



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Palau

Snorkel and SCUBA Dive Micronesia

April 8 to 23, 2022



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 crafted 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 snorkeling and diving 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: \$11,650 to \$13,750 per person, depending on cabin type, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 6.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Apr 8–9	Travel to Koror, Palau.		
Apr 10	Arrive in Koror.	The Cove Resort, Koror	D
Apr 11	Birding and nature sea kayaking tour among the Rock Islands.	Aboard the <i>Ocean Hunter III</i>	B, L, D
Apr 12–13	SCUBA dive and snorkel in the Rock Islands, including snorkeling with stingless jellyfish.		
Apr 14	Travel to Peleliu Island for World War II history.		
Apr 15–16	Sail to Helen Reef (about 30hrs, depending on conditions) with seabird watching en route.		
Apr 17–18	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 19	Arrive by morning to visit Tobi Island for snorkeling and SCUBA diving plus an island tour.		
Apr 20	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 21	Navigate back toward Koror and arrive in time for an afternoon snorkel and SCUBA dive.		
Apr 22	Full day of snorkeling and SCUBA diving in the Rock Islands.		
Apr 23	Disembark in Koror for flights homeward. Arrive home.		B

LEADERS

Scott Davis

Scott is a professional photographer (www.scottdavisimages.com/) 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 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 'Macs' Sasao

Macs grew up in Palau and the Pacific Northwest of the US. His relatives taught him the advanced arts of Micronesian hunting and fishing. Macs quickly adapted to a lifestyle which revolved around the moon and the tides, requiring an intimate knowledge of fish behavior and the ability to free dive under the full moon to find masses of spawning fish. As ecotourism developed in Palau, Macs traded his spear gun for an underwater camera, finding that his knowledge translated well into photography. So he now shares his passion for Palau's environment as a guide and photographer.

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 8–9 ~ Travel to Koror, Palau

Apr 10 ~ Arrive in Koror

Arrive in Koror to rest before your kayaking day trip tomorrow.

Apr 11 ~ 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 12–13 ~ 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 and



Snorkeling in a Jellyfish Lake
© Ocean Productions

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 14 ~ 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 15–16 ~ 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 17–18 ~ 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 breath-taking site. Enjoy a sunset on the beach with your shipmates.

Apr 19 ~ 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.



Family of Clown Fish
© Ron Leidich

Apr 20 ~ 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 noddies and common white tern, plus brown noddies, great frigatebirds, and red-footed boobies. On the beaches, you will search for coconut crabs and nesting green sea turtles.

Apr 21 ~ 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 22 ~ 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 23 ~ 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 10)	Cost per Person
Standard	Double occupancy, one upper and one lower twin bed, private bath, and large storage space and closet. Lower deck.	\$11,650
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.	\$12,250
Deluxe Queen	Double occupancy, one double-sized bed and one twin bed, private bath, large storage space and closet. Lower deck.	\$12,250
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.	\$13,750

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

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we will not charge you a single supplement. If space is available, some cabins can be booked as a single by adding **90%** over the listed cabin cost.

We cannot guarantee a specific cabin number, but if changes occur, we will assign a cabin of equal or greater value.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Second	November 1, 2020	\$3,000
Third	April 1, 2021	\$3,000
Final	November 1, 2021	Remaining balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

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 trip if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable.

Dates	Forfeited Amount per Person
On or before August 31, 2021	\$300
September 1 to 30, 2021	10% of tour cost
October 1 to 31, 2021	40% of tour cost
On or after November 1, 2021	100% of tour cost

Included

- All leaders, transport, kayak rental, 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 or departure day.
- Accommodations for the night of April 10 in Koror.
- Twelve nights aboard the *Ocean Hunter III*.
- Meals from dinner on April 11 through breakfast on April 24.
- Non-alcoholic beverages while aboard the *Ocean Hunter III*.
- 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. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$1,500 to \$2,500 between the US and Koror, Palau, 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 always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$500 to \$600 total per participant.
- Mandatory dive insurance with evacuation coverage. For more information, see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Optional 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 signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

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

Fitness Level

Minimal fitness is required to join this trip, but your fitness and snorkeling and/or 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 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 trip.

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 on board and skip landings or snorkels and dives.

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 you are close to the islands most of the time, the seas tend to be gentle. Your 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.

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 10. Depart from Koror, Palau (ROR) any time after 11:00pm on April 22. Our ship arrives in the Koror harbor around dinnertime on April 22, so we will make one late-night transfer to the airport this evening. Otherwise, you

will overnight on the ship, have breakfast, and then disembark the morning of the April 23. Since most flights are late at night, we can book you a room at our group hotel on April 23 and arrange your transfers to the hotel and to the airport.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

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.

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 Rio Bravo Reserve in Belize, a Nature Conservancy project (www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/).

FAQS

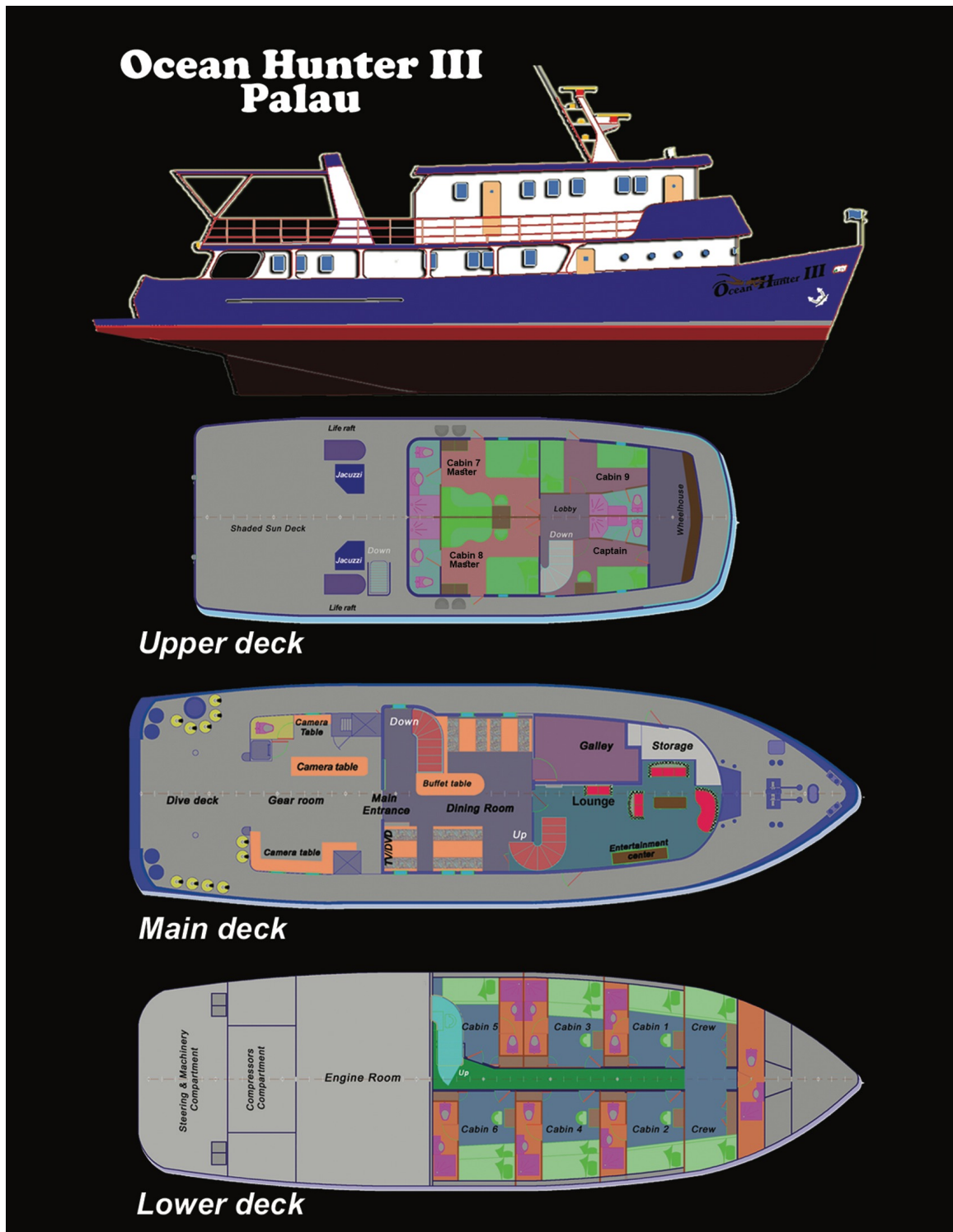
Do I need to be able to SCUBA dive or snorkel while on this trip?

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 and cabin sizes are not to scale and shows the number of beds, not actual bed arrangement.
See cabin descriptions under the *Costs* section on page 6.