WORLD TRAVEL MAGAZINE

GREAT OCEAN ESCAPES

Photograph courtesy of Prana by Atzaro

PULL ANCHOR AND SAIL FOR INDONESIA'S REMOTE ISLANDS AND MARINE LIFE RICH WATERS ON ONE OF THE ARCHIPELAGO'S MOST LUXURIOUS PHINISIS. BY LAUREN HILL

With well over 17,000 islands spread across three time zones, Indonesia is one of the world's largest archipelagos. It's also one of the most biodiverse, both on land and in the depths of the cerulean sea.

The Coral Triangle spanning the waters of Indonesia, Philippines and Solomon Islands is particularly bountiful with hundreds of types of coral, six of the world's seven turtle species and more than 2,000 species of colourful reef fish. These facts alone are enough to bring people here and with such scope for exploration of uninhabited islands, it's the sailing yachts known as phinisis that are the favoured way to get around.

Charters designed with the luxury traveller in mind sail through these vast regions according to the time of year, passing from Raja Ampat to the Komodo Islands and exploring the Spice Islands in between.

A voyage through Raja Ampat is among the most extraordinary journeys you can take by sea. Just off the tip of Bird's Head Peninsula in West Papua, over 1,500 wild forested islands and cays sit amid cerulean waters home to a kaleidoscope of coral reefs so rich in marine life, they're thought to have the highest recorded marine diversity on Earth.

I begin my journey here on the new phinisi, Prana by Atzaro, in Sorong, leaving the busy port for the open sea and clusters of sparsely populated islands. Our first port of call is Mioskon, a hut inhabited heart-shaped island with waters known for excellent diving. It's close to here in the village of Saporkren that I set out on an early hike to see the bird of paradise at first light and visit huts lining a jetty jutting out to sea.

Over the next few days, I dive on the colourful roof of Yenbuba, scale the limestone slope of Wayag to see the view Raja Ampat is famous for and stop by Afjai Bay for a guided trial of Atlas pearl farm. From here, I dive down to the coral wall of Wofoh, drink coconut water on a deserted beach and return to the boat for a movie under the stars. We sail to Fiayamno for the final day, hiking the steps to a platform commanding astounding island views before diving on the most spectacular reef I've ever seen, Matissa's Garden.

Each seven-night voyage here comes with an 18-strong crew. Hosts are on hand to attend to you every need, chefs whip up Indonesian-inspired fine dining cuisine and therapists provide massages in the Amo Nimosis spa. Dive instructors and guides then take you out

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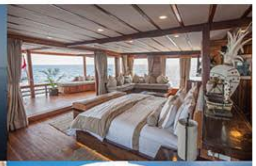

PRANA BY ATZARO SAILS THROUGH INDONESIA'S REGIONS ACCORDING TO THE SEASON, PASSING FROM RAJA AMPAT TO KOMODO AND EXPLORING THE SPICE ISLANDS IN-BETWEEN.

Photograph courtesy of Prana by Atzaro

each day, with the course the ship sails tailored to suit everyone on board.

By cleaning a Banda Sea cruising for your phinisi charter, you'll take in a whole different spectrum of land and ocean life. These Spice Islands tell the story of nutmeg, clove and mace becoming a sought-after commodity in the 16th century. Now you can see reminders of this era through the colonial architecture of Banda Besar, before hiking up Mount Api, spotting dolphins and whales off Ambon harbour and relaxing on the white sand shores of Pulau Hatta.

Komodo is perhaps the most visited area in the phinisis' itinerary though. This protected cluster of islands has long captured people's imaginations with its pink beaches, lush mountains and infamous Komodo dragons, which some people say are worth the journey alone.

Here you can see the contrasting terrain of Komodo National Park, encounter the world's largest lizards in their natural habitat and see thousands of fruit bats take flight at sunset.

In any of these remote regions, water sports become an intrinsic part of the experience. Diving and snorkelling are a daily draw and the most luxurious yachts come with an abundance of water toys. This is how many people choose to spend their time on board and everyone seems so leave spellbound by what they see.

PRANA BY ATZARO

The Ibiza-based Atzaro Group launched this phinisi in September 2018. Elements of the nine-suite boat's design pay tribute to its Balearic sister, encapsulating Atzaro's natural luxury philosophy by combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design. *prana@yatzaro.com*

Opposite, clockwise from the top, Explore Indonesia's most isolated islands on board one of the region's luxury sailing yachts; Uninhabited islands; Snorkelling over the reef; Sunbathing on the deck; **This page, clockwise from top left,** Prana by Atzaro sets sail; The master suite; Rottavia, A secluded beach picnic; **Previous pages, from top left,** A sun coral garden in Komodo National Park; Life beneath the water's surface in Raja Ampat; A mandarinfish in the Banda Sea; Raja Ampat's red bird of paradise; Prana by Atzaro sails into the sunset.