ANNE BONNY

Banda Sea, Ambon to Raja Ampat

Ambon to Sorong | The Banda Islands, Misool and Raja Ampat

Once sought by Columbus and Marco Polo, the Banda Islands were the original Spice Islands, and today the seas around them are coveted for spectacular diving on some of the world's richest reefs.

The Banda Islands are full of fish in vast numbers, with huge gorgonian fans, truly monumental sponges and one of the best places in the world to see mandarin fish.

Close to the 6,000-metre-deep Banda trench, the chances of big pelagics are quite high, with schooling trevallies, barracudas, tuna, turtles, hammerhead and grey reef sharks.

Pulau Koon has walls covered in soft corals and an amazing amount of schooling fish, from barracudas to giant groupers.

Misool finishes the trip with steep rocks, vertical walls, a profusion of colourful soft corals and sea fans draped brilliantly over the reefs.

LENGTH	DEPARTURE PORT	ARRIVAL PORT	EXPERIENCE
11 nights	Ambon	Sorong	Open Water, 10 dives







Your itinerary

DAY 1

Embarkation in Ambon

1 dive

The crew pick you up at Ambon airport and welcome you on board.
After refreshments, a short tour of the ship and briefings on safety, diving and life on board, lunch is served and there is time to set up your dive gear and cameras.
A check dive follows later in the afternoon.

DAY 2

Nusa Laut and Molana

3 dives

Amet Reef, only a few hours from Ambon, is a great example of grassroots conservation, and its corals are outstanding.
Whitetip and grey reef sharks patrol the depths and playful turtles can be spotted, and for the incredibly lucky, hammerhead sharks and dugongs have been seen here.
After lunch comes Molana Wall, where ribbon eels, small pipefish and moray eels live on the sandy slopes and turtles feed in the coral garden above.

DAY 3

Pulau Ai and Pulau Run

3 dives

Umbrella Rock on Pulau Ai is named for the many overhangs along its walls, and you drift past thousands of tiny reef fish darting in and out of the cracks.
Little Manhattan, next to the island of Run, which the English traded for Manhattan in 1667, has white sandy slopes, large coral heads, a resident school of bumphead parrotfish and passing eagle rays.
The third dive is an exploratory dive off Pulau Run, in a region full of unexplored sites.



DAY 4

Banda Neira tour and Banda Islands

3 dives

The morning is spent ashore in Banda Neira, walking through the town with its Dutch colonial architecture and up to Fort Belgica, with views over the bay.
Batu Kapal, or boat rock, is a submerged pinnacle with fish in vast numbers, huge gorgonian fans and truly monumental sponges.
Pohon Miring has a deep swim-through, moray eels and bumphead parrotfish, and the sunset dive at Banda's jetty is one of the best places in the world to see mandarin fish.

DAY 5

Banda Islands

3 dives

Karang Hatta is the closest dive area to the 6,000 metre deep Banda trench, so the chances of big pelagics are high, with schooling trevallies, barracudas, tuna, turtles, hammerhead and grey reef sharks.
On Pulau Hatta's west shore a 5 metre hole in the reef opens to the sea, under a bridge covered in soft corals, with gorgonian fans that are home to pygmy seahorses.
The boat sails overnight to Pulau Koon.

DAY 6

Pulau Koon, Ceram

3 dives

Pulau Koon, a small island off the southeast of Ceram, halfway between Raja Ampat and the Banda Islands, has walls covered in soft corals and sandy slopes with hard coral bommies.
Its best feature is the amount of schooling fish and pelagics: barracudas, bigeye trevallies, red snappers, pompanos, batfish and giant groupers.
After three dives the boat sets sail for Misool.

DAY 7

Wayilbatan, Misool

4 dives, including a night dive

Sites include Dunia Kecil, Barracuda Rock, Four Kings and Wedding Cake, where schools of batfish, trevallies, barracuda and pygmy seahorses congregate.
Four Kings is four underwater pinnacles covered in soft coral and tunicates in psychedelic colours, so look out for turtles.
In the afternoon there is kayaking and paddle boarding among the hidden lagoons.

DAY 8

Warokaraket and Boo Island

4 dives, including a night dive

Shadow Reef, also known as Magic Mountain, is one of the top-rated sites in Raja Ampat: bannerfish and yellow snappers cavort on a narrow ridge, stalked by giant trevallies, while oceanic manta rays come to a cleaning station at the end.
Jamur Boo is known for its windows, openings that pierce the rock from the surface down to five metres, with reef sharks, schooling batfish, nudibranchs and green turtles.
Yellit Kecil is known for its nembrotha nudibranchs, and the day ends with a night dive.

DAY 9

Yilliet

3 dives

Sites include Whale Rock, Nudi Rock and Tank Rock in the Fiabacet area, where colourful soft corals and beautiful sea fans smother the reefs.
A deep ridge running from Boo in the east to Kalig in the west rises here to form some of the most amazing dive sites of the park, with healthy fish life, pygmy seahorses, nudibranchs, anemones and reef sharks.

DAY 10

Daram

3 dives

Sites include Candy Store, Warna Berwana and Andiamo.
Andiamo is a large reef with a submerged pinnacle covered in sea fans and surrounded by fusiliers and batfish, with blacktip reef sharks and Napoleon wrasse.
Candy Store, named because the first divers to explore it felt like kids in a candy store, is covered in huge sponges, soft corals and sea fans.

DAY 11

Balbulol

3 dives

Sites include No Contest, Love Potion, Number 9 and Pet Rock, with schools of batfish, snapper and bumphead parrotfish, and barracudas and jacks around the pinnacles.
The afternoon is spent in the hidden lagoon, where as night falls you hear the palm cockatoos roosting along the rainforest edges, before the boat sails about 12 hours overnight back to Sorong.

DAY 12

Disembarkation in Sorong

After breakfast and a last exchange of photos and memories, the crew take you to your hotel or the airport.

GOOD TO KNOW

On land and on the way

Small groups

Dive groups are limited to 5 divers per guide, with a dedicated tender.

Activities

Kayaks, stand-up paddle boards and snorkel gear are on board.

Check in

Private transfers collect you from the airport or your hotel and take you to the harbour, where the crew welcome you on board.

Check out

After breakfast on the last day the crew transfer you to your hotel or the airport.







INCLUDED

What your trip covers

INCLUDED IN THE TRIP PRICE

- Private airport and hotel transfers
- Air-conditioned en-suite cabin with hot shower, with daily housekeeping
- Three meals a day plus snacks, cooked on board
- 3 or 4 dives a day, with a night dive on alternating nights when the weather allows
- Groups of at most 5 divers, with a dive guide and a dedicated tender
- Snorkel gear, kayaks and stand-up paddle boards
- Starlink Wi-Fi when available, which varies in remote areas
- First aid kits and emergency oxygen

NOT INCLUDED

- International and domestic flights, airport taxes and visas
- Park and port fees, covering park entry, village contributions, dive permits, harbour clearances, trekking fees and regional taxes
- Dive equipment rental and dive courses
- Nitrox
- Crew tips, which are customary
- Alcohol, with beer and wine, and you may bring your own spirits

BEFORE YOU GO

What to bring

ESSENTIALS

- Dive certification card and logbook
- Completed diver medical questionnaire
- Details of your dive and travel insurance
- Dive computer and surface marker buoy
- Torch for night dives

AND ALSO

- Reef-safe sunscreen
- Swimwear, hat and sunglasses
- Light clothing and sandals
- Personal medication and toiletries
- Passport

WORTH KNOWING

Key notes

Good to know

The sample itinerary is an example, and navigation and dive sites may vary slightly with the weather and visibility