Join French manta ray expert Dr. Fabrice Jaine in Myanmar on an exclusive research expedition to explore southeast Asia’s manta hotspots

2015 Expedition Dates
February 28th – March 7th Spaces Still Available!

Your Host
Dr. Fabrice Jaine is a world-leading expert on manta rays and a senior scientist at the Marine Megafauna Foundation, a non-for-profit 501c3 charity organization that spearheads conservation efforts for manta rays across the world. Fabrice, who previously appeared on Nat Geo Wild’s “Manta Mystery” documentary, was the first person in the world to dedicate a PhD thesis to unravelling the movement ecology of these mysterious animals. Upon completing his PhD, Fabrice teamed up with Dr. Andrea Marshall, BBC’s ‘Queen of Mantas’ and 2013 National Geographic Emerging Explorer, to unravel connectivity patterns of manta ray populations across the globe and integrate knowledge about movements of animals into conservation policy.
These bespoke ‘Ray of Hope’ research expeditions were created to allow the public to engage in citizen science while following the Marine Megafauna Foundation research team’s activities in the most remote and exciting destinations for manta rays in the world. The goals of each expedition are unique but every trip is tailored to engage participants while producing high quality science. For the second year in a row Dr. Jaine will be leading the 2015 ‘Ray of Hope’ Expedition to Myanmar and Thailand. Researchers from the Marine Megafauna Foundation have been conducting research in this region for the last four years in a bid to enhance conservation efforts for manta rays in Southeast Asia. Each day the team will explore new areas of the coast. Evenings will be spent in comfort, dining on local cuisine, listening to research talks and improving photography skills with mini workshops.

On this exclusive trip you will spend 8 days with Fabrice as he cruises around Myanmar and Thailand’s most pristine islands, stopping at some of the most remote and spectacular manta viewing sites on the planet. Guests will have the opportunity to become citizen scientists, assisting Fabrice by performing visual transects for mantas, setting camera traps and recording behaviour. All mantas seen and photographed will be uploaded to ‘Manta Matcher’, a global automated online manta ray database, to check for previous sightings or to register individuals for the very first time.

The Mergui Archipelago in Myanmar is world famous for its colour-saturated reefs boasting incredible fish and invertebrate life. This area is still off the grid, and it is rare to encounter other boats or divers during the navigation. The remoteness of the islands, the pristine seascapes and the abundant marine life all make this a destination not to be missed. On the way home we will also visit some of Thailand’s premier dive sites, which are also famed for giant manta rays. Do not miss this incredible opportunity to explore this region with one of few world-leading experts on mantas and help contribute to their research and conservation efforts!
Your Itinerary

For the 5th year in a row, our partners Thailand Dive and Sail have put together a formidable itinerary for this expedition! Building from previous years and knowledge of manta rays in the region, this trip will start from Ranong, Thailand. The first leg of the trip will be dedicated to exploring Myanmar’s vibrant waters with some of the best and most experienced dive guides in the region, before re-entering Thailand and visit its most prestigious dive sites.

One of the biggest highlights of this trip comprising 26 dives in total will be the two days diving at ‘Black Rock’, a breathtaking dive site that Dr. Andrea Marshall previously identified as a major manta ray hotspot in the region after encountering over 30 different giant manta rays in one day! She later described ‘Black Rock’ as one of her top 10 dive sites of all time! Additionally, guests on the trip will have the opportunity to dive at the best macro site in the region, the ‘Three Islets’, the famed ‘Western Rocky’ and ‘Burma Banks’. The second leg of the trip will be highlighted by dives at Thailand’s world-class dive site ‘Richelieu Rock’ in the Surin Islands Marine National Park, as well as key manta sites ‘Koh Ta Chai’ and ‘Koh Bon’. The 2014 season saw a surprising number of encounters with large pelagic species at these three destinations, and we are hopeful that the manta and whale shark sightings will once again be sensational!

The trip will also integrate cultural highlights and community work with the area’s indigenous community, the Moken, on Bo Choo Island. The Moken are sea gypsies who previously lived their lives at sea, and have now settled on a small group of islands. Unrecognized by any government, the Moken are one of the 10 poorest ethnic groups in the world, yet are a charming and smiley bunch of folk. Thailand Dive and Sail’s charity, the See and Sea Organization, has been working with the Moken for the past five years supplying the villagers with much needed malaria medicine and prevention aids, school supplies, reading glasses, etc.
Your Vessel

For the 2nd season in a row we have chosen to do this particular expedition to Myanmar aboard the luxury Deep Andaman Queen liveaboard. The spacious Deep Andaman Queen is a twin engined steel hulled motor boat at 28m long and 7m wide. She takes a maximum of 21 guests on board and regularly runs navigates waters of the Similans and the Mergui Archipelago. Cabins are master, double, twin, triple or quad bunk; all are air-conditioned and ensuite. The Deep Andaman Queen has a very large dive platform, in fact it prides itself on being the largest in South East Asia. It is tailored for divers with a spacious kitting up area with separate entry and exit platforms and 2 fresh water showers. There are also facilities for rinsing cameras and other equipment. Nitrox is available onboard as the Deep Andaman Queen has 2 Bauer mariner compressors. For additional information, including more detailed specifications on the vessel, please refer to its webpage.

Deep Andaman Queen:

• 28 meter, twin-engined steel vessel (7m beam)
• Double, twin, triple and quad bunk rooms with en-suite bathrooms
• Air-conditioned state rooms, lounge & dining area
• Large sundeck & shaded outside areas and spacious dive deck
• State-of-the-art galley serving mouth-watering meals
• Indoor sitting area with TV/DVD/Stereo sound
• Latest diving and safety equipment and satellite communication
• Speed boats
Trip Details

Tour Rate:

- **Standard Quad Cabin**: 68,000 THB (~US$2,120) per person sharing
- **Standard Triple Cabin**: 71,500 THB (~US$2,230) per person sharing
- **Standard Twin Cabin**: 76,750 THB (~US$2,395) per person sharing
- **VIP Deluxe Double/Twin Cabin**: 85,550 (~US$2,670) THB per person sharing
- **Master Cabin**: 96,000 (~US$2,995) THB per person sharing

Price Includes:

- Khao Lak and Phuket transfers to and from your hotel
- 8 day / 8 night liveaboard cruise with Deep Andaman Queen
- 8 diving days - 12L tanks, weight belts, weights and torches provided
- Food and non-alcoholic beverages
- Research activities and evening talks by biologists
- Cultural visit to Bo Choo Island to meet the Moken gypsies
- US$200 donation to the Marine Megafauna Foundation & See and Sea

Price Excludes:

- International and/or domestic flights
- US$300 National Park & Visa Entry Fees (to be paid in cash on the boat)
- Dive gear hire, if required (US$19 per day)
- NITROX tank fill (US$8 per tank or US$110 for full package)
- Underwater cameras / housings
- Stopover costs & gratuity
- Travel Insurance (dive and travel insurance are highly recommended)

For full booking and cancellation policy please inquire at the time of booking.

FOR BOOKINGS CONTACT:
info@rayofhopeexpeditions.com

$800 deposit required to hold your space on this research expedition of a lifetime!

Final payments due by 7th Jan 2015.