



## AREA & WEATHER COMPARISON

A comparison of what the sea conditions are like and what of the each of the dive areas in Indonesia is really like. This information comes from the most up to date trips throughout each of the regions mentioned. This is a guideline only, at times sea conditions may vary from the information on this page.

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### Diving Bali

#### When to dive Bali

Bali can be dived all year round, though during January and February, July and August it may be an idea not to make confirmed plans for the shore diving. Conditions during these months can be slightly unreliable in a few areas, making shore entries can be slightly more difficult. We prefer to offer a more flexible shore diving package during these months to allow for possible rough weather conditions, this way we can move to another area if needed! During certain months it is possible to see the rare oceanic sunfish (Mola Mola) and manta rays can also be seen in large numbers at the right site at the right time. The best months for these animals is generally around August and September with some time on either side of these months. Be aware that the sunfish tend to come in more reliably on certain moon phases. If you really want to see these rare animals ask for the best time, being flexible with your dates often gives you the very best chance to find sunfish.

#### What makes Bali unique

Bali is probably the most overlooked dive destination in Indonesia, mainly due it being a stopping off point for international flights and a place where the majority of tourists come for there yearly holidays. Bali actually has some of Indonesia's best critter diving. Look in any Indo-Pacific identification books to see how many of the photo's have been taken in Bali. In all my years in Indonesia I have seen more unique and bizarre marine life in Bali than anywhere else. This is not due to making more dives in Bali, it is just that more unique animals have been seen here and most of the dives are from shore.

#### Water Temperatures in Bali

Bali varies a huge amount depending on where and when you are diving. The range is from 16degC to 29degC, 16 the coldest it will get in the months of July-September in the southern parts of Bali, this is when the Mola Mola, Oceanic Sunfish come in on the cold water upwellings, in the north during this time water temperatures will be about 27degC. Secret Bay is another area that has its own strange weather system with regards to water temperatures, usually this site is much colder than the rest of Bali and is generally between 23-25degC.

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### Diving The Banda Sea

#### When to dive The Banda Sea

This a huge area and in places very open ocean, certain islands are only really safe to dive with guarantees of good diving for a few months of the year. The very best times are March through to May, then October and November, the middle of these months brings the best sea and diving conditions. Outside of these months can be possible though it may not be possible to dive certain sites on all the islands as the sea may be too choppy and during a few months there may be very low visibility as well! Area's like Ambon can be dived all year round, the Banda islands can also be dived for a longer season than the more remote islands.

#### What makes Banda unique

This area is fantastic for clear water wall diving with excellent coral growth and fish life with pristine reef

crests. There are areas where large fish can be seen and a few sites great for super schools of jacks!

### **Water Temperatures in Banda Sea**

Generally this area has warm waters around 28-29degC, though during the panca roba (cross over season), the water temperatures can be lower than usual, this is usually around August September and can bring in really low visibility as well!

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## **Flores and Alor Diving**

### **When to dive Flores and Alor**

September through to December is a very good time to dive this region, the middle of these months brings the best all round sea conditions. January and February if often OK in Alor though not really for the northern areas of Flores. June through to August can be a little choppy for live aboard boats, though it possible to depart from Alor itself via Kupang, going this way you only dive the Alor region which is a great destination on its own!

### **What's unique about Flores and Alor**

It is not actually Flores alone that makes this route great, what Flores has that seems to stand out to me is the great black sand critter diving. Recent trips through here I have noted that the reefs are actually started to bloom again. There are fantastic wall dives where you can see reef sharks, some larger pelagic fish with pristine coral packed reef crests and area with gorgeous soft coral growth. When we head east into Lembata, we can dive beneath dramatic volcano's on black sand critter rich sites, there is a great wall dive which has been very reliable for big fish, schooling action and great reef scenery. Alor is one of... if not "The" most welcoming place in Indonesia. The locals come out to see dive boats and often swim above divers wanting their photo's taken. Going on land in this region is also a great highlight. The local people enjoy seeing tourists, often it's hard to see who is enjoying the experience more, the tourists or the locals. The diving in Alor has for many years been played up to be a big fish destination. This came when the Dive Indonesia guide book came out, there were a few sites like Kal's Dream and Sharks Galore which were billed as excellent big fish sites and great for sharks and the likes. Back then the writer may have had great dives on these sites, though now these sites are not so reliable. Still many divers head into Alor expecting to see big fish, in my mind Alor is better for the unique marine life and some of the fantastic pristine reef dives. It's fairly common to find sea horses, frogfish, ghost pipefish and at the right time in the right place we can often find the very rare and bizarre wonderpuss or ornate octopus and other bizarre small animals which are generally considered rare in many other parts of Asia.

### **Water Temperatures in Flores & Alor**

North Flores is where most people would be going diving and temperatures here are usually warm year round 27-29degC. Alor however is a very different story, like Bali, Alor has the strong upwelling currents coming in from the south, this can at times bring in waters as cold as 18degC, usually when we take our own private charters through here we will be diving in water around 28degC in the north and as low as 23degC in the south, with chances of the odd thermo cline that drops a little more. This has never put off divers as most want to go back for more...

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## **Halmahera**

### **When to dive Halmahera**

Halmahera can be dived most of the year round, the best season would be from around April through to around November. The west side of islands are protected from the south easterly monsoon and can dived

### **What makes Halmahera unique**

Halmahera is one of a few places left in Indonesia where we can still see sharks regularly, on many of the dives here we can see black tip sharks close up. There are lots of the walking sharks (Epaulette sharks). Some of the reefs in area are just fantastic for the reef scenery with fish abundance being outstanding on quite a few of these dive sites. Dr. Gerry Allen had a fish count that even beat that of the Raja Ampat here, 301 fish on one dive as compared to 284 in Raja Ampat. The topside scenery is also fantastic, four volcanoes are lined up north to

south, the coasts of Halmahera is covered in pristine rain forest, going in near to these islands for the evening is fantastic to hear and see the tropical birds in the canopies above.

### **Water Temperatures in Halmahera**

I have yet to spend enough time in this region to know the full extent of the conditions here, I have experienced warm water here between 27-29degC, from the looks of this area I would think that it would be consistently warm. My previous trips were during times of the year when other areas are much colder.

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## **Komodo Diving**

### **When to dive Komodo**

In Komodo it's possible to comfortably dive different areas during different times of the year. September through to January is better for diving the southern islands, February through to early June is generally better in the north, while June through to August can be the choppiest time of the year. With Komodo having so many small islands and straits it is possible to get away from the worst weather and there are many optional dives in the Komodo National Park that can often be dived when weather does not allow on certain sites!

### **What's unique about Komodo**

Komodo is probably the easiest pleaser for divers coming to south east Asia. Komodo has all the classic dives and can provide excellent critter sites, fantastic scenic sites, wall dives, hard coral gardens and coral filled submerged sea mounts and pinnacles. There are plenty of sites to see larger fish like reef sharks, often manta rays can be seen on a few sites without too much current and danger, there are also two manta aggregation areas which are fairly reliable. Large schooling fish action can be seen on a few sites, land tours range from visits to primitive villages, Komodo dragon tours, treks to view scenic panorama's and beach BBQ's are possible! If you really like the unique marine life Komodo has plenty of great dives to see some very unusual and unique small animals.

### **Water Temperatures in Komodo**

Komodo has two main seasons, the colder season will be in the mid months round July and warming up stretching out from this month temperatures can be as low as 22degC with chances of even colder thermo clines. The warmer season is usually around December-January and cooling down stretching out from this month, temperatures can be as warm as 28degC in the south.

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## **Raja Ampat Diving**

### **When to dive Raja Ampat**

Raja Ampat covers a very large area, the north and south can be dived at different times of the year for optimum conditions. The best season for the south is generally from October through to March/April, this is when the weather starts to change and turn coming from the south east. July and August are when the strong easterly winds kick in! During these months it is still possible to dive in certain areas of the northern Raja Ampat though it may not be possible to dive all the top sites.

### **What's unique about Raja Ampat**

Raja Ampat has some of Indonesia's most intense reefs for colourful coral growth and fish density. This region also has the best topside scenery of any dive destination in south east Asia. What Raja Ampat does not really have, are the great classic critters that many other regions of Indonesia have, it is not so common to find the likes of frogfish, ghost pipefish and other wish list critters, though there are a few dive sites that "at times" can be good for critters.

### **Water Temperatures in Raja Ampat**

Generally this area has warm water of around 27-28degC, though during December it may often drop to 25-26degC.

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## **Diving Lembeh Straits**

### **When to dive Lembeh Straits**

It is possible to dive here all year round. The best times for hot critters, according to local operators and the most respected dive guides would be from June through to November, this is when the cooler water comes, in bringing with it more unique critters. From what we saw in January it was still excellent. This region being a very narrow strait it is fairly protected from the worst weather conditions.

### **What makes Lembeh unique**

Lembeh is a very unique place and at the moment stands alone as being the number one destination for dedicated critter diving. People flock here from all over the world to see some of the most unique marine life. Many of which can be seen in other parts of Indonesia though it seems at the moment no where else has so good a reputation for delivering the goods when it comes to guaranteed critter action! The diving here is very easy and best done with one of the many dive operators in this region. The two longest standing and most respected being Kungkungan Bay Resort (KBR) and Lembeh Resort. There are many other small operators though we have yet to visit any of these and cannot really recommend any. For diving in this region you really need great dive guides who know the area very well, if you take a guide who is not so familiar to this region you may not what is most unique while you are diving, and trust me when I say there is a lot to see!

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## **Diving Wakatobi**

### **When to dive Wakatobi**

Wakatobi is best from March through to May, June through to August can bring choppy seas and often much lower water clarity. This region needs good visibility to really enjoy the best reef scenery. The end of December can bring with it strong winds. In January and February winds are generally too strong to dive here from a liveaboard, the weather is often so rough that Wakatobi Dive Resort closes down! For liveaboard it is best to dive here around April and May and then October and November for the calmest seas, outside of these times is possible for those who do not mind the chance of choppy seas, it is always possible to create an itinerary which has the boat hiding behind the islands, this may mean certain outer islands may not be diveable.

### **What makes Wakatobi unique**

The main reef type in this region are walls, the outer islands offer the best walls and water clarity, while a few of the inner islands offer the better fishy dives, critter diving here is limited to reefs, there is one area with good critter diving and a day here can be a great change if you want to try and see the rare and unique small animals.

### **Water Temperatures in Wakatobi**

This area is generally warm 28-29degC, though during July and a little either side of this month water temperatures will drop to as low as 26degC, also this colder water brings in very low visibility for an area which is best seen with good clear water to fully appreciate it!

**NOTE:** I have been working on some data which shows that moon phases make a significant difference with regards to not only sea conditions but also marine life! More on this later...