

# Eastern Banda Sea

The Banda Sea is a vast expanse of water in eastern Indonesia. We start our cruise exploring the remote islands around Saumlaki, then will journey towards Kaimana following the Banda arc.

## Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary of dive sites we may visit during your liveaboard safari on board the S/Y Indo Siren. We wish to show you the very best diving possible, however, several factors can determine which sites we visit. Our Cruise Director and Diving Director, along with the Captain will take weather, tides, currents and many other factors into consideration to determine which route the yacht takes, and which sites are selected for diving. Whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled; bad weather can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specified dive site in good time. The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best in offering diving at alternate locations should we be unable to visit those sites listed below. This itinerary involves some long distance (overnight) travel.

The diving day on board the S/Y Indo Siren has a typical schedule 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, relaxation, followed by briefing & Dive 4
- Dinner

For your final day aboard, we schedule two morning dives to allow plenty of time for off-gassing before disembarkation and your flight home. Guests are responsible for their own dive profiles and for obtaining suitable dive insurance to cover all diving activities.

Depending on weather conditions and where we are, we will always try to offer a sunset, or night dive. Guests should bring along dive lamps, though of course we have rental lights for those that need them!

Dive sites we visit may include but are not limited to:

## Dai & Dawera

On our way to Saumlaki, these islands have lots to offer from pristine shallow hard corals gardens, deep walls to rocky slopes covered with massive Sponges. The seamounts are swarming with curtains of Pyramid Butterflyfishes and the friendliest Longfin Batfishes we have ever encountered. Spiny Lobsters hide in the numerous cracks and overhangs in Dai, while shoals of Snappers, Unicornfishes and rivers of Fusiliers inhabit the pristine reefs.

## Nil Desperandum & Serua

Upwelling and currents around these islands bring nutrient rich waters and with them an abundance of marine life. We see many larger fish species in these little visited waters.

Hammerhead sharks, tunas, napoleon wrasse and groupers are amongst the most common sightings. Schooling surgeon fish, bannerfish and barracuda give divers a spectacular display.

## Manoek Island

Next we will voyage to this tiny island in the middle of the Banda Sea, which offers a wide variety of dive topography including walls, coral slopes and sandy areas. Famed as the home of a multitude of sea snakes and where you can witness the snakes hunting together. Larger fish pass by on the outer walls, which include tunas and jacks, as well as smaller creatures that can be found amidst the pristine corals.

## Banda Island

This group of islands, also called the Spice islands, boasts fantastic diving, with up to 40 meters of visibility. On land, enjoy the view of Gunung Api, a 650-meter-high active volcano, from the top of Fort Belgica, built by the Dutch in 1611 and located in the historical town of Banda Neira. Clove, nutmeg, mace and cinnamon are still the main spices that are grown here.

There are various dive sites that can will visit:

**Karang Hatta** – We will dive in a spectacular submerged reef south of Hatta, which offers steep slopes surrounded by deep waters. Dense Redtooth Triggerfishes alongside with Fusiliers, Napoleon Wrasse and Hawksbill Turtles populate this long reef. You might also get the chance to spot a few rare creatures like Devil Rays or even a Scalloped Hammerhead shark during your dive. Keep your fingers crossed before you enter this wonderful water.

**Hatta Blue Hole** – A widespread hard coral shallow plateau which extends away from the island to a majestic drop off. A large opening on top of the reef opens to a swim through densely covered with huge vibrant Gorgonian fans. Also, massive Barrel Sponges which are inhabited by tiny Hairy Squat Lobsters decorate the wall.

**Pohon Miring** – Stunningly covered with colorful Soft corals and Gorgonian fans, a swim through will take you through a sheer wall covered with Leather corals. Numerous big Napoleon Wrasses inhabit the reef and Dogtooth tunas patrol the blue waters.

**Batu Kapal** – This island is named for its boat-like shape and is an exhilarating dive, with walls decorated with Yellow Soft corals. Curtains of Redtooth Triggerfishes, Pyramid Butterflyfishes, Fusiliers and Surgeonfishes cluster into a multicolor fish soup. On the rocky and sandy bottom, you can spot large groups of Longnose Emperor which hunt alongside Bluefin Trevallies and opportunistic Napoleon Wrasses. Look in the blue for Grey reef sharks, while Blackfin Barracudas hover above the reef.

**Laval Flow** – In 1998, the volcano on Naira island erupted and the lava flow destroyed 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 meters to 40 meters an extensive hard coral garden completely blankets the solidified lava flow.

**Banda Jetty** – Famous for its Mandarin fishes 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. Here, it's

all the contrary! Once they have done their mating business, a wide array of critters awaits to be discovered on the black sand, including colorful Nudibranchs, Octopus, Cockatoo Waspfishes and Frogfishes.

## Koon Island

Between the Ceram and Banda Seas lies Koon Island, an area that is projected to be the biggest coral fish breeding spot in eastern Indonesia.

Its position between a shallow and a deep sea attracts a variety of pelagic such Pompanos, Spanish Mackerels, Dogtooth Tunas and Rainbow Runners. The reef boasts a great diversity of topographies with white sandy bottoms, walls, steep slopes and long plateau. We will have a full day of diving in this area, with three dives in this huge site.

## Sanggala Bay

Situated along the coast of the Fak Fak Province, Sanggala offers both great diving and breathtaking landscapes. Cool water from the Papuan's mountains flows through thick primary jungle to enter the turquoise waters of the Ceram sea. It is not uncommon to see local ships refilling their water tanks at the foot of the waterfall.

If you walk about an hour upriver, a beautiful hidden turquoise lake lies in the heart of the forest, where Tree-Kangaroos occupy the area.

There are two special dive sites we will explore:

**Mike's Mount** – Hundreds of meters long, this seamount attracts large pelagics, such as Oceanic Manta Rays, Grey Reef Sharks and big Dogtooth Tunas. Large shoals of Fusiliers and Surgeonfishes drift above extensive hard corals fields, such as Staghorn and Cabbage corals, which can live in depths of 40 meters. Masses of Anthias and Damselfishes inhabit these vibrant coral gardens.

**Mikado** – Years ago during a storm, a ship transporting tree trunks had release its cargo to avoid running aground the shallow seamount in the center of the bay. As a result, dozens of these trunks are littered forming a huge "Mikado" structure on the grey sand. This area is a good place to look for Twinspot Gobies and Upside-down Jellyfishes between the trunks. The seamounts slopes are covered by hard corals where Bumphead Parrotfishes & Crocodilefishes are among the usual suspects.

## South Aiduma & Dramai Islands

The strait between Aiduma and Papua is the heart of Triton Bay, where the nutrient rich current feeds some of the most diverse colorful Soft corals reefs in all of Indonesia. Because of this, we usually experience a lower visibility, but it is worth it. The sandy bays also offer great muck dive. We will spend a whole diving in these waters, in the following dive spots:

**7<sup>th</sup> Heaven** – Undoubtedly a well-earned name, as the walls are entirely covered with Pastel and Purple coloured soft corals. When there is a current flowing, the corals are pumped with water

which release a fantastic purple carpet cover on the rocks. We can also expect to see large schools of Snappers, Barracuda and Fusiliers cruising around.

**Batu Jeruk** – This site literally means ‘orange rock’ in Indonesian, which is not overstated. We will dive over a shallow rocky plateau and slope carpeted with Orange soft corals where Sweetlips, Snappers & Fusiliers hover. The numerous rocks also create small overhangs where Wobbegongs & Giant Groupers often rest.

**Tim’s Rock** – You can expect to see an array of boulders decorated with Green Black coral, a resting spot for Sweetlips, Snappers & Glassfishes. The white sand in between hosts numerous species of Gobies and Jawfishes. Rocky slopes are densely covered with vibrant Gorgonian fans, fully grown colorful Soft corals and Whip Corals. There are even a few yellow Gorgonian, where the observant eye can find the elusive Yellow Bargibanti Seahorse.

**La Ultima Frontera** – Located on the outskirts of Triton Bay, where the visibility is typically better, this small island is pierced by a large swim through near the surface. Regularly large schools of Red Snapper, Surgeonfishes and Fusiliers are seen, creating a real fish soup, where Giant Trevallies tour eagerly. Boulder clusters are adorned with soft coral hangings, creating a playground for Wobbegong sharks, Giant and Honeycomb Moray eel.

## Mauwera & Pelican Bay

Triton Bay also offers spectacular sights above the surface that can be explored, including white sand beaches, turquoise lagoons, mangroves, mushroom shaped island and even some Pelicans for the patient eyes.

## Pintu Arus, Saruneus Island

In the channel between Aiduma & Papua, this small island can offer a remote diving spot. This area is known for three specific dive sites: Little Komodo, Larry’s Heaven and Saruneus. These areas boast a diverse topography, including walls, rocky and sandy slopes, plateaus and boulders. You can spot a huge diversity and density of Soft corals of all colors and forms.

We will be diving in Little Komodo, known as the penultimate dive site of Triton Bay, which boasts shallow boulders that are covered in colorful large Soft corals, a true photographer’s paradise. Deeper on the slope, a large Black coral forest with large Gorgonian fans meets the sandy bottom. When the current hits the boulders, huge colonies of Orange Cup Orange extend their polyps to feed on the nutrient carried by the current. On top of this fantastic array of colors and shapes, Wobbegongs, Spiny Lobsters and Pipefishes hide beneath large table corals.

## Bitsyara Bay

Not far from Kaimana, our final stop will be this large shallow bay which contains Bagans (local fishing platforms). Whale sharks are seen around the area, as they adore the smell of deceased fish from the fishing boats.

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