

Mergui Archipelago, Myanmar

Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary of where you might dive during your liveaboard holiday with us. We wish to show you the very best diving but a number of factors can determine where we visit. Weather, tides, how busy a site is with other dive vessels all play a part in the Cruise Director's decision of which route the yacht takes. The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best in offering diving at alternate locations.

Schedule

Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a night dive. The diving day 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

Generally, we schedule 2 dives on your final dive day in order to allow enough time for off-gassing. To remain on the safe side, we kindly request our guests to check their own flight times and ensure that they leave a minimum of 24 hours between their final dive and their return flight. Guests are welcome to suggest preferred dive sites to the Cruise Director. He/she will be happy to accommodate guests' wishes, providing it is possible and the schedule allows for it.

The following is a description of some of the dive sites we may visit during your liveaboard safari aboard The Phinisi:

Rocky Island

Underwater, you will find a steep rocky reef with lots of tube and fan corals. Explore the huge colourful anemone garden where also massive schools of yellow five lined snappers hang out. There is a garden of small granite boulders at depth, providing a home for octopus and cuttle fish, and a variety of moray eel. Lots of critters hang around the cracks including nudibranchs, pipe fish and, razor fish, and seahorses. Look out for hunting wahoo, tuna, and barracuda passing in the blue. Visibility and currents can sometimes be challenging but it is a rewarding site.

North and South Twin

Strong currents bring with them teams of schooling barracudas, hunting tunas, as well as mating cuttle fish. There is also a nice selection of macro creatures such as nudibranchs, ghost pipefish, and longnose hawkfish.



With superb visibility the atmosphere on the reef at North Twin is breathtaking. Healthy gorgonian sea fans can be admired at depth, while soft corals adorn the reef and bring plenty vibrancy and colour.

In South Twin, we can expect to see an abundance of moray eels, harlequin sweetlips and cuttlefish. Eagle and devil rays may fly by and Kuhl's stingrays and spotted garden eels can be seen on the sandy bottom.

Black Rock

Black Rock stands alone in the Andaman Sea 100 miles northwest of the Thai-Burmese border town of Kawthaung. The rock acts as a natural magnet for oceanic mantas and other large pelagics such as whale sharks and eagle rays. An excellent multi-level site, you can start your dive anywhere around the perimeter, depending on currents.

Underwater terrain on the south side consists of vertical wall down to roughly 27m, where it becomes a more gradual slope. Just off the south-west corner is a particularly interesting area, where a detached rock formation rises from very deep water to about 24m. These rocks are covered with small, vibrant soft corals, and often attract schooling snappers and rainbow runners. Back at the main islet, deeper sections are decorated with orange gorgonian fans, along with fields of corallimorpharians (they look like stony corals) on the sloping west and north sides. At the eastern tip, watch for vast numbers of magnificent anemones, especially at dawn and dusk when they show off their colourful bases.

A wide range of invertebrate life can be found at Black Rock, including smashing and spearing mantis shrimp, spiny lobsters, hermit crabs, sea stars, cowrie shells, harlequin shrimp, octopus and cuttlefish.

During safety stops, move slowly along the eastern and western ends of the south wall to find brilliantly coloured elegant hermit crabs and a variety of nudibranchs. Fish life is also abundant and varied, with a chance to see almost anything from scorpion fish and giant morays to marbled sting rays.



Burma Banks

Probably the best known dive area in Myanmar is called Burma Banks. These remote seamounts in the middle of the open ocean rise from 300 metres to 15 metres below the surface of the Andaman Sea between Myanmar and the Andaman Islands. There are five banks in total which, due their exposed location, can be challenging to dive, but are worth it for the very common shark encounters. Nurse sharks, grey reef and silvertips are among the usual suspects. We typically schedule one full dive day here and may visit Heckford Bank and/or Silvertip Bank. Please note that diving at Burma Banks is highly dependent on the weather and ocean currents. For the same reason we plan max. 3 day dives here; there will be no night diving at Burma Banks.

Shark Cave, Submarine and Square Rock

All around these three sites, marine life is extremely rich and diverse. There are three different rocky islets with vertical walls as well as sloping reef. Many areas are populated with fields of anemones, which are home to five different species of anemone fish. Elsewhere, large tubastrea coral trees sprout from the rocky terrain, accompanied by crinoids, gorgonian fans, blue dragons, and pastel green rope sponge. Tiger tail sea horses are often encountered on the deep edges of the slope, as are many varieties of morays - often several species in the same hole.

Cuttlefish may be found at nearly any depth, sometimes courting and mating. Ornate ghost pipe fish, cowrie shells, octopus, reef squid, jaw fish, porcelain crabs, longnose pipefish, and mantis shrimps are often seen at this site. Scorpion fish are very abundant, so be careful where you place your hands! Between the three pinnacles and surrounding bottom, Shark Cave easily lends itself to several dives to enjoy the diversity of the reef and to marvel in the chasm of the Shark Cave! Nurse and white tip reef sharks can be found lurking inside of the cavern along with marble rays, ghost pipefish and plenty of other fascinating creatures, including blue ribbon eels.

Sea Fan Forest

As the name Fan Forest Pinnacle suggests, it is a submerged pinnacle, starting at 5m depth, famous for the amount of gorgonian sea-fans. The biggest gorgonians are in deeper waters around 20 m and below.

They are very healthy and support a large variety of marine life including feather stars, cowries, hawk fish and shrimps. Schooling fish include snapper, trevally, rainbow runners and fusiliers. Moray eels and scorpion fish are also numerous. We are also likely to find giant marbled groupers and eagle rays.

Western Rocky

A short trip south of Sea Fan Forest, Western Rocky is the scene of dramatic underwater terrain on this excellent dive site, which consists of a main islet plus several detached pinnacles. Among the more striking features of the main islet is a huge underwater archway where schooling snappers often hang out.



The soft limestone island is riddled with holes and crevices, providing hiding places for hinge-beak, thorny oysters, cowrie shells, nudibranchs, spiny lobsters and moray eels. There is a good chance of finding frogfish and seahorses.

Large gorgonian fans and lush soft corals populate many of the deeper areas, while shallow portions of the south side wall are covered with orange cup corals and colourful encrusting sponges. Fish life can include almost anything from ornate ghost pipefish to frog fish to schooling batfish and barracudas. Western Rocky pinnacle is shaped like a cheese wedge covered by both hard and soft corals, lots of trevally and tuna.

Little Torres Island

Due to its remote location this is a good dive site for appreciating the a kaleidoscope of colours from the hundreds of corals types in abundance such as table corals, mosaic corals and red whip corals to name a few. The corals are surrounded by healthy reef life and huge submerged boulders, as well as the occasional sting ray and the rare leopard sharks on the sea bed nearby. There is also a good chance of seeing black banded sea snakes here. Chances of spotting sharks, whale sharks and mantas. The "Sea Fan Forest" is an enchanting patch where lionfish, moorish idols and several cowries are present.

Tower Rock

As its name suggests, this is a magical dive site with towering walls descending into the depths. Below the water you will find a lunar site of boulders, made up from the taller reaches of Tower Rock in years past. The walls are laced with whip corals and sea fans, oysters and clams. White banded cleaner shrimp and ornate spiny lobster hide amongst the crags, whilst blue faced angelfish and yellow striped fusiliers dance their way up the walls. Larger visitors include manta rays and mobula rays, as well as blacktip and whitetip reef sharks. Moray eels, bearded scorpionfish, schools of snappers and fusiliers are among the usual suspects.

The last diving day will be scheduled around Horseshoe Island. You can choose between doing two dives and just relaxing on the beach on the island.

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@thephinisi.com who will be pleased to assist and advise you.