



Return charter flights ex Darwin ARE INCLUDED in the cruise tariff.

This itinerary is provided as example only – prevailing conditions and local arrangements may cause variation.

Helicopter flights can be purchased additional to the cruise tariff as a package or individually.

The Whale Sharks of Cenderawasih Bay

Darwin/West Papua/Darwin
Snorkel and dive perhaps the richest waters of all!

Day One

Your adventure begins amidst the tropical charm of Darwin. One of our crew members will escort you aboard

North Star's chartered aircraft for your short flight to Sorong – a logistics hub for Indonesia's thriving eastern oil and gas frontier (On Cruise 2, the arrival port will be Biak).



Sorong is also where we will welcome you aboard the magnificent **TRUE NORTH**.

Enjoy a welcome aboard cocktail as we begin to cruise through the equally magnificent Raja Ampat archipelago. Located off the northwest tip of Bird's Head Peninsula on the island of New Guinea, in Indonesia's West Papua province, Raja Ampat, or the *Four Kings*, is an archipelago comprising over 1,500 small islands, cays and shoals.

The archipelago lies in the heart of the coral triangle, the world's most bio-diverse marine region and encompasses more than 40,000 km² of land and sea including the Cenderawasih Bay Marine Park, the largest marine park in Indonesia and, setting for one of the most unique animal encounters on the planet!

Day Two

Cross the equator as we continue north to Wayag Island. These small beehive atolls are totally uninhabited and quite spectacular. Take a stroll along a pristine beach or for the more adventurous, climb to the island summit and enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding islands. Join a not-to-be-missed scenic heli-flight over the island or hop in an expedition boat for an afternoon of fishing.

The crystal clear waters around Wayag will also begin to reveal the unrivalled underwater diversity of the Raja Ampat – a region that it is home to 450 confirmed species plus countless yet to be discovered species of coral – a stark comparison to the only 70 species that are found in the Caribbean!

Day Three

Today we visit Ayau - one of the largest atolls in eastern Indonesia. This remote and very beautiful atoll was colonized by Papuan fishermen from Biak Island (to the east) over 100 years ago. The Ayau people are fishermen and are skilled at all means of fishing - from free-dive

spearfishing to collecting eatable worms from the powdery-white sand beaches. The atoll is surrounded by crystal clear water that is frequented by large pods of dolphins. The outer-reef drops sharply to over 1000m and clouds of beautiful fishes carpet the reef walls. We'll have a chance to snorkel and dive at several sites around the atoll, or you can head off to the big-blue (outside the Ayau Marine Park) to try your luck at some deep water trolling.

In the afternoon we'll enjoy a traditional dance on the island of Miosbekwan - expect some loud drumming!

Day Four

The ship's naturalist will eagerly introduce the intriguing Amsterdam Islands - another opportunity to marvel at the unrivalled beauty of the area's stunning coral environs.

Here there are World War II wrecks to explore including the Junkyard. During the war the US Navy scuttled small boats and barges off one of the islands. The discarded items have morphed into an artificial reef that sits in about 30m of clear water. Hard corals, sea whips, sea fans and soft corals have established and an interesting mix of fish life can be observed around the wreckage. Divers can swim all around the area following schools of barracuda and fusiliers.

Heli-flights over the myriad-colour reef will be impossible to resist and the day's highlights will include an evening visit to see nesting leatherback turtles.

The leatherback is the largest of all sea turtles. It can easily be differentiated from other modern sea turtles by its lack of a bony shell. Instead, its carapace is covered by skin and oily flesh. Recent estimates of global nesting populations are 26,000 to 43,000 annual nests, which is a dramatic decline from the 115,000 estimated in 1980. The species is currently considered to be critically endangered and opportunities to view nesting animals are rare.



Day Five

Mapia Atoll is a very remote, exquisite atoll offering perhaps the 'holy grail of fishing'. Mapia is actually located north of the equator and has a classic atoll structure. Lying basically in the middle of nowhere, it's a day to enjoy the clarity and splendour of this beautiful location. The vertical walls of Mapia Atoll rise several thousand feet from the ocean floor and come alive with brilliant soft corals, gorgonian sea fans, sponges and a myriad of tropical fish. Snorkel, dive and fish until your heart is content in this natural playground!

Day Six

Purupi and Wairundi are known for their beautiful beaches.

An opportunity to beachcomb; an opportunity to swim in the crystal clear waters of an inviting lagoon; an opportunity to indulge.

The area is also known for copious elephant ear sponges. Sea fans and whips decorate the underwater slopes and fish life, notably schooling fusiliers, barracuda and trevally are plentiful.

The expedition boats will be away to snorkel, to dive, to fish and to sight-see. And the helicopter too will be the perfect vehicle to cover maximum ground.

We will also try to inspect some rock art near Purup.

Day Seven

Roon Island and the wonders of the Cenderawasih Marine Park beckon.

Roon offers excellent snorkelling and diving, there are some beautiful waterfalls in the area and also opportunities for bird watching.

The Cenderawasih Marine Park comprises the southwest quarter of Cenderawasih Bay. The protected area supports

a wide spectrum of relatively undisturbed coastal and marine habitat and the extensive coral reef rank amongst the finest in the world. The marine habitats, in particular, contain a number of rare and commercially important fish species.

The park includes 80 km² coral reefs, 1,305.3 km² seas, 12.4 km² coastal plain and 55.8 km² islands bounded by 500 km of coastline.

Join the crew for a village visit. Walk around Yenda and discover the local culture – the village church contains a bible that dates back to 1898.

In the afternoon we will relocate to the southern end of the island – here a Zero fighter lies on a hard coral slope in just 12m of water. This whole area is covered with masses of soft corals, sea fans, whips & elephant ear sponges. Green turtles, barracuda and surgeonfish are known to swim alongside divers.

Day Eight

The whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) is the biggest fish in the sea! They feed predominately on plankton and can grow to more than 12 metres in length. There are several places in the world where snorkellers can seek out a close encounter with these gentle giants - however we are pretty sure that nothing compares to a whale shark encounter in Cenderawasih Bay!

Most encounters with whale sharks are fleeting – although they mostly swim slowly, mouths open and gulping microscopic buckets of plankton – they don't have any trouble cruising past even the most determined snorkeller.

But not in Cenderawasih Bay – here whale sharks linger close to the surface for extended periods and the reason for this unusual behaviour is not difficult to appreciate – they have long become accustomed to taking advantage of small fish that spill from the nets of local fishermen. This



'learnt behaviour' provides even the most inexperienced snorkeller with a unique opportunity to truly interact with these mammoth fish.

Join the crew this morning for a once in a lifetime experience!

After lunch we will explore the underwater cave at Tanjung Mangguar and on Mioswaar Island - a chance to visit a terrestrial cave containing ancient remains and, a freshwater thermal spring.

Day Nine

Another opportunity to swim with the whale sharks of Cenderawasih Bay and to explore the surrounding marine park.

The marine park is also renowned for diversity in fish species. About 209 species inhabit the park include numerous species of colourful butterfly fish, angelfish, damselfish, parrotfish, rabbitfish and anemone fish. Species of mollusc are also diverse and four species of turtle are often seen. They are the hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), common green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Pacific ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), and the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*). Dugong (*Dugong dugon*), coconut crab (*Birgus latro*), blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), dolphin, and various shark species are other frequent visitors to these waters.

Day Ten

Today we visit the beautiful southern end of the Auri Islands. Experience amazing diving & snorkelling at Tridacna Wall & Wild Fish Reef. And spend the afternoon snorkelling on plane wrecks in this pristine coral playground.

Day Eleven

Enjoy breakfast together before clearing customs on-board. We will then transfer you to Biak airport in preparation for the short flight back to Darwin.

