

# Mergui Archipelago - Myanmar

## Overview

Encompassing over 800 islands across 12,000 km<sup>2</sup> of crystalline waters, Myanmar's Mergui Archipelago and Burma Banks offer some truly breathtaking diving away from the masses. Gorgeous underwater landscapes consisting of isolated pinnacles, caves and tunnels, soft and hard corals, vibrant marine life and exclusive, rarely visited dive sites are just part of the appeal of time spent cruising this region of the Andaman Sea.

## 7 and 10 Nights Itineraries

### Diving Information

Some of the diving around the Mergui Archipelago can be challenging for divers who have not dived in similar conditions. Some sites are deeper than entry-level certification limits and there can be strong currents and reduced visibility due to an influx of nutrients at some locations making them unsuitable for entry-level divers or those who have not dived in similar conditions.

#### **Mandatory minimum dive certification and experience:**

All divers must have **PADI Advanced Open Water (mandatory) and Nitrox\* certification**, or equivalent with a **minimum of 30 logged dives and ideally, experience diving in currents**.

*\*Guests who are not Nitrox certified can register to do the course via the PADI e-learning website, [here](#), and complete their certification while on board (Additional charges apply).*

Guests who do not fulfil the minimum requirements, or who the crew feel lack the skills or experience to dive safely in certain conditions may be denied participation in some or all dives.

All divers must have insurance which covers scuba diving activities, including emergency evacuation and recompression chamber costs.

### Embarkation, Disembarkation and Transfers

- **Embarkation Point:** B.C.Badin Resort, Ranong at 11:00 a.m.
- **Disembarkation Point:** B.C.Badin Resort, Ranong at 09:00

Ranong is approximately 5 hours by minivan from Phuket. We provide a free shared transfer on embarkation day with two specific, early morning pick-up times and locations in Phuket to arrive in Ranong by 11:00. Please contact our reservations team for details and bookings.

There are coffee shops and 7/11 convenience stores at both pick-up locations.

- 05:00 Pick-up - [PTT Petrol Station](#), Bypass Road, north of Tesco Lotus, Kathu  
**Address** 108/191 Chalermprakiat Ratchakan Thi 9 Road, Ratsada, Mueang Phuket District, Phuket 83000
- 05:30 Pick-up - [PPT Petrol Station](#), Highway 402, north of Phuket Airport  
**Address** 106 Mai Khao, Thalang District, Phuket 83110

**PLEASE NOTE:** Guests are responsible for arranging their own transport to the shared transfer pick-up point and must *arrive before the specified transfer departure time*.

We also provide a free shared transfer from Ranong back to Phuket upon disembarkation, after immigration formalities have been completed.

Transfers between hotels in Ranong and Thailand Master on embarkation and disembarkation days are also included in the liveaboard price.

Transfers from and to hotels and resorts outside of the specified pick-up locations or times can be arranged for an additional charge.

#### **Pre-embarkation arrangements:**

- We take all guests to the Thai Immigration Office in Ranong Town to obtain their exit stamps, then proceed to B.C. Badin Resort where they will board Thailand Master.
- Guests who are already in Ranong will be picked up from their hotel and taken to the immigration office with the guests who have transferred from Phuket.
- When all guests have arrived at the immigration office, our agent will take the whole group inside to complete the necessary paperwork together.
- Myanmar immigration clearance is done on board when the vessel reaches Kawthaung.

#### **Post Disembarkation arrangements:**

- After disembarkation, guests will be taken to the Immigration office in Ranong Town for Thailand re-entry registration and stamps.
- Due to the unknown length of time at Myanmar and Thai Immigration, guests flying out from Ranong Airport must ensure their flight departure is after 12 noon
- Guests departing from Phuket Airport on the day of disembarkation must book a flight that departs after 18:00 as we can not guarantee they will be at the airport in time to check in for earlier departures.

## Itinerary Details

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

### Marine Park & Port Fees (Mergui Archipelago entrance fees)

These fees and the Myanmar visa cost are payable on board only.

- 7 nights: 280 USD per person
- 10 nights: 350 USD per person
  
- Myanmar Visa cost: 50 USD per person

This itinerary involves some long-distance travel and, while we endeavour to ensure the number of scheduled dives is fulfilled, weather and sea conditions can affect the boat's ability to reach a specific dive site in good time and may impact the number of dives possible.

### Number of scheduled dives:

- 7 nights: Up to 22
- 10 nights: Up to 34

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

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

**Day 1:** Visit immigration in Ranong for Thailand exit formalities followed by embarkation, lunch, and orientation briefings. We then make the short crossing to Kawthung in Myanmar for immigration entry formalities before cruising into the archipelago.

*There is no diving on embarkation day.*

### Day 2-6 (7 night) / Day 2-9 (10 night):

Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and, where possible, a sunset or night dive. A typical diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing and Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing and Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing and Dive 3
- Snack
- Briefing for Dive 4
- Dinner

**Day 7 / Day 10:** We usually schedule 2 morning dives before cruising to Horseshoe Island for an afternoon beach visit and snacks before the vessel returns to Kawthung.

**Disembarkation Day:** Breakfast and Myanmar immigration clearance onboard followed by disembarkation between 08:30 and 09:00 a.m. and a visit to the Thai Immigration Office in Ranong to obtain your re-entry stamp before the transfer to Phuket Airport or your hotel.

While we wish to show you the very best diving possible, the safety of all on board remains paramount throughout each itinerary. The following is an overview of dive sites we may visit during the Mergui Archipelago liveboard itinerary.

**Disclaimer:** This information below is only a general indication of the areas that we usually visit and some of the possible dive sites; *the inclusion of specifically named areas or dive sites is not guaranteed*. Various factors determine which locations are selected to dive on each trip, including sea and weather conditions and itinerary duration. If we are unable to visit a specific area for any reason, we will offer diving at alternative locations.

### Rocky Island a.k.a. High Rock

This is a tiny islet with a solitary tree growing on the top, located roughly 75 kilometres northwest of Kawthuang. Beneath the surface, you will find a steep rocky reef with a variety of corals and a huge, colourful anemone garden where large schools of yellow five-lined snappers hang out. A garden of small granite boulders at depth provides a home for octopus, cuttlefish and numerous moray eels. The cracks provide refuge for plenty of critters for macro lovers to discover including nudibranchs, pipefish, razorfish and seahorses while hunting wahoo, tuna, and barracuda can be spotted passing in the blue. Visibility and currents can sometimes be challenging but it is a rewarding site.

### North Twin & South Twin

Strong currents around these granite islands bring with them groups of schooling barracuda, hunting tuna and mating cuttlefish. With often clear visibility the atmosphere on the reef at North Twin is breathtaking. Healthy Gorgonian sea fans can be admired at depth, while soft corals adorn the reef and bring plenty of vibrancy and colour.

North Twin features a sloping reef strewn with huge boulders covered with soft corals and encrusting sponges. Sweetlips, barracuda, a variety of angel fish and many smaller creatures including devil scorpion fish, pipe fish, shrimps and flabellina nudibranchs can be found all over the reef. Mantas may also be seen here.

On South Twin, you will find large boulders, steep-walled gorges, wide valleys, caverns and swim-throughs carved out of the granite foundations of the island. You can expect to see an abundance of moray eels, harlequin sweetlips, and cuttlefish. Eagle and devil rays may fly by while Kuhl's stingrays and spotted garden eels can be seen on the sandy bottom.

### Black Rock

Black Rock stands alone in the Andaman Sea acting as a natural magnet for oceanic mantas and other large pelagics such as whale sharks and eagle rays. The underwater terrain consists of sloping reefs around most of the island with a vertical wall down to roughly 27 metres on the south side where it becomes a more gradual slope. Deeper sections are decorated with orange gorgonian fans, along with fields of Corallimorpharia and, at the eastern tip, you will find vast numbers of magnificent anemones. Off the southwest corner a detached rock formation, covered with small, vibrant soft corals rises from very deep water to about 24 metres where we often see schooling snappers and rainbow runners. A wide range of invertebrate life can be found at Black Rock, including smashing and spearing mantis shrimp, spiny lobsters, hermit crabs, sea stars, cowrie shells, harlequin shrimp, octopus and cuttlefish.

## Three Islets

The three sites across these tiny islands (**Shark Cave**, **Submarine** and **Square Rock**) are rich with diverse marine life and a mix of caves, canyons, vertical walls, and sloping reefs. Many areas are populated with fields of anemones providing homes to five different species of anemonefish. Elsewhere, large tubastrea coral trees sprout from the rocky terrain, accompanied by crinoids, gorgonian fans, blue dragons, and pastel green rope sponge. Tiger tail seahorses are often encountered on the deep edges of the slope, as are a variety of moray eels with several species regularly sharing the same hole.

Cuttlefish may be found at nearly any depth, sometimes courting and mating. Ornate ghost pipefish, cowrie shells, octopus, reef squid, jawfish, porcelain crabs, longnose pipefish, and mantis shrimps are often seen at this site. Scorpionfish are very abundant, so be careful where you place your hands!

**Shark Cave** easily lends itself to several dives, where you can enjoy the diversity of the reef and marvel at the chasm that splits the island. Nurse and white-tip reef sharks can sometimes be found lurking inside the deeper part of the cavern along with marble rays, ghost pipefish and plenty of other fascinating creatures, including blue ribbon eels.

## Sea Fan Forest

As the name suggests, this submerged pinnacle, starting at 5 metres depth, is famous for its abundance of gorgonian sea-fans. The biggest gorgonians are in deeper waters around 20m and below. They are very healthy and support a wide variety of marine life including feather stars, cowries, hawkfish and shrimps. Schooling fish include snapper, trevally, rainbow runners and fusiliers. Moray eels and scorpion fish are also numerous. We are also likely to encounter giant marbled groupers and eagle rays here.

## Western Rocky

A short cruise south of Sea Fan Forest, Western Rocky consists of a main islet and several detached pinnacles. Among the most striking features is a huge underwater archway where schooling snappers often hang out. The soft limestone island is riddled with holes and crevices, providing hiding places for hinge-beak shrimp, thorny oysters, cowrie snails, nudibranchs, spiny lobsters and moray eels.

Large Gorgonian fans and lush soft corals populate many of the deeper areas, while shallow portions of the south side wall are covered with orange cup corals and colourful encrusting sponges. Fish life can include almost anything from ornate ghost pipefish, seahorses and frogfish to schooling batfish and barracudas. Several kilometres south of the main islet, **Western Rocky Pinnacle** is shaped like a cheese wedge covered with hard and soft corals, lots of trevally and tuna and, if you are lucky, guitar sharks resting in the sand.

## Burma Banks

Probably the best-known Myanmar scuba diving area, the Burma Banks are a remote group of seamounts rising from depths of 300+ metres to 15 metres below the surface. Approximately 125 kilometres west of Kawthaung, the banks are part of a Myanmar economic zone, although they are situated within International waters.

Diving around Burma Banks is *highly dependent on weather and sea conditions* and we will schedule a maximum of 3 dives each day that the boat is there, all of which will be during daylight hours. For safety reasons, there will be **no night diving** at Burma Banks.

There are 6 banks in total, namely Big, Silvertip, Rainbow, Roe, Coral and Heckford which, due to their remote and exposed location, are susceptible to varying and often unpredictable currents making them challenging to dive, but well worth it for the delights they offer.

Known for their dramatic topography, rich biodiversity and pelagic encounters, the vibrant reefs feature an abundance of colourful hard and soft corals and sponges, creating a stunning backdrop for any dive. Visibility is typically excellent, often reaching over 30 metres (100 feet), making it ideal for marine life observations and stunning underwater photographic opportunities.

### Little Torres Island (10 night itineraries only)

This is a good dive site for appreciating a kaleidoscope of colours created by the abundance of multifarious corals such as table corals, mosaic corals and red whip corals, to name just a few. Surrounded by healthy reef life and huge submerged boulders, there is a good chance of seeing black-banded sea snakes here as well as the occasional sting ray and the rare leopard sharks on the sea bed or even reef sharks, whale sharks and mantas.

### Tower Rock (10 night itineraries only)

Due to its remote location, there are often strong currents around this isolated rocky island and surface conditions can be squally, making this a dive best-suited for experienced divers.

As its name suggests, this magical site features towering walls rising above the water's surface that descend over 60 metres to the depths below. Underwater you will find a lunar-like seascape created by boulders that were once part of the upper reaches of Tower Rock. The coral-covered walls are laced with sea whips and sea fans, oysters and clams. White banded cleaner shrimp and ornate spiny lobster hide amongst the crags, whilst blue-faced angelfish and schools of yellow-striped fusiliers shimmy along the walls. Larger visitors include manta and mobula rays, as well as blacktip and whitetip reef sharks. Moray eels, bearded scorpionfish and schools of snapper fusilier are other usual suspects.

### Moken Village Island Visit

Any holiday aboard Thailand Master is an amazing adventure in itself, with spectacular scuba diving, breathtaking sunsets, newly formed friendships and memories to treasure.

On our Myanmar itineraries, we offer our guests the opportunity of an island visit to meet the remarkable Moken community who are indigenous to the region. Historically existing as nomadic seafarers traversing the waters of the North Andaman Sea in their houseboats, small groups subsequently settled on islands of the Mergui Archipelago and Surin National Park. Today, they maintain their traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle living in harmony with their surroundings, making them a true testament to understanding and respecting nature and its precious resources.

Should you have any concerns regarding the dive sites and diving conditions, or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team [dive@masterliveaboards.com](mailto:dive@masterliveaboards.com) who will be pleased to assist and advise you.