



AMBON-AMBON

No cruise on MV Samambaia is like the other. Every single trip is tailor-made to create a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The decision on the itinerary is made by the cruise director as we cruise along and is based on factors such as weather conditions, dive conditions, requests of guests and schedules of other liveaboards, which we are trying to stay away from.

There are however certain constants on every cruise which are:

- Three day dives of minimum 1 hour duration
- One sunset/night dive (unless we have to cover a serious amount of miles over night)
- Activities during the surface intervals such as:
 - scenic rides through lagoons and coves in our tenders
 - trekking to breathtaking view points
 - visits of secluded perfect beaches
 - excursions to traditional villages
 - whale watching
 - water action such as wake boarding and kayak

Based upon that, here is a potential itinerary for an 11 nights /12 days cruise from **Ambon (Maluku)** back to **Ambon (Maluku)**. This is just to give you a general idea and is subject to change due to weather and other conditions. Popular dive sites are named. We do however have our secret spots as well, which you will learn about during the cruise.

Day 1: Embarkation

Arrival with plane to Ambon. You will be picked up by crew members at the airport. Embarkation in the port of Ambon. A general orientation follows.

Day 2: Ambon

After an initial general dive briefing, we will do our check dive with you at an easy and protected dive site. Check dive in the sense of you checking your gear and weights, making sure the camera housings are properly sealed and our guides checking your buoyancy. No skill demonstrations are required. We will thereafter offer two more dives in the bay of Ambon. One in the afternoon and one for sunset. All of these days will be muck dives. World class critter hunting. That's what Ambon is famous for. Rhinopias, Frogfish, Ghostpipefish, Harlequin Shrimps and if you are really lucky: the Psychedelic Frogfish that has been very recently found here again.

Day 3: Nusa Laut

In the early morning we will arrive at the island of Nusa Laut, which is a great example for how active conservation by the local community can not only preserve the reefs but actually make them even better. We see here for many years a proper growth in biomass. We have four spectacular dive sites here, either wall or slope diving. Great variety of reef fish as well as large schools of jacks. Bumphead Parrotfish like to pass by here also. A lot of macro life can be found in the wall as well.

Day 4 & Day 5: Banda Islands

The famous Spice Islands, the island group around Banda Neira, which is also historically very interesting. Wars were fought over these islands by colonial powers as these islands used to be the only islands in the world where nutmeg grew. A historical walk through the town of Banda Neira with its museum and two forts is a must. An interesting option for ambitious challenge seekers is to climb the volcano Gunung Api, which rises 'only' 600 m above sea level. Which in the tropics however turns into a strenuous climb.

The diving here is very diverse and spectacular. As these volcanic islands rise up to the surface surrounded by deep sea water, the chances for sightings of large pelagics are very good. In the past we've often encountered schooling hammerheads here. A dive site called 'Lava Flow' is one of the most pristine hard coral reefs you will ever see. After the last eruption of Gunung Api in 1988 a flow of lava made its way down into the ocean and destroyed the whole reef. What has grown back ever since will boggle your mind. In the harbour of Banda Neira we've got a beautiful Mandarin Fish dive waiting for you. Other highlights include: 'The Cathedral', 'Batu Kapal' and 'Karang Hatta'.

Days 6: Gili Manuk

This place is also known by the name 'Snake Island'. If you've got a phobia of snakes you should definitely go diving here to face your fear and thereby cure it. You may encounter dozens of sea snakes in one single dive. These graceful creatures, though highly venomous, are very peaceful, sometimes even curious. Despite these reptiles there is plenty of reef fish but also pelagics around. On top of all thousands and thousands of seabirds are nesting here. A very unique and spectacular place. Our favourite dive site is called: 'Smoking Hot'.

Day 7: Karang Nil Desperandum

An atoll with steep walls rising from the deep. Weather conditions permitting we will spend a whole day here. Mainly steep walls all around and some sloppy parts. Very nice growth of sea fans and sponges. But we are in for the big pelagic stuff. Schooling sharks have been often seen here in the past.

Day 8: Pulau Nila & Karang Duisborgh

Five miles from the small island of Nila we find another atoll and even prettier coral growth along the walls. Again the focus lies here on large pelagic fish passing by out in the blue. The close by island of Nila offers us protection for the night's anchorage and gives us the possibility for a night dive.

Day 9: Terbang Utara & Terbang Selatan

Very remote and untouched by commercial fishing the reefs of these islands are in pristine conditions. Schooling Barracudas, Jacks on the hunt and large Tunas passing by whilst well disguised critters are blending into the reefs. Our skilled dive guides will find and show them to you.

Day 10: Gunung Api

There are two snake islands in the Banda Sea and on this special itinerary you will get to see both of them. Besides snakes we have seen Silvertip Sharks and Hammerheads here. Usually the waters around here are gin clear so make sure you look out into the blue not to miss something big passing by.

Day 11: Lucipara

A group of seven paradise islands in the middle of the Banda Sea. All dives are steep wall dives. The Dutch seafarers named this island group the Schildpad Islands as we have not only find nesting grounds but also a healthy population of sea turtles here.

For those who are flying out the next day, we offer two dives in the morning and some relaxing time on a perfect beach in the afternoon. If you have planned a land based extension in Ambon after the cruise, our dive guides will happily go diving again with you in the afternoon.

Day 12: Ambon - Disembarkation

Depending on your flight schedule, our crew will check your luggage in for you in advance so you can rest on board and let us shuttle you to the airport when your plane is ready to leave.

The chances to have close encounters with whales (Blue Whales, Sperm Whales, Pilot Whales and others) are very good whilst cruising the Banda Sea.