

# Bikini Atoll - The Marshall Islands

## 10 & 11 Nights Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary of dive sites and wrecks we may visit during your liveaboard safari with Master Liveaboards in Bikini Atoll. We wish to show you the very best diving possible but a number of factors can determine where we visit. Weather, tides, currents and other factors play a part in the Cruise Director's decision of which route the yacht takes. 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 total distance from Ebeye to Bikini is 406 kilometres which equals 25-34 hours of cruising depending on weather conditions. 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.

As most wrecks at Bikini Atoll are beyond recreational depth limits, this itinerary is suitable only for **technical divers** with previous wreck experience.

Your Cruise Director will schedule 2 dives per day. The diving day has a typical schedule as follows:

- Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 2
- Snack, relaxation,
- Dinner

We keep a standard minimal surface interval of 4 hours between dives in Bikini, as a safety measure.

### The unique shipwrecks of Bikini Atoll

After the Second World War, the USA collected a 'mock' naval fleet for the purpose of testing the impact of different atomic bombs on a large fleet. These nuclear bomb tests were performed in several remote locations in the South Pacific Ocean, known as the Pacific Proving Grounds. Bikini Atoll was appointed one of the designated testing areas within the Marshall Islands, where a grand total of 67 nuclear bombs have been detonated within the framework of Operation Crossroads and several other Operations.

Between 1946 and 1958, not less than 23 atomic bombs were tested at Bikini Atoll only, which resulted in a unique selection of shipwrecks consisting of war battleships, cruisers, and an aircraft carrier. In March 1954, the notorious dry fuel hydrogen bomb 'Castle Bravo' was detonated in Bikini.

This bomb was the US' most powerful nuclear device ever; 1000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. It left a crater of 2km wide and 76m deep in the lagoon of Bikini. More than 60 years later, the shipwrecks remain equally as impressive while they have become home to many kinds of corals and fish species.

## USS Saratoga

The signature dive of Bikini Lagoon: the USS Saratoga CV-3. This 270 metres (888ft) long and 29 metres (95ft) wide American aircraft carrier weighs 39,000 tons and rests in Bikini Lagoon at a depth of 52 meters. Her bridge is easily accessible at 18 metres depth, her flight deck at 28 metres, and the hanger for the Helldivers at 32 metres. The Helldiver planes were all swept off the deck during the Baker test and the remains of them are scattered around the Saratoga on the seabed. On deck though, 350lb and 500lb bombs, air drop torpedoes and depth charges can all still be found.

Remarkable detail: the Japanese reported her sunk 7 times during World War II. The Saratoga did, however, suffer damage on multiple occasions during the war and was therefore chosen to be used as a testing target in Bikini.

## Nagato

This battleship was built for the Imperial Japanese Navy as the first super-dreadnought to mount 16-inch (406 mm) guns. Together with a cruising speed of 26.5 knots, this made her the Imperial Navy's flagship as well as one of the most powerful and versatile warships in the world at that time. She measures 221 metres (725ft) in length and 29 metres (95ft) wide and her crew used to comprise of 1734 men.

After the Japanese surrender, the Nagato was seized, used for testing and sank during Operation Crossroads in July of 1946. She landed upside down; her most prominent features are the four propellers at a depth of 33.5 metres (110ft).

## USS Arkansas

An American dreadnought, measuring 171 metres (562 ft) long and armed with twelve 12-inch guns and capable of a top speed of 20.5 knots. The USS Arkansas served in both World War I and World War II; escorting convoys in the Atlantic and bombarding shore targets during the invasions of Normandy, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. She was moored only 500 ft. away from the intended atomic bomb detonation in 1946 and was supposedly lifted up vertically within the blast column. She sank completely only 19 minutes after the blast, ending almost completely upside down on the sandy bottom at 55 metres depth.

## USS Lamson

The American Mahan-class Destroyer ship appears almost like a pirate ship underwater. With her length of 104 metres (341 ft), she might not be the biggest of the Bikini wrecks but nevertheless very interesting to explore, as she features several guns, torpedoes, bombs and generally provides good access to divers in water with great visibility.

## USS Anderson

The Sims-class destroyer of 106 metres (348ft.) long by 11 metres (36ft) wide was built in 1939. She served at different locations in World War II; she participated in fighting battles in the Atlantic and the Pacific using her machine guns, anti-aircraft

missiles and torpedoes, taking down many enemy aircraft. USS Anderson also helped in anti-submarine warfare.

### **USS Apogon**

A second submarine of the Balao-class that headed straight for Hawaii and the Marshall Islands after her launch in 1943. Patrolling designated areas in the South Pacific and attacking enemy (i.e. Japanese) ships were her duty. The Apogon lies completely intact at a depth of 48 meters with an average depth of 43 metres. Explore the conning tower, viewing binoculars on the bridge, and propellers covered by red sponges.

### **USS Carlisle**

A Gilliam-class attack support boat, 130 metres (426 ft) long and 18 metres (58 ft) wide that served as merchant vessel transporter within the US Navy in the Second World War. Finished and acquired by the Navy in 1944, she arrived late into the war and was assigned to transport operations; of which she only performed 3. Hence, she never participated in any combat situations. She sank in 1946 during the Operation Crossroad, resting upright in the sand at 51 metres depth and her deck at 40 metres.

### **Prinz Eugen - Kwajalein Atoll**

Being a war prize awarded to the USA by Britain after WW II resulted in the atomic fate for this German heavy cruiser. She survived the blasts of Operation Crossroads, even though she was already damaged, and she was towed to Kwajalein.

Here, she ultimately capsized and sank to her final resting place in December 1946. Nowadays, a part of the ship is still visible above water.

**Please note:** Guests are responsible for their own dive profiles and for obtaining suitable dive insurance to cover deeper diving. During the trip, we plan an afternoon on land to explore Bikini Atoll. There will be no diving that afternoon.

We respectfully request our divers stay within the bounds of their training, follow dive computer guidelines and make decompression stops where necessary. When planning deep dives or dives with extended bottom times, please bear in mind that recompression facilities in the region are limited and remote, therefore we recommend you dive conservatively. Midway the trip we schedule an afternoon to visit Bikini Atoll and have a beach BBQ. There will be no diving on that afternoon.

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@masterliveboards.com](mailto:info@masterliveboards.com) who will be pleased to assist and advise you.