



CHEESEMAN'S ECOLOGY SAFARIS

2059 Camden Ave. #419
San Jose, CA 95124 USA
(800) 527-5330 (408) 741-5330
info@cheesemans.com
cheesemans.com

Palau Diving

Experience Spawning and Blackwater in Micronesia

May 15 to 26, 2024



Red Snapper
© Richard Barden

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Snorkel, paddle, sail, and dive among awe-inspiring tropical islands in the western Pacific Ocean on our scientific exploration of the Palau National Marine Reserve. Seek hidden pockets of pristine beauty around West Ngeruktabel Island and Risong Bay before the *Palau Siren* beckons you to join her in an exploration of Palau's most mythical dive sites. With multiple daily dives from dawn through nightfall, you will join the early morning world of snapper spawning rituals as well as the nighttime abyss illuminated by hanging lights on blackwater dives. In between, explore and photograph blue holes, drop-offs, caverns, caves, and channels. Science and art are truly one on this journey.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover seahorses and a myriad of other dazzling fish after snorkeling through a coral-filled tunnel.
- Experience the offshore on the *Palau Siren*.
- Dive at sunrise to view the rhythmic dance of thousands of snappers.
- Behold 100 million tons of biomass rise to feed at night.

LEADER: Scott Davis plus Richard Barnden (diving) and Macstyl Sasao (snorkeling).

DAYS: 12, including estimated travel time. Seven nights aboard the *Palau Siren*.

GROUP SIZE: 16 (7 are Cheesemans' participants).

SHIP: The *Palau Siren*. See the *Ship* section on page 3.

COST: \$9,380 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
May 15–16	Travel to Koror, Palau.		
May 17	Arrive in Koror.	Palau Pacific Resort, Koror	—
May 18	West Ngeruktabel snorkeling odyssey.		B, L, D
May 19	Kayak Risong Bay in the morning, then embark on the ship for your diving adventure.	On board the <i>Palau Siren</i>	B, L, D
May 20–25	Experience spawning and blackwater dives. Dive many iconic Palau sites and snorkel the infamous Jellyfish Lake.		B, L, D
May 26	Fly Home.		B

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 have taken him to the far corners of the globe and all seven continents. National Geographic, BBC, Animal Planet, NY Times, 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.



Richard Barnden

Richard has been guiding and photographing marine life in the Pacific Ocean for nearly 20 years. His passion is in unique underwater imagery, specializing in spawning aggregations and blackwater night diving. Richard moved to Palau in his early twenties as a video pro then cruise director of multiple liveaboards where he continued filming. He has spent the last ten years researching spawning aggregations and their predictabilities. Richard's specialty is leading spawning expeditions timed around lunar phases to observe fish reproduction.



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. He now shares his passion for Palau's environment as a guide and photographer.



SHIP

The Palau Siren

The 40-m Palau Siren was designed by divers for divers to provide superior ease and comfort. Scuba enthusiasts will explore pristine, remote dive sites while overnighing in lavish accommodations. The crew of 12 is on hand to ensure you have the best trip possible. This intimate liveaboard offers ample space including eight large cabins equipped with individual climate controls, entertainment systems, and en suite bathrooms.

The ship also features an airconditioned lounge with cocktail bar, sofas, 42-inch flat screen, and movie network. Massage service is available daily. The decks feature a covered outdoor dining area where meals and refreshments will be served buffet style throughout the day and an upper-level sun deck with cushioned loungers. A massive, shaded diving deck provides individual stations and personal storage lockers.



DETAILED ITINERARY



Saltwater Crocodile
© Ocean Productions

May 15–16 ~ Travel to Koror, Palau

May 17 ~ Arrive in Koror

Our local agent will transfer you from the airport to the hotel. If you would like to arrive earlier, we can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra nights.

May 18 ~ Snorkeling odyssey

Snorkel through a coral-filled tunnel into a turquoise oasis known as Lost Lake. Swim with sea horses and shrimp fish in charming Sea Horse Bay. Seek out sub-adult crocodiles within the labyrinth of islands adorning West Ngeruktabel.

May 19 ~ Kayak Risong Bay and embark on the ship

Snorkel the crystal-clear waters of Mandarin Fish Lake in search of exquisite fish and coral. Plant clams within a secreted sanctuary as a part of our "Adopt a Clam" project. Paddle into Black Tip Lake in search of baby sharks and rays.

Embark on your ship around 6:00pm, which will be your home for the next seven nights.

May 20–25 ~ Spawning, nightwater diving, and Palau's best

On the first morning, you'll participate in a check out dive. Timed to experience the rich waters of Palau, you will spend the rest of time on board diving three to four dives per day! In addition to the spawning aggregations and blackwater diving, you will dive Palau's best dive sites, most are world-class, with underwater features like blue holes, drop-offs, caverns, caves, and channels. Visibility is often seemingly endless and can go up to 100ft (30m) on good days, which is perfect for wide angle photography. You can dive in Palau year-round, but the best diving is generally between October and July.

Red snapper (*Lutjanus bohar*) **spawning** only takes place during a full moon cycle and has been predicted and documented for the last ten years. Dive at sunrise to witness the spectacle of thousands of snappers swim back and forth in a ritual-like dance before swimming off to spawn. This dance may last for an hour with bull and blacktip reef sharks in hot pursuit. You will have the opportunity to dive two sites to witness snappers propagating.



Bull Shark and Red Snapper
© Richard Barden



Cuttlefish
© Richard Barden

Blackwater night diving started commercially in Hawaii more than 15 years ago. Typically, you dive in the middle of the ocean into the nighttime abyss. By hanging lights at around 15m for a stable reference depth and drifting over a contour of a 1,000m, or as deep as you can, microscopic zooplankton rise from the depths bringing with them an array of magical creatures. Discover the biggest migration of animals on Earth that happens every night; about 100 million tons of biomass rise from the mesopelagic layers (so deep that light cannot penetrate) to the epipelagic layers (close to the surface) to feed and respire on richer oxygen concentrations. You will have the opportunity to try several open-ocean blackwater and bonfire (closer to the reef) night dives during your expedition.

While diving Palau's known sites you will also have the chance to encounter manta rays at reliable locations.

May 26 ~ Fly home

You will disembark around 10am after breakfast and fly home.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Costs and Cabin Options

Type	Description (see <i>Deck Plan</i> on page 8)	Cost per Person
Premium	Double occupancy, one double-sized bed, entertainment system, and portholes. Cabins 1 and 2.	\$9,380
Premium	Double occupancy, two twin-sized beds, entertainment system, and portholes. Cabins 3–8.	\$9,380

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

If you are a single traveler, we will try to 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 **100%** 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	\$1,500
Final	December 7, 2023	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. Through October 6, 2023, 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 October 6, 2023	\$300 (see terms above)
October 7 to November 6, 2023	10% of trip cost
November 7 to December 6, 2023	40% of trip cost
On or after December 7, 2023	100% of trip cost

Included

- All leaders and transport for all activities unless described as optional.
- Permits for Peleliu, Rock Islands, and Jellyfish Lake.
- Accommodations for the nights of May 17 through May 25.
- Seven nights on board the *Palau Siren*.
- Cabin taxes on board the *Palau Siren*.
- Meals from breakfast on May 16 through breakfast on May 26.
- Transfers on May 17 between the Koror Airport and Palau Pacific Resort, on May 19 to the *Palau Siren*, and on May 26 from the *Palau Siren* to the Koror Airport.
- Soft drinks, juice, tea, and coffee while onboard the *Palau Siren*.
- Lectures on board the *Palau Siren*.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.
- Tanks, weights, BCD, regulator, 3mm wetsuit, mask, and fins.

Not Included

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$1,700 to \$2,000 between the US and Koror, Palau, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- COVID tests.
- Divergent airport transfers and extra hotel nights (arranged by us).
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$440 for ship crew for the ship portion of the trip.
- Nitrox.
- Mandatory dive insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Optional trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic beverages, 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

Email: info@cheesemans.com

Website: www.cheesemans.com

WhatsApp: (408) 741-5330 | Skype: CheesemansEcologySafaris

Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

OTHER DETAILS

Climate

In May, 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

With the strong currents of the Pacific Ocean sweeping through Palau, most of the dive sites require divers with experience. Please contact us if you have any concerns that may make this trip challenging.

Seasickness

Don't let a fear of seasickness scare you away! It's a good idea to bring medication if you get seasick or are unsure, but you may find that you do not need it after a couple days once you have your "sea legs." Even those who have experienced seasickness reported that the incredible wildlife and overall experience were well worth the temporary discomfort. 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) by 11:59pm on May 17. Depart from Koror, Palau (ROR) after 1:00pm on May 26. **If you are continuing on our Palau Snorkeling trip**, see the *Flights* section in its itinerary for departure information (<https://cheesemans.com/trips/palau-snorkel-may2024>).

Terms and Conditions

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

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Ecotourism and Conservation for Palau** (<https://cheesemans.com/ecotourism-and-conservation-in-Palau>).
- **Cheesemans' Trips are Carbon Neutral:** As of June 1, 2022, our trips are carbon neutral (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-neutral>).
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. Use this tool to calculate your emissions and purchase your carbon offset today through Sustainable Travel International, or through your favorite carbon offsetting organization (<https://cheesemans.com/carbon-calculator>).

PALAU SIREN DECK PLAN



Deck plan and cabin sizes are not to scale.
See cabin descriptions under the *Costs* section on page 5.