eagle rays and Blue-tail unicornfish.

Along the north-western shore is **Batu Payung** which translates as Umbrella Rock. A steep wall featuring lots of cracks and overhangs drops down to around 60 metres; The shallow parts of the reef are covered in barrel and vase sponges, gorgonians and a variety of corals which are teeming with a vast array of colourful fish.

Run Island

Due west of Banda Besar, **Pulau Run** offers exceptional dives on unspoilt reefs teeming with fish life and deep walls decorated with huge Gorgonian sea fans. Measuring just 3 km in length, and less than 1 km wide, Run Island is one of the smallest of the Banda Islands and has an interesting history including being the first British overseas colony.

Like Pulau Ai, currents around the island can be strong; A gently sloping reef transitions into a dramatic wall which features several overhangs. Covered in a variety of beautiful corals and awash with colourful coral fish, schools of snapper, fusiliers, sweetlips, blue-spotted stingrays, and eagle rays are just a few examples of the marine life that can be seen when diving here.

Ambon Island

Situated in the heart of the Moluccas, 7 miles off the southwestern coast of Ceram Island, the famous dive sites of Ambon offer world-class muck diving, diverse marine ecosystems and dramatic seascapes.

Hukurila

Located in the Hukurila Coast region on the eastern side of Ambon Island, this underwater cave is a treasure trove of aquatic delights. Featuring a chimney, several canyons and caverns and other interesting geographical formations, marine life includes colourful corals, sponges, giant gorgonians and plenty of critters waiting to be discovered in their hidey-holes.

Pintu Kota

This area boasts incredible underwater architecture, with a massive archway decorated with colourful soft corals hanging from its walls to ceilings. Many white and red polyp sea fans are dotted along the bottom, whilst shoals of fusiliers, bannerfish, and surgeonfish feed along the steep walls covered with huge barrel sponges.

Laha

The diving at Laha is concentrated around a small, sheltered bay along the northwestern shore of Laha Harbour, close to Ambon Airport. The area features a gentle sandy slope with scatterings of coral and rubble which levels off slightly at around 12 metres then continues to slope into the depths of Ambon Bay.

Around the jetty, which is used by local fishermen, discarded glass bottles provide homes for fangblennies and catfish; fingered dragonets, cockatoo waspfish, tiny orange painted frogfish, and several species of lionfish and scorpionfish are just a few examples of the types of fish that can be found lurking on the sand and rubble substrate. There are also a variety of moray eels in this small area including fimbriated, undulated, snowflake, white-eyed and starry.

As the sun starts to set, beautifully colourful mandarinfish emerge from their daytime hiding places to perform their mating dance putting on a show that is always a delight to witness.

Twilight Zone

Located within the same bay, this is another of Ambon's renowned muck diving spots in the harbour and is a great place to explore either during the day, or as a night dive.

Amongst the detritus, countless species of nudibranchs, shrimps, crabs, and dwelling fish are waiting to be discovered. During your treasure hunt, you may come across flamboyant cuttlefish, ornate ghost pipefish, donald duck shrimps, tiger shrimps, starry octopus, and even rhinopias.

Rhino City

So named for the number and variety of Rhinopias that can be found here, Rhino City lies southwest of Twilight Zone and is an extension of the same sandy slope, following the shoreline with very similar topography. Across the slope, carpet, bulb-tip and long tentacle anemones play host to Clarke's anemonefish as well as a variety of commensal shrimps, porcelain crabs and hairy crabs. Ribbon eels and jawfish can be spotted in their sandy burrows, while short-snout and ornate ghost pipefish hide amidst the seagrass.

SS Duke of Sparta

The SS Duke of Sparta was a huge cargo ship, built in West Hartlepool, England for the Trent Maritime Company in 1940. Measuring 135 metres in length and 17 metres wide, she was sold to the Italian Grimaldi Brothers in 1951 and was then renamed SS Aquilo. In May 1958, while anchored near Ambon City, she was bombed by an unmarked Douglas B-26 Invader aircraft during Operation Haik - a clandestine CIA operation conducted as part of the US initiative to quash perceived communist threats in Indonesia. The Aquilo eventually sank one month later, coming to rest almost completely intact on the seabed with her stern approximately 13 metres below the surface and her bow at 35-40 metres.

She remains in great condition with her deck and masts covered with colourful soft corals and sponges and her cargo holds offer some easy penetration possibilities. Across and around the whole wreck there is plenty of fish life, large and small, as well as some more elusive critters waiting to be discovered.

Should you have any questions concerning the diving or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team at dive@masterliveboards.com who will be pleased to assist and advise you.