

# Halmahera & Northern Moluccas

We will spend a few days diving some of the best dive sites in Raja Ampat. Then we will begin our journey towards North Sulawesi, crossing the Halmahera sea where the visibility can reach up to 35 meters!

## 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:

## Dampier Strait

Located in the remote far east of the Indonesian archipelago, the Strait is the 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 characterize the area. Your dive team will check currents and choose sites based on the optimum conditions each day. There is a variety of dive spots that we can choose from:

**Manta Sandy** - The two large bommies situated in the middle of a sandy bottom at just 18 meters is 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 this underwater show take place. If the mantas

are not performing their show, there is still a plethora of marine life to look and discover. The reef itself has many smaller creatures with dragonets and various pipefishes.

**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 a nutrient rich current attracts an amazing variety of fish, such as Napoleon Wrasse, Bumphead Parrotfish & Pinnate Batfish. In the blue, myriads of Bignose Unicornfish and Bluestreak Fusiliers are closely watched by Giant Trevallies & 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, with a long finger-shaped seamount that starts at 8 meters and drops down to 30 meters, where everywhere you look teams with life, colour and movement. The surface is covered with hard and soft corals, where schools of jacks and barracuda wander. Oceanic & Reef Manta rays can be seen hovering above the cleaning stations, while Grey reef are cruising 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 parrot fish, 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 feasting on the prey. This is a perfect location to watch the food chain in action.

**Mike's Point** – As we approach the tiny 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.

## Penemu & Yangeffo Islands

Located west of Gam, next we will visit these mushroom islands that are surrounded by turquoise coral filled seas. These islands 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, that are adorned in a variety of sizes and colours. In its shallow waters, vast fields of staghorn corals are inhabited by myriads of Damselfishes, whilst Blacktip reef sharks circuit the area. On the slopes, Trevallies, 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. Its seamount, reaching 12 meters below the water, boasts big bommies that are home to glass fishes and Wobbegong sharks. The tip of the reef is teeming with large shoals of Fusiliers and Surgefishes 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, Jaw fish bob out of their ground holes, Wobbegong sharks rest lazily beneath table corals, Twinspot Gobies grazed on the sandy bottom, while Crocodilefishes awaits 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. We have a variety of dive spots that we will visit:

**Andiamo** – A diverse two-island reef with walls, overhangs, pinnacles, ridges and shallow plateau. With a high variety of habitat, it is no wonder this site is one of the most famous dive sites in Misool. Thick schools of fusilier's cruise over hard and soft corals, where we can find Wobbegong and epaulette sharks hiding. Pickhandle barracuda form schools along the reef whilst reef octopus hide in the wall's crevices where giant Gorgonian Sea fans are attached.

**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 and schools of dog tooth tuna. Back near to the surface the tides and water have eroded various holes in the rocks, creating swim-throughs that make for great photography opportunities. Pickhandle barracuda, snapper, grouper, napoleon wrasse, turtles, batfish and rabbit fish are often seen in the waters surrounding the islands.

**Gorgonian Passage** - Situated in the channel that runs between the Wayilbatan and Wayil islands lies Gorgonian Passage. This area is decorated with huge sea fans, where a variety of pygmy seahorses can be found hiding in, including Bargibanti and Denise. Divers come to this spot to find countless types of sweetlips and various smaller marine creatures, such as peacock mantis shrimp and juvenile convict fish.

**Karang Bayangan aka Magic Mountain** – One of the best dive sites in Indonesia; 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, Surgeonfishes and Batfishes circled by Dogtooth Tunas, Giant Trevallies, Grey Reef and Whitetip reef sharks. On top of these incredible encounters, a cleaning station for Oceanic & Reef Mantas can make this dive one of your best!

**Nudi Rock** – A Nudibranch-shaped island and an iconic dive site, part of a 0.8-mile ridge with walls, pinnacles and sandy plateaus. Marine species varying from macros to large pelagics 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 Crocodilefishes, Nudibranchs, Porcelain Crabs and the elusive Soft Coral Pipefishes.

## Pisang Island

Our first stop, an oasis in the middle of the Halmahera sea and surrounded by deep water: Located between the islands of Misool & Papua, the Pisang Island is named after its Banana-like shape.

We will stop off at Bantu Anyer Besar and Kecil, a steep rocky slope covered in a blanket of giant Barrel Sponges and where an exhilarating drift can be done with the right current. In the blue, schooling Jacks, Blackfin Barracuda and Rainbow Runners can be seen, while back in the shallows there is a hard-coral plateau.

## Batjan Island

One of the northern Moluccas in the Molucca Sea, it lies just southwest of the large island of Halmahera. There are two special dive spots that we will explore in this area:

**Akiko's Neverneverland** – This is a truly unique dive site, riddled with diverse topography. It adorns a wall plunging to 40 meters, where Spiny Lobster hide in the numerous cracks. Cruising along the wall are Schooling Jacks, Blacktip Reef Sharks and Hawksbill Turtle. The shallow plateau is also densely covered with Leather Corals.

**Tanjung Maragarando** – An exciting dive for pelagic and schooling fish. With the right current, this dive brings a large school of Jacks, Blackfin Barracuda, Golden Batfish & Fusiliers. From 30 meters, the slope is densely covered with bright yellow Soft corals.

## Patantie Strait

Located between Batjan & Halmahera, the strong current nurture dense Soft corals and Gorgonian fan gardens. Numerous protected bays offer interesting night dives opportunity to look for critters such as Bobtail squids & Walking sharks. There are a couple of dive spots we will travel to:

**Proco** – Sitting in the middle of the channel, this pinnacle extends to a plateau around 25 meters. This area is densely covered with Pastel, Yellow and Orange Soft corals, a wonderful array of colors contrasted by the schools of Fusiliers and Surgeonfishes.

**Batu Jabu** – A massive submerged reef where one can find himself quickly drifting along rocky slopes covered of Hard & Soft corals. Numerous aggregations of Unicornfishes, Fusiliers, Snappers & Surgeonfishes. The shallows are also densely covered by Staghorn corals packed with Anthias.

## Goraici & Tamo-Tamo Islands

As we cruise north, we enter the North hemisphere and the Moluccas Sea. nestled 31 miles west of the Halmahera Island and 43 miles south of Ternate and Tidore. There are a few dive spots we will visit:

**Renne's Rock** – We will dive around a colossal pinnacle, surrounded by extensive plateaus and large bommies. This is a great site to look for Grey, Whitetip and Blacktip Reef sharks, and grazing Bumphead are usually found in the shallows.

**Akejoraru** – A wide shallow plateau decorated with large spread of bommies, which then drops 60 meters down to a steep slope and a dramatic wall down to a white sandy bottom, which reflects light onto the vibrant soft corals. This is a great place to spot Blacktip reef sharks, Napoleon Wrasse and Bumphead Parrotfishes.

**Tamo-Tamo pinnacle** – Here we will observe an explosion of marine life along a wall of colorful soft corals. Ribbon Sweetlips are often seen hanging around the deeper parts of the wall, where Grey Reef sharks patrol. Dense shoals of Fusiliers and Surgefishes along with Giant Trevallies are also common residents of this reef.

## Makian Island

Makian island is a 6-mile-wide volcano with a mile wide summit crater. Located to the south of Ternate Island this is one of Indonesia's most destructive volcanos. We will be spending a full day muck diving around this fantastic diving spot.

Encrusting sponges completely covers underwater pillars where Frogfishes, Honshu Pipefishes and Nudibranchs hide. The grey shallow sand plateau is home to a variety of critters waiting to be discovered, including Ghost Pipefishes, Dragonets and diverse cephalopods, such as Long-arm octopus, Bobtail Squid and colorful flatworms.

## Tifore Island

Rising midway between Halmahera and Sulawesi, in the very deep open Moluccas sea, the dive sites around Tifore are mostly plateaus with sheer walls and steep slopes plus great visibility in clear blue water.

Sago Sago is one massive dive site, where we dive three times following the best entry points depending on the current. On top of a beautiful variety of corals, sponges and topographies, we are looking in the blue for big schools of Barracuda, Jacks and other surprises.

## Lembeh Strait

Welcome to the macro mecca, which is well known for the volcanic black sand that is home to many weird and wonderful critters that the sea has to offer, often where "muck diving" all began. Very often the divers tend to disappear in this underwater world of Lembeh longer than they expected, with performances of those rare critters, all playing hide and seek in their homes of those manmade debris along the seabed.

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.