

THE SCENTS OF THE SPICE ISLANDS WITH DR GEORGE BECCALONI, ZOOLOGIST AND WALLACE EXPERT

Join UK tropical biologist, Dr George Beccaloni, on this 12-day cruise that will transport you back in time as you discover the colonial history of Indonesia and its role in the international spice trade during the 17th century. The Moluccas are the original Spice Islands, a magical destination, beautiful, remote, and unspoiled, with a long, fascinating, and turbulent history. For millennia, these fertile volcanic isles were the world's only source of the 'holy trinity' of rare spices: cloves, nutmeg, and mace, which were once worth their weight in gold. Along the way, you will wind your way through dramatic volcanic islands interspersed with stops at pristine white-sand beaches, where you can swim and snorkel in waters rich in marine life. You will also visit historic outposts and island villages, and the rich cultures of the local people, and experience the marketplaces and inhale the aromas of the spice plantations in this most beautiful and untouched part of the world. See birds of paradise in their natural habitat as they perform their elaborate courtship rituals high in the forest canopy. Also, you will get to encounter black-crested macaques, tarsiers, giant butterflies, and all manner of birdlife. Enjoy daily snorkeling sessions on beautifully rich and abundant coral reefs, and explore uninhabited islands with white sand beaches, hidden coves and bays, and spend long hours swimming and playing in the warm tropical waters.





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Day 1

On the first day of your adventure, you will be collected from your hotel after breakfast by our tour leaders and taken directly to the boat, which will be waiting at anchor in Ambon Harbour. As soon as everyone is settled in and the captain gets clearance from the harbour master, we will raise anchor and head south across the open sea, crossing to the legendary Banda Archipelago.

The Banda Islands are renowned for their natural beauty and cultural heritage, and quite simply one of Indonesia's highlights. Banda was originally the world's only source of nutmeg and mace, valued for their rarity and high cost by aristocrats and elites, and is filled with the well-preserved remnants of an extraordinary history of imperialist rivalry.

Day 2 & 3

Since conditions of wind and tide will determine the order in which we visit various Banda islands, our activities here can't be assigned to a particular day, but here's what we aim to cover.

In the capital Banda Neira, with its quaint, characterful streets, a museum, churches and a waterfront market, and imposing forts. Just across the harbour is Banda's perfect, jungle-clad volcanic cone Gunung Api ('Fire Mountain' - 640 metres).

We will also visit the other small islands of the Banda archipelago - Lonthor, Ai, Run, Hatta - each of them with its own remnants of old plantations, Dutch cemeteries, and fortifications. The tiny outlying island of Run was the subject of an unbelievable real estate deal when, in 1667, under the Treaty of Breda, it was ceded by the English to the Dutch in exchange for Manhattan. Yes, the Manhattan where New York stands.

Day 4 & 5

We will observe the age-old technique of harvesting nutmeg by hand, and can taste (and buy) baked goods, condiments, and jams flavoured with fresh mace and nutmeg. The fruit enclosing the nutmeg seed is sold dried and has a unique and intense flavour. It is a delicacy rarely obtainable outside the Banda Islands.

There are some excellent coral reefs here, and we should see some amazing marine life whilst snorkelling. Ironically, in the less-than-pristine waters of the harbor, we have a good chance of seeing (at dusk) arguably the world's most stunning fish, the small but jewel-like Mandarin Fish.



Leaving Banda, we will navigate through the Sonnegat ('Sun's gap') between Neira and Gunung Api, possibly escorted by kora-kora - the big Moluccan galleys used traditionally for ceremony and warfare, propelled by banks of warrior-oarsmen.

Day 6 & 7

Visit Nusa Laut, home to a Christian community, where we will visit a Dutch-built church from 1719 as well as a 17th-century fort. A highlight here is a lunchtime feast of wonderful local dishes - freshly prepared by villager hosts from forest, garden, and sea produce.

Manipa Island is said to have magical powers, because none of the Portuguese, Dutch or WWII-Japanese who occupied the surrounding islands ever landed here. Here they distill a volatile oil called kayu putih, a volatile oil famed throughout Indonesia as a universal panacea: cosmetic, antiseptic, insecticide, decongestant, analgesic, expectorant, anti-spasmodic, stimulant, and tonic.

We also view production of the traditional Moluccan food staple, sago, a nutritious flour washed from the fibrous trunk of the sago palm. Sago can be baked into easily transportable dry cakes, which Wallace often subsisted on, while the palm also provides building material and thatch. After an afternoon snorkeling, we will cruise on towards our next destination.

Day 8 & 9

We will spend the next couple of days visiting some beautiful paradise islands, including the deserted, white-sand Belang-Belang, a real beachcomber's paradise, where we can launch our full flotilla of watercraft, kayaks, and paddle boards.

On Obi, mountains clad in forest and clove plantations plunge spectacularly into the sea, and we will visit the isolated village of Manatahan, a village of migrants from Sulawesi, hundreds of miles to the west.

In past times, the picturesque channels around Obi were dotted with the sails of local spice traders, Portuguese caravels, Spanish galleons, Dutch 'jachts', and English pinnaces. Now we encounter friendly fishers and their outrigger dugouts, colourful timber island-trading craft, and sometimes little sloops still trading under sail.

We go ashore into the forests of Bacan island, in search of some endemic wildlife, including the Standardwing Bird of Paradise, and the huge and magnificent Golden Birdwing Butterfly, as well as parrots, cockatoos, lorikeets, hornbills, the elusive cuscus, and maybe the endangered, black-crested macaque - the only monkey in Maluku.

Day 10 & 11

Spend the day at the Guraici Archipelago, a chain of islands with white sandy beaches, vibrant coral reefs, and some lovely local villages. We will snorkel, swim, and pay a visit to one of the villages to meet the local people. The islands are part of a government-controlled conservation area, designed to protect the reefs and the many beautiful marine species that live there.

Visit the small village of Dodinga on Halmahera, the very place where Alfred Russel Wallace was staying when, in a fit of malarial delirium, he came up with the idea for the mechanism for evolutionary theory.



Dodinga is a pretty little riverside village with friendly people, colourful houses, and the ruins of an old Portuguese fort, and its importance in the history of science cannot be understated.

Day 12

Today, finds us in Ternate, once the centre of the spice trade for several centuries. The influence of the Dutch and the Portuguese can still be seen, and their warehouses are still filled with fragrant piles of clove and nutmeg.

We will have a short tour of the city, which includes a visit to the Sultan's Palace, with its rich collection of heirlooms, and the well-restored Fort Tolukko, built by the Portuguese in 1540.

We will head back to the Ombak Putih for lunch and to say farewell to the captain and the crew before heading off to the airport for the next leg of your journey.

Please Note:

Our mission is to provide the best experience possible for our guests given the current conditions and when unexpected opportunities for adventure may present themselves along our cruise routes. Sometimes weather conditions, tides or other local factors dictate that we need to vary from the published route, and at times there are special opportunities to explore and discover new locations, events and activities. These explorations will always be a definite enhancement to the published itinerary and will be undertaken after discussion and agreement among guests. Ultimately, the boat captains and your tour leader will make decisions to maximize trip safety and your overall enjoyment, so please come prepared to be flexible!



YOUR SHIP: OMBAK PUTIH

YOUR SHIP: **Ombak Putih**

VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

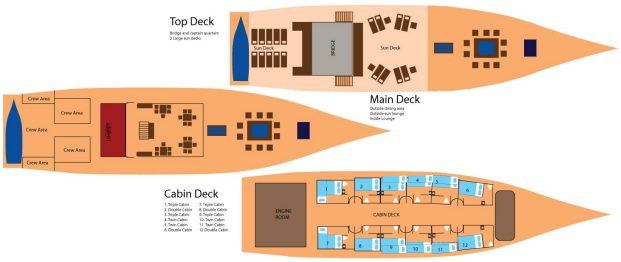
The Ombak Putih is a traditional Indonesian schooner custom built from Iron wood by Buginese ship builders. The Ombak Putih is 42 metres long and provides accommodation for up to 24 guests in 12 comfortable cabins. With approximately 400 square meters of public space divided over 2 main decks, the Ombak Putih offers both open and covered space in abundance, allowing for privacy and serene relaxing. All cabins are located below deck and offer private bathroom, portholes, individually controlled air conditioning, and ample storage space including safety deposit box. Led by Captain Feri, 14 dedicated crew members coming from all regions of the archipelago make your stay with us a memorable experience. Spacious twin shared cabin with twin bunk beds or double bed Each cabin has a private bathroom with toilet and hot shower Washbasin and soap toiletries in your cabin Cabins have individually controlled air conditioning Towels and beach towels that are regularly changed Valuables and travel documents can be stored in the ship's safe Dining in spacious air conditioned lounge Teak wooden furniture in lounge, cabins and on deck Spacious sun and semi-covered decks Free tea, coffee and mineral water Excellent food and snacks (vegetarian food on request) A selction of wines, cold beer and other alcoholic drinksare offered for sale Fresh water on-deck shower Outdoor sleeping facilities Professional cruise director Unlimited use of our snorkeling equipment and 2 sea canoes Television, DVD and music



center in lounge



INSIDE YOUR SHIP



Stateroom





PRICING

20-Sep-2027 to 01-Oct-2027

Stateroom	**£7895 GBP pp**

ADDITIONAL CHARGES: **Fuel Surcharge 2026 200 USD pp**