

INDONESIA

## Raja Ampat Biodiversity Resort

Text by ARLIE HAFT  
Images by RAJA AMPAT BIODIVERSITY RESORT

Ask any experienced diver to name their dream destinations and Raja Ampat will undoubtedly be very high on the list. Reputed to be near the centre of the most biodiverse marine habitat on Earth, this is home to many species not found anywhere else. Spectacular, otherworldly, the stuff of underwater reveries, Raja Ampat is irresistible.

Historically, the area has primarily been served by liveaboards and therefore the domain of more-experienced divers. However, a more accommodation options have evolved on these

remote islands over the last few years and this is attracting a wider range of visitors and diving experience including newly certified divers and snorkellers.

Raja Ampat, the Four Kings, comprises over 1,500 small islands, cays, and shoals surrounding the four main islands of Misool, Salawati, Batanta and Waigeo.



One of the region's jewels is the small island of Gam, separated from Waigeo by a narrow passage. Easily accessible, Gam is in the heart of the Dampier Strait, which rightfully claims some of the most famous dive sites in the world. Just minutes from the Dampier Strait, is home to nearly 600 species of coral, including 75 percent of all coral species known in the world, as well as at least 1,074 fish species.

On reaching Gam, a long, breathtaking strip of white sandy beach is home to the Raja Ampat Biodiversity Resort, doubly favoured by both Nature and hosts who consciously grow and invest in a holiday destination that encourages guests to explore and experience the exceptional environs of Raja Ampat while maintaining an environmental integrity. The island of Gam was selected primarily for its beauty, but it was also chosen for its proximity to Waisai, making the resort a destination that is both accessible and affordable. Daily ferries bring guests from Sorong to the capital, Waisai, and a relaxing 30-minute boat ride brings you to this idyllic getaway.

Imagine descending into the big blue, encountering a rainbow of colours in the vibrant, thriving soft coral reefs. These marine invertebrates live in colonies of polyps and create a kaleidoscope of unique formations that stun the eyes of the most seasoned divers and spoil forever the newcomers. Then the marine life comes alive, as if they know how special they are and want to share their secrets. Schools of fusiliers and jacks duck and sway in the currents, bumphead parrotfish chomp away on the corals, shy Denise's pygmy seahorses hide among gorgonian coral and whitetip and blacktip reef sharks sweep and patrol effortlessly through the sea.

Dive sites include Blue Magic, where majestic mantas, grey reef sharks and schools of big-eyed trevally and barracudas put on a spectacular show. Sardine Reef, just five metres at the top, offers one of the best reef dives in the world to witness biodiversity in all its glory. Unforgettable, too,

27 The long, breathtaking strip of white sandy beach, home to Raja Ampat Biodiversity Resort





is Cape Kri that put Raja Ampat on the map when Dr. Gerry Allen smashed his record for the total number of fish species on a single tank dive – 374 species!

Further excursion day trips can be easily organised to equally desirable dive locations including Manta Sandy, known for its manta cleaning station and Fam Island, with species-rich dive sites and the Penemu lookout point where you see the famous “mushroom” islands from above.

Above water there is also a world of activities and interest. Kayaks provide a different view of Gam or perhaps a trip to the local villages for a tour or a stroll. The area around Gam Island harbours floral communities including mangrove, beach, lowland and sub-mountain forests. This habitat offers sanctuary for a wide array of birds, mammals,

reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and plants. Indulge in a jungle trek and you help support the local economy.

These walks are led by guides from Yenbeser Village, whose depth of knowledge of the local flora and fauna are unmatched.

The main attraction is the red bird-of-paradise in one of the few places in the world you are able to witness these amazing birds. Spectacularly plumaged, they inhabit their own special trees only 45 minutes from the wonderful Raja Ampat Biodiversity Resort.

Lovers of Nature are coming to Raja Ampat, and rightfully so. Thankfully, there are still serene, pristine and relatively unexplored places. And they are worth discovering and protecting.

28 374 fish species were identified on a single tank dive

#### PRACTICALITIES

##### WHEN

Raja Ampat is a year-round destination. The high season is October to April, while the seas can be choppy from June to August.

##### HOW

Connect through Sorong in Raja Ampat from four international Indonesian airports in Jakarta, Makassar, Bali or Manado. A daily ferry runs from Sorong to Waisai, where your resort will pick you up and take you to Gam Island.

##### STAY/DIVE

- Raja Ampat Biodiversity Resort  
[www.rajaampatbiodiversity.com](http://www.rajaampatbiodiversity.com)

##### TOPSIDE

There are many attractions for surface intervals or non-diving days. The snorkelling all round the island is incredible, or hire kayaks to explore around the islands. Local guides will be delighted to show you round traditional villages like Friwen and Yenbeser. Alternatively, head off for a jungle trek and visit the rare red bird-of-paradise found only in this area of West Papua.

##### ENTRY

It is advisable to check the Indonesian Government current visa information as the rules do change. Depending on your passport, there are currently three options to enter Indonesia:

- No visa required – for the majority of countries there is free entry, valid for 30 days and non-extendable
- Visa on arrival – \$35, valid for 30 days and can be extended once for 30 days
- Visa required – apply abroad before arriving in Indonesia

##### IMPORTANT

An entry permit tag is required to enter Raja Ampat Marine Park:

- International citizens – IDR1,000,000 (approx. US\$100)
- Indonesian citizens – IDR500,000 (approx. US\$50)
- Permit valid for 12 months from date of purchase
- Children under 12 years of age do not require a permit

# biodiversity eco resort



## raja ampat - indonesia



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[info@rajaampatbiodiversity.com](mailto:info@rajaampatbiodiversity.com)