

WildWings/WildOceans

# INDONESIA



*Pantropical Spotted Dolphins*

## RAJA AMPAT

Led by Dr. Charles Anderson

# RAJA AMPAT

**A wonderful wildlife cruise, 26th February to 6th  
March 2020**

## SUMMARY

Join us for a 9 night / 10 day cruise around the islands of Raja Ampat in the far east of Indonesia in Feb-March 2020. On board our exclusively chartered liveaboard vessel, we will cruise west from Sorong (in Papua) around the islands of the Raja Ampat archipelago. The coral reefs here are the richest in the world, and we will have time for snorkeling every day. We will also go ashore in search of some fabulous local birdlife, including the Red Bird-of-Paradise. Out at sea we will be looking for the wealth of dolphins and whales that call this area home, including Bryde's and Omura's Whales, as well as a wonderful diversity of smaller species. All-in-all this promises to be a fabulous trip at the very epicentre of marine biodiversity.

## INTRODUCTION TO INDONESIA

Indonesia is a country of superlatives. It is the largest archipelago in the world (over 17,000 islands) with a stunning diversity of cultures, and the most diverse marine-life anywhere. For example, over 3500 species of fish have been recorded – more than enough to keep the keenest snorkeler enthralled. And this diversity extends to the marine mammals. Recent research around Raja Ampat has highlighted the wealth of tropical whale and dolphin species there.

Our cruise starts from the town of Sorong, on the western tip of the great island of Papua. Just offshore lies the archipelago of Raja Ampat ('Four Kings', named for the four largest islands in the group). Most of the islands remain cloaked in forest, and are home to a wealth of birdlife, including the Red Bird-of-Paradise. While nestling in the surrounding seas are the richest coral reefs in the world, where we can expect to enjoy plenty of wonderful snorkeling.

## OUR BOAT

On this trip we travel through the Raja Ampat archipelago on board our exclusively chartered 28 m liveaboard safari vessel, **M.V. *Mermaid***. She is very comfortable and ideal for our needs. *Mermaid* has a local crew of 15, including an experienced captain and two full-time cooks. There are 7 guest cabins, including: one master suite, with panoramic windows looking forward over the bows; four standard twin/double cabins on the main deck, with windows; and two slightly smaller lower deck cabins without windows, with lower double bed and upper single bunk. All are ensuite and air-conditioned.

Our itinerary while on board will be very flexible, to make the most of cetacean sightings. The outline given below should therefore be considered to be a guideline only, not a rigidly structured programme. We will wander through the archipelago, enjoying the scenery, and taking our time to watch dolphins, whales, flying fish and seabirds. We will travel by day and anchor early most evenings in a sheltered spot. Depending on our location there should be opportunities for a snorkel or island visit at these times, using the *Mermaid's* two inflatable tenders. And after dark, far from city lights, the top deck offers stunning views of the night sky.

In summary, this promises to be a superb wildlife cruise with great cetacean sightings, some extraordinary birds, magnificent coral reefs and tropical islands together with friendly local people.

## DATES

The dates of our 2020 trip are:

| Trip       | Group size | Depart Sorong | Return Sorong | Nights | from     |
|------------|------------|---------------|---------------|--------|----------|
| Raja Ampat | 14 max     | 26 Feb, Wed   | 6 Mar, Fri    | 9      | £3625 pp |

These dates are for *time on board*. Add on time at each end to include international flights. We *strongly* recommend that you arrive in Sorong one day early at the very latest; the boat cannot wait for late arrivals.

## ITINERARY

### Raja Ampat, 2020

**Day 1. Wed 26 Feb. Start of cruise from Sorong.** Board MV *Mermaid* at Sorong port, mid-morning. Depart around lunchtime. Cruise towards Waigeo Island, looking out for dolphins en-route. After sunset tonight there will be an orientation talk, and on most other nights there will be a slide show. Note: You should arrive in Sorong at least one day early.

**Days 2-8. 27 Feb to 4 March. Cruising Raja Ampat.** We will wend our way slowly through the Raja Ampat islands, looking out along the way for whales and dolphins, flying fish and seabirds. There will be opportunities for snorkelling on the coral reefs, including at least one site with Manta Rays. And we can also expect opportunities for island visits.

**Day 9. Thurs 5 March. Back to Sorong.** Another full day, with during which we can expect a morning snorkel or island visit, and plenty more time for whale and dolphin watching. We should arrive back at Sorong port in the afternoon.

**Day 10. Fri 6 March. Disembark.** After breakfast we will sadly have to disembark and transfer to accommodation ashore or to the airport for flight home.

## NATURALIST

This trip will be led by Dr. Charles 'Chas' Anderson, a professional marine biologist who lives and works in the Maldives. He is an authority on both the cetaceans and fishes of the tropical Indian Ocean, and the pioneer of whale and dolphin watching in the region. Chas has made numerous visits to Indonesia over the past 25 years (including a spell working as a diving instructor on Flores), has dived widely throughout the archipelago, and leads regular whale- and dolphin-watching cruises between Bali and Komodo. He is the author of 'An Underwater Guide to Indonesia', and a major contributor to the best-selling divers' guide 'Underwater Indonesia'.

## CLIMATE

Indonesia spans the equator, so the climate is tropical. Feb-March is the inter-monsoon season, and is normally calm and sunny, but the wind can pick up and bring showers. Temperatures typically reach 29-33°C during the day, dropping to about 25-27°C at night. Sea breezes make this quite comfortable, although when there is no wind it does feel hot. While snorkelling, sea temperatures are pleasantly warm (typically 27-29°C).

## COST

|                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Master suite:</b>      | £4445                |
| <b>Standard cabin:</b>    | £4079                |
| <b>Lower deck cabin:</b>  | £3625                |
| <b>Single supplement:</b> | £1799 (if available) |

**Includes:** Accommodation and all meals on *MV Mermaid*; teas, coffees and soft drinks; naturalist guide; transfers to boat from airport or nearby hotels and vice versa.

**Does not include:** International and domestic flights; Indonesian visa fee if required; insurance; other transfers; bar bill; airport taxes; gratuities; personal items. Also, there is a Raja Ampat National Park and port fee (currently €200 per person) which has to be paid in person on board.

**Payment schedule:** To confirm your booking we will require a non-refundable deposit of £750 per person. The balance should be paid no later than four months before departure. *We reserve the right to impose a surcharge at cost in case of major fuel price, foreign currency or local tax increase.*

It is a good idea to bring US Dollars or Euros cash to cover miscellaneous expenses.

# INDONESIAN WILDLIFE

## Cetaceans

The main attraction of whale and dolphin watching in Indonesia is the wonderful diversity of tropical cetaceans. Of course, nothing can be guaranteed with wild animals, but it would be very surprising if we did not see a good selection of whales and dolphins. One particular species that we will be looking out for is Omura's Whale. This little-known baleen whale was only described as a new species in 2003, and since then has been positively recorded several times from Raja Ampat. Cetaceans that we are quite likely to see include:

|                         |                                   |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Omura's Whale           | <i>Balaenoptera omurai</i>        |
| Bryde's whale           | <i>Balaenoptera brydei</i>        |
| Spinner Dolphin         | <i>Stenella longirostris</i>      |
| Spotted Dolphin         | <i>Stenella attenuata</i>         |
| Bottlenose Dolphin      | <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>         |
| Indo-pacific Bottlenose | <i>Tursiops aduncus</i>           |
| Pilot Whale             | <i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i> |
| False Killer Whale      | <i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>       |
| Killer whale            | <i>Orcinus orca</i>               |
| Sperm whale             | <i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>     |

Other potential species include:

|                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Eden's Whale          | <i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>    |
| Blue Whale            | <i>Balaenoptera musculus</i> |
| Pygmy killer whale    | <i>Feresa attenuata</i>      |
| Fraser's dolphin      | <i>Lagenodelphis hosei</i>   |
| Risso's Dolphin       | <i>Grampus griseus</i>       |
| Humpback dolphin      | <i>Sousa sahalensis</i>      |
| Rough-toothed dolphin | <i>Steno bredanensis</i>     |
| Dwarf sperm whale     | <i>Kogia sima</i>            |

## Other Wildlife

While out with the whales and dolphins there will be plenty of opportunities for seabird watching. As for land birds, Indonesia has the highest diversity in the entire old world, with West Papua and Raja Ampat being home to numerous endemic species. We will not have time to search them all out, but we will have some island visits, and can expect to see a number of local specialties. And we will make at least one dedicated excursion ashore to look for the Red Bird-of-Paradise. There should also be a chance to look for Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise (tbc).

## Other Marine Life

While underway, in addition to whales and dolphins, we will undoubtedly see plenty of other marine life. Both flying fish and tuna are abundant and should be spotted regularly. If we are lucky we may see Turtles, Sunfish and possibly also a Whale Shark. But a real highlight should be snorkelling on the magnificent coral reefs, which are alive with myriad colourful reef fishes. And at one site we have a real chance of snorkelling with Manta Rays. There will be time in the evenings for discussion and identification of the bewildering variety of reef animals.

## FLIGHT INFORMATION

You will need to arrange flights to Sorong in Papua, Indonesia. There are no direct international flights into Sorong, so you will have to fly into another Indonesian city first, and then take a domestic flight from there. There are flights to Sorong from:

Jakarta  
Makassar (=Ujung Padang in South Sulawesi)  
Manado (in north Sulawesi)

The cheapest route may be to Jakarta with *Garuda Indonesia* (GA) and then on with *Batik Air* or *Express Air*. Another option would be to Singapore with *Singapore Airlines* (SQ), to Manado with *Silk Air* (MI) and then on with *Garuda* or *Nam Air*. There is also an *Air Asia* flight from Kuala Lumpur to Makassar.

A useful site for checking flights within Indonesia is:

[www.traveloka.com](http://www.traveloka.com)

Scheduled airlines flying to various Indonesian destinations include *Garuda Indonesia* (GA), *Singapore Airlines* (SQ), *Malaysia Airlines* (MH), *Cathay Pacific* (CX), *Royal Brunei* (BI) and *Emirates* (EK).

We can board the *MV Mermaid* from late-morning on the first day. We should set sail around lunchtime. I strongly recommend arriving in Sorong at least one day early. That will allow time to recover from the long journey, see something of the local area, and minimize the risk of sailing without baggage.

We expect to return to Sorong port during the afternoon of the penultimate day. We will disembark after breakfast on the last day. Flights can be arranged for any time that morning. Airline timetables are available at:

[www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com)

[www.silkair.com](http://www.silkair.com)

[www.garudaindonesia.co.uk](http://www.garudaindonesia.co.uk)

[www.malaysiaairlines.com](http://www.malaysiaairlines.com)

[www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)

[www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com)

[www.cathaypacific.com](http://www.cathaypacific.com)

[www.flyroyalbrunei.com](http://www.flyroyalbrunei.com)

## STOPOVERS

Raja Ampat is a long way from Europe, so if you have the time you might want to think about a stopover, either on the outward or return journey. The airline you choose will determine your likely options, eg Singapore with SQ, Kuala Lumpur with MH or Hong Kong with CX.

If you take your domestic flights via Manado, there is the opportunity to visit Tangkoko National Park (for Tarsier and Crested Macaque) and much more in North Sulawesi.

If you would like to spend more time exploring Raja Ampat before or after your cruise, good places to start looking for information include:

[www.stayrajaampat.com](http://www.stayrajaampat.com)

<http://birdsheadseascape.com>

## VISAS

You will require a visa for Indonesia. Nationals of some countries (mostly in SE Asia and Europe, including the UK) will be issued with a free 30-day tourist visa on arrival. Nationals of other countries will also have a visa issued on arrival, but will have to pay a fee (currently US\$30 *payable in cash* on arrival). Everyone must have at least 6 months remaining on their passport and a valid return air ticket.

### WildWings

[www.wildwings.co.uk](http://www.wildwings.co.uk)

Tel 0117 9658 333

[tours@wildwings.co.uk](mailto:tours@wildwings.co.uk)

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