Into the heart of the Coral Triangle
February 5th - February 15th
Join us on an exclusive trip through the Bird’s Head Seascape and explore the best of manta ray diving on Raja Ampat’s color saturated reefs.
Expedition

Our bespoke ‘Ray of Hope’ expeditions were created to allow the public to travel with MMF’s manta researchers to the most remote and exciting destinations in the world. The goals of each expedition are unique but every trip is tailored to engage participants and further Marine Megafauna Foundation’s programs in our focal regions around the globe.

The Raja Ampat Regency covers over 40,000 Sq Km of land and sea, including 1500 islands. It sits right in the heart of the "Coral Triangle", which is unquestionably the most biodiverse area for marine life in the world. The waters surrounding Raja Ampat contain 80% of all the world's coral species, 1350 species of fish, six of the world's seven marine turtle species, 27 varieties of marine mammal and conveniently for us manta rays- lots of them! The strong currents of the Dampier Straights make this region highly productive for marine megafauna and fish abound on the reefs here in staggering numbers.

MMF researchers have been monitoring the manta rays in Raja Ampat for the last seven years in a bid to enhance conservation efforts for these gentle giants. This is one of the only locations in Indonesia or anywhere in the world with virtually guaranteed sightings of both species of manta rays. This bespoke Ray of Hope Expedition was specially designed so we can visit the best aggregation sites for both giant oceanic and reef manta rays in the seascape. Luckily, because we will be covering so much ground participants will also get to experience the best dive sites in Raja Ampat as we travel from Misool in the South to the Dampier Straight in the north.

In addition to the rich and varied dive itinerary, which will include both megafauna dives and dives dedicated to exploring the region’s unique macro life, guests will also have the opportunity to kayak to remote beaches, snorkel or paddle board through mangroves, hike to unimaginable vistas and dine under the stars. Evenings will be spent in comfort, sampling local cuisine, listening to research talks and improving photography skills.

Our trips are designed for advanced divers looking to participate in something a bit more challenging and stimulating than your average dive trip. We recommend that you brush up on your diving skills and be in good health in order to capitalize on the experience. Certification cards will be required in advance. We limit the guests on our expeditions to ensure that you get the most out of your time with us and have the best possible encounters with wildlife.
Expedition Guides

Andrea Marshall

Dr. Andrea Marshall is a world-renowned expert on manta rays, a passionate underwater photographer and a National Geographic Explorer. Andrea, dubbed the ‘Queen of Mantas’ in 2009 by the BBC in the Natural World documentary by the same name, was the first person in the world to receive a PhD on the ecology of these mysterious animals.

Today Andrea oversees global research on manta rays and other threatened species as one of the principal scientists of the Marine Megafauna Foundation, a global organization that she co-founded.

MMF is a not-for-profit organization which develops and executes conservation efforts for marine megafauna species threatened with extinction through rigorous research programs and the application of sound management practices. Saving our ocean giants from extinction is MMF’s mission and MMF teams are busy spearheading conservation projects across the globe.

Janneman Conradie

Janneman Conradie is a talented marine conservationist specializing in aerial surveillance and technical diving. Using these specialist skills he helps MMF teams to monitor and capture data in some of the most remote and challenging environments on the planet.

Janneman oversees project logistics for many of MMF’s field expeditions ensuring their teams are using the most efficient and state of the art technologies to execute their research.

As professional underwater and aerial cameraman, Janneman always has some type of camera in hand. He has filmed with some of the best in the business and has worked on projects for broadcasts like National Geographic, BBC and Netflix. In addition to being one of our expert guides, he is onboard to help participants learn more about the technical side of taking photos and videos for fun and for science.
Expedition Vessel

An exclusive trip like this one requires a sensational vessel! We have chosen to run this particular expedition aboard the award-winning liveaboard MV Coralia, one of the finest boats in the region. The Coralia is a classic wooden Phinisi built in Indonesia by the Konjo tribe. This 48-meter schooner is ideal for long navigations through the archipelagos of Indonesia. It is as comfortable as it is beautiful, ensuring that you not only experience the best of what Raja Ampat has to offer, but you do so in style.

Coralia was designed and outfitted specifically for diving. She was built with a massive dive deck and private kit up areas for guests. There is a large, dedicated camera room on the main deck with private charging stations for your gear. The boat has nitrox filling capabilities and spacious, well-designed diving tenders complete with easy to use ladders. Coralia’s cruise directors are the best in the business and between them have decades of experience diving in and around Indonesia. The local dive guides have been hand picked for their expertise in locating hard to find critters and are extremely knowledgeable about the local marine ecosystems. It is hard to imagine a nicer boat to dive from or a friendlier and more skilled crew.

With four levels and so many well designed areas, space is never an issue on Coralia. The boat has several cushioned relaxation spots and deck lounges, which afford guests the opportunity to sunbathe, read, listen to music, chat or enjoy sundowners. Divers will be treated to gourmet snacks and meals prepared by qualified chefs. Food is plentiful and diverse, with both Indonesian and International dishes available. Dietary restrictions can be catered for on request and special dinners or deserts arranged for celebratory occasions like birthdays or anniversaries. With both indoor and outside deck dining available, guests can choose to dine with the group or privately.
We will navigate around the seascape in style and comfort. The vessel is large and stable and handles the sea well. Guests are sure to love their incredibly spacious, boutique style cabins complete with air conditioning and large en-suite bathrooms with showers. Unlike so many dive boats, there is plenty of space to unpack and and relax in the privacy of one’s own room. The exquisite master cabins on the upper decks come complete with private sun decks and lounges as well.

Participants will will be broken up by dive experience into smaller dive groups and provided with private guides to ensure a better quality experience underwater. We also stagger the times these groups are dropped on the reef to ensure sites are not over crowded. Dives will be broken up with periods of rest or meals and we aim, on most days, to provide 4 dives, with either a late afternoon or night-dive option per day. Snorkelers are welcome on our expeditions. Most sites within the Raja Ampat seascape offer incredible snorkeling opportunities as well. For those guests who are not dive certified, a private snorkeling guide will be assigned to you if required. Even certified guests often choose to swap out a guided dive for an equally impressive snorkeling experience from time to time, which of course is your prerogative.

Guests needing a break from diving all together can use stand-up paddle boards or kayaks to explore, get treated to relaxing massages on the sundeck, watch movies or browse through a library of books and magazines. In the evenings guests can sign up for spectacular night dives, conduct dive classes with instructors, listen to lectures from MMF researchers, edit and share their images and manta IDs, get photography tutorials from tour leaders or relax under the stars or in the comfort of their rooms.

Our goal is to provide you with as many options as possible so that you yourself can design the best personalized schedule for your holiday. Participants often return year after year with us to the same destination because each time they come they are able to have a different and unique experience.
Expedition Itinerary

The expedition will start from and end in Sorong. We will be visiting the southern sections of Misool, a community-protected region exploding with life, with some of the healthiest and most color saturated reefs in the world. Here we will seek out both reef and giant manta rays at Magic Mountain, Eagle’s Nest, and Boo Windows- some of Andrea’s favorite dive sites in the world. This region has extraordinary pelagic life, game fish, sharks, schooling fish but is also known for great macro-life, including pygmy seahorses and unusual nudibranchs. With its abundance of stunning dive sites, private bays for kayaking and paddle-boarding, and calm anchorages where we can dine under the stars. We will definitely linger here for several days, indulging in the natural beauty of the local karst limestone formations and getting in as many dives as we possibly can.

During our navigation north we will have the opportunity to explore the region around Penemu, visiting the panoramic vistas that Raja Ampat is famous for. While there we will visit the famous Melissa’s Garden and the lovely underwater arch of Batu Rufus. Nearby we will enjoy a dedicated day of finding bizarre macro critters in the black sands of Batanta, for no trip to
Indonesia would be complete without experiencing ‘muck diving’ and the extraordinary macro-life that abounds here.

Our team will pay special focus on the Dampier Straight area where we have been conducting manta research for many years. Here we again will have the opportunity to encounter both reef manta rays and giant oceanic mantas. We will visit some of the best cleaning stations and feedings grounds on offer in Raja Ampat, locations like Manta Sandy, Manta Ridge, Pulau Wai and Blue Magic.

While this is a manta ray focused trip we will not neglect some of the most famous or iconic dive sites either, like Cape Kri, Mayhem and Sardine’s Reef. The Dampier Straight area of Raja Ampat is magic, the strong currents bring nutrients and food supporting schooling game fish and other pelagics- each dive is surprising and exciting.

No visit to Dampier would be complete without visits to the amazing jetties in the area, particularly the ones at Arborek and Sanwanderek. These jetties are teeming with life from sharks, turtles and schooling fish schools and are known for their extraordinary critters and macro photography opportunities.

Our aim is to showcase the diversity of life and ecosystems in the seascape and infuse your experience with detailed scientific information and unique discoveries, so be prepared to try new things like mangrove dives, drift snorkels, black water dives and drift dives in current. We will adequately prepare our guests for these experiences and provide you with the equipment needed like reef hooks so that you can hook in, relax and enjoy the show as sharks, game fish, even mantas hunt and feed in these dynamic environments.

**This is a suggested schedule and one that has worked well for us in the past. Opportunistic changes in this schedule or itinerary due to conditions, animal presence, foul weather and/or research requirements are at the discretion of the Captain, the Cruise Director and the Dive Expedition Leader.**
Expedition Details

**Master Upper Deck Cabins (for couples):** US$5,800 per person sharing
**Double Bed Cabins (for couples):** US$5,300 per person sharing
**Twin Bed Cabins (for single travelers):** US$5,100 per person sharing

**Price Includes:**
- 11 day / 10 night liveaboard cruise on the *MV Coralia*
- All food (Full breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner and desserts everyday)
- Hot and cold non-alcoholic beverage selection
- Up to 4 dives a day (Air or Nitrox)
- Tanks, weights, belts
- Transportation to and from the airport in Sorong
- Research talks and activities with Marine Megafauna Foundation biologists
- $200 built-in donation to the Marine Megafauna Foundation
- ‘Ray of Hope Expedition’ gift

**Price Excludes:**
- International or domestic flights
- Hotel in Sorong *(if required)*
- Port, fuel and national park fees *(approximately US$295 to be paid in cash on board)*
- Dive Courses *(Advanced Open Water or Nitrox Classes available on request)*
- Dive Gear Rental *(if required)* *free for returning Coralia or Papua Explorer guests*
- Alcoholic Beverages *(wine, beer, cocktails and liquor)* *guests can bring along alcohol without corkage fees*
- On-board Massages
- Laundry
- Use of on-board satellite phone *(if required)*
- Gratuity *(not required but strongly encouraged)*
- Travel Insurance** *(dive insurance required, general travel insurance is highly recommended)*

**Ray of Hope Expeditions and the MV Coralia both** take no responsibility for scheduling or itinerary changes due to extreme weather, political situations, disasters, pandemics or other events beyond our control. Travel insurance is strongly recommended. A DAN or comparable diving accident insurance policy is required for unanticipated evacuations or treatments that may not be covered by your regular insurance. Proof of policy is required in advance.