

Diving

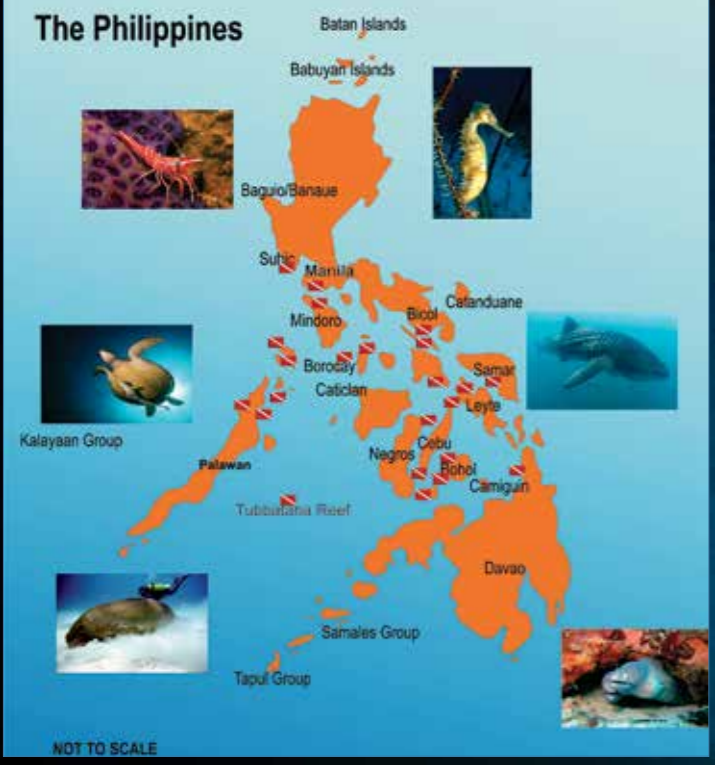
Asia Pacific

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Diving in the Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands situated in Southeast Asia and in the tropical region of the Pacific Ocean. The Philippines geography is very diverse and includes, without doubt, some of the best diving in the world and at a very attractive price.

The Diversity of The Philippines is enormous. From the bustle of Manila with its history and culture, to the island experience, where you can relax on one of the thousands of beaches, sample some of the best diving in the world, soft and hard core adventure, mix with the crowds, get away from the crowds, climb mountains, meet the helpful and friendly locals and eat great food, from all corners of the world and for all tastes.

Tubbataha Reefs: It is a marine sanctuary located in the middle central **Sulu Sea**, 98 nautical miles southeast of **Puerto Princesa City**. Declared a World Natural Heritage site by UNESCO. Diving is by liveaboards on the Tubbataha reef and is only from mid-March to mid-June. There are a number of small islands with surrounding reefs with sloping walls covered in fantastic corals and gorgonia. Mantas, and rays of all types, hammerhead and leopard sharks are to be found with turtles. This is in the top ten dive sites in the world.

Apo Island, Negros Oriental: This is a protected reef and fishing is not allowed. Apo Island has some of the top sites in the area, with depths ranging from 5 to 35 meters. Plenty of hard and soft corals including huge table corals, fire corals, brain and stag horns. Barracudas, tunas, white tip and black tip sharks. There are great drop offs and walls and the visibility offers really good photography. There are many dive sites around Apo and something for all tastes and all levels of confidence.

Donsol, Bicol: This area is famous for the sighting of whale sharks. Diving in the waters with whale sharks and mantas is an experience you will never forget. The whale sharks are under protection of the government and WWF so is something very special. Dive sites such as the **Ticao Pass** with its mantas, hammerheads and whale sharks, and San Miguel island with its caves is more of an added bonus. Although not diving, the **Mayon Volcano** rising in the east, is one of the great volcanoes of the world.

Moalboal and Pescador Island, Cebu
From Moalboal, you can dive straight from the beach onto a beautiful, sloping wall that descends to 35 meters. This area is home to a fantastic collection of coral, anemones, sponges, and tropical fish. Cliffs and drop offs are great geological features here. On **Pescador Island**, you will find a shallow reef which drops off to around 40 meters plus. The caverns and overhangs located along the cliff are just spectacular. There is a huge range of coral, gorgonia, anemones and sponges as well as groupers, turtles and sea snakes. This area is excellent for the photographer. A number of excellent dive resorts are situated in the area.

Panglao Island, Bohol. This area offers excellent diving for all levels of diver with shallow, easy dives for the novice. There are deeper dives for the confident diver such as the black coral trees from 35 to 45 metres and an underwater island called snake island, where lots of nudibranchs and snake are found. This area is very good for photography including some great macro subjects. Dolphins are seen year around with whales during the migration season.

Diving in the Philippines

Coron, Busuanga: Situated south of **Mindoro** and north of **Palawan**, Coron is very popular for its huge concentration of Japanese WWII wrecks. It's considered one of the most famous wreck diving locations in the world. Some of the wrecks are very big with most being intact and either upright or on their sides. Dive site depth ranges from 10 to 30 meters.

Cabilao Island, Bohol: This island lies in the Bohol Strait and has a great variety of dive sites that will suit all tastes and experience. More than 800 species of underwater life are to be found here including many types of coral, shell fish, sea snakes, barracudas, large groupers, napoleon wrasse and maybe the odd hammerhead sharks cruising by. Great wall dives full of gorgonia, nudibranchs, and pygmy seahorse. Get that camera out!

Batangas: A beautiful area on the southwestern part of Luzon, with beautiful sandy beaches that attract many divers and snorkeling fans. Its dive sites are outstanding for macro photography with the variety of nudibranchs unmatched. Night diving is excellent where unusual creatures such as sea hares, sea goblins, catfish eels, ghost pipe fishes, blue-ringed octopus, mandarin fish, and snake eels can be seen. Within the area the dives also offer wrecks, caves and swim through tunnels.

Puerto Galera: Situated on the northern tip of Oriental Mindoro Island and only around 110 kilometers south of Manila. Puerto Galera, is a marine sanctuary, so the reefs are well protected and have become a great habitat for many tropical fish, pelagic and big predators. The canyons is a thrilling drift dive for the experienced diver due to the currents. It is really worth the effort to see the huge amount of life in the canyons. For the less adventurous, the coral gardens are just beautiful.

Leyte Island, Visayan Islands groups: Leyte has long and intact coral reefs and beautiful drop offs. Its dive site is home to many kinds of animals from tiny pygmy seahorses, nudibranchs and pipefish to turtles, frogfish, and napoleon wrasse. It is a great spot for whale shark watching during the spring. **Limasawa Island** offers great drop offs deep canyons and a host of flora and fauna. The current can be strong but the rewards are great with gorgonia and black coral everywhere. **Sogod Bay** has prolific life on pristine reefs with many of them still unexplored. The diver can see the pygmy seahorse through to shark. If you want to get away from it, this area would be a good start.

Malapascua Island, North of Cebu: It has beautiful sandy beaches and untouched underwater scenery. Great reefs, drop offs, walls and several WWII wrecks are among the great dive sites on Malapascua. You will almost certainly see mandarin fish, nudibranchs, pygmy seahorses and cuttlefish as well as a few mantas and thresher shark.

There are many diving areas not mentioned here. We can only give a few suggestions, but be assured the Philippines has some of the most diverse and perhaps the largest range of diving sites in the world, from coral to wrecks. And to cap it off, the prices to dive fit everyones pocket.





Diving in Malaysia

Peninsula Malaysia

The island groups of **Perhentian, Redang and Tioman** are scattered off the east coast of Malaysia in the warm, tropical, clear waters of the South China Sea. These waters support an incredibly diverse, underwater ecosystem including extensive coral reefs, a multitude of fish species and sea turtles. Indeed the east coast of Malaysia is an important breeding ground for many endangered turtle species.

Dive programmes can be organised from 2 days upwards on the various islands or as a combination.

Perhentian Islands: Diving around the Perhentian Islands is a superb experience and many divers repeat the experience.

Dive sites include

Tokong Laut: A pointed rock protruding from the seabed. It is also known as the Temple of the Sea, or the Pinnacle. Marine life is excellent and apart from the many species of hard and soft coral you can see turtles, many species of shark, mackerel, jacks, moray eels, and nudibranchs.

The Sugar Wreck: A sunken freight ship that lies at around 15-22m. Dive prices are excellent on these islands, so good value for money.

The islands remain relatively untouched and the only permanent inhabitants live in a small fishing village on Perhentian Kecil.

Redang Island: The Redang area is known to have the one of the highest number of marine species in the world, making Redang one of the top dive sites for all types of divers at all levels of ability. There are more than 20 dive sites, including beach dives and challenging deep dives, with a good mix of coral gardens, and wall dives offering plenty of opportunities for macro photography.

Tanjung Tokong: Where there is a strong chance to see green and hawksbill turtles.

Tunnel Point: Large boulders which create fabulous swimthroughs. Night diving at **Chek Isa** will be a rewarding experience and great for the photographer.

Cina Terjun: Another great spot for the photographer as one is almost certain to get up close with lionfish, rays, scorpionfish and maybe the odd stone fish.

Pulau Lima: Seamounts are fantastic at this site, set within a marine park including fantastic black coral.

Tioman Island: Tioman Island is one of the biggest and most impressive of the islands on the east coast. Not only is the diving great, but you can explore one of the oldest rainforests.

The many dive sites on and around Tioman Island are amazing, with granite rock formations, healthy soft and hard corals and a fantastic huge collection of marine life.

Dive sites offer caverns and swim throughs, perfect and varied wreck diving on wrecks sunk in the marine park (17 of them). Macro photography is especially stunning at night. Throughout this area you will see a huge variety of nudibranchs and groupers, fantastic corals, and gorgonia.

Diving in Malaysia

Sarawak

Kuching: has not been widely known as it is still really an untouched dive destination. However, it is truly one of the exploratory shipwreck & macro sites for those who are underwater adventure enthusiasts.

Dive sites around Kuching have something for everyone, from snorkelers to advanced deep divers. The water is warm and generally clear during the season from April to September. A variety of dive sites are available including shipwrecks, submarines from WW2, and beautiful coral gardens, ideal for the photographer including great macro. Dive sites are within easy reach taking only 15 - 40 minutes to access.

Wrecks: There are many undiscovered wrecks from WW2 around the Kuching area which offers some of the best wreck diving in the world with large cargo ships, a battle ship and submarines. Apparently lots of wrecks are still waiting to be found.

Because of the untouched nature of diving around this area, there are many new sites to explore without bumping into other divers. Often one can see mantas, whale shark, sea otters and many other animals.

Miri and Sibuti: The Miri-Sibuti Coral Reef National Park, lying at depths ranging from 7 to 30 metres offers great pristine patches of coral so again, fantastic for the photographer. Although around Miri it is fantastic reef diving, there are also five wrecks to explore such as the **Sri Gadong Wreck** resting upright in 18metres This small 30metre cargo ship is renowned for its large resident groupers. Another wreck is the Atago Maru, a large WW2 Japanese freighter, sunk in 1944, and in about 12 metres of water.

Anemone Garden and Eves Garden: In terms of flora and fauna composition, these two reefs are the most interesting. Although shallow dives, they are quite splendid in both hard and soft corals. The life is diverse with anemones and their clown fish, feather stars, giant clams, nudibranchs, bubble corals, staghorn corals and fantastic colorful soft corals.

Belais Reef: This site is described as an open zoo with pelagic, sea fans, large gorgonian fans of over 4 metre span, colourful whip corals, and yellow coral trees. The fish life is prolific and if you are a photographer you would have a great time here.

Tukau Drop-Off: The reef starts at about 20 metres and drops quickly to 40 metres. Often there is a vertical wall on the descent. Schooling jacks, barracudas, napoleon wrasse, yellowtail fusiliers, and large groupers should be seen.

Santak Point: With an average visibility of 30 meters or more, the sea fans, large colonies of gorgonian fans of 2-3 metres in size are found all over the top of the reef at 21 metres. The reef edge drops to 35 meters.

Siwa Reef: On the lower reef slope, leopard sharks and huge marble rays can be seen. This site is full of surprises in small packages; orange clownfish in purple anemones to several species of nudibranch.

Barracuda Point: A school of 300 large barracudas are predictably swirling in a never ending circle. At a depth of 25 metres, flatworms, sea horses, symbiotic shrimps and seldom seen nudibranchs are also commonly found.





Diving in Malaysia

Sabah

The sea around Sabah contains some of the best dive sites in the world. The legendary Jacques Cousteau rated the diving around Sipadan as one of his favourite dive sites of all time. This is not without good reason.

Sabah: Offers the diver many rare and endangered sea creature sightings including green and hawksbill turtles, napolean wrasse, giant clams, as well as countless species of sharks, thousands of barracuda and jacks. Sabah is not only known for its reef's larger inhabitants but also for smaller animals such as the mimic octopus, colourful cuttlefish, mandarin fish, harlequin ghost pipefish, frogfish and nudibranchs.

Kota Kinabalu: The main city in Sabah with but with a great introduction to Sabah diving. The tropical waters around offer great diving for beginners as well as the experienced diver. This also includes snorkeling. Sabah's government is ready to protect, preserve and rehabilitate perhaps the greatest diving destinations in the world.

Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park: A group of five islands just fifteen minutes from downtown Kota Kinabalu. The Marine Park is in shallow waters, but with fantastic colourful coral gardens. The location is ideal for novice divers or divers who are getting back into the sport. On saying that, the variety of interesting and rare marine creatures also make it a good dive location for experienced divers and underwater photographers. Scorpion fish, blue-spotted rays, cuttlefish, mantis shrimps and the occasional green or hawksbill turtle can be seen.

Layang Layang: Around 300km north of Kota Kinabalu in the South China Sea is the stunning, isolated dive island of Layang Layang where from March to October you can dive the pristine reefs. The water has excellent visibility, and steep drop off walls so excellent for the huge sea fans. There are regular sightings of pelagic fish such as scalloped hammerhead sharks, grey reef shark, leopard sharks as well as barracuda and the big eyed trevally. The 20m deep lagoon has some fantastic macro creatures to be found including seahorses, cuttlefish and pipefish. Many types of rays visit these waters as do dolphins.

Lankayan: Lankayan is a jewel in the Sulu Sea, a 1.5 hour boat ride north of Sandakan. Lankayan has been declared part of a marine protected area. Unpopulated and covered by thick tropical island vegetation, is an untouched paradise. The diving has colorful macro, fauna, fascinating wrecks and in season from March to May, regular sightings of the gigantic and harmless whale sharks. Situated within the 'Sea Turtle Corridor', Lankayan Island is also a nesting place and foraging ground for sea turtles. The green and hawksbill Turtles are the most commonly seen. If you go at the right time you will be able to see the baby turtles being released back into the sea. There are 14 dives sites around the island so plenty to keep you occupied at Lankayan.

Diving in Malaysia

Sabah

Turtle Island Park: Lies in the Sulu Sea. The park is a safe haven for the endangered green and hawksbill turtles and gives you the rare opportunity to watch turtle landings. As turtle landings usually occur after dusk, an overnight stay would be the best plan to see the turtles as they come ashore to lay their eggs. Turtles lay their eggs throughout the year, but the best time to go is between July and October when the sea is calmer. You will be able to see the collection of eggs, tagging of mother turtles and releasing of baby turtles into the sea. A great experience.

Tun Sakaran Marine Park: The largest marine park offers the diver much to see with its high level of unique biodiversity. There are eight islands in the park. It is around a 2 hour boat ride from Semporna and well worth taking the trip out there. You may see eagle rays, turtles, barracuda, bumphead parrotfish, and plenty of nudibranchs in the park. There are large walls and a mass of macro life in the Bodgaya lagoon, while the sandy areas are home to big gorgonian fans and sea pens.

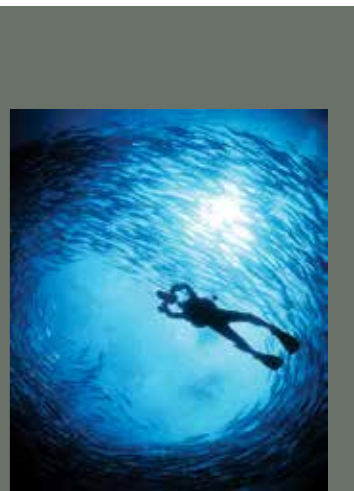
Sipadan: The legendary diving mecca, Sipadan is an oceanic island and was formed by living corals growing on top of an extinct undersea volcano, which rises 600m from the seabed. This makes this area one of the richest marine habitats in the world. It is situated off the south east coast of Sabah. The residential, schooling barracuda and big-eye trevally, often gather in their thousands forming spectacular tornado-like formations. With the possibility of seeing pelagic species such as mantas, eagle rays, scalloped hammerhead sharks and whale sharks, each dive at Sipadan is one for the book. It is not only the big fish that divers come to Sipadan to see, but equally the fantastic macro life. This is world class diving. Number of divers each day is carefully regulated and bookings are essential.

Mabul: Also renowned for its amazing array of macro life, making it an underwater photographer's dream location to photograph some of the rarest ecological species. Flamboyant cuttlefish, blue-ringed octopus, spike-fin gobies, frogfish and moray eels are to be seen. The reef is on the edge of the continental shelf and the seabed surrounding the reef slopes out to 25–30m deep.

Kapalai: The Kapalai Dive Resort sits on stilts in the Ligitan Reefs. The dive sites are close and are reached either by speedboat or some of them, just by swimming from the dive centre pier. In just a few minutes, you can be diving in Sipadan to see the big fish and turtles.

'The Rig': Although of course this is not an island it is perhaps one of the most famous dive venues in the world as it is unique. It is the only dive rig in the world and is situated in the heart of the coral triangle and the middle of the three islands, Sipadan, Mabul and Kapalai so is the ideal base to explore the unbelievable diving on offer.

Sipadan, Mabul, Kapalai and the Rig offer some of the best diving and interesting holidays you can have.





Diving in South Korea

South Korea is perhaps not known for diving outside of the country. If you have never been there it is certainly worth the effort going to have a few dives. Mainly the diving works around dive clubs who teach diving and organise dive trips around the country. Diving sites are in the East of the country and by far the most popular Jeju Island. Jeju is the local holiday mecca for Korean people but has also become very popular as an international destination. A wide variety of animals inhabit the waters, including frog fish, huge sand dollars, abalones, and colorful sea slugs. Also the soft corals, which grow large, up to a meter high, in a vibrant range of colors and sizes. Some walls are totally covered to create a soft coral forest.

Jeju Island:

Jeju Island: A one hour flight from Seoul. Situated 80 km off the southern coast of the Korean peninsula, it was formed by a volcanic eruption and has a number of craters on the island. Halla Mountain (1950m) is a National Park in the center of the island, an inactive volcano and provides a great hiking experience. There is much to do on the island so is well worth having a complete holiday here. The island is largely covered with forest and a unique high growing grass.

The waters off the southern coast of **Jeju Island** offer many attractions to divers. There are soft coral gardens and vertical walls, caverns and caves, white sandy bottoms and reefs of volcanic rock. Huge kelp forests grow from the bottom to the surface during the cold season. The fish life is a unique mix of tropical and cold water species. Octopus, lionfish, scorpion fish, grouper, jack, butterfly fish, angelfish, boxfish, and many others can be spotted while diving.

The beautiful nudibranches are the favourite of many divers and many can be seen together with many various species of soft coral. The soft coral is very good and comes in orange, yellow, purple, blue and white. Sometimes they cover a whole wall, sometimes they stand alone as a mighty soft coral tree in the blue water.

The underwater environment of **Jeju Island** has been described as being like a meeting of the under-sea landscapes of the Red Sea and Norway. The marine life has the colour and diversity of that living in the Red Sea and the black volcanic rocks covered with kelp are reminiscent of Norway's underwater landscape, resulting in both coral and kelp, and tropical and cold water species of fish. This is a wonderful undersea world for the underwater photographer to capture as the colour contrasts can be quite spectacular. The water temperature ranges from around 17 degrees in the winter to 26 degrees. It truly is an amazing place to dive and well worth a visit.

The small rocky islets off **Sogwipo City** are popular dive spots. These islets are uninhabited and their vertical walls fall straight into the depths.

Jeju Island is geared up to cater for specialised diving holidays and weekend dives, and you will find that there are few non Asian divers that have actually been here, apart from some enthusiastic expats. International divers are still a rarity so you can be sure that if you do choose to visit you will be diving somewhere your friends and associates have probably never been, nor even heard of.

Diving in South Korea

Jeju Island:

Off the southern part of the island there are 4 islands that are very popular. 3 of them (Little Munsom, Big Munsom, Supseom) are "shore-dives" where a boat drops you off on a rock ledge, you set up your gear and go diving from the rocks, and return back to the entry point. One island (Beomseom) is accessible only by boat dives.

Islet Diving: An uninhabited islet off Sogwipo. The steep walls of the islets make it possible to descend right at the point of entry, so not a lot of surface swims!. Between the dives, a rest on the island where you can swim, snorkel or sunbathe. You are provided with drinking water and served a light lunch.

Munsom: The most popular of the islets and offers three main entry points. One is located on Little Munsom and the other two on Munsom itself. The waters here are between 8 and 40 meters deep and show a rich marine life with various species of soft coral and a lot of fish. Diving the vertical wall on the north side of Little Munsom is a great dive.

Supsom (Forest Island): Has two main entry points and a unique natural beauty with rocks and pine trees. There is less coral than in Munsom but the fish life is interesting. Large schools of squid have been spotted there and sometimes the dolphins come in for feeding. Depth: 18 - 30 meters

Pomsom (Tiger Island): Has one main entry point but its best attractions are the boat diving spots on the north and south side of the island. It is a rocky reef with beautiful soft coral and exciting fish. Depth: 18 - 30 meters

Boat dives and charters can be arranged to fit with you or your group. This allows you to explore a little more.

East Coast

East Coast of Korea: Around Sokcho and Gangneung, there are plenty of sites you can dive. In fact, just about anywhere in Gangwon-Do along the ocean you'll find little scuba diving shops where you can rent a couple tanks. Best if you take your own reg and BC. Bring your own dive-buddy as well since most shops don't offer guided diving, but only rent out the tanks and organise the boat ride. Your best bet is to join up on a trip with one of the expat clubs who seem to head here at least a couple of times a month. This happens often and really gets you out to diving somewhere very different and new.

And before we leave South Korea we have to mention the true divers in this fabulous country.

Hae-nyo, literally Sea Maiden, famous on Jeju and for hundreds of years, these incredible ladies free dive, collecting shellfish, crustaceans, sea cucumbers, fish & other marine life, including nutritious kelp, cut with a hand scythe. All of their catch is placed in a net bag and bought to the surface. Go and see them, they are unique.





Diving in Thailand

Thailand has more than a 1,000 miles of coastline, with one part facing east towards the Gulf of Thailand and one facing west to the **Andaman Sea**. Along both coasts are hundreds of islands (called Koh) surrounded by marine life.

There are many different styled dive packages to suit all tastes, budgets and experiences throughout Thailand. From 1 day to 21 days and can be fully inclusive if required. Liveboards are available for those who want the ultimate dive experience, particularly around the Andaman Islands and the Mergui Archipelago.

Phuket: Phuket is the main departure point for the liveboard boats heading for the Andaman Sea. There are a few good dive sites off the shores of Phuket Island itself. Phuket has many resorts and hotels so an excellent base if the family is with you.

Phi Phi: Koh Phi Phi offers a great variety of diving on its local reefs, with good hard and soft coral and a rich diversity of marine life. This area is suitable for all levels of divers. Snorkelling around Phi Phi is excellent, with plenty of shallow coral gardens and fringing reefs. Phi Phi was the location for the film 'The Beach' starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

The Similans

The Similans consist of 9 islands and is recognised as being one of the Asia Pacific's top dive destinations. The underwater geography and terrain is highlighted by good quality reefs especially the soft corals. The marine life includes many of the larger pelagics, including leopard shark, manta rays and barracuda. The east-facing dive sites feature gently sloping reefs and drop-offs with impressive gardens of sea anemones, with the western sites featuring giant boulders in depths of 40m or more. Currents have kept the gaps between the boulders free from a build-up of sand, leading to the development of tunnels, archways and caverns that provide exciting swim-throughs. The currents also provide nutrients for masses of gorgonians, crinoids, sea fans and lush soft corals.

The Similans are dived as both multi-day liveboard excursions and daily dive trips, scheduled from Phuket and Khao Lak.

Lanta: The diving to the south of Koh Lanta and the adjacent islands is exceptionally good and quite uncrowded. This is thought of as one of the best dive areas in Thailand. The variety of walls, fringing reefs, caves and a wreck to explore around the offshore islands, islets and rocks are considerable. The variety of life has a good healthy cross section of reef and pelagic species.

Khao Lak: Day dives and liveboards mainly concentrate diving around the Mu Koh Similan and Surin Marine National Parks. The liveboards will also cruise north to the Mergui Archipelago with its 800 island and limestone rock formations. This area was only opened up in 1997 so even to this day, is little known. There are also a couple of wrecks. The 'Boonsong' lies just off the coast and can be a great dive. With so much marine life it can be a good opportunity to photograph tiny and endemic nudibranchs and if you are lucky, a whale shark. The second wreck, the 'Premchai', lies upside down but remains in one piece allowing good exploration.

Diving in Thailand

Krabi: There is good diving around a couple of islands, Koh Podah Nai and Koh Podah Nok. With limestone outcrops it makes the geography, with its caves and swim throughs together with the soft corals and diverse marine life, excellent diving. Other areas around this location are Koh Phi Phi, Shark Point Marine Sanctuary, Hin Daeng and Mouang. The shallow reefs also offer some great snorkelling.

Gulf of Thailand

Tao (West): The diving around Koh Tao is varied and is good for all levels of diver. There are a number of shipwrecks, suitable in some cases for confident divers only. Starting at 14 metres and dropping to 44 metres is the unique feature of the underwater pinnacles, covered with sea anemones, hard and soft corals. Maybe a visit by a large pelagic. The opposite are the dives along gentle sloping coral reefs. Again a huge range of flora and fauna. A number of good snorkelling sites are off the beach at Nang Yuan island.

Chang (East): Mu Koh Chang Marine National Park is spread over a large area and consists of 52 islands and it is here that you can experience uncrowded diving. There are good reefs, pinnacles and walls to explore and together with the variety of fish and pelagics, it offers great diving. Giant clams as well as rays and the odd whale shark can be seen in this area. There are a number of good snorkelling sites.

Other areas to consider are **Hin Kuak Maa** with moray eels, turtles, stonefish and puffer fish, so really good for close up photography. **Hin Luk Bath** is a favourite dive area with its unique boulder formations.

Samui: Although Samui is renowned for its long sandy beaches and its nightlife, there are a number of good dive sites around the island. However, the suggested best sites are further north, via boat. Confident divers can enjoy exciting deep wall-dives.

Chumphon: Chumphon is a selection of natural attractions with a good amount of marine life and fringing reefs. This place has become famous for night diving. Ko Lak Ngam located just 15 km north-east of Chumphon, is one of 40 islands belonging to the Chumphon Marine National Park. There are plenty of hard and soft corals and is home to a large amount of sea life such as bat fish, trevally, fusiliers, turtle and seasonal whale sharks.

Pattaya: One of the most popular dives is the Hardeep Wreck, a wreck sunk in the second world war. The wreck lies on its side in 26 metres of water.

Diving throughout Thailand is a great experience as there are many areas to explore. Whether you are on a diving trip or taking a holiday with the family, Thailand offers diving holidays and options to suit all.





Diving in Niue

Niue is a Pacific Island paradise, one of the smallest, arguably the cleanest and friendliest countries on earth. Sitting atop a dormant volcano, Niue is the largest coral atoll in the world. The earth's dramatic forces have created stunning and unique scenery both above and below the water....the perfect dive destination.

Just over 3 hours flying Air NZ from Auckland will see you land in your very own resort country. Niue operates on the NZ\$ so offers very good value for money.

With world class diving, fishing, walking, caving and whale interactions set in a relaxing tropical environment; Niue is a soft adventure and ecotourism paradise. It's a place where it's normal for complete strangers to wave at each other, all the time. It's a place where nature hasn't been broken.... and things are the way 'they should be'.

Swim with whales and dolphins, dive within underwater caverns in crystal clear water, discover your own secluded sandy cove teeming with coloured fish, snorkel over bright coral in warm waters and explore breath taking caves with ease...and that's just your first day in Niue!

After you visit Niue it will be a place about which you will say, "I have a friend that lives there". In fact you will probably have a few. You will arrive as a visitor and leave as a friend.

Niue is also one of the world's safest destinations and one of the few countries in the world where crime is almost unheard of. It's also free of any harmful animals or insects!

Discovering Niue will have you planning your return before you've even departed, so if you want a little bit of adventure back in your life then Niue will under promise and over deliver, every time. The 64 km road circling Niue is mostly sealed, as are most inland routes between the main town and the surrounding villages. Local sea and bush tracks connect everything else most of these are not sealed. At 269 sq. kms

Niue is over four times the size of Rarotonga. In fact, Niue's much larger than the entire Cooks group of fifteen islands put together....so we strongly recommend you hire a car, motorbike or bicycle for your stay to ensure you can access all of Niue's scenic sites and villages.

There are several well established rental car companies with safe, well maintained vehicles for hire. You will also need a local driver's license from the Police Department - these are possibly the best souvenirs ever! You can also guarantee that while getting around you will make a few local friends.

Where the sheer cliffs meet the water line your diving adventure begins. As Niue is a single land mass with no surrounding islands all dive sites are short boat trips and close to land. Jump into the unique crystal clear water unlike anywhere else world-wide. Visibility can reach up to 100 metres and rarely falls below 40 metres. Alongwith Niue's stunning underwater clarity is warm water ranging between 24 degrees in winter to 30 degrees in summer.

Diving in Niue

Diving in Niue is easy yet rewarding with minimal currents and an interesting mix of diving in caverns, caves, walls and drop-offs, with pristine hard coral reef. Whether you are just starting out or are a regular to the underwater world Niue has something to offer to make your dives unforgettable. No specific training is required for the caves or cavern diving- all have easy access and natural light source with depth ranges from 5m- 30 metres.

Niue is the home of the endemic Niuean Sea Krait, which can be found in water holes all over the island, though major congregations are common at Snake Gully or inside Bubble Cave where these sea snakes lay their eggs. They are very friendly and truly mesmerising to observe. Most people are nervous the first time they see them, however once you have been formally acquainted it will not take long to see they are friend not foe.

Niuean waters are home to a wide range of reef fish, and due to close proximity to deep waters large pelagic species are frequent visitors; such as Barracuda, Tuna, Wahoo, Rays, Sharks and many more. The diversity of species will keep you entertained on dives.

Whales: Humpback Whales migrate to Niue from June to October to mate and calve. They are often spotted very close to land, breaching and teaching their young how to play. Niue is one of the few places in the world you can get in the water with Humpback Whales. An unforgettable experience with these gentle giants only metres away.

Spinner Dolphins: Niue also has their resident Spinner Dolphins which are regularly guests. Always eager to play in the bow of the boat and show off with their unique aerobatics that give them their name. Buccaneer Adventures Niue Dive offers snorkelling trips with a chance of getting in the water with these amazing creatures.

With more than 14 dive sites and up to 15 divers catered for per dive Buccaneer Adventures Niue Dive can cater for all levels of divers needs. They provide top quality and well serviced equipment so divers need not bring anything. Buccaneer Adventures Niue Dive also offers a wide range of courses from beginner to professional levels as well as free-diving.

Don't you just hate it when you have had an amazing holiday yet it seems that the Jones' down the road have already been there and done that! That's unlikely to be the case with Niue. You will have people intrigued with your travel stories and photos on return. Be a pioneer of travel and experiences. Dive Niue!





Diving in New Caledonia

New Caledonia has perhaps the most prolific marine animal life in the South Pacific. Within a single dive a vast assortment of tropical fish can be seen during just that one dive. With fish such as sharks, (lemon shark in the Isle of Pines) manta rays, turtles, moray eels, groupers, sea snakes, lionfish, butterfly fish, leaf and cabbage fish and a host of other unusual species, New Caledonia is a paradise for the underwater photographer.

With New Caledonia being in the world's largest lagoon it offers unique diving, and with the other islands such as **Isle of Pines, Ouvéa, Lifou, and Maré**, New Caledonia is without doubt a divers paradise.

Around the main Island are many dive sites and one of the best ways to explore is to hire a car and drive around, stopping where and when you like and calling into the local dive club for a dive. Accommodation at one of the many 'Gites', a kind of bed and breakfast, is a great way to see the country. It is good to plan and book ahead though as these are very popular.

The Main Island of New Caledonia

Nouméa: Nouméa has some great dive sites, including the Amédée Lighthouse Reserve, which often includes a host of flora and fauna, and due to it being a marine reserve the fish will come very close to you. So if you are a photographer it really is a fantastic opportunity.

Nouméa is a good base while you explore the area, and as an added bonus it will allow you to enjoy the many attractions the city has to offer. From Nouméa, you can either hire a car and drive around the main island, go on an organised diving tour or catch a short flight to one of the outer islands.

A number of wreck dives are located inside the lagoon, one being the **La Dieppoise**, a wooden patrol boat sunk in 1988 by the Navy to become a dive site, located 26m underwater. Lots of life and a good night dive. Other wrecks include the Humboldt near the Dumbea Pass, and the Snark, a cargo ship sunk in 1942. This site is often visited by leopard shark and black spotted rays,

Boulouparis: The first stop north from Nouméa and it is worth having a couple of dives on the Tenia Horn, a coral collection of underwater peaks rising up from the earth. It is home to numerous fish species such as pelagics, eagle rays, and turtles. Plenty of accommodation in the area.

Bourail: Bourail has a number of really good dive sites for both the confident diver and the novice. Again with such an abundant marine life it is easy to get totally absorbed in what the dives have to offer. One dive is called the **false pass of the green islet**. Great name!. This dive offers easy dives to some and deep diving for the experienced. Leopard shark and rays can be seen here. Another good site is the Kélé Elbow a vertical drop from 18 to 70 metres with canyons and fantastic coral formations.

Koumac: Here you can dive the Shark Hole, the Kendec Peak where you can see a huge variety of life, the Deverd Faults where you can see pelagics of all shapes and sizes, the Coral Forest for fantastic Gorgonians and to top it off, a wreck dive called B17.

Diving in New Caledonia

The Main Island of New Caledonia (continued)

Poum: Just 35 kilometres north of Koumeac we are at the top of the island at Poum, considered by many to be one of the most beautiful dive sites in the world, with the dive in the Gazelle Pass staying in your memory for a long time. This is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Nothing else to say. Go and dive it!

Hienghène: Down from Poum on the opposite side of the island, Hienghène is a very attractive area with excellent dives. Between July and November in the Hienghène Pass, the humpback whales on their way north are often seen with the dive finishing under an arch covered in gorgonia. The Cathedral is a deep rift dive into a tunnel which opens up to an area full of life, including fabulous gorgonia. The seabed continues down to some 55 metres via a beautiful wall. Another excellent dive is the Hiengu pass where caves come to the open, and with the light shining down, creates wonderful light displays on pristine coral gardens.

Poindimié: There are more than 50 dive sites here with the distinctive geography of rifts, arches and canyons.

Prony Needle: We cannot leave the main island without mentioning the Prony Needle. It is situated south of Nouméa and is unique in that it is a chimney structure created by hydrothermal activity and rises from 38 metres up to just 2 metres from the surface. A different and unique dive.

The Islands

Isle of Pines: Known as the Jewel of the Pacific and not without a good reason as it is a beautiful island with white beaches. Film companies have featured this island many times. On the Kasmira Reef there is a high chance to see the elusive leopard shark lying on the bottom. The Isle of Pines offers many types of gorgonia, soft coral and sponges. Together with numerous geographical rift valleys to explore.

A unique fresh water cave dive is also available in the centre of the island where a grotto of stalagmites and stalactites can be seen in crystal clear water.

Lifou: Situated in the Loyalty Islands to the east of the main island, Lifou offers great unspoiled diving with a huge range of fantastic colourful Gorgonia, together with a huge range of flora and fauna. Lifou is well worth the flight over.

Ouvéa and Maré: Both in the Loyalty Islands and very much undived. Ouvéa with its 25 klm beach is one of the most beautiful islands in the world, with the dive sites often protected from the winds. Drift dives are the main type of diving. If you want to explore outside of the main areas, these islands are perfect.





Diving in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea has some of the world's most spectacular diving. For the photographer it is paradise. Even buying a cheap camera is well worth the effort. With well known areas such as Madang, Kavieng, Rabaul, Kimbe, Tufi and Milne Bay the opportunities for your fantastic dive trip are endless.

The diving includes, barrier reefs, wall diving, coral gardens, patch reefs, fringing reefs, sea grass beds, coral atolls, and wreck dive sites. The wreck diving sites of Papua New Guinea provide a collection of ships, aircraft and submarine wrecks from World War 2.

Milne Bay is famous as one of the Worlds finest dive destinations. The area is rich in both large and small creatures that are to be found on the rich coral reefs, walls and muck sites. The diving is spectacular with World War 2 wrecks, shark diving, and underwater volcanic activity.

As an explanation, muck diving is the sediment on the bottom of the ocean. It can be made up of all kinds of material but within it lies a range of amazing creatures hidden among the rubble.

Tawali PNG

Tawali Resort is tucked away, only accessible by boat, and it may be Papua New Guinea's best kept scuba diving secret. Welcome to the exotic culture of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and to Tawali Resort. Located on a volcanic bluff overlooking the clear protected waters of Milne Bay, Tawali offers travelers a unique location to dive, relax and enjoy the unspoiled wonders of this magnificent part of the world.

Some of Tawali great diving locations:

Jason's Reef: A small coral mound located in 150 feet of water. This mound has large schools of banner fish and fusiliers as well as many pelagics. Also on this mound is the sought after rhinopious or weedy scorpion fish.

Little China: A coral mound coming out of 150 feet of water. Typical of over 30 dive sites in close proximity. Large schools of fish over the front face, soft coral gardens where both macro and wide angle photographers can be more than satisfied.

Michelles's Reef: Located on the North Coast, this dive site provides both macro and wide angle. A shallow wall dropping off to 25 feet. A beautiful swim-through with gorgonians growing off the wall and sea bed. Able to shoot up into the jungle canopy from 20 feet of water. Also ideal for macro, a large variety of nudibranchs, Pegasus fish and on occasions mimic octopus.

Crinoid City: A coral mound coming up from 120 feet of water. As it's name suggests, it plays host to a variety of crinoids. The front slope of this reef is covered with a variety of black coral trees. Off the slope, huge schools of fusiliers, anthias and jacks circle. Excellent for wide angle.

Tawali PNG

Pelagic Point: This dive site has relatively strong currents and because of this there are large quantities of fish patrolling a steep wall dropping off to 130 feet. Sharks are often sighted on this dive. The top of the reef is approximately 215 feet and has a large number of bommies hosting a magnificent variety of sea life, ie: crabs, rays, crays not to mention all the fish.

Tania's Reef: A large coral mound coming from 140 ft to just 8 ft from the surface. Divers are able to dive around the full circumference of the reef on a single tank. The south side of the reef is littered with soft corals of all descriptions. Large schools of fish feed off this face. The reef also plays host to giant clams and turtles.

Cobb's Cliff: Steep drop off on one side down to 150+ft rising to just 20ft below the surface and dropping back in the center to a sandy lagoon to 60ft. This site is frequently visited by large pelagics such as manta rays and hammerhead sharks. The reef also hosts a variety of macro subjects such as leaf scorpion fish, rhinopious, blue ribbon eels, elegant fire gobys, and so much more.

Wahoo Point: A small point located on the north side of the mainland with a shelf from 15 to 50 feet in depth and dropping with a sheer wall down to 200+ft. This site is frequently visited by hammerheads, manta rays, occasionally whale sharks, minki whales and on two occasions, orcas. The site also hosts a variety of anemones, a school of barracuda and very large elephant ear sponges. A great place for wide angle photography.

Lauadi: This dive site you could spend a number of days doing. This location actually has two separate dives. Straight off the boat, no deeper than 25ft of water you have an incredible collection of cleaning stations, divers are able to get their teeth cleaned if they wish. The site has a variety of octopuses and on occasions, the mimic has appeared.

Cherie's Reef: This is a beautiful drift dive along a slope that's covered with large Gorgonians and littered with large schools of fish. Particular gorgonians host the infamous pigmy sea horse.

Observation Point: A true rubble dive. Sand slopes going down 100' host snake eels, star gazers, pipe fish, flamboyant cuttle fish, mimic octopus, spanish dancers, cuttle fish, fire urchins with coleman shrimp and the bugs bunny scorpion fish.

Sponge Heaven: A sheer wall starting at 2 feet below the surface dropping to 200+ft, honey combed with small caves. Huge variety of sponges and home to a variety of Nudibranchs, including the large Spanish Dancer. Beautiful night dive.

The other way to see Milne Bay and the surrounding area is diving from a liveaboard and one such vessel is the M.V. Cher-tan. The vessel has been operating in the area for more than 16 years, although the owner has been exploring and establishing dive sites in Milne Bay for more than 35 years, and has built up a knowledge of Milne Bay dive sites like no other. Reservations for this is made through Tawali.





Australia

Australia is a vast country and, as you would expect, the diving around the coast is some of the best in the world. The country offers diving from the tropics through to temperate waters. Below are only a few ideas as there are many around Australian.

Perhaps the most famous area is the **Great Barrier Reef** some 2000kms long. It is little wonder the reef offers great diving. Diving is available throughout **Queensland** but good departure points are the **Whitsundays, Cairns and Port Douglas** as they all give good access to many dive sites along the reef. Many day trips are available, or for further afield to places such as the ribbon reefs, the cod hole and the coral sea, the liveaboard is a good option. The vast amount of fish species at around 1625 gives you a good start to seeing so much on your dive.

From **Townsville** you can dive the famous wreck, the **SS Yongala** which lies towards the south of the reef in open water, The wreck has become a magnet for a huge amount of sea life.

Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia is a beautifully untouched fringing reef, one of the largest on earth. Diving in these vibrant and colourful pristine waters is unforgettable with so much flora and fauna to see. The whaleshark, which can be seen from April to June each year is a must and mantas, turtles and humpback whales are also regular visitors.

Rottneest Island in Western Australia offers diving in caverns and huge swim throughs. The soft corals and the fish life are excellent. The waters are normally very clear.

Dunsborough in Western Australia is the dive site for **HMAS Swan**. It was sunk purposely for divers in 1997 and now lies in 35 metres of water. This is now a great wreck dive.

Port Lincoln in South Australia and **shark cage diving** is great for the thrill seeker to get up close to the great white shark.

Fiji Islands

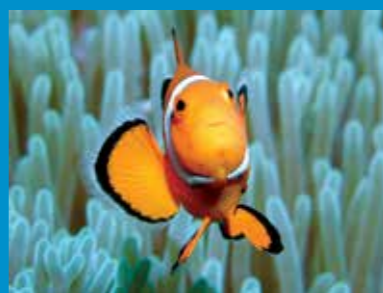
Fiji not only has fabulous diving but many resorts and liveaboards to cater for all tastes. Whether you are a hard core diver or a holiday diver you will find you are catered for very well and with the Fijian hospitality you will have a great time in these islands.

The **Mamanuca Islands** and the **Yasawa Islands** both have a lot of dive sites. This is where many of the resorts are situated. The Mamanucas have shallow lagoons with hollows and bommies with excellent marine life. There are some interesting caves to explore notably Sawa-i-Lau in the Yasawa Group. To the north of the main island is **Nanani-i-Ra** and the **Lomaiviti Group** with terrific diving in both areas.

The now famous **Rainbow Reef** in the Northern Islands offers advanced drift diving through channels. In this area there are many reefs around islands such as **Taveuni, Qamea, Laucala and Matagi** with a great variety of soft and hard corals. Rainbow Reef hosts approximately 390 species of corals and 1500 species of fish, and many large pelagics.

The **Astrolabe Reef** is situated in **Kadavu** and lies south of the mainland. It is certainly one of the great diive spots with three major passes, drop offs', numerous caverns, caves and pinnacles together with many species of fish and soft coral to appreciate. Within the reef you can see many species of shark, many ray types including the fabulous manta ray found at manta reef. Where else!, bumphead parrotfish, and barracuda.

Beqa, a small island off the south coast of **Viti Levu** and famous for its world class shark diving although there are lots of other creatures and corals to see around **Beqa and Beqa Lagoon**. However, it is the shark diving which has become famous here with the shark marine being created. Around 8 species of shark are present including bulls, tigers, lemons, silvertips, grey reefs, white-tipped, black-tipped and tawny nurses. The big bulls hang around at around 30 metres.



Vanuatu

If you are planning on diving on the deeper wreck dive such as the **SS President Coolidge** it is wise to organise some dives on Vila prior to your trip to Santos. Below are a couple of suggestions and great diving in Vanuatu.

Port Vila has a number of excellent dive sites such as the **Pango wall drift dive** with its anemones, nudibranchs, mushroom coral, gorgonian fans, hawksbill turtles and barracuda. **Mele Reef** is a lovely dive to see spectacular coral and fish life. **The Cathedral** with shafts from the ceiling to vast caverns. A wreck dive on the **Konanda** lying in 26 metres on a sandy bottom. Other deeper wreck dives include the **Star of Russia**, a sailing ship 80 metres in length, the **Semele Federsen** an island trader and the **Tasman Flying Boat** to explore through the cockpit.

Within **Mele Bay** lies **Hideaway Island** and the resort there is custodian to one of Vanuatu's only marine sanctuaries. The reefs around here are ideal for divers and snorkelers and will get you comfortable in the water. As it is a marine sanctuary it is ideal for the photographer. The dive sites have a great range of life from sponges and hard corals, to anemones, gorgonian fans, and many different fish species. Night diving is excellent.

Diving on the island of **Espiritu Santo** is very famous for the accessible intact wreck of the **SS President Coolidge**, perhaps one of the best wreck dives in the world. Only metres from the shore, she lies in 20 metres of water at the bow and 65 meters at the stern. This dive is a must for the diver who wants to explore one of the worlds best. Other fabulous dives on the island are **Million Dollar Point** where the Americans bulldozed thousands of trucks, jeeps and equipment into the channel. This is truly an historical dive site. **The Henry Bonnard** and the **USS Tucker** are also great wreck dives. Santo is not all about wrecks as there are some great reef dives such as **Cindies Reef**, the **Aore Wall** a gentle drift dive to encounter hard corals, fans, trigger fish and passing pelagics. The macro life puts this on a photographers wish list.

Samoa

Samoa is comprised of 10 islands, of which **Savaii** and **Upolu** are the largest. The 8 smaller islands includes Apolima, Fanuatapu, Manono, Namua, Nuulopa, Nuulua, Nuusafee and Nuutele. Samoa is one of the most pristine and unspoiled underwater environments of the world. The islands are rich in marine life and diving through canyons, along walls, swim-throughs and coral gardens you will see why. Schools of barracuda and tuna, turtles, reef sharks, moray eels and rays as well as plenty of tropical fish and striking coral. There are many dive spots throughout the islands and certainly with Samoa not being too commercial, it is a nice place to relax and dive.

The Rock dive is around a small volcanic pinnacle dropping to between 12 and 18 metres where you will hope to see barracuda and many giant clams. Surrounding the hard coral is tropical fish, anemone, clown fish, trigger fish, manta rays, trevally, napoleon, tuna and moray eels.

Apolima Gardens dive is under the cliffs of **Apolima Island**. The coral garden begins at 8metres and drops to 40metres. Large table corals hide lobsters and rainbow runners, unicorn fish, turtles, napoleon, reef sharks and blue fin tuna.

A wreck dive on the Juno is only a 5 minute boat trip from shore. This was a 3 mast missionary sailing ship which sunk in Lelepa bay in 1881. This iron wreck is full of corals and fish life including, trumpet fish, turtles, parrot fish, and yellow snapper.

Canyon Pinnacle consists mainly of pinnacles with many swim throughs and canyons to explore, reaching a depth of 25 meters. usual visibility is around 20m. Among the cracks and crevices you might see turtles and puffer fish, as well as an assortment of other fish and corals.



Cook Islands

Rarotonga, the Cook Islands, has many dive sites around the island including wrecks, caves, passages and stunning coral formations. The warm water and easy access makes for great diving. In the lagoon it's common to see octopus, eels, trevally, puffer fish and even the occasional eagle ray. The larger species tend to stay outside the lagoon. The green and hawksbill turtles are also found in the Cook Islands so the diversity of the diving and flora and fauna is extensive. A group of spotted eagle rays are a fantastic sight and certainly one when you need your camera.

The North Side of the island has nice coral in the shallows and heaps of reef fish which makes it a great spot for introductory dives. It is also the site of two of Rarotonga's wrecks, the **RMS Mai Tai** and the **MV Miss Mataora**. With huge bommies creating overhangs and gullies, and sea life such as turtles, and napoleon wrasse it offers a great opportunity for photography.

The South Side of the island offers dramatic drop offs where many of the large animals are likely to be. Species such as turtles, reef sharks, eagle rays, tuna and barracuda can be seen. Dive sites such as the **Rutaki Passage** where you should meet with a few turtles, moray eels and lion fish as you swim along and through the swim throughs. **Papua Passage** with its excellent visibility and coral is a fabulous dive and at around 18 metres suits all levels of diver. Other dives are the **Avaavaroa Passage** and drop off.

The East Side of the island has some of the steepest drop offs just a short swim from the shallows. You can hover over the drop off looking down into the deep ocean, where you will often see a few reef shark down on the sand. Sites such as **Canyons** offer some of the largest coral formations and swim throughs in the Cook Islands.

The West Side of the island is where you find the big coral formations, with huge mushroom coral bommies and a myriad of swim throughs. You will often find sharks and eagle rays, along with lionfish, moray eels, crayfish and many other tropical reef fish.

French Polynesia (Tahiti)

French Polynesia is one of the most beautiful diving destinations on the planet.

With the water temperature warm all year around (26-31°) and excellent visibility, the islands offer a wide range of different sites such as walls, channels, and fantastic lagoons. A vast array of colourful tropical fish are everywhere, but one thing stands out, and that is the prolific amount of large animals such as manta rays, turtles, dolphins, humphead wrasses, barracudas, gigantic shoals of jack fish, surgeon fish, parrot fish, and lion fish. The area has become the largest shark sanctuary in the world with species of shark such as white and black tip shark, lemon, tiger, hammerhead, grey reef and sometimes the silky shark.

There is fantastic diving throughout the country, in such places as the island of **Tahiti** itself with its great wall diving and giant moray eels. Each island in French Polynesia offers something different. **Bora Bora** has the mantas rays and great drift dives, **Manihi** and **Tikehau** have the pristine lagoon and enormous schools of fish. **Raiatea** has the wrecks, deep lagoon, and octopus dives, **Moorea** may be shark feeding, moray eels, sea turtles, and the humpback whales, when they are passing through.

Rangiroa: Drift diving into the lagoon is the nearest thing you will get to flying underwater. Barracudas and humphead wrasse will be keeping you company.

Fakarava: Outside the north pass you will see shoals of barracuda, sharks and other pelagic species. On the inside of the north pass you will experience a high concentration of sharks and fish, and a beautiful coral garden in the middle of the pass. The inflowing current drift dive in the southern pass will astound you. The sight of the giant wall of grey reef sharks is the highest concentration in the world. Literally hundreds, all in one spot together, with humphead wrasse, beautiful coral and a multitude of tropical fish. Probably the best diving experience in Polynesia!



Tonga

Diving in Tonga, and particularly Ha'apai, is known for superb coral reefs, diverse topography and a big variety of fish life. With coral sea mounts, overhangs, tunnels, swim throughs, drop offs and even a few caves. Diving in Tonga has something for divers of all interests and experience levels.

Tonga has a prolific amount of reef fish such as the parrot, butterfly, clown, angel and triggerfish but you can also see wrasse, grouper, snapper, sweetlip, trumpet, and lionfish. Bigger pelagics include barracuda, tuna, eagle and sting rays, batfish, turtles, sea snakes and the rare leopard shark. Occasionally, sightings of a hammerhead shark, and manta rays, and between July and October, Tonga is famous for sightings of the humpback whale. With such varieties as the nudibranch, pipefish, longnose hawkfish, scorpionfish, crabs and shrimps, it is certainly a photographers paradise. To cap it all you may get to see the pacific spinner dolphins as they make an occasional appearance. What more can you ask for!

There are more than 30 dive sites but we can only mention a few of the great sites available.

The Arch of Ofolanga, The South Pacific's only known coral arch, located 15 miles offshore, It begins at a depth of 20 meters and leads to **The Shark's mouth**, an opening that takes divers into a tunnel inhabited by hundreds of lobsters and shrimps, followed by a 3 cavern cave system. Suitable only for confident divers.

Diving on **the Bank** with lovely overhanging coral and it is here you can see the resident **leopard shark** among the wrasse and butterfly fish. On **Blakes Reef** you might catch site of a hammerhead shark and manta rays. The hard coral here is pristine and home to schools of batfish. **Cliffanger** is a good name for the 45 degree overhang and to explore beneath it will give you great rewards. Nudibranchs, wrasse, emperors, groupers, butterfly, parrotfish, damselfish, chromis and lizardfish are everywhere. **The Sisters**, two sea pinnacles starting at 5 and 10 meters, dropping off steeply to 50 meters, are crowned with beautiful branching and table acropora corals, while their sides are literally covered in hundreds of feather stars which play host to elegant squat lobsters, crinoid clingfish and crinoid shrimps. Giant clams are also seen together with huge plate coral.

New Zealand

Diving around New Zealand offers a huge range of contrasts from the warmer northern waters to to colder southern waters.

North Island: Here are a few of the great dive sites in the north island.

The Poor Knights: And yet another of the dive sites Jacques Cousteau rates in the top ten dive sites of the world. With the warmer subtropical current flowing through the area it is a wonderland of sub-aquatic arches, caves and tunnels. You may be diving with maomao, trevally, stingrays and the fantastic kingfish, colourful sponges, anemones, nudibranchs and moray eels. This is wonderful New Zealand diving and excellent for the photographer.

The wreck of the **Tui**, an ex minesweeper, lies in 30 metres off **Tutukaka Heads**. There are access points cut to allow the diver into the control room, bridge and other parts of the ship.

Who can forget the bombing of the **Rainbow Warrior**? The wreck was sunk off the **Cavalli Islands** as an artificial reef and is now well established with fantastic colourful anemones and a host of various fish species now calling it home.

White Island is an active volcano and makes for excellent diving around the island to witness the underwater fissures letting off steam. Because of the warmer water the diver is rewarded with lots of life including nudibranchs, stingrays, morays, and kingfish. A number of pinnacles rise from the ocean floor.

South Island: Good dive sites are around the island including **Stewart Island** and the **Chatham Islands**. Here are just two.

The **Mikhael Lermontov**, a Russian liner, hit rocks while negotiating a narrow passage and sank. It is one of the great modern wreck dives of the world. It lies on its side with the bridge wing just 12 metres down and the rest up to 36 metres.

Diving in the wilderness of **Fiordland** is a very different dive. You dive through the top layers of freshwater water into clear seawater and the most amazing sight seen on a dive. With perhaps the highest density of **black coral** in the world this is something you have to see! **Red coral** also grows here!

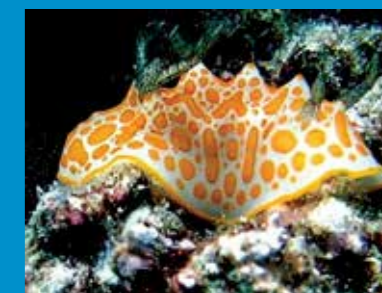


Indonesia

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago with more than 17,000 thousand beautiful islands containing around 12 percent of the world's coral reefs. About 4000 different species are found in the Indonesian waters. Diving on the steep walls and barriers reefs will get you close to colourful nudibranch, pipe fish and seahorses swimming around the chrynoids, gorgonias and soft corals, The big fish are also on show including big tunas, barracudas, manta rays and sharks. In some areas you might even get to sight the dugong. That would be an experience.

As **Indonesia** is a huge country here are just a few ideas of the diving areas around the country.

The Raja Ampat area of Northwest Irian Jaya has many islands, surrounded by reefs and a huge range of sea life. With both hard and soft corals many of the reefs are pristine, and with a good drift dive you will see mile after mile of the coral landscape. Hopefully you will see a wobbegong shark as you fly by. **Bali** offers a wide range and variety of dive sites as you can dive on a wreck, vertical drop offs, huge bommies, coral forests and seagrass. The islands of **Nusa Penida and Ceningan**, offer excellent diving, and at Bali's northwestern tip lies **Pulau Menjangan**, a part of Bali Barat National Park. **The Komodo Islands** give you world class diving and is the home to the komodo dragon, the worlds largest living lizard. Underneath the water it is a brilliant mix of colour and exotic life, with the seabed covered with florescent corals and marine invertebrates. **Sangalaki** claims to be the world capital of the mantas rays. They arrive from all directions and is a sight to behold as they can gather in large numbers. Great! **Bunaken island** is facing the coastline of **Manado**. This island is one of the world's most beautiful sea environments with a fantastic density of fish and coral. You can experience wall diving, caverns, gullies, large caves and a vast amount of different creatures including the famous spanish dancer. The diving on **Derawan** is varied from walls and fringing reef to caverns. Green turtles, whitetip, leopard and nurse sharks, barracudas, napoleon wrasses, cuttle fish, spanish mackerel, jacks and batfishes, are to be seen. Both the green and hawksbill turtles lay their eggs here. Other areas to dive are **Flores and Alor Islands** and **Biri and Selayar**. As you see, a huge range of dive sites await your visit.



Vietnam

Diving in Vietnam is quite new to the international diver, although now must be considered as a dive area worth visiting. It is a little known fact that **Jacques Cousteau** first found his passion for diving around Whale Island in Vietnam. New sites and areas are being opened up all the time... so much to explore.

Nha Trang has become the main centre of diving, with dives to show off the multitude of soft corals and more than 50 species of nudibranchs which makes this one of the best spots for macro photography. For some reason it is very rare to see the big pelagics so it is good to plan your dive around the smaller creatures. The walls of the pinnacle which towers from 45 metres to the surface is encased in a huge variety of soft corals and there is a large swim through covered bright yellow sunflower corals. There are also caves to explore with unusual flatworms, shrimp and the fabulous ghost pipefish. Other dives here offer drop offs and walls where you may get a glimpse of the frog fish, but you have to get your eye in as they are so well camouflaged. Batfish, grouper and sting rays are there as is the playful clown fish.

Whale Island is around 90 minutes north of **Nha Trang** located on the very quiet and beautiful **Van Phong Bay**. Diving is mainly done from January through till around October. Some great dive spots are here such as **Hon Trau Nam** where the pinnacle is situated. The bottom is covered in yellow, white and purple soft corals and gorgonians. The dive sites are from 10 to 35m. The life you will encounter are manta rays, eagle rays, sting rays, scorpion fish, and stone fish so be careful where you put your hands!. On the bottom is the rare black coral. Again lots of Nudibranches for that close up work.

The island of **Phu Quoc** lies 100 kilometers off the Southwest coastline of Vietnam and is very close to Cambodia. Diving here is very new so new sites are still being discovered. Marine life is very much into the smaller reef fish and fantastic, pristine coral. **Turtle Island** off the Northwest coast is acknowledged as being one of the best dive sites in the country.

Micronesia

Micronesia stretches over a vast area in the Pacific Ocean and includes **Guam, Palau, Yap, Truk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Marshall Islands, Rota and Saipan**. All offer fantastic diving with wall diving and drop offs, World War 2 wrecks and such a variety of flora and fauna it is impossible to describe it all here. Micronesia is without doubt one of the world's greatest dive locations.

Palau has been named one of the underwater wonders of the world and with good reason. The sea life here is stunning. Great drift dives add to this remarkable dive location. And don't forget a swim in Jellyfish Lake. **Yap** is the place to see the manta rays, and maybe a shark encounter or two. Again fabulous diving on walls and through caverns. **Truk Lagoon** needs no introduction having the greatest concentration of diveable shipwrecks on earth, with at least 70 in the lagoon. Plenty to keep you busy. **The Marshall Islands** with its many islets and atolls have pristine dive sites, including Ahnd Atoll, and Kwajalein Atoll. **Pohnpei** offers drift diving at drop-offs outside passes along its barrier reef. **Guam** has some excellent shore dives around Agat Bay and Apra Harbor. The **Northern Marianas includes Rota and Saipan** and both are known for shore diving, crystal-clear water and hard coral gardens.

Kosrae Island lies to the east of Truk and Pohnpei and staying at **Kosrae Eco Lodge and Dive Resort** gives you the opportunity to dive the miles of rich and diverse coral reefs all to yourself! Where in the world can you that? With totally pristine reefs full of sea life, it gives a rich reward to the photographer. Dive sites include great wall dives where you can see shark, barracuda, eagle rays, Napoleon wrasse, dog-tooth tuna, rainbow runners, turtles, as well as lots of smaller tropical fish. This location is also home to many crinoids, lobsters and other invertebrates. On top of the drop offs, are magical gardens of hard corals which are home to a vast array of life. Again this is perfect for the photographer and for all levels of diver skills.

The Kosrae Eco Lodge and Dive Resort is modelled after an historic Kosraean village and encourages and supports environmental conservation on the island. All the cottages are constructed in the traditional style. A great place to be based for this unique diving experience.

Myanmar

Myanmar (or Burma) offers pristine and untouched dive sites and with more than 900 islands covering a huge area. Because the **Mergui Archipelago** was strictly closed to all foreigners until 1997, it is one of the world's true frontier diving destinations. This is now one of the premier and sought after diving areas of the world. With a rich and diverse marine ecosystem untouched by tourism and left in isolation for many years, it offers incredible dive sites. Sharks, mantas and big pelagics coupled with stunning visibility make this fantastic. October to May is the time to visit and diving is from liveaboards. Here are a few of the dive locations.

Western Rocky Island has a number of pinnacles and with a tunnel right through the island, it makes for a great dive. The tunnel is covered in crayfish and there are usually some large nurse sharks piled on top of each other.

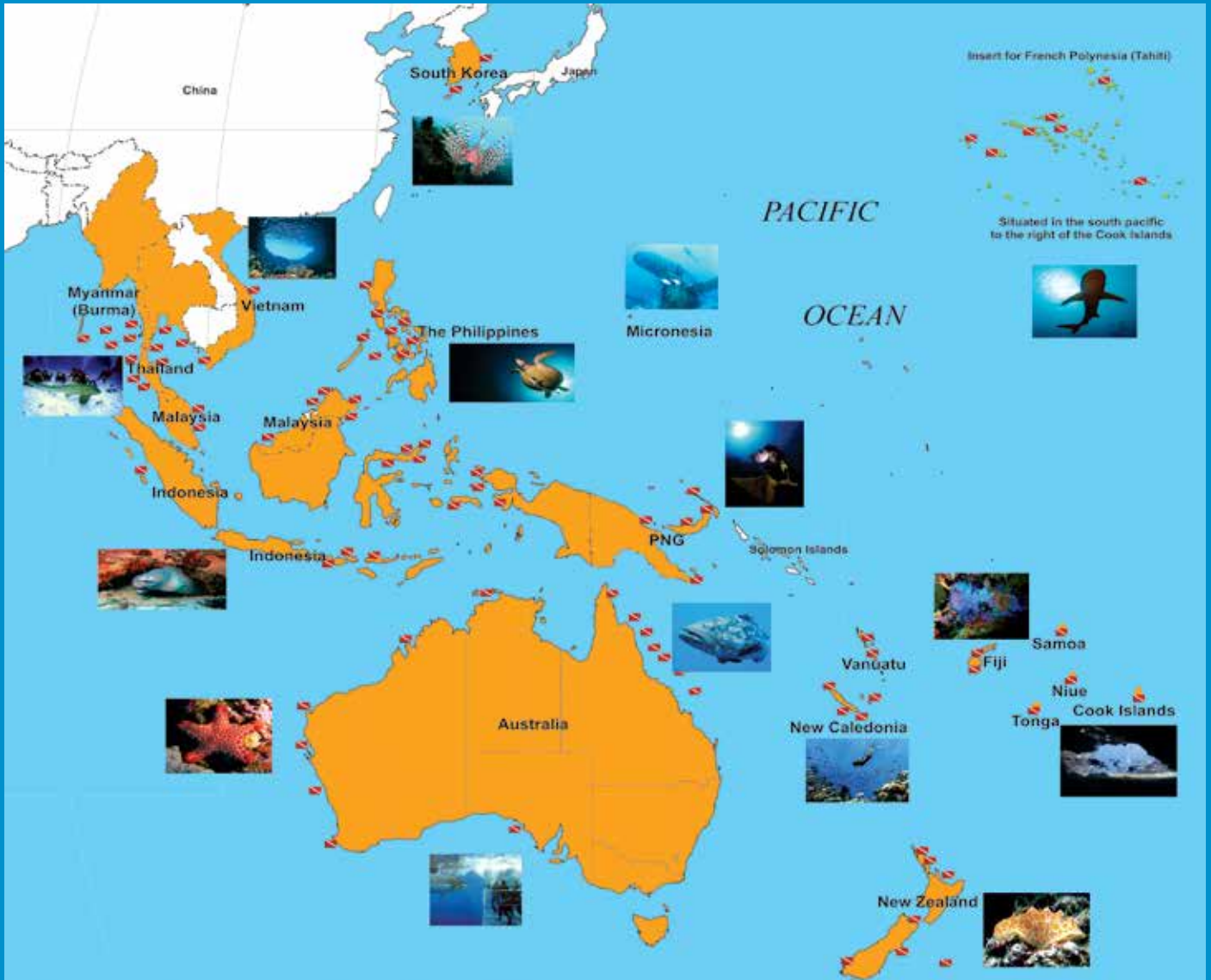
High Rock has heaps of marine life, with dense growths of orange cup coral covering the vertical walls. Below 21m, huge green tubastrea coral and large black coral bushes dominate, and together with red harp gorgonians, pastel green rope sponges and feather stars of most every colour ,the dive is just stunning. What more can you ask for!

If you want to see the big fish then **Black Rock** is the place to go. It is 16 miles to the nearest land in deep water and an overnight stop. **Many think this is one of the best dives in the world**. It is here, where you are almost guaranteed to see the large pelagic such as grey, reef and silvertip shark with blacktips, hammerheads and bull sharks coming by to say hello. Huge sting rays, manta's, devil rays and maybe whale sharks if you are fortunate. On top of that the reef life is excellent with beautiful soft corals, gorgonian's and plenty of reef fish.

The whole of the **Archipelago** is so diverse that it would take a lifetime to truly explore. Give it a go though!

Diving

Asia Pacific



Throughout the Asia Pacific Region diving is one of the best ways to explore the country and although we cannot mention all the dive sites, we do hope you find this co-operative dive information brochure useful. We have to thank many of the countries tourism departments dive companies, and resorts for their support in this production, and the many photographers for some fantastic photographs.

Pack Ya Bags can organise diving and non diving for any purpose wherever it is in the world and for any amount of people. Get a group together and we will do the rest. Many of the dive sites mentioned in this publication, have been dived by one of us over the past 38 years. All tours can be organised through us or your local agent or club.



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