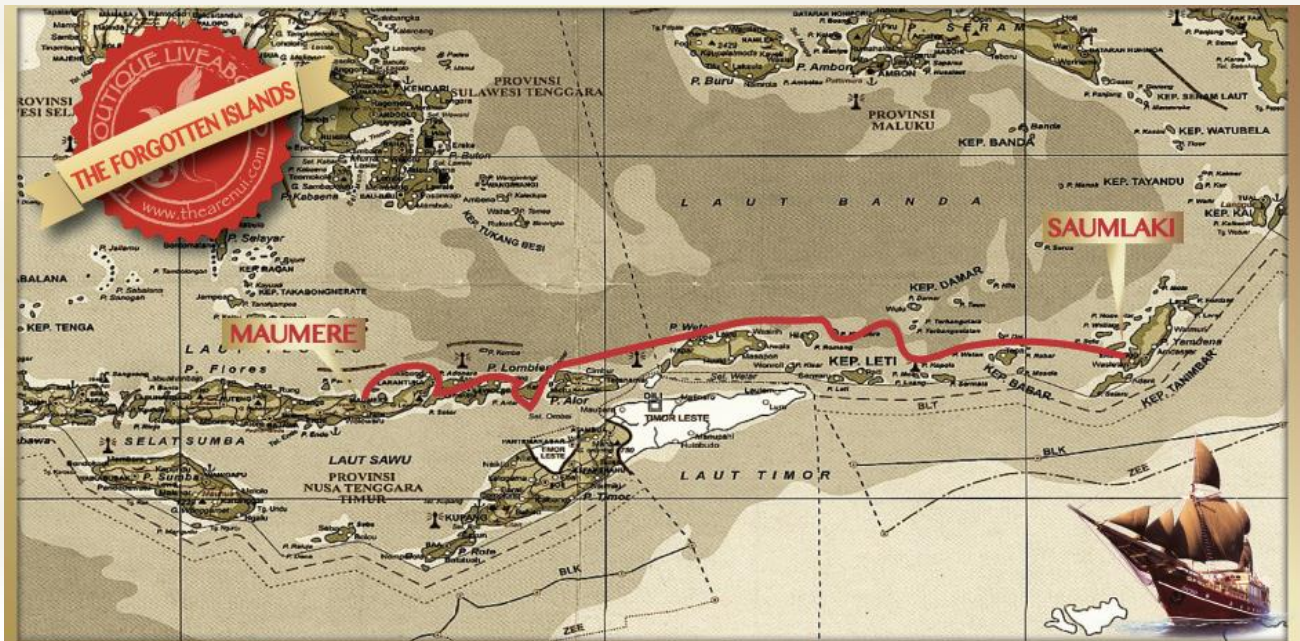


# SOUTH FORGOTTEN ISLANDS



Arenui The Boutique Liveaboard



## SAMPLE ITINERARY "SOUTH FORGOTTEN ISLANDS" 13 Day/12 Night Saumlaki - Maumere Cruise

**Day 1 Embarkation in Saumlaki**

**Days 2-8 Forgotten Islands**

The Forgotten Islands are part of a remote archipelago in the southeast corner of the Moluccas (Maluku Tenggara). Despite the remote feeling in other parts of Indonesia (such as Alor or Banda), the Forgotten Islands are isolated even by Indonesian standards, covering a 1,000 km long chain of islands starting at Timor and extending up to West Papua. The Tanimbar group of around 65 islands that separate the Banda Sea from the Arafura Sea include the island of Yamdena where the capital Saumlaki is where this cruise begins.

There are many groups of islands in this area and the Forgotten Islands are relatively undiscovered and still being explored. The exact itinerary around these islands will depend exclusively on the weather and current conditions. Also due to the big distances between island groups some of the days will include three day dives before heading off in the afternoon and travelling overnight. When the next location is closer and there are anchorage spots in sheltered bays we will offer a fourth dive, usually a night dive.

Dive sites in the Forgotten Islands are characterised by endless reefs and spectacular deep walls covered in soft corals, sea fans and huge sponges. These islands usually experiences amazing visibility and warm water around 27-30C (81-86F). Here are the names of the islands we may visit (weather permitting) during your cruise:

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# SOUTH FORGOTTEN ISLANDS



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## **Dai Island (3-4 dives)**

This small island in the northern part of the Babar group of islands is our first stop from Saumlaki. The villagers on this island still practice traditional hunting with bow and arrow. Steep slopes provide hunting grounds for schooling barracuda and trevally. Large sea fans on the reef are surrounded by very healthy reef fish life.

## **Teun/Nila/Nil Desperandum (3-4 dives)**

Teun, Nila and Serua, often referred to as TNS, are all small, very remote volcanic islands only accessible by liveaboard, located just east of Damar. You will feel as if you have reached the ends of the earth and that may be why there is a growing interest in diving in this zone. Although the sites here remain relatively unexplored, experiences so far have revealed tremendous diving potential and splendid coral reefs.

Close to the small island of Nila are two atolls Dusborgh and Nil Desperandum. Weather permitting we will spend two days in this area, making a small bay on the east side of the island of Nila our base. There is also a night dive opportunity here.

Nil Desperandum means “don’t despair” possibly referring to a ship wrecked here centuries ago. It is a big atoll with very deep drop offs. Schooling sharks have been spotted in the deep here with a chance to see hammerhead, silky and grey reef sharks.

## **Nila/Dusborgh (3-4 dives)**

Dusborgh is a submerged atoll with a surrounding reef that reaches all the way up to the surface. The reef then slopes steeply to deep walls. As with all of the Forgotten Islands the walls are covered in huge sponges and sea fans. With the amazing visibility keep an eye into the deep for passing pelagics.

## **Pulau Damar/Nusleur/Terbang (4 dives)**

Close to the big island of Damar the small islands of Nusleur, Terbang Utara and Terbang Selatan are surrounded by pristine beaches that stretch out to coral reefs that then drop down to the most beautiful, untouched walls. From top to bottom, the reef is an explosion of different colours and forms and seems to be in constant motion from the swarms of fish darting about. You may find yourself floating in the midst of a huge school of fish as the sea creatures here appear quite curious, perhaps because they are generally not used to seeing many divers. Another unique attraction in this area is the wall of sulphur formed as a result of its proximity to the volcano on Damar. There is a possibility to visit a village on Damar where there is also a black sand night dive.

## **Pulau Romang/Nyata (3 dives)**

At Romang and Nyata Islands there are gentle slopes with pristine hard corals that slip down into the deep blue of the Banda Sea. You will be able to see huge gorgonians in vivid orange, yellows and reds, carpets of soft corals and massive barrel sponges in all directions. If you manage to tear your gaze off of the life on this wonderful reef and train it into the blue you will often be rewarded by the sight of majestic napoleons, reef sharks or tuna. Many of the nearby dive spots show signs of volcanic activity on the seabed and are good spots for night dives.

# SOUTH FORGOTTEN ISLANDS



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## **Gunung Api (3 dives)**

Gunung Api is a volcano whose summit reaches 245m (800 feet) above sea level but also extends downwards until hitting the seabed at some 4,000m (13,000 feet). As the island formed by the volcano is around 200 km (120 miles) from the nearest landfall, it naturally attracts all the surrounding fish life that have made their home on the steep drop-offs and walls. For some inexplicable reason an extraordinarily high number of banded and olive sea snakes live at Gunung Api. It is truly a unique spot that never ceases to amaze divers. Above water, immediately upon arrival, the boat becomes surrounded by thousands of frigate and brown-breasted boobie birds. Here you feel like a true explorer.

## **Pulau Wetar/Reong (3 dives)**

Not many people can say that they have dived Wetar Island. It has several calm bays where interesting critters can be found as well as swift drift dives between Wetar and Reong that takes you past a spectacularly coloured wall.

The small island of Reong, which lies off the northwest coast of Wetar, presents a change in scenery as it is made of limestone. Reef sharks, barracuda and trevallies frequently visit these waters. Other delights can be found while diving the impressive walls and a site full of diverse marine life.

Tanjung Nunukae on Wetar Island is generally characterised by shallows forming a plateau that narrows as it goes deeper until it drops off abruptly, forming a very nice wall swathed in gigantic sea fans, cup corals and impressive sponges. Divers have come across both mobula and manta rays here. Currents are generally moderate to strong.

## **Day 9 Pura Island (north)/Kalabahi Bay (4 dives)**

Dives in the Alor/Pantar Strait promise a variety of thrills as the sites present a wide array of exciting possibilities, with topography ranging from dramatic shear drop-offs, spurs jutting out from the shore mingling together with shallow reefs where the light brings out the full colour of the dazzling corals covering all surfaces. The water temperature can be a little cooler in this area dropping from the normal 28/29 degrees Celsius (82-84 Fahrenheit) to a possible 20 Celsius (68 Fahrenheit).

Here you can see the famous Pura Island villagers splash out of their wooden dugout canoes diving underwater with homemade goggles made out of wood and the ends of glass bottles.

During the day we will also look out for large pelagics who use the Pantar Strait as a thoroughfare. If there are any sightings of whales, dolphins or even Mola Mola we may forego a dive and head out in the tenders with snorkelling gear to see if we can have a lucky encounter.

## **Yan Village**

At Yan Village there are several wonderful spots to dive. Walls covered in sponges topped with shallow hard coral reefs where you can spot the elusive Mandarin fish to black sandy slopes where fans of macro will get their fill too. Some examples of the critters here are frogfish, weedy scorpionfish, all sorts of nudibranchs and yellow, blue and black ribbon eels.

# SOUTH FORGOTTEN ISLANDS



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## Clown Valley

One exceptional dive site on Pura Island is probably the only place in the world where you will see this phenomenon. The entire reef is completely covered in anemones of all shapes and sizes. Enjoy a drift dive along this site and enjoy the abundant fish life, with thousands of colourful anthias and damsels dancing off the reef. Take a look at some photos of Clown Valley and other wide-angle opportunities in Alor [here](#).

## Kalabahi Bay

Mucky Mosque and Rocky Church are two of the great muck dives we will do inside Kalabahi Bay on Alor Island. The 'holy grail of fish' Rhinopias can be found here, with a chance to see both the weedy and paddleflip scorpionfish. Ghost pipefish, soft coral crabs, frogfish, various octopus including the wunderpus and mimic, snake eels, sea moths, sand divers and many other remarkable creatures. The only way you are likely to see stranger ones is if you do a night dive here when unimaginable ones begin foraging out of their holes.

## Day 10 Visit traditional Abui tribe village/Reta Island (1-2 dives)

In the morning we will visit Takpala or Latevui village, both villages still living by their old Abui traditions. The villagers will perform the Lego-Lego dance wearing traditional clothing with brass anklets that make a wonderful jingling sound as they perform. Afterwards there is an opportunity to purchase handmade ikat, woven fabrics of various colours and motifs, as well as jewellery and wooden artifacts. Take a look at our photo album of these villages at [Alor Abui Tribe](#).

After the village tour we will do one more dive in the muck of Kalabahi and then travel out into the Alor/Pantar Strait to Reta Island where we will do one more dive. The number of dives on this day is dependant on the weather and currents.

## Cave Point

This dive site is on Reta Island and has beautiful vertical walls with overhangs, undercuts and a deep plateau at 25m/75ft. It is full of hard and soft corals, barrel sponges and whip corals. At the top of the wall is a coral garden teeming with reef fish. In this area you should always keep an eye out into the blue for Mola.

## Day 11 Kawula Island (4 dives)

Next to the north of Kawula Island there is a beautiful, calm bay overlooked by Lewotolo volcano. We spend the day diving here.

## Takat Prau

In the middle of the bay there is a seamount we call Takat Prau. There is a small wooden fishing boat wrecked in the deep right next to a sea fan with pygmies. There can be schooling fusiliers here with small reef sharks patrolling the pinnacle. Leaf fish make their home in the shallows and large reef octopus are often spotted hunting in the hard coral.

# SOUTH FORGOTTEN ISLANDS



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## **Padang Pasir**

This dive site has two sections. A huge expanse of white sand extends to the south and a mini wall and reef comes out from the corner of the island. In the sandy area look for waspfish, flounders, stingrays and ghost pipefish. On the wall algae shrimp, moray eels, lionfish and beautiful angelfish hide out. At the top of the reef there are healthy staghorn corals where you might spot a mandarin fish. At night the wall and reef come alive with shrimps and crabs and there is a chance you will see Spanish dancer nudis. Or hunt around in the sand for stargazers, bobtail squid and frogfish.

## **Day 12 Tanjung Gedong or Pulau Babi (1-2 dives)**

Depending on the overnight travel from Komba and the weather we will either visit Tanjung Gedong on the northeast of Flores Island or Pulau Babi close to Maumere.

### **Tanjung Gedong**

This dive site is on the northeast of Flores at a corner called Tanjung Gedong. The reef slopes down into sandy areas with large coral heads. The deep sections are beautiful with soft corals and large table corals decorating the reef. Reef sharks and groupers can be seen here.

### **Pulau Babi**

Pulau Babi literally means 'pig island'. Its north end is bordered by a wide coral reef and faces the Flores Sea. Further south there is a small tidal flat where two villages were built. At the southern end of the island, the barrier reef tapers. It has deep walls with lots of cracks and crevices with leather corals in the shallows. Babi is home to many dive sites. One, called The Crack, was formed during an earthquake in 1992. Located in a reef 20 metres (66 ft) below the water, the 70-centimetre (28 in) crack reaches a length of 30 metres (98 ft).

After the dive we will travel closer to Maumere and spend the rest of the day relaxing on the beach or take a kayak around the calm waters of the bay.

## **Day 13 Disembarkation in Maumere**

**Total dives: 32-37 dives**