MARINE MEGAFAUNA FOUNDATION

Photo: Coralia Liveaboard

Liveaboard expedition with MMF scientists

Banda Sea

Alor to Ambon 6 – 18 October 2027

Ambon to Raja Ampat 21 October – 2 November 2027

From **US$8,400** per person

Banda Sea · Liveaboard expedition with MMF scientists

The trip at a glance

The Banda Sea can only be crossed by liveaboard, and only when the seasons allow. Schooling hammerheads over deep seamounts, the Spice Islands, and world-class muck diving at either end.

In October 2027 we're running two back-to-back Banda Sea crossings aboard the award-winning Coralia: join us for one, or combine both for the full month-long traverse from Alor to Raja Ampat.

The Banda Sea is famous for deep walls, untouched reefs, and giant sponges in crystal-clear blue water, and it's now known for the chance to see schooling hammerhead sharks over seamounts rising from very deep water. Around it lie some of Indonesia's finest critter destinations: Alor's Kalabahi Bay and Ambon Bay, two of the best places on Earth to find the Holy Grail of fish, Rhinopias.

Hammerhead shark, Banda Sea

The Abui, Alor

Alor to Ambon	6 – 18 October 2027	Boards in Maumere, via Alor	Open for booking
Ambon to Raja Ampat	21 October – 2 November 2027	Ambon to Sorong	3 cabins available

From **US$8,400** per person

Two 12-night crossings
October 2027, join one or both

Coralia
#1 for crew in Scuba Diving Readers Choice 2026

Up to four dives a day
free Nitrox, tanks, and weights

Hosted by MMF scientists
evening science talks and photo tips

Hammerheads
plus Rhinopias, frogfish, and octopus

14 guests
seven guest cabins, 20 crew

Your hosts

Dr Simon Pierce
Executive Director

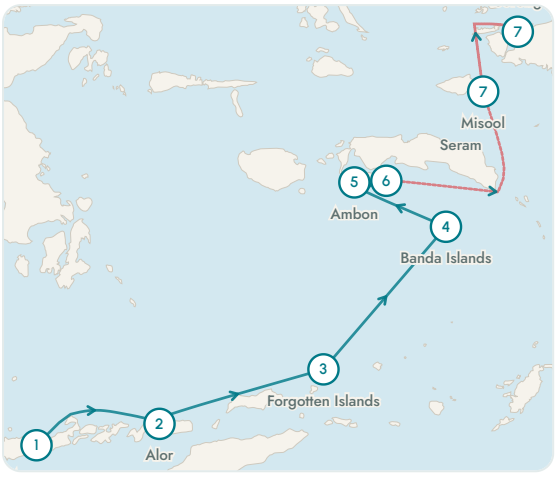
Janis Argeswara
Indonesia Country Manager

Highlights

- Schooling hammerhead sharks over the Banda Sea's deep seamounts.
- Rhinopias, frogfish, ghost pipefish, and octopus in Alor and Ambon.
- The Spice Islands: an old Dutch fort, a nutmeg plantation, and centuries of history.
- A chance of whales and dolphins on the deep-water crossings.
- Evening science talks and photography tips from MMF co-founder Dr. Simon Pierce.

Photos: Coralia Liveaboard

The itinerary



Two back-to-back crossings. Crossing 1 runs from Maumere through Alor and the Forgotten Islands to the Banda Islands and Ambon. Crossing 2 starts in Ambon and heads north to Raja Ampat. Join one, or both for the full month.

Approximate route · teal line: crossing 1, Alor to Ambon · pink dashed line: crossing 2, Ambon to Raja Ampat. Numbers match the stops.

Joining both crossings? There are three nights between them, October 18 to 21: ask us about arrangements. This is a sample itinerary, not a fixed plan: the cruise directors change the route day by day for weather, currents and wildlife.

National park and port fees are paid on board.

1 **Board in Maumere** · Crossing 1 · start

Fly into Maumere on Flores from Bali or via Jakarta. Airport transfers are included, and Coralia heads east toward Alor.

2

Alor and the Pantar Strait · Crossing 1

Colorful walls and hard coral gardens, village dives where children swim out in hand-made wooden goggles, and Kalabahi Bay's black-sand muck, one of the best places in the world to find Rhinopias. Time ashore with the Abui people.

Dive sites Kalabahi Bay · Pura · Kawula **Look for** Rhinopias · Frogfish · Ghost pipefish · Octopus

3

The Forgotten Islands · Crossing 1

A remote arc of islands reachable only by liveaboard: overhanging walls draped in soft coral, hard coral gardens, and seamounts rising from very deep water where hammerheads school.

Dive sites Nyata · Nus Leur · Terbang · Damar · Dusborgh · Nil Desperandum **Look for** Schooling hammerheads · Pelagics · Giant sponges

4

The Banda Islands · Crossing 1

The original Spice Islands, with deep walls, seamounts, and fish-filled drifts, and a visit ashore to the museum, the old Dutch fort, and a nutmeg plantation. The pinnacle at Batu Kapal is covered in schooling pyramid butterflyfish and red-tooth triggerfish.

Dive sites Banda Neira · Batu Kapal **Look for** Hammerheads · Bumphead parrotfish · Napoleon wrasse

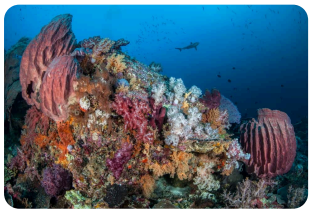
5

Ambon Bay · Crossing 1 ends · Crossing 2 starts

A world-class muck site and the changeover between crossings: Rhinopias, frogfish, mandarinfish, harlequin shrimps, and octopus from wunderpus to coconut to the night-hunting long-arm.

Look for Rhinopias · Mandarinfish · Mimic octopus

6

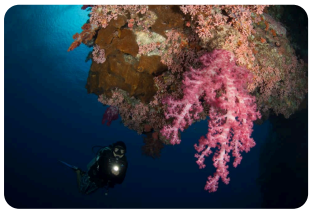


Nusa Laut and Koon · Crossing 2

Eagle rays, schooling jacks, and the chance of hammerheads at Nusa Laut. Koon's signature dive site is called Too Many Fish.

Dive sites Amet Reef · Too Many Fish **Look for** Eagle rays · Schooling jacks · Groupers

7



North into Raja Ampat · Crossing 2 · finish

The crossing ends among the soft-coral reefs and karst islands of Raja Ampat, where marine surveys suggest coral reef biodiversity is the highest recorded on Earth, then disembarks in Sorong.

Look for Manta rays · Soft corals

Photos: Coralia Liveaboard

In pictures

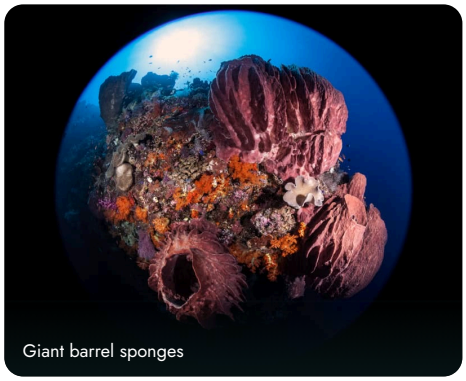
Dutch fort on Banda Neira, with the volcano behind

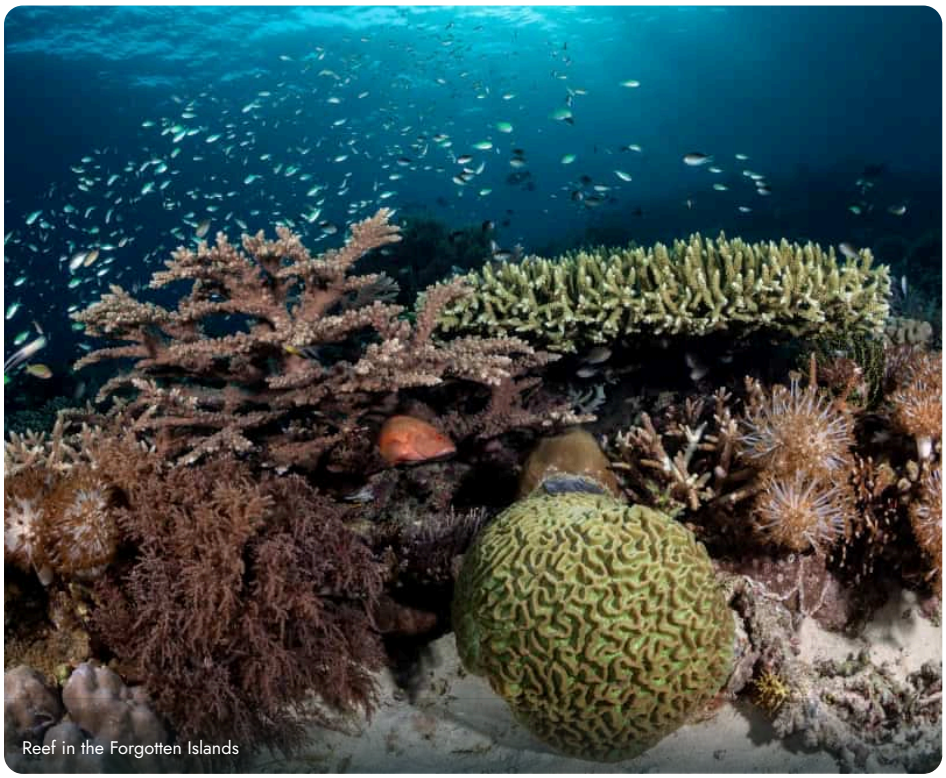
Frogfish, Alor

Paddleflap scorpionfish (Rhinopias)

Soft corals and a diver

Hammerhead shark


Giant barrel sponges


Reef in the Forgotten Islands

Reef with a shark behind

Coconut octopus

Photos: Coralia Liveaboard

The boat

Coralia

Coralia

Operated by Coralia Liveaboard

Readers Choice Awards 2026
Scuba Diving Magazine · #1 for crew, safety, value, and luxury

A classic wooden phinisi built for diving and run by cruise directors Debbie and Jerry Arriaga. At 48 meters (157 feet), she has eight cabins, each named after a coral species, one of them kept for the MMF host, so our trips carry 14 guests, with 20 crew: more than one crew member for every guest. The main deck holds an air-conditioned lounge and restaurant and a dedicated camera room, with a large sun deck above, and satellite WiFi is free when coverage allows.

Sun deck

Main deck dining

Indoor lounge

Dive deck

Cabins and prices

Master cabin

Four cabins, 30 m² (323 sq ft), on the main and upper decks, each with a private balcony

US$9,600 per person, each crossing

Lower deck double

Two cabins, 24 m² (258 sq ft), with a double bed; each converts to sleep three

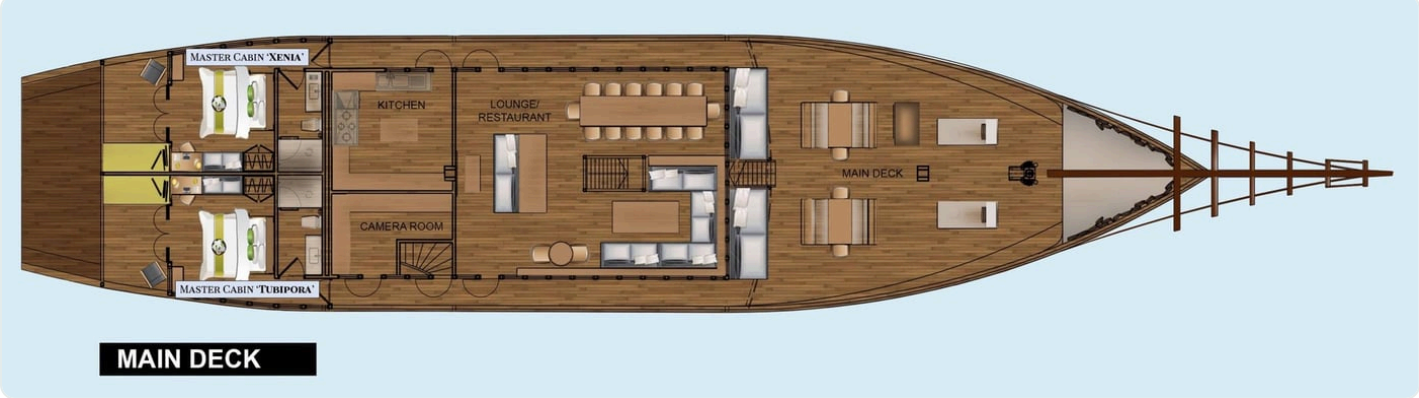
US$8,400 per person, each crossing

Lower deck twin

Two cabins, 22 m² (237 sq ft), two single beds, suited to friends or solo travelers sharing a cabin

US$8,400 per person, each crossing

Deck plan · Main deck



Photos: Coralia Liveaboard

Who you travel with, and what your trip supports

The Marine Megafauna Foundation is a globally recognized marine conservation non-profit, protecting the most endangered ocean giants and the habitats they call home since 2009.

Our vision is a future where marine megafauna are treasured and protected. Our mission is to protect marine megafauna and their key habitats through research, education, and conservation.

Our work began in 2003, when Dr. Andrea Marshall started her doctoral research on manta rays in Mozambique. Dr. Simon Pierce joined her at Tofo in 2005 to establish a whale shark research program, and Tofo remains our long-term base. MMF was registered as a nonprofit organization in the United States in 2012.

In the years since, our team has authored more than 200 scientific publications on marine megafauna, and that research has been put to use. It has contributed to the national protection of manta rays and whale sharks in several countries, including Indonesia, Mozambique, and Tanzania. MMF scientists also led the technical work that placed the reef manta ray, the oceanic manta ray, and the whale shark on Appendix I of the UN Convention on Migratory Species.

In Indonesia, where we have worked since 2012, more than 2,300 individual reef manta rays have been identified across our sites, principally at Nusa Penida and in Komodo National Park.

National staff lead our programs, and locally registered organizations carry the work: Associação Megafauna Marinha in Mozambique, Yayasan Megafauna Laut in Indonesia, and an independent partner organization in Madagascar.

A reef manta ray swims over a diver in Komodo National Park

Children in a crowded classroom raise their hands during a marine conservation lesson

Learning with us on board

Every MMF expedition is hosted by a working marine scientist, who shares the latest research and conservation discoveries about the animals you'll see. Across the voyage your host gives a series of evening presentations — on the animals we're looking for, how they're studied, what the current research actually shows, and the threats these populations face. There's time to ask the questions you never get to ask a researcher in person, and photography guidance for anyone who wants to come home with better images.

Your photographs do real work. Whale sharks and manta rays can be identified individually by their natural markings — the spot patterns on a whale shark's flank, the markings on a manta's underside — the same way a fingerprint identifies a person. Guests are shown how to take an identification shot, and the photographs taken during the trip are contributed to the global photo-identification databases that researchers around the world draw on. Sightings you record become part of the long-term record for that population.

Marine Megafauna Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit. Our expeditions exist to bring people into contact with these animals and send them home understanding them — and **100% of the profit supports MMF's research, education, and conservation work**.

A snorkeler photographs a whale shark swimming below.

Our expeditions are small-group trips hosted by MMF scientists, and they support this work.

Your hosts

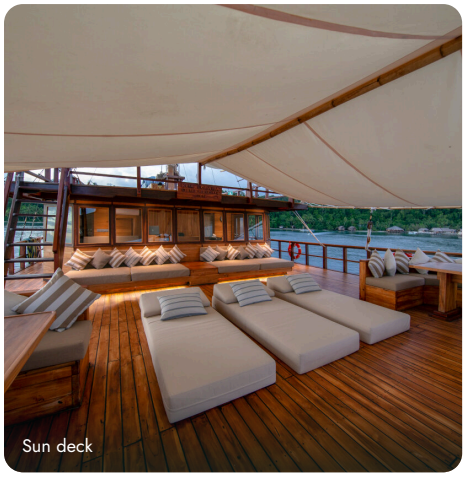
Dr Simon Pierce
Executive Director

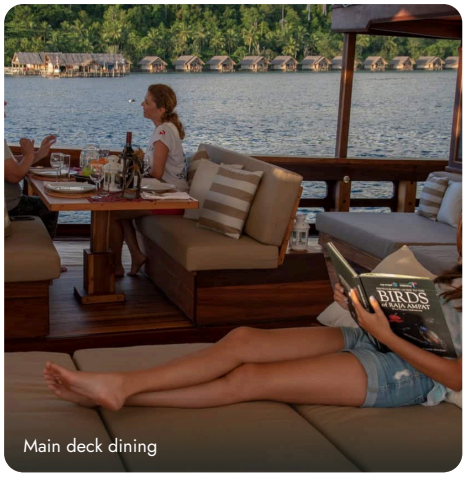
Dr. Pierce founded MMF's flagship Global Whale Shark Program. His work on the population ecology and management of this iconic species has made him the world's top whale shark conservation biologist.

Janis Argeswara
Indonesia Country Manager

In Indonesia, a two-year Research Assistant program trains early-career marine scientists. Janis Argeswara, MMF's first Indonesian intern, later earned a Fulbright scholarship to Florida International University, where she completed a master's degree on the reef manta rays of Nusa Penida. She now leads the national program.

Costs, getting there and good to know


Sun deck



Main deck dining

Indoor lounge

What's included

- Liveaboard cruise on the Coralia
- Up to four dives a day
- Complimentary Nitrox
- Shore excursions according to the program
- All meals and snacks, every day
- Hot and cold soft beverage selection
- Tanks, weights, belts
- Airport transfers at embarkation and disembarkation
- Presentations from MMF hosts

Not included

- International or domestic flights
- Pre- and post-trip accommodation
- National park and port fees (paid on board)
- Dive courses
- Dive gear rental
- Alcoholic beverages
- On-board massages
- Laundry
- Use of on-board satellite phone
- Encouraged gratuity
- Travel insurance

Getting there

Crossing 1 boards in Maumere (MOF) on Flores, reached from Bali or via Jakarta. Crossing 2 boards in Ambon (AMQ) and finishes in Sorong (SOQ), where the harbor is about 10 minutes from the airport. Airport transfers are included.

Booking and terms

National park and port fees are paid on board. Inquire with no commitment. A 30% deposit and the completed terms and conditions form confirm your place, and the balance is due 120 days before departure. Travel insurance is required.

Good to know

Do I need to be a diver?

Certified divers of all experience levels are welcome, and each dive guide leads no more than four guests. Snorkelers are welcome too, and the Cenderawasih Bay whale sharks are seen at the surface.

How experienced a diver should I be?

Some sites have currents and depth, so recent diving helps you get the most from them. Tell us your certification, logged dives, and when you last dived when you inquire, and we will confirm the trip suits you. Courses, including Advanced Open Water and Nitrox, can be arranged on board if you book them ahead.

What insurance do I need?

Personal dive-accident insurance that includes emergency evacuation (Divers Alert Network is recommended) is required for every certified diver. Our trip terms and conditions also require comprehensive travel insurance covering trip cancellation and interruption, overseas medical expenses, and emergency evacuation: these trips run in remote places where medical care is scarce, and MMF cannot help with canceled flights or lost luggage.

Is Nitrox included? Can I rent gear?

Nitrox is free for certified Nitrox divers, and tanks, weights, and belts are included. Full rental gear is available (BCDs, regulators, wetsuits, computers, fins, masks, torches, and SMBs); reserve it before the trip.

What if my flight is delayed?

Contact the boat straight away. Depending on the itinerary and where the boat is, the crew will do everything possible to help you join. Plan a spare day either side for international flights; the last full day ends with two morning dives, finished around 1 pm, so you can fly safely.

Inquire: **trips@marinemegafauna.org**
marinemegafauna.org/trips/banda-sea

Photos: Coralia Liveaboard

100% of profit supports MMF's research, education and conservation work

Brochure made 5 November 2026; availability as of 17 October 2026. Confirm both when you inquire.