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CELEBES EXPLORER

SIPADAN MARIN PARK – 3, 4, 6, 7 NIGHTS ONBOARD

DAYS	ITINERARY	DIVES
DAY 0	Transfert to Tawau Airport	---
DAY 1	<p>Ever since diving celebrity Jacques Cousteau raved about Sipadan's diversity of marine life, this dive mecca has been indisputably the most famous scuba destination in Malaysia. It is located off the east coast of Sabah, Malaysia's eastern most state, and lies on the north-eastern corner of Borneo, the world's third largest island.</p> <p>The list of attractions is quite staggering and all the more exceptional as it involves plenty of big fish encounters - barracudas, large schools of trevally and marauding bumphead parrotfish. This is one of the big fish capitals of the world !</p> <p>When diving in Sipadan everywhere you turn you'll see turtles, munching on the sponges and algae, or lazing on the wall ledges. If you take the time to look closely at the walls you'll see a wealth of macro life and fish species to rival most destinations, although this is often overlooked due to the other major attractions vying for your attention.</p>	4
DAY 2	<p>South Point is a dive site typical of Sipadan - colourful abundant walls, sharks, turtles and schools of fish in big numbers and all the while the possibility of seeing something really exciting such as hammerheads or thresher sharks. Cruising along you won't be sure whether it is a better idea to poke around in the wall or keep an eye out for the bigger stuff. As with many of the other sites, there is no hanging around in the blue doing a boring safety stop. Instead you will want the use of every breath of air in your tank as you spend the last few minutes hovering over coral gardens with as much colourful life and activity as</p>	4

DAY 3	anywhere. Barracuda Point. One of the favourite dive sites here. Hordes of turtles, vast schools of jacks, bannerfish and snapper are merely bit part players on this site. A variety of sharks are also likely to be spotted but the real stars of this show are the eponymous barracuda. Find yourself in the eye of the hurricane that is the enormous vortex of barracuda here and you will be simply awestruck. Turtle Cavern is a site not dived as much these days as it was before the closure of the resorts based on Sipadan Island itself, but it is well worth doing as it is unlike any of the other sites. Before approaching the cave entrance you may well be stunned to see a marauding horde of huge bumphead parrotfish charging past you as you sink down the wall.	4
DAY 4	back to Semporna around 02:00 pm-02:30 pm	3
TOTAL DIVES		15

This is an example of a typical 4 days trip

BOAT SPECIFICATIONS

Technical specifications	Accommodation and Facilities	Navigation and Communications
<p>Length :29m Width : 7,2m Cruising speed : 8-10 knots Electricity : 220-250 V; 3 pin plug; Adapter available onboard.</p>	<p>Staterooms : 8 Private ensuite with hot water shower and individual air conditioned unit. Closet with hangers. Individual mini safe available.</p> <p>Max passengers : 16 Crew : 12</p>	<p>Mobile phone Sattelite phone VHF radio SSB radio Radar Depth sounder GPS</p>

Currently, Entry Permit Fees to Sipadan Island is @USD13 per person per day (subject to changes without prior notice). Celebes Explorer conducts 4 dives in Sipadan per day on every Monday, Tuesday, Friday & Saturday (3 dives). The entry permit is subject to the approval of the SABAH PARK.

FAQ

Climate

Malaysia has an **equatorial climate**. The average temperature is about 26°C, but highland temperatures can drop down to 18°C. The annual rainfall is about 250 cm, and on rainy days thunder and lightning often accompany the downpour. The humidity level is high - about 80%.

Generally, the east coast of the Malay Peninsula and the north eastern coast of Sabah and western Sarawak will expect more rain from November to February. The west coast of the peninsula will have more rain from May to October. Having said this, the **diving season in Malaysia** runs **all year round** in most locations.

History

Since the 3rd Century BC the region of Malaysia has been profoundly influenced by its neighbours of India, Indonesia and Thailand. Many Malay kingdoms were in existence as early as the 2nd and 3rd centuries, but it is the Malaccan Sultanate of the 1400's, lasting more than a century, which was the golden age of Malay self-rule and did much to spread Islam throughout the region.

Colonial influence was greatest with the British who, in the mid 18th century, with the British East India Company, based in British India increased their interest and made allies with the 19th century Malay Sultans.

Various Anglo-Dutch treaties shaped the borders of the Malayan peninsula and following the weakening of British power in Malaysia in World War II, and independence for Malaya was declared in 1957. Tunku Abdul Rahman became the nation's first president. In 1963 Malaysia came into being consisting of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore. Brunei and Singapore subsequently withdrew. There continues to be an imbalance in favour of Malaya (and ethnic Malays) that allows resentment to fester in the Bornean states although the union appears healthy.

The Local People

Malaysia, truly Asia, is a multi-racial society with a population of about 22 million, 80% of which live on the Malay peninsula. The population comprise 3 main races - Malays, Chinese and Indians. The Malays, who are Muslim, form the majority in the country. The Chinese are mostly Buddhists and the Indians mainly Hindu. Other racial segments found in the country are the Eurasians, and the indigenous groups like the Ibans, Kadazans, Dusuns, Dayaks, Bidayus and Muruts.

The different races have their own culture, traditions and customs. This makes for a rich tapestry of local customs and culture - visitors will be amazed at the depth and variety found in the country. The national language is Bahasa Malaysia, but English is spoken by most (it's taught in all national schools as a second language), particularly in urban and tourist centres.

Health

Malaysia generally has a good standard of health and cleanliness - it's better than most other destinations in South East Asia. Having said that, the usual rules for ensuring good health in an equatorial climate do apply.

Wear loose clothes, wash frequently and dry yourself carefully to avoid fungal infections. Drink lots of fluids to ensure you don't become dehydrated. Avoid prolonged exposure to the sun and wear cool, lightweight clothes.

On the off chance that you do experience health problems here, the quality of hospitals and clinics are high. Hospitals and clinics are available in almost all cities and towns, with the only real exception to this rule being the smaller islands off the Malaysian coast. Most doctors and nurses speak English. Pharmacies/chemists are also of high quality, with most medications not needing a prescription.

Citizens coming from yellow fever infected countries on the African and South American continents have to produce their yellow fever vaccination certificates for entry into the country. Travellers are advised to buy travel and health insurance before visiting. International SOS, the world's largest emergency assistance company, provides 24-hour emergency assistance services in Malaysia.

Tourist Visas

Commonwealth citizens (except those from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan) and citizens of the Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, San Marino and Liechtenstein do not require a visa to visit Malaysia.

Citizens of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovak Republic, South Korea, Sweden and the USA and most Arab countries do not require a visa for a visit not exceeding 3 months.

Citizens of France, Greece, Poland, South Africa and many South American and African countries do not require a visa for a visit not exceeding 1 month. Citizens of Israel cannot enter. Most other nationalities are given a shorter stay period or require a visa. You should contact a local Malaysian embassy or consulate for details.

Time Zones

There is only 1 national time zone: +8 hrs GMT, or +13 hrs EST.

Business Hours

Banking hours are 09:30 till 15:00, Monday to Friday. On Saturday, banking hours are from 09:30 till 11:30. Banks are closed on the first and third Saturday of each month. Shop stores are usually open from 11:00 till 22:00, every day. Government offices are open from 08:15 till 16:45 from Monday to Friday. On Saturday, they are open from 08:00 till 13:15; they are closed on the first and third Saturday of each month.

3 states on the Malay Peninsula practise slightly different office hours (welcome to Asia!). Offices in Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah open from Saturday to Wednesday, with a half-day on Thursday and a rest day on Friday.

Electricity

Voltage is 220 - 240 volts AC at 50 cycles per second. Most major hotels provide 110 - 120 volt adaptors.

Photographic Facilities

Most popular brands and types of film are widely available, especially in the cities and towns. Print film is commonly available. Slide films are mostly only found in large cities and are generally rather expensive. Film processing can be done quickly and competently in almost all urban and tourist locations.

Communications

Malaysia has an efficient postal system with good poste restante at the major post offices. Post offices are open from 08:30 till 17:00 from Monday to Saturday. They are closed on Sundays and public holidays. Parcels can be sent from any post office although the rates are fairly high. Other than the ordinary delivery services, there is also a national courier service known as Poslaju or Expedited Mail Service (EMS). Private air couriers such as DHL and UPS also have representatives in most urban locations.

International direct dial calls and operator assisted calls can be made from any private phone. The access code for making most international calls is 00. For information on international calls, dial 103. For operator assisted calls, dial 108. International direct dialling phone cards, which offer cheaper rates than local telephone operators, are also available for sale in most urban centres - the usual outlets which stock these are 7-11, news stands and shops. Public payphones throughout the country are offered by Uniphone, Citiphone and Telekom. Therefore, the phone cards are different for the differing pay phones and are not interchangeable.

There are many internet cafes in urban and tourist locations. Connection speeds vary - some can still be slow in the more remote locations.

Codes of Behaviour

Malaysians are generally a tolerant lot - a result of its multi-racial and multi-religious society. However, as in all countries, Malaysia has its own peculiar set of do's and don'ts which tourists need to practise when visiting the country. Remember to remove your shoes when visiting local homes and places of worship. Dress modestly when visiting rural areas and places of worship.

Shaking hands is acceptable but kissing the hand or cheek is generally not. Many Muslim women, particularly those who wear the *tudung* (head scarf) prefer not to shake hands with members of the opposite sex. In these circumstances, a polite nod of the head and a smile will do.

Kissing and fondling each other in public is a no-no, particularly in rural areas. Use your right hand when eating with your hands or when giving or receiving something - the left hand is considered unclean and rude. To indicate a direction or when pointing at a person or place, don't point with the forefinger as it is considered rude. Instead, use the thumb with the 4 fingers folded under.

Tipping and bargaining

Tipping is not necessary, although it is certainly appreciated. All hotels and restaurants have already added a 10% service charge and 5% government tax.

Clothing

Due to the humid equatorial climate, lightweight clothing, especially cotton, is advisable. Generally, T-shirts and shorts are acceptable.

However, do dress appropriately when dining out in restaurants or going for a night out, especially in the cities. It is also important to dress decently (i.e. no shorts) when visiting villages and any place of worship.

Criminality

It is a criminal offence to carry drugs into Malaysia. The penalty is death by hanging and many foreigners visiting the country have already fallen prey to this.

As it is in the rest of the world, travellers should be aware of pickpockets and con artists. These are more likely to be found in crowded areas, so keep a watchful eye on all your valuables in these places.

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