

# SAMPLE DIVING CRUISE ITINERARY "RAJA AMPAT"

## 11 Day/10 Night

### Day 1 Embarkation in Sorong

Raja Ampat means 'Four Kings'. In an archipelago of over 1,500 small islands there are four main islands or 'kings'—Waigeo, Salawati, Batanta, Misool. The majority of Raja Ampat is in Marine Protected Areas. These islands usually experience varying visibility depending on the weather conditions and warm water around 27-30C (81-86F). Upon arrival in sorong airport, embark on Mutiara laut then sail to southern Raja Ampat.

### Day 2-6 Misool, Raja Ampat

Misool is in the south of Raja Ampat and we will dive at the many small islands in the southeast. Southeast Misool is famous for the profusion of colourful soft corals and sea fans beautifully draped all over the reefs. We will stay three and a half days in the Misool area, on Day 5 we will complete 1-2 dives before traveling to the central part of Raja Ampat. There is a possibility to visit Tomolol Cave that has a river-sized waterway running through it. We take a 30-minute tender ride through a pearl farm and into the rugged interior. Once at the cave we float and paddle our way inside to enjoy the amazing rock formations. There is a large opening at the other end and also a 'secret' cave to explore. This tour is dependent on receiving permission from the pearl farm and local village.

The islands in southeast Misool are grouped by areas. Here are the names of the areas and dive sites we may visit (weather permitting):

#### Misool – Boo Area

Boo Windows is the famous dive site in this area. It is best known for the "windows" or rounded openings on the end of the largest rock that completely pierce the reef from the surface down to about five meters/fifteen feet. Although the two rocks appear separate from the surface they are in fact connected underwater by a magnificent reef draped in soft corals and brimming with fish. See our . Boo Ridge is an underwater ridge coming off the eastern point of Boo Island. Both sides are covered in huge gorgonian sea fans. At these dive sites look out for turtles, reef sharks, pygmies, nudis and schooling batfish, fusiliers and snappers. Shadow Reef is a submerged seamount south of Boo. The fish life here is profuse with napoleon wrasses of all sizes, baby white tip reef sharks sleeping under the table corals, schooling barracuda and batfish and for the lucky ones maybe a manta ray circling the cleaning stations.

#### Misool – Yuliet Area

The tiny islands of Yuliet and Romeo both have surrounding plateaux in the shallows that slope down to reefs or small walls. At Yuliet there is a good chance to see the 'Santa Claus pygmy' a red colour variation of the Denise pygmy seahorse. In the shallows are large coral heads completely covered in colourful soft corals. Schools of barracuda and batfish as well as napoleon wrasses are often seen here. Romeo is a great night dive where we will look for the endemic epaulette shark, known as the 'walking' shark.

#### Misool - Fiabecet

Fiabecet area has a selection of dives where the colourful soft corals and beautiful sea fans literally smother the reefs. The soft corals here are truly outstanding. There is a deep underwater ridge connecting the island of Boo in the east to the island of Kalig in the west. In parts this ridge moves up shallower and forms the dive sites of Boo West Corner, Batu Kecil (Taka Tank Rock), Nudi Rock, Whale Rock and Kalig Ridge. Expect healthy fish life, pygmy seahorses galore, nudis, colourful anemones, reef sharks and perhaps a Wobbegong shark.

#### Misool - Wayilbatan Area

Neptune Fan Sea is a small channel between two islands with a shallow wall completely covered in some of the biggest gorgonian sea fans you will ever see. At the start of the dive explore the beautiful coral heads where a wobbegong shark or even a huge grouper can be hiding. Then drift along the wall and enjoy the view of the sea fans, stopping once in a while to find the tiny pygmy seahorse. Four Kings is a stunning dive site made up of four underwater pinnacles. Swim from one rock to the next enjoying the soft corals and fish life. Look out for turtles here. Wedding Cake and Wayili Rock offer chances to see schools of batfish, trevallies, barracuda, pygmy seahorses and even a walking shark at night.

#### Misool – Daram Area

Daram is the most easterly point of the islands we might visit in Misool. The reef at Andiamo is stunning and is large enough for at least two dives. There is a submerged pinnacle where sea fans are surrounded by schools of fusiliers and batfish. A short swim across a sandy bottom brings you to the main reef lush with soft corals. In between the two islets is a gap thick with sea fans and is excellent for wide-angle photography. Look out for black tip reef sharks and napoleon wrasse, if you can see them through all the fish! Candy Store is so named because the first divers to explore this reef felt like kids in a candy store. Huge sponges, beautiful soft corals and sea fans cover this dive site, especially in the valleys where schools of fusiliers, butterfly fish and sometimes barracuda gather.

#### Misool – Pele Area

Pele's Playground has a long plateau that runs west out from the northwest corner of Lenmakana, which is northwest of Pele Island. Towards the deep the ridge has a wall on each side completely covered with soft corals. There is a large crevice in the wall where the corals are concentrated. Up in the shallows the reef is sparse but mobula and manta rays have been spotted here. Kaleidoscope is so called because of the profusion of colours produced by the huge soft corals draping the shallow rocks and coral heads. A ridge extends out west from the island which can full of fish when the current is running. Back at the island finish the dive under the overhangs.

#### Misool - Sagof/Wagmab/Farondi Area

This area offers several different dive sites. At Sagof the little islets of Baby Rock and Two Tree Island create amazing dive sites with abundant fish life. There is a resident school of batfish at Baby Rock and Two Tree Island is often full of thousands bait fish. At Wagmab and Farondi dive into Eddy Cave and surface inside to see the stalactites hanging from the top of the cavern. Outside the wall is full of overhangs and caves where divers are likely to encounter groups of snapper and large groupers resting at the bottom. At Three Sisters, Grouper Net and Wagmab Corner look for wobbegong sharks resting under ledges or on top of cup corals. Sea fans fill the walls and slopes so be on the look out for pygmy sea horses. Between dives there is a chance to go on our Jungle River Tour to see the secret lagoons around Wagmab Island.

#### **Day 7 Manta Sandy/Arborek**

The first two dives of the day we dive at Manta Sandy, well-known for the much bigger visitors as it is one of the most consistent spots for finding congregating mantas. It is easy to spend a whole dive observing these majestic animals as they somersault through the water while being cleaned by several species of wrasse and even butterfly fish. In addition to the cleaning, they come to feed on plankton carried along by the currents so can be seen lining up on the surface. If you're lucky you'll be able to witness the unforgettable sight of what is called a "manta train", where half a dozen or more mantas glide around and follow each other head-to-tail.

The afternoon and night dive are at Arborek Jetty. In the shallows the jetty posts are covered in soft corals and below look for pipefish and cuttlefish. The local children love to jump off the jetty and pose for the cameras, great fun! On the reef see the huge giant clams nestled among pulsing soft corals. At night listen for the toadfish croaking from under the rocks and look for the blue ringed octopus. The reef also provides shelter for many interesting small animals like hermit crabs, flatworms and skeleton shrimp. Between the dives there is an opportunity to visit the village on Arborek Island to see the traditional way of life for these island people. Be ready to be greeted by many children who

are more than willing to pose for photographs. Anyone joining our cruise is more than welcome to bring along some goodies for the children at Airborek. Obviously the children love sweets but we encourage people to bring pencils, pens, notebooks, colouring books all of which don't rot their teeth! The school always needs more materials and the girls love hair clips and bands.

### **Day 8 Hidden bay, Penemu island**

Citrus Ridge is situated between Gam and Yanggelo Islands and is a reef that extends out into a point in the middle of the channel. The white sand provides amazing contrast to the colourful orange and yellow soft corals. The coral heads are teeming with glassfish with batfish and sweetlips grouping around them. There are also two pinnacles off Yanggelo Island (Takat Yanggelo North and Takat Yanggelo South) where we see huge schools of fusiliers, snappers, surgeons, batfish and barracuda. Wobbegong, black tip and white tip sharks cruise the reefs here and look out for the allusive blue ring octopus creeping around the hard corals. Mangrove Ridge is deep inside the mangroves between the two islands. A ridge extends out from Yanggelo and is covered in black corals and sea fans. In the shallows you can explore the mangrove roots for juvenile fish, cardinal fish and archerfish.

Penemu is an island west of Waigeo with a selection of dives sites. Melissa's Garden is the most well known. Here there are very healthy hard coral reefs in the shallows. Hundreds of anthias dance in and out of the corals where you might also see a sea snake. Takat Penemu is a long submerged seamount. The shallow part of the seamount has a beautiful coral garden sloping to the sides where schooling fish hang out in the current. Wobbegong sharks like to sleep inside the large cup corals here.

### **Day 9-10 Dampier Strait**

The strait that flows between Waigeo and Batanta is rapidly becoming known as having some of the most spectacular diving in Raja Ampat as a result of the nutrient-rich ocean currents passing through. Everything that makes for a wonderful dive can be found here. But even beyond the usual delights and the satisfaction of spotting prized macro subjects such as the newly discovered Pontohi pygmy seahorse on the coral heads, there are surprises to be found in every dive.

Ironically, sardines are about the only reef fish not found at the site of Sardine Reef, but you won't even notice as you see swarms of fusiliers, surgeonfish, trevallies, rainbow runners, sweetlips and bannerfish practically block out the sky swarming over a reef decorated with sea fans, soft corals and huge orange elephant ear sponges encrusted with pastel colonies of tunicates. One of the more unique thrills of this site is being able to hear "fish thunder" - the loud booming sound made when a large number of fish move rapidly through open water. Cape Kri, Chicken Reef, Kerupiar Island and Mioskon are all dive sites in Dampier Strait full of these wonders. The fish life in this area is as plentiful as can be expected at sites with a great deal of healthy hard and soft coral. Wobbegong sharks can also be found at any of these dive sites. Blue Magic is a submerged seamount where there is a chance to encounter Giant manta rays.

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An optional tour in the Dampier Strait area is a hike in the jungle to see Birds of Paradise at sawiringgai village. On the last full day of the cruise there will be one or two dives depending on the weather conditions and also on the flight times out of Sorong the next day. After the dives we will travel back to Sorong.

### **Day 11 Disembarkation in Sorong**

ALL THE ITINERARY CAN BE CHANGED DUE TO ANY WEATHER CONDITION AND GUEST INTEREST

FOR RESERVATION:

**PT EXOTIC YACHT CHARTER**

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