

Raja Ampat Diving Project Pre-departure information

This document contains all the information you will need to know to ensure you are fully prepared for your time on the project. We therefore strongly recommend that you read through this entire pack before you depart. Feel free to print it out, but we suggest you print only the pages you require to save paper!

The Project

Located in the East Indonesia/West Papua region of the coral triangle, the stunning remote paradise of Raja Ampat finds itself surrounded by the highest known concentration and diversity of marine life on earth. The area is a top global priority for marine conservation, and the extent of its importance to marine science and ecology is only just being discovered.

The oceans surrounding Raja Ampat contain 80% of all the world's hard coral species (10 times the number of species found in the entire Caribbean) as well as 1350 species of fish, 2 of the world's 7 marine turtle species and 27 varieties of marine mammal. This biodiversity is unparalleled anywhere in the world and the reefs are showing remarkable resistance to global marine threats such as climate change, coral bleaching and disease. Larvae that are naturally produced here are swept across the oceans to replenish 80% of the world's other coral reefs, which in turn supports healthy ecosystems globally and sustainable subsistence fishing for poor villages. What happens in Raja Ampat will have a direct impact on the world's marine ecosystem.

You will be working as part of the Barefoot Conservation Team to protect the coral reefs of Raja Ampat and the communities that rely upon them. The project is designed to work at a grass roots level mixing research and survey dives with education and community work, thus making a real difference that each volunteer can see and be part of.

The goals of the project are to:

- Monitor permanent transect sites, undertake Reef Checks and to produce detailed coastal habitat maps of the surrounding area for use in advising local government and communities on how best to protect their coral reefs (though mapping may be paused to focus on specific science programmes).
- Undertake educational programmes on environmental and conservation issues, sustainable fishing techniques and the economic benefits of MPA's.
- Increase the quality of life and alleviate poverty in local communities.
- Encourage entrepreneurial attitudes to deter from unsustainable destructive activities like shark finning and dynamite fishing.
- Research the effects of climate change on coastal communities (long term project).

Science Dives

Before being able to participate in the official data collection, volunteers must first learn about corals and marine life in the area, and then prove that they know their stuff!

During your first two weeks, you will attend lectures with the science officer on corals, manta rays, and reef fish, and then participate in 'pointy dives' to test your knowledge. You will then need to complete a computer test, and pass, to be able to join the transect dives.

To give yourself a head start, please see your 'My Project' account and download the Pre-departure Learning PDFs to familiarise yourself with the science material prior to your arrival at the project.

The project currently has 5 permanent transect sites which the group survey, at several different depths. The data volunteers collect from these survey sites is being used not just by the Barefoot team, but by both the local fisheries department (KPP) of the Raja Ampat government and Conservation International (CI, a large worldwide NGO) to compare with their own historical data from around the same areas. This is to try and determine how healthy the reefs are, and if any degradation has happened between the prior KPP/CI data collection and the project's new data. Raja Ampat has seen an increase in development over the last five years, with some resorts being built across the coastline of the Dampier Strait and small-scale deforestation happening due to a large increase of local homestays. While this development has not been as drastic as it has in destinations such as Bali, it is vital that all changes are monitored as the health of Raja Ampat's reefs contributes to ecosystems across the globe.

The team also work closely with Reef Check Indonesia and with Coral Watch, but please note that volunteers may only be able to do a few of these surveys during their time on the project.

Volunteers undertake the reef check surveys, and then their data is shared with/analysed by Reef Check Indonesia in Bali.

In conjunction with Coral Watch (who are part of the University of Queensland, Australia), the project team are working to collect data on a global bleaching event which has negatively impacted the Great Barrier Reef. These surveys will form part of Barefoot Conservation's and Coral Watch Climate Change's programmes/research.

The team are also currently working on another research project, which looks at the effects that a local fish farm is having/has had on the surrounding coral reefs and marine life. Volunteers also collect marine mega-fauna data from every dive, which is shared again with the KPP and CI plus other local stakeholders. Some of the dives are used to do nudibranch surveys, to add to the nudibranch species list, and the project have an ongoing manta ray research project, where the data is shared with Manta Trust NGO.

Mantas are commonly seen here, and Raja Ampat is renowned as being one of the best places to spot them in the wild. There are even rare 'Black Mantas' here which are endemic to the region! When involved in this programme during certain seasons, you will be brought by boat to dive sites including Manta Sandy and Blue Magic for the giants. Here, giant mantas can reach lengths of up to 7m! These dive sites are just short boat trips away from the project site and are a common cleaning station for manta rays. Resultantly, they are

ideal locations in which to observe these fantastic creatures. During the science lectures you will be trained to recognise key characteristics, markings and behaviours of the gentle giants (reef mantas are present through most of the year and can grow to four metres in width); you'll also study their ecology, biology and conservation.

Arrival Information

Volunteers will need to fly into Sorong Airport, on the western tip of Papua. The area is built up for tourism and has a great infrastructure. The best way to get to Sorong is via Indonesia's capital, Jakarta.

As all internal flights to Sorong leave Jakarta early in the morning, we recommend that you look for flights that arrive into Sorong the day **BEFORE** your expedition start date. This is so that you will be able to catch the 9am ferry to Waisai on the day of your start date without risks of delay.

Please note that sometimes staff have to come back to Waisai to extend their visas/other volunteers' visas, and on such occasions new arrivals will be asked to take the later ferry at 2pm to allow for them to do this. In this event, you will instead be collected at 1pm (we will notify you by email as soon as possible if this occurs on your start date).

Operators that currently fly to Sorong from Jakarta are: Garuda Indonesia, Lion Air, Sriwijaya, Nam Air and Batik Air (all have stopovers in Makassar, Ambon or Manado). No matter which airline you choose, they all arrive in Sorong in the morning.

You will need to make your own way to the Meridien Hotel from the airport - we recommend making a reservation here for the night before the project start date, as you will be collected from this hotel in the lobby at 8am the next day; however, if you'd prefer to use an alternative hotel and make your way to the Meridien by this time, it is not a problem.

The Meridien Hotel is located across a busy road from the airport, and though it is possible to walk the distance in about 5 minutes, we recommend taking a taxi as it is a safer option, and the easier thing to do with luggage! Taxis are available for approximately IDR50,000, but please agree this cost with the taxi driver beforehand as otherwise they will usually ask for double the fare. A representative will collect you from the Meridien Hotel and take you to the ferry port, where you will catch the 9am ferry on the Wednesday morning to Waisai (approx. 2 hours).

The cost of the ferry/boat (around IDR130,000 per person each way) is **not included in your project fee**, and you will need cash for both the journey there and your journey back. A boat will then meet you on arrival in Waisai and take you on the final 40-60 minute boat ride to your home for the duration of your expedition, Arborek Island.

Departure Information

On the day of your departure from the expedition, a boat will take you back to Waisai, where the ferry for Sorong (fee not included) leaves at either 9am or 2pm. You will arrive in Sorong approximately 2 hours later.

You will usually need to stay one night in a hotel in Sorong as there are rarely flights back to Jakarta leaving after 2pm.

Also, the ferry regularly runs late, so if you opt for an extra night in Sorong before flying, it will remove the risk of missing your flight and, importantly, will lessen the risk of decompression illness.

Flying After Diving Recommendations

For dives within the no-decompression limits

- Single dives: a minimum pre-flight surface interval of 12 hours is suggested.
- Repetitive dives and/or multi-day dives: a minimum pre-flight surface interval of 18 hours is suggested.

For dives requiring decompression stops

A minimum pre-flight surface interval of greater than 18 hours is suggested.

You can book another night at the Meridien Hotel (the most convenient option as it is closest to the airport) and you can arrange a taxi to take you to the airport the next day (there are always taxi drivers parked outside of the entrance).

As soon as your flights are booked, please fill in the 'Flight Details' section on your account, and please ensure to add a note to confirm the hotel you have booked so that the team know where they can reach you should they need to.

Visa and Passport Information

You must hold a valid passport to enter Indonesia. Your passport must be valid for a minimum period of six months from the date of entry to Indonesia.

For a visit of 30 days, citizens of the UK, the USA and nations in the European Economic Area can obtain a single-entry visa on arrival for free when first entering Indonesia (this is for 30 days maximum). For stays of over 30 days, you will need to apply for a social-cultural visa beforehand. If you do require a social-cultural visa please get in touch with us in plenty of time, so that we can ask the in-country team to prepare a sponsor letter to support your application. For more information, please click on the following link:

<http://indonesianembassy.org.uk/en/consular/visa-info/socialcultural-visit-visa/>

Citizens of other countries should also check this website to see if they require a tourist visa.

If you are volunteering for over 60 days, the in-country team will assist you with extending your visa once you are in Indonesia. Please note that the maximum length of stay in Indonesia is 90 days.

Insurance

It is **ESSENTIAL** that you have adequate insurance for the duration of your stay. Your policy must cover you for diving down to 30m. Please note that many household policies and cheap backpacker policies do not provide adequate cover. In the unlikely event that you do have an accident, you must be covered for all contingencies including emergency air evacuation and repatriation.

You must scan or e-mail a copy of your insurance policy to us along with your PADI medical form. We need this information to activate the emergency response teams in the unlikely event of an accident. It is incredibly important that we have this information.

These details must be sent to us at least 8 weeks before your project start date.

Please note: we are able to provide a tailored insurance policy for you through Endsleigh, which you can purchase on your account. Please use the following link:

<https://www.thegreatprojects.com/travel-insurance> for more information.

Accommodation and amenities

The project site is very remote, and the accommodation is very basic. Due to the remote location, it is part of camp life that all volunteers and staff work together to ensure the camp is well-kept and maintained. It's also important to communicate well with project staff if there are any issues.

Whilst on site it will be your responsibility to keep your dorm clean, to wash up your plates and cutlery after each meal, and to also take part in a cleaning rota in camp. Typically, this will involve completing a cleaning task for 30 minutes every other day, but this may be more frequent. Each week the cleaning rota will be written on a white board in camp, an example of which you can find below:

CLEANING! ☺

	DINING TABLE	FOOD & SCIENCE + WASHING AREA	FOOTBOWLS	TOILETS	SHOWERS	WASTE + KITCHEN WASTE	RAKING
THU	HANSIKA	SANDRA	JESSICA	Gordel	LINCE	IVANA	
FRI	Phoebe	Jeffri	Victoria	Stefano	Dwayne	Eureka	Sophie
MON	Gordel	Hendrik	Gina	Angel	Sophie	Lince	
TUE	Stefano	Phoebe	Eureka	Sandra	Gina	Jessica	Jeffri
WED	Angel	Dwayne	Hansika	Victoria	Ivana	Hendrik	

DEEP CLEAN

All volunteers will also take part in a deep clean, once each weekend, which will take 1 hour maximum and involves everyone picking up any litter around camp among other things.

Accommodation upgrade

The island has a beachfront bungalow with 2 private rooms inside, and two twin beds in each. These rooms are available at an extra cost of £120 per week for those who wish to upgrade and are great for couples travelling together. Please enquire for more details. The private rooms are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Facilities

Due to the remote location of the project site, facilities are limited. The camp has western style toilets (flushable using a bucket of sea water) and at present has water from the local well on tap to wash in/wash clothes in – this is half fresh and half salt water. The project uses a desalination machine to produce all drinking water and water to shower with. The washing water is stored in large containers in the shower room which are re-filled daily, and a scoop provided. Fresh bottled water can be bought from the local shop (always available and very reasonably priced) if volunteers prefer. All bungalows have multiple power points in them so you can recharge cameras, iPods etc.

***Please note electricity is only available between 6pm and 6am and that you will need to bring an adapter with you (2 round pins used in Indonesia).**

****If you see anything broken and in need of repair or any other issues, please bring this to the attention of project staff immediately so it can be rectified.**

Destination Information

As one of the last great dive frontiers on earth, Raja Ampat offers stunning scenery both above and below water. A hotspot of biodiversity, this magical archipelago (also known as the 'Four Kings') offers over 1500 small palm-fringed islands, cays and shoals for exploration - perfect for the intrepid traveller and wannabe Robinson Crusoe's!

Recent marine research in the area has found that there are 1,300 species of coral reef fishes, 27 marine animal species, and 600 + species of hard coral – the highest marine biodiversity level recorded for an area this size anywhere on the planet! What's more, new species are still being discovered – in 2006 alone there were more than 50 species discovered, including two types of 'walking' epaulette sharks! It's clear that as a destination, Raja Ampat is pretty unique, and therefore needs protecting.

Climate

Raja Ampat lies close to the equator, and therefore enjoys a hot and humid climate year-round. Air temperatures are reliably constant with a daytime maximum of 31 degrees centigrade and a nightly minimum of 25 degrees centigrade. It can however feel hotter due to the region's average relative humidity of 83%! The water temperature is also warm year-round, with an average surface temperature of 29 degrees.

Being a tropical environment, there are no days of the year where you can be sure it won't rain. However, there is far less of a chance of rain during the dry season (between October and April). Most rain falls between May and September, and July is usually the wettest month. Even in the wet season though, it doesn't rain all day every day – rainfall is often short-lived and localised.

Please note however that even if it does rain, it will not be as dramatic as in monsoon affected destinations like Bali, Thailand and Malaysia.

Cultural Considerations

The project site itself is located amongst a Christian community, so though volunteers can mostly dress as they wish on site (please note volunteers are asked not to walk around in only their swimwear), mainland Indonesia is mainly a Muslim culture.

The culture in Indonesia may be very different to what you're used to at home, so we have put together some points to take into account when on your trip:

- Do not point, except with the thumb.
- Do not touch people on the head (especially children)
- Women should avoid very short skirts and revealing clothes and will need adequate clothing for when visiting local schools and villages. This means long skirts/knee

length shorts/trousers, i.e. clothes that cover their knees and tops which cover their shoulders.

- Take off shoes before going indoors.
- In Indonesia, it is not considered impolite to stare. Sometimes when you are out in public, you will feel yourself the object of staring. There is nothing you can really do about it, and no matter how uncomfortable you feel it will always happen. Expect and embrace it!
- Indonesian culture is based on the concept of 'saving face'. Do not be confrontational! Locals do not know how to deal with this.
- Always remain pleasant - even when making a complaint.
- Locals are laid back and do not like hassle - pace of life is slow and people like to relax!
- Throughout Indonesia, it is considered rude to pass anything (especially food or drink) or shake hands with your left hand. This is the hand used for 'toilet duties'.
- Make yourself clear when speaking. Avoid being longwinded when asking a question. Get straight to the point.

Religion

Christianity is the main religion on Arborek Island and in Papua. 90% of the population on the remote islands of Raja Ampat are Christian. Other religions include Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Animism (spirit worship).

Languages

More than 700 languages are spoken in Indonesia! The official language is Indonesian (known locally as Bahasa Indonesia), a modified version of Malay, which is used in commerce, administration, education, and the media. However, most Indonesians speak local languages, like Javanese and Sudanese, as their main language.

Volunteer Conduct

All volunteers must operate within the laws of the host country and must not act in a way that is offensive to its inhabitants or to fellow expedition members. Breach of these principles could lead to repatriation at the discretion of the field staff. Please also remember to only drink alcohol in moderation.

At all times the decision of the project manager will be final on matters likely to endanger your safety and well-being and that of the other volunteers. Therefore, you must always strictly comply with the laws, customs and regulations of the premises.

We hold a zero-tolerance policy on drug use. You will be reported if you do and asked to leave the project.

Health and Safety

Indonesia is generally a very safe place. Most visitors will not see any crime, but it pays to be safe and aware like you would be anywhere in the world. Before travel, we recommend you research any potential travel restrictions with your government travel advisory department. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel information for Indonesia can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/indonesia>

The Great Projects are not qualified to give advice regarding vaccinations; please speak to your GP or a travel nurse and they will be able to provide you with more details. A good source for vaccination advice is: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>

We do wish to highlight that there are cases of Dengue Fever found in Indonesia, and if any volunteers experience symptoms (a sudden onset of fever, headache, muscle and joint pains) whilst on the island they are advised to speak to the medical staff member of the team immediately. For further information and advice about avoiding mosquito bites please see the NHS Fit For Travel website on the following page:

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/disease-prevention-advice/dengue-fever.aspx>

Raja Ampat is extremely safe, but please don't take this for granted. Like you would anywhere else in the world, please keep an eye on valuables. Cameras and smart phones are best kept in a dry box – we recommend a small Tupperware box or zip-lock bag to keep the sand and seawater away! There is also a cupboard in the staff accommodation with a sequence padlock on it that can be used to store passports and money if you prefer.

Please also be aware that as this is a remote tropical island, there are certain health risks that you wouldn't necessarily find back home. These include severe sunburn (you are on the equator here) and dehydration – make sure you bear this in mind whilst on your trip! Health risks like viruses can happen and Indonesia has Dengue, Malaria (in some remote parts) and Chikungunya, even in Bali. Plenty of DEET mosquito repellent is needed and long sleeved shirts and trousers are recommended. All vaccinations should also be up to date.

First Aid

There is a first aid kit located on site. You will find plasters, antiseptic, anti-itch creams and painkillers there. Small quantities are free, but the project reserves the right to charge if you use a lot.

It is recommended that you bring your own first aid kit supply to the island with you. Due to the nature of living on a tropical island, cuts and grazes are commonplace and **it is important you have supplies to use to stop infections.**

Recommended items include:

- Assortment of plasters
- Iodine Tincture/Betadine (for wound cleaning)
- Assortment of non-stick dressings
- Micropore tape and/or Zinc oxide tape
- Antihistamine cream
- Imodium tablets
- Rehydration salts (eg: Dioralyte)
- Ibuprofen/Paracetamol (on advice of GP)
- Antibiotic ear drops (on advice of GP)
- Non-sedative antihistamine tablets (on advice of GP)

Please take your own antibiotic ear drops, as ear infections can happen due to the rich nutrients in the water.

There is also an AED (Automated External Defibrillator), and a wide range of medical supplies to cover most (if not all) expedition emergencies, including the need for oxygen.

Manuals, Dive Slates and PADI PIC's

It is **ESSENTIAL** that **ALL** volunteers get their **dive manuals and PICs** (*example of a PIC shown right) for any course they plan to do during their stay (**Open Water and Advanced Open Water diver, Emergency First Response, Rescue, Divemaster etc**) along with any other equipment such as **dive slates or dive torches** before travel.

Once out in Raja Ampat you will not be able to purchase these, and they are **NOT** included within the project price. It is best to check online for dive shops that offer suitable postage options for your location. Please note that these may take a while to arrive via post, so plan accordingly.

If you come without the appropriate manuals/PICs you WILL NOT be able to do the course!

The image shows a sample PADI Positive Identification Card (PIC) envelope form. The form is titled "POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION CARD (PIC) ENVELOPE" and includes the following sections:

- INSTRUCTOR STATEMENT:** A section for the instructor to certify that the person has been trained to a proficiency level acceptable for PADI certification and has completed all requirements including open water training.
- FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:** A section for PADI certification level.
- PART I: To be Completed By Instructor:** Includes fields for RETURN CARD TO (Direct Course Return or Returning Dive Center/Resort), INSTRUCTOR, DIVE CENTER/RESORT, CERTIFICATION LOCATION (Month and Day), and COUNTRY.
- PART II: To be Completed By Student:** Includes fields for REFERRAL (Referring Dive Center/Resort), ORIGINAL CARD (Have you ever had this level?), REPLACEMENT CARD (Original Student Name), and INDICATE TYPE (Lost Card or Upgrade from Another Certification Level).

Money

Currency exchange should be done in your country of origin or at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta (CGK). Money cannot be exchanged at Sorong International Airport (SOQ) in Papua.

Please note that there are ATMs in Waisai and at the Meridien Hotel, but not all debit/credit cards are accepted. It is best to change money in Jakarta or before joining the project – do please try to withdraw money before you travel.

Over the course of the project, you will require funds for in-transit expenses and personal expenditure (such as bar refreshments, luxury items from Waisai, etc). A budget of approximately IDR2,750,000, to cover in-transit expenses to/from the expedition base, and a budget of approximately IDR 1,750,000 per month for personal expenditure during the course of your expedition is usually adequate.

A rough guide to help you plan personal expenditure whilst in-transit to/from the expedition and during the course of the project is given below:

- Visa on arrival - \$35 US dollars
- Any excess baggage - 15,000 IDR - 30,000 IDR per kilo over the maximum 20 kilo allowance, depending on the airline
- Taxi for transfers between Sorong Airport and your hotel - 50,000 IDR each way
- Accommodation in Sorong - 500,000 IDR per night (250,000 IDR each if sharing twin room; breakfast included)
- Ferry between Sorong and Waisai (Raja Ampat capital) – 260,000 IDR (130,000 IDR each way)
- Raja Ampat Marine Reserve park fee - 1,000,000 IDR (this is paid on arrival at Waisai)
- Personal expenses per month (bar refreshments, luxury items etc) - 1,500,000 IDR - 2,000,000 IDR
- Visa extensions if needed - 355,000 IDR (plus 300,000IDR for the sponsor to travel to Sorong with you, though this cost will be split if others are also going)
- Extra optional PADI dive courses - Rescue Course £200 - Divemaster course £350
- Any ad-hoc scuba equipment rental not pre-arranged - see the 'Diving' section.

Please note that the exchange rate for the Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) fluctuates so please check current rates before leaving. A good source of finding out up to date exchange rates can be found here: <http://www.xe.com/>.

We also recommend that you bring a credit card for emergency use as many insurance companies will not pay for bills upfront, and initial payments may be needed.

Extra Information

Supplies

The local village has a shop in which to buy snacks, soft drinks and beer (perfect for the amazing sunsets!). There are a few toiletry supplies here, but please note it is advisable to get the majority of your supplies before you arrive. This is after all a remote island experience!

Communication

Raja Ampat is remote and in the middle of the ocean, and therefore it is very unlikely that you will get reception on a SIM card from home!

At present only one local network provider (Telkomsel) has coverage/reception in the Raja Ampat region. It is possible to purchase a Telkomsel SIM card and use it in your mobile phone while on site if your mobile phone is unlocked. You may be able to get 3G and some 4G reception with Telkomsel which gives OK internet access via smart phones. Some overseas mobile phones may work if set to roaming but please check with your network service provider before joining the expedition. This may well be very expensive, and calls and texts may well be cheaper from a local SIM card.

Please note that NO mobile phones are permitted during scuba/science lectures or whilst attending any community projects.

Pre-departure Learning

Within the 'My Project' section of the website, there are 5 pre-departure learning documents (under the 'Documents' tab). Please take a look at these and familiarise yourself with some of the different fish and coral species. You do not need to know them all but anything you learn before you go will help you on the project!

Entertainment and Social Life

Having a good social life is encouraged whilst on expeditions here; fancy dress parties, murder mystery nights, social events, evening games, movie nights, volley ball competitions, and a few cold beers on a Saturday night are all a major part of that.

We understand that one issue which may arise from living on a remote island is a certain amount of 'cabin fever'. For this reason, the project staff will try (whenever reasonably possible) to arrange off-site days to resorts where you can get pizza and other western treats, however, you may be required to pay for the fuel to take you to other islands. Additional day trips can cost between 30,000 and 150,000 IDR (£1.50 and £7.50).

Alcohol

There is usually a supply of cold beer available on the island. This however is not included in your overall payment. Please note that it is not safe diving practice to drink before diving and for this reason, there is generally no drinking during the day. If you drink excessively, you will not be diving the next morning.

Water

Drinking water is included in the expedition fee, however you may wish to purchase additional bottles. There is also a freezer on site so you can put bottles in it to have cold water. You will need to bring a drinking container to refill as often as possible, as project staff try to limit the amount of waste that is produced.

Laundry

We recommend taking environmentally-friendly washing detergent with you. You can, however, buy detergent on the island or in Waisai for around £3. There are buckets for you to do your laundry in. No laundry should ever be done in the showers!

Scuba Diving

Whilst participating on the project you will have the opportunity to join numerous dives. From Monday to Friday, all dives are science dives and then on Saturdays you will be able to take part in a fun dive. Sunday is a day free from diving to give you time to rest after a busy week.

The data collected from science dives is integral to the project, however, if you need to take a break from diving for a morning/afternoon or a day, then you are free to stay at base camp. **It is not, however, possible to miss a science dive and take part in a fun dive instead.**

Please also note, if you do not take part in the lectures/complete the tests, then you may not be able to take part in certain science dives.

Diving Equipment

If you are joining an expedition as an unqualified diver (or are qualified up to an Open Water level), your expedition fee will include the use of a Buoyancy Control Device (BCD) and a full regulator set (1st, 2nd Stage, Octopus and SPG) for the first week of your booking and you can rent items for the remainder of your stay.

If you are joining an expedition as a qualified diver (PADI Advanced Open Water or above), you will either need to bring your own equipment or you can rent items from the project for the full duration of your stay.

Rental equipment can be arranged through your project account and must be paid for at least 30 days before your project start date.

If you do not confirm your equipment by this time, we cannot guarantee the items you may need will be available when you arrive. **Please also be aware that during peak times some equipment may be shared between volunteers who are renting equipment.**

Volunteers can rent the following items, should you not have your own equipment or if you simply wish to avoid carrying it while on further travels (costs are **per week** and in GBP £):

- Buoyancy Control Device (BCD) - £15
- Full regulator set (1st, 2nd stage, Octopus and SPG) - £15
- Mask & Snorkel - £10
- Wetsuit - £10
- Fins & Dive boots - £15
- Dive Computer - £20 (£150 refundable deposit needed) This item is a requirement for every volunteer, so if you do not have your own you will need to rent one.

All dive equipment is serviced every 6 months.

Unqualified Scuba Divers

If you join the project as an unqualified diver, you will take part in the Dive Training Program (DTP) and be a Dive Trainee (DT). This will take part in the first week of the expedition and will involve being trained first as a PADI Open water (OW) diver, then as a PADI Advanced Open Water (AOW) diver. Our fully qualified PADI Scuba Instructor will guide you through the dive theory, then confined water sessions (no deeper than 5 meters), and then, once you are comfortable, on to the open water sessions where you will dive to no deeper than 18 meters.

The AOW course does not involve as much theory work as the OW course, and is more about reinforcing what you have already learnt by undertaking 5 dives. A 'deep' dive (max 30 meters) and a 'navigational' dive are mandatory as part of the PADI AOW course, however, as you will be doing coral reef surveys, it is vital your buoyancy is good and hence we also make the 'Peak Performance Buoyancy' dive mandatory as well. For your safety, and that of the other divers on the survey team, Dive Trainees will not be allowed to take part in survey dives until they have passed the OW and AOW courses to the satisfaction of the PADI Scuba Instructor teaching them.

Please note if you are joining as a Dive Trainee you will have to provide your own PADI Open Water and Advanced Open Water manuals, plus the Personal Identity Card (PICs) for each course undertaken. PADI have now made it mandatory for each student to have their own set of manuals for each course.

Qualified Scuba Divers

If you are joining an expedition as a PADI AOW qualified scuba diver (or equivalent level with another organisation) your expedition will start a week later than the Dive Trainees taking part in the DTP. It is important that you send our UK office a copy of your scuba diving qualification card and log book detailing when your last scuba dive was before your expedition start date. You must also take this qualification card and log book to the expedition with you for the on-site PADI Scuba Instructor to verify.

For your safety and that of your fellow divers, all qualified divers joining an expedition must undertake a review dive with the PADI Scuba Instructor to demonstrate their dive skills, show they have the necessary neutral buoyancy skills to undertake survey dives and prove they do not pose a safety risk to themselves and/or others.

Qualified divers will not be allowed to take part in further dives until they have passed this scuba review dive to the satisfaction of the on-site PADI Scuba Instructor.

As the priority during the project is your personal safety, there will be a high level of diving standards and strict dive profiles maintained at all times. The project's dive profiles are more conservative than the recreational dive tables other scuba diving centres may use.

This is due to the amount of diving volunteers undertake each week and to greatly reduces the risk of a diving incident.

It is your responsibility to present yourself as fit for diving (i.e. well rested, well hydrated with no pre-existing injuries or illnesses). If you have any doubt as to your fitness to dive you must refer yourself to the Medical Officer (MO).

If volunteers are proven to have misled project staff, or it's appointed MO regarding medical issues, they will not be allowed to dive until cleared to by the project's head office and on-site MO. If an individual has wilfully misled any of the above, they may be dismissed from the expedition site. The MO's decision on an individual's medical suitability to dive is final. Cave diving, cavern diving, wreck penetration or any other form of diving presenting a 'no clear surface' environment is not permitted at any time.

Dive Safety

Owing to its position in the coral triangle, Raja Ampat experiences currents from different oceans flowing into the region. This means that at times there may be mild currents on some of the dives. You needn't worry however, as you will fully trained on how to dive in currents and you will not be expected to go out on surveys until you are totally confident and have good buoyancy skills. During the project, safety is of paramount importance. The project keeps medical equipment, such as oxygen, on site for remote diving safety.

They also tend to have a doctor onsite; if not, there is a nurse resident on the island and members of the dive team are first aid qualified. If there are ever any more serious issues, those affected will be taken to the nearest hospital (situated in Waisai) immediately.

The local government has recently installed a new Decompression Chamber in Waisai's hospital. This means the nearest Decompression Chamber is only 45 minutes from basecamp.

The coral reefs throughout Raja Ampat are home to some of the most diverse marine species anywhere on the planet! While this makes for some incredible diving, there are some species that you should be conscious of whilst underwater. These include stonefish (watch where you put your feet!), scorpionfish, lionfish, stingrays, sea snakes, blue-ringed octopus, fire coral and, of course, jellyfish! The chances of being stung are very slim, but it pays to be aware.

Packing List

- Spending money (see the 'money' section to gauge how much to bring)
- Light bed sheet or cotton sleeping bag
- Dive skins and snorkel gear – mask, snorkel, fins, skins/rash vest/stinger suit (Dive gear is hard to find in Raja Ampat so please either buy it in your home country or perhaps plan a stopover in Jakarta or Sorong for shopping)
- Snorkel equipment and diving skins: a wet suit can be worn, 3-5mm at max. A good 3mm is all that is ever needed (the average water temperature is 29 degrees here!); though a loose 5mm will work.
- Underwater or land cameras
- Dive knife or line cutters, dive torch (ESSENTIAL for joining the night dives), dive computer
- Reef hook (imperative for some dives)
- A service kit for regulators if bringing your own
- Shorts and t-shirts
- Towel
- Longer trousers and thin long-sleeved layers for cool evenings (and for protection against biting insects!)
- Light weight t-shirts, at least one hoody, a lightweight water jacket and a jumper
- Flip flops
- Sunglasses, a hat/cap and sun cream/aftersun for sun protection
- Torch
- Small mirror
- Water bottle
- Mosquito repellent
- Talcum powder
- Personal toiletries (razors, shampoo, shower gel and contact lens solution if needed)
- Environmentally friendly washing detergent

- Ladies – your preferred feminine hygiene products, plus Canesten (just in case)
- Personal medication/medicines/basic first aid kit/antibiotics for skin infections and anti-fungal cream – please ask your GP at **LEAST** one month before travel

Issues on Site

If you have any issues on site, please speak to a member of the team as soon as possible to get the issue resolved. Most things can be fixed immediately but it is important you communicate with the project staff. The camp works on a foundation of teamwork and communication, so please be aware that if you encounter any issues and do not bring these to the attention of the project staff, we will not be liable for them at a later date.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST:

We recommend you become a fan of our Facebook page 'The Great Projects' where you can connect with past and future volunteers, who are happy to exchange a wealth of information about all of our projects and tours.