

# SCUBA DIVING DELIGHT IN INDONESIAN PARADISE



More than 13,000 islands form the country of Indonesia, each one with its own special and distinct identity. There are over 3,500 submarine species living in the Indonesian underwater world. The country is part of [the Coral Triangle](#), widely regarded as being the most bio-diverse habitat in the world's oceans. All of this, along with crystal clear waters and a warm, mostly benign, climate, makes Indonesia one of the world's top diving destinations.

At the beginning of December, at the Diving and Resort Travel Expo held in Hong Kong, Indonesia was presented with the Outstanding Live Aboard Diving Destination award for 2016. The country also received 12 further awards at the World Halal Tourism Awards ceremony in Abu Dhabi.

"The potential of marine tourism in Indonesia is world class. These awards show that Indonesia is a paradise for lovers of yachts and diving tourism," said Vincent Jemadu, the assistant deputy of the Asia Pacific Market Development of the Ministry of Tourism.

In 2016, Indonesia aimed at attracting 1.8 million visitors, worldwide, to its beaches and sea resorts. To reach this figure, the government introduced visa-free entry for visitors from 169 countries and regions. The main target destinations were Raja Ampat, Lombok, Sulawesi, and the island of Bali.

## **Raja Ampat**

Located off the northwest tip of Bird's head Peninsula on the island of New Guinea, Raja Ampat is an archipelago consisting of 1,500 small isles surrounding the four main islands, Misool, Salawati, Batanta, and Waigeo. Over 1,500 species of fish have been recorded here, 600 coral species (more than 75 % of all known species), and 699 mollusc species - the highest number recorded in any region in the world.

The variety of marine life can be staggering. Some areas boast enormous schools of fish, as well as large numbers of sharks. According to the Conservation International Rapid Assessment Bulletin, in their 2006 survey, this part of Indonesia is home to one of the most diverse gatherings of marine life in the world.

Visitors can take their pick from a smorgasborg of diving choices, including live-aboard, staying in the south at the Misool Eco Resort, or in the north at other resorts like Sorido. However, strong currents in the waters around Raja Ampat mean diving is not recommended for beginners, rather for more experienced scuba divers.

## **Sulawesi**

The island of Sulawesi boasts 6,000 km of stunning coastline, with warm waters rich in marine life. There is a large variety of dive sites near the shoreline, making Sulawesi one of the top diving destinations. Accommodation is also affordable.

The island lies near the epicentre of the Coral Triangle, east of Borneo and to the west of Moluccas,

and is surrounded by deep oceanic waters. Strong currents surge up from the ocean depths, bringing nutrient-rich water close to shore. This phenomenon has created one of the most beautiful coral environments in the world. The coral reefs and walls are generally found close to the shoreline of the main island as well as to the shores of the sprinkling of smaller, neighbouring islands. Sulawesi is an all year-round diving destination, with June and August usually offering the best conditions.

## **Lombok**

Lombok's south coast offers scuba divers a unique adventure. Visitors can experience, "relaxed diving," in Sekotong, or, "adrenalin dives," with hammerhead sharks in attendance, in Belongas Bay. The island, which is neighbour to Bali, offers a visual treat for divers with its abundance of marine diversity.

South Lombok reflects a good cross-section of what Indonesia has to offer. You can observe turtles, white tip reef sharks, cuttlefish, moray eels, frog fish and much more. Diving in Lombok is a highlight destination for photographers and all scuba enthusiasts.

## **Bali**

Bali is often nicknamed, "The Island of Gods." The diversity of marine life is exceptional. From Sunfish around the translucent waters of Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Penida, to pygmy seahorses near Tepekong, Bali is a submarine paradise for diving enthusiasts.

Among many the diving centres on Bali, we would recommend the **North Bali Divecenter**, which is located far from the crowds of mass tourism. The number of divers in each group is strictly limited to four, while couples and solo photographers are also catered for and can enjoy cruising the wonderful reefs alone with just a personal dive guide for company.

The variety of coral critters is huge, and the **North Bali Divecenter** include famous diving spots Puri Jati, Secret Bay, and Menjangan island, in their itinerary. However, most of the reefs are less well known, which is why visitors rarely meet any other divers there.

The North Bali Divecenter also welcomes scuba diving beginners, providing Open Water Diving Courses in warm, clear waters with shallow reef tops and no currents. Whatever their level of expertise, divers may start their exclusive course whenever they are ready to do so.

And, as if all that isn't enough, the North Bali Divecenter can also provide accommodation for visitors in the form of eight small, delightful, beach-front cottages. Visitors to Bali can enjoy a full board of delicious Indonesian specialties, as well as sightseeing trips to local temples, waterfalls, and volcanoes.

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