



CHEESEMAN'S ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Palau

Snorkel and SCUBA Dive Micronesia

April 2 to 17, 2020



Green Sea Turtle ©Ron Leidich

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Snorkel and SCUBA dive amongst tropical islands in the western Pacific Ocean on our voyage through the newly created Palau National Marine Sanctuary. We created this unique expedition in partnership with Conservation International to explore the more well-known, easily accessible snorkel and dive sites, plus the remote and seldom-visited Southwest Islands of this world-renowned archipelago. Explore the World Heritage Rock Islands Southern Lagoon, where tropical-forested karst islands meet coral caves and lakes with non-stinging jellyfish, where you'll have an opportunity to snorkel. Explore some of the most diverse reefs on the planet, learn about the ecology of Palau's fish and reefs, and experience the unique culture of the people of the Southwest Islands. Join us on this unique voyage that balances the interests of both snorkelers and SCUBA divers.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spend eleven days among the islands of Palau.
- SCUBA dive and snorkel through crystal-clear waters in pristine, remote, and world-renowned sites.
- Explore the rich culture and wildlife by visiting with inhabitants of the Southwest Islands.
- Kayak in Risong Bay, getting close-up looks at the tropical-forested karst islands.
- Explore the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon, including a very special opportunity to snorkel amongst non-stinging jellyfish.

LEADERS: Scott Davis and Macstyl Sasao.

DAYS: 16 including estimated travel time. 12 nights aboard the *Ocean Hunter III*.

GROUP SIZE: 14.

BOAT: The *Ocean Hunter III*, 16-passenger yacht.

COST: \$10,570 to \$12,500 per person, depending on cabin type, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 6.

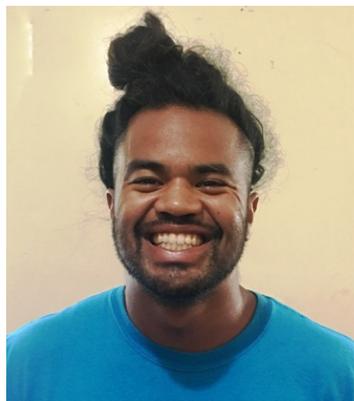
CONDITIONS: This is a **non-smoking tour** for people who are very interested in spending the maximum time in nature. See the *Conditions* section on page 9.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Apr 2–3	Travel to Koror, Palau.		
Apr 4	Arrive in Koror, Palau.	The Cove Resort, Koror	D
Apr 5	Birding and nature sea kayaking tour among the Rock Islands.	Aboard the <i>Ocean Hunter III</i>	B, L, D
Apr 6–7	SCUBA dive and snorkel in the Rock Islands, including snorkeling with stingless jellyfish.		
Apr 8	Travel to Peleliu Island for World War II history.		
Apr 9–10	Sail to Helen Reef (about 30hrs, depending on conditions) with seabird watching en route.		
Apr 11–12	Visit Helen Reef for SCUBA diving and snorkeling and visit Helen Island to see the abundant bird colonies that cover most of the island and enjoy sunset from its shore.		
Apr 13	Arrive by morning to visit Tobi Island for snorkeling and SCUBA diving plus an island tour.		
Apr 14	Arrive at Sonsorol and Fana Islands. SCUBA dive and snorkel Sonsorol and enjoy a sunset cruise around Fana Island to see its incredible bird colonies.		
Apr 15	Navigate back toward Koror and arrive in time for an afternoon snorkel and SCUBA dive.		
Apr 16	Full day of snorkeling and SCUBA diving in the Rock Islands.		
Apr 17	Disembark in Koror for flights homeward. Arrive home.		

LEADERS

Scott Davis

Scott is a professional photographer specializing in wildlife, nature, and travel. Originally trained as a wildlife and marine biologist, his research and photo assignments took him to the far corners of the globe. National Geographic, BBC, Animal Planet, and other renowned magazines have used his photography. His patience for teaching and love of capturing the essence of his subjects make him one of our most popular tour leaders.



Macstyl Sasao

Macstyl (Macs) grew up in the Republic of Palau, paddling his outrigger canoe among the wild outdoors. By age seven, his extended family swept him away to provide better educational opportunities in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. He returned to Palau after high school and found a group of relatives who taught him the advanced arts of Micronesian hunting and fishing. Abandoning his western customs, Macs quickly adapted to a lifestyle which revolved around the moon and the tides. This lunar existence required an intimate knowledge of fish behavior and the ability to free dive under the full moon light in search of massive aggregations of spawning fish. As the ecotourism industry had begun to develop in Palau, Macs traded his spear gun for an underwater camera, finding that understanding fish behavior

during hunting translated well into photography. So now he shares his passion for Palau's environment as a guide, plus uses his photography to help guide policy to protect Palau's fragile environment and precious resources.

BOAT



The Ocean Hunter III

The *Ocean Hunter III* is a 96-foot, steel-hulled live-aboard motor yacht designed by divers, making her the perfect choice to fully and comfortably experience the islands of Palau. This high-quality ocean-going vessel accommodates 16 guests in eight air-conditioned cabins with private bathrooms (toilet, shower, washbasin, and vanity) and hot water. The main deck sports a luxurious salon with a flatscreen TV, computer station, and library. This deck also contains a well-equipped galley, large dining room, spacious gear room

with camera table and charging station, and dive deck with individual storage bins. Relax on the upper deck in one of the two Jacuzzis or the various loungers and chairs.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Apr 2–3 ~ Travel to Koror, Palau

Apr 4 ~ Arrive in Koror, Palau

Arrive in Koror, Palau for an overnight stay before your kayaking day trip tomorrow.

Apr 5 ~ Birding and nature sea kayaking tour among the Rock Islands

This morning, transfer from the hotel to a speedboat to kayak the wildlife-rich Risong Bay. Here you will benefit from the local knowledge of Macs guiding you through a long morning at Black Tip Lake, Shipwreck Bay, Kingfisher Bay, and Mandarin Fish Lake. You'll kayak to paddle past glorious limestone cliffs with endemic plants and birds, snorkel among non-stinging jellyfish, and hear about the historical significance of the area during World War II. Mandarin Fish Lake will cap a beautiful morning with a snorkel over pink sea fans and stunning soft corals, perfect habitat for juvenile sail fin tang, pajama cardinal fish, and mandarin fish. By late afternoon, you'll head back to the harbor and board *Ocean Hunter III*, your home for the next 12 nights.

Apr 6–7 ~ SCUBA dive and snorkel the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon

Explore a rainbow of diversity as you snorkel or dive among dazzling schools of mandarin fish. The complex reef system within this collection of uninhabited limestone islands supports more than 385 types of coral, sustaining a large variety of plant, bird, and marine life. You will discover endemic populations of ocean species in the unusual collection of marine lakes located here (isolated bodies of seawater separated from the ocean by land barriers). Some lakes are home to millions of non-stinging jellyfish that you can swim amongst! The ship will anchor in the heart of this distinct landscape, allowing for beach BBQ dinners



Snorkeling in a jellyfish lake

and visits to some of the world-famous dive and snorkel sites of Palau. Dive highlights may be Blue Corner, Big Drop-Off, and German Channel where gentle giant manta rays show up at a cleaning station for parasite-eating fish to pick them clean of pests. The richness of Ulong and Ngemelis guarantee both snorkelers and divers will have incomparable wildlife experiences. Ulong boasts superb coral life, anemones, sea snakes, dazzling colors of clams, and a myriad of fish species. Timing the tide gives the possibility of finding gray reef sharks riding currents with great viewing for both divers and snorkelers. Ngemelis can legitimately be called the underwater Serengeti of this beautiful planet. Yet exploring on land is also a must where cultural finds, like Yapese Stone Money, and birds, such as the mound-building Micronesian megapode, are found.

Apr 8 ~ Wildlife watching and Peleliu Island history

Keep your eyes peeled for migratory shore birds and whale encounters as the you motor toward the island of Peleliu. Here, the snorkeling and diving are glorious, and divers may visit the breathtaking fish and corals of the Peleliu Wall diving area.

On land, you will scout for endemic birds while you learn about the role these islands played in World War II, visiting the intense relics of the Battle of Peleliu where up-ended tanks are now taken over by glorious fig

roots, reclaiming the island's wild nature. You will also search for coconut crabs, the largest known terrestrial arthropod, and learn about the biology and conservation of these enormous hermit crabs. Listen for the mysterious whistle of the elusive and endemic bush warbler as you walk through these forested islands.

Apr 9–10 ~ Sail to Helen Reef, seabird watching en route

En route to Helen Reef, watch for any traveling birds, and maybe whales, or just enjoy the ride on the sun deck.

Apr 11–12 ~ Explore Helen Reef atoll by sea and land

Explore Helen Reef atoll, very seldomly visited by tourists. Helen Reef atoll has been named as a Marine Protected Area, helping to safeguard it from overfishing and poachers. You will encounter an abundance of dazzling fish and other marine life during your underwater exploration around this spectacular collection of remote reefs. Inside the ring of coral reef sits tiny Helen Island, which is uninhabited except for the rangers stationed there to protect the reef's conservation status and vast bird colonies, including great-crested terns, sooty terns, and black noddies. Visit the ranger station to learn about the ongoing marine research to better understand and protect this breathtaking site. Enjoy a sunset on the beach with your shipmates.



Family of clown fish ©Ron Leidich

Apr 13 ~ Tobi Island diving/snorkeling and island tour

Arrive at Tobi Island by early morning. Explore this small limestone island, learning about the culture and lifestyle of the 16 people that live here and that of their ancestors, a culture with a separate dialect endemic to Tobi. Tour the culturally-modified island to see taro patches that have sustained the inhabitants for more than 150 years and visit other significant cultural sites. You will also SCUBA dive or snorkel in the reefs around this unique island.

Apr 14 ~ Explore Sonsorol and Fana Islands

Today you will arrive at Sonsorol Island to snorkel and SCUBA dive through a magnificent rainbow of hydrocorals, plus land to learn about island life on this remote place or wander the beaches in quiet solitude. In the evening, you'll cruise around Fana Island to marvel at the birds as they arrive back in time to roost for the night in their colonies. Fana is an uplifted reef flat island in the Southwest Islands of Palau that qualifies as a globally significant Important Bird Area. This international designation indicates that this area is critical for the conservation of bird populations. On land, you'll scout for congregations of nesting black noddy and common white tern, plus brown noddy, great frigatebird, and red-footed booby. On the beaches, you will search for coconut crabs and nesting green sea turtles.

Apr 15 ~ Navigate toward Koror

Surprises may await on the voyage north toward our port in Koror, so keep watch for any traveling birds or whales, or just enjoy the ride on the sun deck. Arrive in time to have an afternoon SCUBA dive or snorkel.

Apr 16 ~ One last snorkel and SCUBA dive in the Rock Islands

Spend one more full day of snorkeling and SCUBA diving in the Rock Islands and if the weather cooperates, enjoy a sunset on a small isolated beach.

Apr 17 ~ Disembark in Koror and transfer to airport

You will disembark the ship in Koror in the morning and transfer to the airport or into town for museums, shopping, or relaxing depending on your flight's departure time. If you wish to extend your stay, we are happy to book a hotel in Koror for you (not included).

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Costs and Cabin Options

Type	Description (see <i>Deck Plan</i> on page 11)	Cost per Person
Standard	Double occupancy, one upper and one lower twin bed, private bath, and large storage space and closet. Lower deck.	\$10,570
Deluxe Twin	Double occupancy, one upper and one lower twin bed, plus additional short twin bed, private bath, and large storage space and closet. Upper deck. External door to sun deck and Jacuzzi.	\$11,100
Deluxe Queen	Double occupancy, one double-sized bed and one twin bed, private bath, large storage space and closet. Lower deck.	\$11,100
Master Stateroom	Double occupancy, one double-sized bed and one single bed/sofa, private bath, large storage space and closet. Upper deck. External door to sun deck and Jacuzzi.	\$12,500

Costs are per person depending on cabin type, double occupancy, not including airfare singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

We reserve the right to charge for cost increases that occur between when we set tour prices and the date of travel, for example, changes due to the cost of lodging and transportation. If you are a single traveler and you desire, we will find a roommate for you. If we cannot find you a roommate, we will not charge you a single supplement. If space is available, cabins can be booked for a single occupant by adding 90% over the listed cabin cost. Single rooms are subject to availability.

Please note that we cannot guarantee a specific cabin number. If changes occur, we will do everything in our power to assign a cabin of equal or greater value as the cabin type specified in your reservation. Deck plan, cabin arrangements, and cabin amenities are subject to change by ship operator.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Second	March 1, 2019	\$3,000
Third	September 1, 2019	\$3,000
Final	November 1, 2019	Remaining balance

Payments will be due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space. For reservations made after a due date, all past payments will be due with registration. By sending your initial deposit, you agree to accept our payment schedule and cancellation policy as a contract. If payments are still outstanding two weeks after the due date, your space may be forfeited.

Cancellations

Refunds are given depending on the time left before departure according to the following table. The cancellation fee of \$300 per person can be applied toward another tour if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. Consider purchasing trip cancellation insurance that could reimburse your trip costs in the event of your cancellation.

Dates	Forfeited Amount per Person
On or before August 31, 2019	\$300
September 1 to 30, 2019	10% of tour cost
October 1 to 31, 2019	40% of tour cost
On or after November 1, 2019	100% of tour cost

Included

- All leaders, transport, landing fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Airport transfers from/to Palau International Airport to The Cove Resort, regardless of arrival and departure day.
- Lodging the night of April 4 in Koror.
- Twelve nights aboard the *Ocean Hunter III*, April 5 through April 16.
- Meals from dinner on April 4 through breakfast on April 17.
- Non-alcoholic beverages while aboard the *Ocean Hunter III*.
- Kayak rental for day trip.
- Onboard lectures and workshops by leaders.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Airfare is approximately \$1,500–\$2,500 between the USA to Koror, Palau (ROR), depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- Alcoholic beverages while aboard the *Ocean Hunter III*.
- Snorkel and SCUBA gear. We will send you more details about rentals in the Trip Materials.
- We can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra hotel nights for an extra cost.
- SCUBA certification courses, but we can arrange at an extra cost.
- Gratuities – tipping is, of course, discretionary, however we suggest budgeting about \$500–\$600 total *per participant*.
- Dive insurance with evacuation, but it is required for you to purchase. For more information, see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, internet access, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and form from each participant.

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

In April, average temperatures range from the mid to upper 70's°F (24–26°C) at night, up to the mid to upper 80's°F (29–32°C) during the day, with high humidity and about a 50% chance of daily rain showers. The water temperature averages 84°F (29°C).

Fitness Level

Minimal fitness is required to join this safari, but your fitness and snorkeling and SCUBA diving ability enrich the experience. Getting in the water to snorkel or SCUBA dive is not required, but water activities make up at least 75% of the voyage. At minimum, you need to be able to comfortably and safely move around the ship and embark/disembark from the landing tenders, be comfortable in open water with about one-foot swells, able to swim, snorkel, and dive without hands-on assistance, and get in and out of the water via a boat ladder. Please contact us if you don't have experience snorkeling but would like to join this safari.

Our voyage will include landings and opportunities for short hikes on shore, typically no more than a mile or two on varying terrain. Walks and hikes are generally at a slow pace with stops for observation and photography. You may also opt to stay onboard and skip landings or snorkels and dives.

Flights

Airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in Koror, Palau (ROR) in time for dinner on April 4. Depart from Koror (ROR) any time after 11:00pm on April 16.

Seasickness

Don't let a fear of seasickness keep you away! For all but the most sensitive, seasickness is rarely a problem in this area. Because we are close to the islands most of the time, the seas tend to be gentle. Our crossing to and from the southern archipelago can be exposed to choppy conditions, so bring medication if you get seasick or are unsure. You may find that you do not need it after a couple days once you have your "sea legs." Read our suggestions for coping with seasickness at www.cheesemans.com/seasickness and contact us if you have any concerns.

Conditions

- **Non-smoking policy:** We have a strict non-smoking policy. Smoking is not permitted at any time or any place during our tours.
- **Maximum time in nature:** We try to spend as much time in nature as possible, sometimes resulting in long days, but giving you a more in-depth experience.
- **Itinerary route:** The itinerary route, stops, and plans are subject to change by unforeseen circumstances beyond our control, such as weather or road conditions.
- **Additional forms:** For some of our tours, you may be asked to fill out additional forms (e.g., medical questionnaire).
- **Medical conditions and travel risks:** Travel to remote places is exciting, but it is important to understand and accept the risks, both medical and logistical. Minor medical problems can usually be treated, but because you are often far from medical facilities, there can be no expectation for immediate medical treatment or evacuation, even in cases of trauma. Anyone with health problems needing close medical supervision should not consider going on this tour. Bring enough medication for the duration of the trip for any chronic medical needs since pharmacies are usually not available. When you send your deposit and signed Reservation Form, you certify to us that you do not knowingly have any physical or other conditions that would create a risk for yourself or for other trip participants.
- **Use of drones/UAVs on tours:** Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), AKA drones, are not suitable for use on most Cheesemans' Ecology expeditions due to logistical constraints and in many cases, local and national laws or regulations. In some cases, such as on our polar voyages, we operate under environmental regulations that ban the use of recreational drones. Do not bring a drone on safari without contacting us first.

Conservation

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of these valuable wildlife habitats. We urge you to support conservation organizations that protect and restore natural habitats and write letters to tourism and government agencies to promote work in preserving wildlife.

Conservation International (www.conservation.org) is working to preserve the Palau Islands and its wildlife and would make good use of your donation to fund their ongoing conservation efforts.

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice. We source high quality offsets through CarbonTree Conservation Fund, a non-profit we helped found, supporting pioneering forest conservation in the Valdivian Coastal Reserve, a Nature Conservancy project (<https://tinyurl.com/ybgkwton>).

FAQS

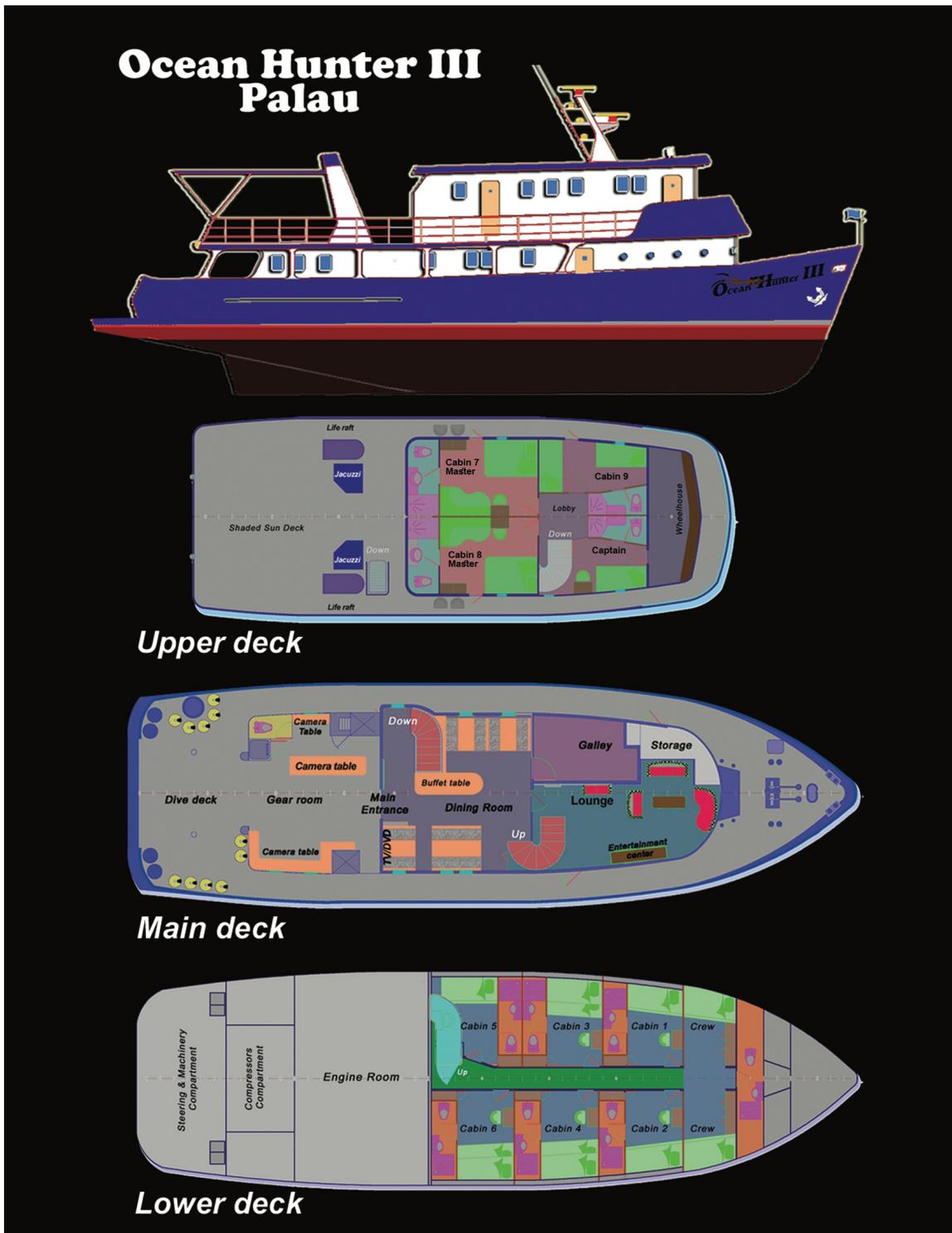
Do I need to SCUBA dive or snorkel while on this safari?

No, getting in the water to snorkel or SCUBA dive is not required, but water activities make up at least 75% of the voyage.

Can I learn to SCUBA dive on this trip?

You may arrive several days early to Koror and participate in a SCUBA certification course, but we recommend that you get certified and get a few dives under your belt before arriving.

OCEAN HUNTER III DECK PLAN



Deck plan is not to scale and shows the number of beds in each cabin, not actual bed arrangement. Cabin sizes vary slightly.