

THE FORGOTTEN ISLANDS

Off any beaten path

Indonesia's "Forgotten Islands" – also known as the Southeast Moluccas (Maluku Tenggara) – are not a single destination, but rather a 1,000 km long chain of archipelagos stretching from Timor to West Papua on the island of New Guinea. Undeveloped, distant from population centers and far off any beaten path, these "Forgotten Islands" have been largely isolated from the rest of Indonesia and the world.

The terrain of these islands varies from forested mountainous peaks in the Inner Banda Arc of islands (Wetar, Roma, Damar, Nila), with peaks as high as 868 m (on Damer) to essentially flat islands of the easternmost Aru and Kei island groups, dominated by savannah, mangroves and broadleaf forests.

The Inner Arc islands are volcanic, while the island groups in the Outer Banda Arc (Leti, Luang, Sermata, Babar and Tanimbar islands) are mostly up thrust coralline limestone, often characterized by terracing resulting from periodic uplift and changes in sea level.

Together, the islands of Maluku Tenggara make up the eastern end of the biogeographic province of *Wallacea*, a transitional region between continental Southeast Asia and Australia-New Guinea, with flora and fauna of the easternmost islands the most similar to New Guinea.

Culturally, most of the Austronesian peoples of the islands of Maluku Tenggara appear to be closely related, sharing similar languages, myths, and traditional beliefs. They are known for their powerful woodcarvings and sculptures depicting ancestral figures, distinctive hand woven ikat fabrics, and plaited bamboo and palm baskets.

"Of course the diving was spectacular, the food delicious & the boat comfortable – but this can be said of many liveaboards. What sets this boat apart are the tremendous efforts put forth by the crew in anticipating our every desire and rendering superb service, and also the professionalism & expertise of Cruise Director Karl, whose sense

of humour above and below water made every moment a joy. Thank you so much for an adventure that will be long remembered and shared with friends.”**Karen Doby**

Forgotten Islands

The Forgotten Islands offer some of the best diving in Indonesian waters. Attractions include gin-clear waters, patch reefs and coral bommies, spectacular wall dives on impossible drop-offs.

On our inaugural trips to the Forgotten Islands in 2010, our excited visitors enjoyed seeing rare Weedy, Bumphead parrotfish, Jacks (Big-eye trevallies), Giant trevallies, Spanish mackerel, schooling barracuda, hammerhead sharks, a 3 metre salt water crocodile, and a whale shark!

Since 2012 we are offering two expeditions to the Forgotten Islands each year in November and December. One trip starts in Maumere (Flores) or Kupang (West Timor) and ends in Saumlaki, in the Tanimbar Islands, and another trip returns along the same or a similar route.

Detailed itineraries in this area will vary according to weather and diving conditions and other factors. But a typical journey through this region might include:

- P. Lembata, a traditional whaling island, which usually offers spectacular critters dives
- Solor/Alor archipelagos. Stops in these islands can include P. Pantar, P. Buaya, P. Alor, Kalabahi)
- P. Komba, location of the Batu Tara volcano.
- P. Wetar. The people of this island live in harmony with salt water crocodiles!
- Barat Daya Islands (P. Romang, P. Nyata, P. Kital, P. Laut, P. Telang)
- Leti island group (P. Leti, P. Lakor, P. Moa)
- Sermata Group (P. Sermata, P. Luang) P. Sermata is known for the many surviving myths that are still part of Forgotten Islands traditional culture.
- Babar Islands (P. Dai, etc.) These islands are known for the survival of boat symbolism.
- Tanimbar Islands

CLIMATE INFORMATION

North West Monsoon:

Late December - April (North West rain storms Dec - March)

South East Trade Winds:	May – October (strong steady winds from South East)
Calm Cruising Season:	November – first half of December (in recent years)
Dry season:	June through November
Rainy Season:	December through May
Air temperature:	27 - 32°C
Water temperature:	27 - 32°C
Other relevant info:	<p>Switch from South East to North West has provided a "window" for calm cruising in November and early December in recent years, where several years ago this calm season started earlier, in October. Switch from North West to South East in April-May has been very quick with unreliable short calm season. Not recommended for cruising. Wind and sea conditions may still vary unpredictably, forcing itinerary changes. Dive conditions vary with the tides, throughout the day. Therefore, it is important to dive according to the tide tables in order to hit each site at the optimal time. This is where your Seven Seas crew and dive guides excel!</p>