

PACIFIC & ASIA

# Raja Ampat: Indonesian Paradise

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*Tropical Paddling Odyssey*

11 day trip





# Raja Ampat: Paddling Odyssey



## 11 day trip 7 days kayaking

The island of New Guinea sits just below the equator, bounded by the Pacific Ocean in the north and the Arafura Sea in the south. New Guinea is divided into two halves, the eastern part is the independent country of Papua New Guinea and the western half is known as West Papua, a region of Indonesia. It's on the north-west tip of West Papua that the approximately 1500 islands that make up Raja Ampat are situated. The area is untouched and unknown, abounding in pristine tropical beaches, sapphire seas and one of the world's most spectacular marine habitats. We'll explore the islands by kayak and overnight in homestays or set up camp on beaches surrounded by colourful reefs. This is a unique trip, not only for paddling, but also for those wanting to explore below the water as we snorkel at every opportunity.

## A Quick Itinerary

B = Breakfast • L = Lunch • D = Dinner

**Day 1:** Arrive Sorong. Trip briefing. Overnight hotel.

**Day 2:** Ferry transfer to Waisai. Homestay accommodation. B • L • D

**Days 3–9:** Kayak through island chain. Camping and homestay. B • L • D

**Day 10:** Ferry from Waisai to Sorong. Hotel stay. B • L

**Day 11:** Trip concludes. B

## Meeting Place and Time

We meet at our group hotel at 7:00 pm on Day 1. You can check into the hotel anytime after 2.00 pm on this day. Hotel accommodation is based on a twin share room but single rooms are available at an additional charge. Taxis are readily available at Sorong airport and the fare to the hotel is around 100,000 rupiah.

## How to Get There

Garuda Airlines fly direct to Sorong from Jakarta and from Denpasar via Makassar or Manado in Sulawesi. Smaller carriers including Lion Air, Express Air and Sriwijaya Air fly to Sorong via Makassar and/or Manado. Singapore Airlines (from Singapore) and Air Asia (from Kuala Lumpur) fly to Makassar and Manado where a connection to Sorong on one of the airlines mentioned above is required. This is not a comprehensive list and we would recommend you check details with your travel agent and/or on airline websites. Past paddlers have advised that flights on the smaller airlines mentioned above can be purchased on <https://ticketindonesia.info> or [nusatrip.com](https://nusatrip.com)

If you have a long wait between flights at Makassar, there is a very reasonably priced Ibis hotel at the airport. <http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-8867-ibis-budget-makassar-airport/index.shtml>

## Sea Kayaking

Sea kayaking is an activity that any reasonably fit person can participate in and could be compared to brisk walking or cycling. Previous paddling experience is required to participate in this trip.

The kayaks are stable, easy to paddle, control and ideally suited for this remote trip. Your guide is a highly experienced sea kayaker and professional wilderness guide. On Day 3 you will be given a thorough briefing on all aspects of sea kayaking techniques with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with the kayaks. We generally limit our group size to a maximum of six clients, plus guides.

In general, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling, so it's a good idea to begin some regular exercise like walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming well before the trip. If you have not paddled recently, we highly recommend some practice before your trip and we may be able to suggest a local operator for kayak hire and/or tuition near your home.

A typical paddling day comprises of approximately four hours of kayaking plus additional time spent snorkelling throughout the day.

The wind in Raja Ampat during the dry season, (Oct-April), is generally calm with occasional afternoon sea breezes. We ask that all participants feel confident in swimming.

## Proposed Itinerary

The following itinerary should be seen as an approximate guide only. Please note that weather and logistical conditions can cause alterations and delays to our itinerary. Paddling distances are approximate only.

**Day 1:** Arrive Sorong. Make your way to the group hotel (the hotel and address will be advised closer to the trip departure). The trip briefing will be held at 7pm and last for approximately an hour, so it's a good idea to eat dinner prior to the meeting. Dinner tonight is not included in the trip cost. Excess luggage not required during the kayak trip can be left at the hotel to be picked up on your return.

**MEALS NOT INCLUDED / OVERNIGHT AT THE GROUP HOTEL**

**Day 2:** Ferry transfer from Sorong to Waisai, a two to three hour trip. Waisai is on the island of Waigeo and is the capital of the Raja Ampat regency. Homestay accommodation tonight in twin share rooms.

**B • L • D / HOMESTAY**

**Day 3:** Our first day of kayaking! We'll pack and launch the kayaks and paddle to Gam island. We'll explore small inlets and coves and take time out from paddling to snorkel over reefs. We'll set up camp in the late afternoon on a white sandy beach. Paddling distance approximately 13kms.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 4:** Today, we'll paddle through the incredible maze of limestone islands, for which Raja Ampat is famous. The day is punctuated by stops for snorkels, swims and snacks. We'll paddle past sharp limestone cliffs and over crystal clear water, a stunning paddling playground. We spend the night in a remote and rustic homestay where our hosts will serve a traditional meal. Paddling distance approximately 16kms.

**B • L • D / HOMESTAY**

**Day 5:** This morning we'll don headlamps to explore the inner recesses of a nearby cave, filled with dozens of stalactites and stalagmites. We continue our paddling adventure along the coast to "The Passage", the narrow waterway that separates Gam and Waigeo islands. Aided by the current, you can choose to enjoy the spectacular scenery from the kayak or have the guide tow your kayak while you snorkel the passage. We then cross Warparim Bay and into Hidden Bay. One of Raja Ampat's gems that is best explored by kayak, Hidden Bay features a maze of islands, stunning coral reefs which are home to a number of small sharks and an intricate system of mangroves. Camping tonight is on the western shores of Gam Island. Paddling distance today is approximately 16kms.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 6:** Paddling south along the western shore of Gam, we'll explore the Pef Islands and enjoy some fantastic snorkelling along the way. Tonight's camp is on the shores of Jangelo Point with a fantastic view of North Waigeo Island and the Pef archipelago. This campsite has a beautiful sandy beach and features amazing snorkelling steps from the shore. Paddling today is around 16kms.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 7:** Today our paddle exploration takes us along the south shore of Gam Island. We'll take time out to relax on jungle-fringed beaches, all with incredible snorkelling opportunities. We'll enter Besir Bay in the afternoon and enjoy a warm welcome and a refreshing drink from our hosts, the family that run tonight's homestay. Paddling today is 16kms.

**B • L • D / HOMESTAY**

**Day 8:** We'll wake at dawn in order to paddle into Besir Bay to catch the sunrise as it lights up the limestone islands. Mornings in Raja Ampat are fantastic as the birds come to life. Their calls fill the sky as you quietly paddle the maze of islands. We head back to the homestay for breakfast and pack up. As the sun gets higher in the sky, we'll paddle into a mangrove lagoon hoping to spot and snorkel with stingless jellies. Our camp tonight is on the south-east coast of Gam Island and features another snorkelling hot spot and a superb view of Kri island in the distance. Paddling is 24km.

**B • L • D / CAMPING**

**Day 9:** Paddle into Mangrove Bay, a series of salt water lakes, joined by narrow salt water rivers and mangrove forests. The lakes and rivers are full of bird life and dugongs have been known to frequent the area. We'll paddle through these lakes and mangrove rivers finishing with a small arch which deposits us on the eastern side of Gam Island. We then head back to Waisai, maybe stopping for a last snorkel along the way. Paddling distance 13kms.

**B • L • D / HOMESTAY**

**Day 10:** On our final day in the islands, participants have the opportunity to join an early morning Birds of Paradise tour. Later today we'll catch the ferry from Waisai back to Sorong. On arrival, we'll transfer back to the group hotel and the luxury of a modern bathroom. Tonight, the group may like to enjoy a celebratory dinner at a local seafood restaurant. Dinner tonight is not included in the trip cost.

**B • L / OVERNIGHT AT THE GROUP HOTEL**

**Day 11:** Breakfast at the hotel.

**B / END OF TRIP ARRANGEMENTS**

## The Country and its People

Raja Ampat's 1500 plus islands are spread over nearly 40,000 km of area. Marine conservation groups have estimated that the marine life diversity in the Raja Ampat area is the highest recorded on earth, making the islands an amazing destination for those who love the water.

The name Raja Ampat comes from local mythology and tells the story of a local woman who finds seven eggs. Four of the seven eggs hatch and they become kings of the four of the bigger islands. The other three hatchlings become a ghost, a woman and a stone.

Until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, West Papua had little contact with the outside world. Since then, the Dutch, and now the Indonesians, have colonised the area. The culture of the islanders in Raja Ampat is predominately Papuan and Christian. Most villagers prefer to use one of the many Papuan local languages when communicating with each other. English is not widely spoken but most locals do understand Bahasa Indonesia. Tourism is now playing a big part in the economy of the islands, providing income for families and funds for conservation projects.

## Climate

The wet season lasts from May to September with June to August the windy months. October to April is generally the drier time, although showers can still happen. The average temperature is 30C and humidity is generally high. Water temperature is around 27C.

## Trip Organisation

Paddling days will start early to take advantage of cooler temperatures. It's a good idea to pack your dry bags before breakfast, prepare your personal items for the day and if camping, take down your tents so that loading for departure can be organised. On a paddling day we'd like to be on the water before 9:00 am and arrive into camp/homestay by mid afternoon. It's important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members.



When camping, you will be expected to unload your own boats, set up tents and perhaps each night a few can help with preparing the evening meal.

## **Expedition Staff**

Your western kayak guide is one of our most experienced leaders. The guides' role is to co-ordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. They will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and liaise with the local villagers on your behalf. An additional Papuan guide will provide valuable local information and communication with the village communities. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guides.

## **Travel Arrangements**

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures is not responsible for any additional charges involved. Our staff will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and Southern Sea Ventures will do its best to rectify the situation. Please understand that in this part of the world, delays and waiting are commonplace and whilst we do our best to keep to schedule, it is not always possible. We are sure you will appreciate this and accept it as part of the whole island experience.

## **Travel Insurance**

It is necessary to take out a personal insurance policy to cover yourself against sickness, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons, and in the unlikely event that you need emergency evacuation by plane or helicopter due to illness or accident. Ensure you have read the policy thoroughly and are familiar with the claim process in case it becomes necessary to make an emergency claim. We will require proof of your insurance prior to departure.

## **Visas and Permits**

For citizens of 140 countries, including Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and those from the UK and USA, a visa is not required to enter Indonesia for a stay of 30 days. The free entry stamp cannot be extended beyond a 30 day stay. If you intend to stay for more than 30 days, you must purchase a Visa on Arrival which is valid for 30 days and may be extended once for a further 30 days (current cost US\$35.00). All tourists must have at least six months validity on their passports, a return ticket and a minimum of two blank pages in their passports. Entry requirements for Indonesia do change regularly, so it's best to keep checking consular advice.

Entry into Raja Ampat requires a marine entry permit which is included in your trip cost. Our office will require a scanned copy of the photo page of your passport in order to arrange the permit, please provide this at least six weeks prior to your trip departure date. Your guide will hand out the permits in Sorong.

Funds raised by the Raja Ampat marine park pass are directed to community development, conservation and patrol programs essential to environmental

protection, public health and development of a sustainable eco-tourism industry in the islands.

## **Time & Communication**

Sorong is two hours behind Australian Eastern summer time. Mobile reception is by Telkomsel, the only Indonesian telco with coverage in the islands. Signal strength is good around Sorong and some of the islands. It's possible to purchase a Telkomsel SIM card in Sorong. There are some internet cafes in Sorong.

## **Accommodation**

We'll spend two nights in Sorong at a comfortable hotel. Rooms are based on twin share, although single rooms may be requested for an additional charge. Two nights are spent in the town of Waisai in homestay style accommodation (twin rooms). When paddling, we camp for four nights and two nights will be spent in basic homestays.

Homestays are built in the traditional housing style for the area; thatch roofed, stilt huts built over the water. Each homestay is run by a local family with limited to no English, but each family is incredibly hospitable and friendly. Our homestays are located in beautiful settings with opportunities for snorkelling, swimming, kayaking and short hikes. The rooms are twin share huts with one double or two single mattresses on the floor and a mosquito net hung overhead. Each homestay family provides guests with breakfast, lunch and dinner. Meals are a traditional fare of fish, chicken, spinach like vegetables, rice and eggs. Bottled drinking water is provided. Most homestays do not have cell service or internet but usually electronic devices can be charged during the evenings. There are outhouse facilities and basic fresh water showers.

Participants are expected to bring their own tent, sleeping sheet, sleeping mat and mosquito net. A thin tarpaulin is recommended to hang above your tent as added protection from rain.

## **Paddling Equipment**

Participants must bring their own paddling clothing. The kayak, paddle, skirt and PFD are supplied and included in the trip cost. The kayaks supplied are all Rainbows - Atlantis doubles and Laser singles, the paddles are all Werner Skagit.

## **Food and Water**

The group will enjoy three meals and snacks throughout the day. The menu will be a mixture of western and Asian cuisine with emphasis on fresh vegetables, fish and eggs. Meals provided by the homestays are generally made up of rice, fish, eggs and greens.

We use treated (Pristine) rain and spring water throughout the trip.

Indonesian snacks are generally full of sugar and it's difficult to provide healthy alternatives. If you like to snack on trail mix or muesli/granola bars while paddling, consider bringing your own supply from home.





Please let the office know if you have any dietary requirements or food allergies and note these on your medical form.

Sorong is a small town with a few reasonable cafes. Lonely Planet recommends Ratu Sayang for grilled fish and Sunshine Beach, beside Hotel Tanjung, for all kinds of seafood. Please note that alcohol may be banned in Sorong in the near future.

As with any change in diet, it is wise to accustom yourself slowly to different foods. It is recommended to wash any fruit bought in the market and to drink sterilised or bottled water rather than tap.

## Cultural Considerations

It is very important to behave in a respectful way towards the people of Raja Ampat, their land and sea. Some basic practices you should observe are:

- ask the locals if they mind being photographed.
- restrict wearing bathing suits to remote beaches.
- In villages use a sarong/shirt to cover singlet tops and brief shorts.

We usually visit two to three Papuan villages during the trip. You may like to donate school supplies, such as notebooks, pens and pencils to the school. Hats and sunglasses are also items that are appreciated by the villagers.

## Conservation

It has always been our motto that “we take only photographs and leave only footprints”. We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to limit our impact on them. We ask that each person takes out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc.

## Photography

High humidity, along with paddling in a salt water environment, can damage the delicate electronics in cameras. You might consider bringing a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of silicon packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries as there is little opportunity to purchase batteries during our island trip. It is wise to keep lenses to a minimum. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged. If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and get it well before departure so you can practice with it.



## Money Matters

### **Your tour cost includes:**

- Hotel accommodation at our group hotel in Sorong on a twin share basis for the first and last night of the trip.
- Four nights in homestay accommodation.
- Ferry transfers to and from Waisai.
- Transfers to and from the the port in Sorong.
- All kayak gear.
- One western guide and one Papuan guide.
- All meals (except dinners in Sorong).
- Raja Ampat marine entry permit.

### **Your tour cost *does not* include:**

- Airfares.
- Airport transfers.
- Meals in Sorong (except breakfast provided by the hotel).
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Departure taxes (if any).
- Indonesian Visa.
- Travel insurance.
- Snorkel equipment.
- Optional Birds of Paradise tour.
- Items of a personal nature such as postage and laundry.
- **Participants must bring their own tent, sleeping mat, sleeping sheet and mosquito net.**

## Money to Bring With You

While paddling through the islands, we will visit local villages where there may be opportunity to purchase local handicrafts, such as carvings and weavings. Money will also be needed to purchase meals in Sorong. We suggest you bring AU\$150.00 to no more than AU\$500.00 worth of rupiah for the trip. There are banks with ATM's in Sorong and one machine at the airport. If travelling through Bali or Jakarta on the way to Sorong, it's recommended you purchase your rupiah there rather than in Sorong. If exchanging currency in Sorong, please note, that some banks will only accept US\$100.00 clean notes. Credit card purchases in Sorong usually attract a 3% surcharge.

## Currency

The unit of currency is the Indonesian rupiah. The exchange rate is approximately AU \$1 = 10,000 rupiah.

## Tips

Our western guides do not expect tips, however you may like to tip the local guide. Suggested amount is about US\$15.00 but paid in rupiah as there is limited exchange facilities for locals.

## Security

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, airline voucher and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them.

Theft is a consideration in Raja Ampat (like at home) so it is always a good idea not to leave things unattended when in the towns or villages. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you and always be aware of what you are carrying, especially personal valuables like cameras, jewellery and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief. It is a good idea to use a money belt or neck wallet. You may also like to look up the contact details of your country's consulate in Indonesia.

Valuables and spare luggage not required during the kayaking trip can be left at the Sorong hotel and picked up on your return.

Passports should be triple wrapped in zip log bags and a dry bag and carried with you.

## Medical Matters

Any passenger undertaking this trip is required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately.

Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your guide know of any drugs to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities, so attention to medical matters is vital.

### Hygiene

Be conscious of hygiene. Regularly wash your hands, be wary of uncooked food and wash fruit or preferably peel it (with clean hands!).

### Malaria and Vaccinations

Malaria is present in West Papua but not common.

**Please consult a doctor or traveller's medical centre regarding malaria medication and prevention.**

Some malaria medication can affect people while scuba diving and increase the risk of sunburn.

We advise participants to use insect repellent and wear long sleeves and long trousers and socks in the evenings. A mosquito net should be used while sleeping.

For entry into West Papua there are no statutory vaccinations at the time of writing. However, you should check with your doctor or medical centre for current information. All travellers should be up to date with their tetanus, typhoid and hepatitis vaccinations.

### Dental

Due to the remoteness of the trip, it is advisable to have a checkup before departure.

### Medical Supplies

On our trips into more isolated areas we carry a comprehensive medical kit. However, it is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require. In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SPF30).
- Lip protectant.
- Band-aid strips.

- Insect repellent.
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness.
- Antiseptic soap/liquid hand wash.

## Equipment & Clothing: What You Need to Bring

To minimise our impact on the villages and the environment through which we pass, we travel self sufficiently. That means that we carry everything with us, so it's important to keep personal gear to a minimum. Keep in mind that water is scarce on some of the islands and there are no shops. We will carry our own drinking water but it may be several days before we can wash with fresh water instead of salt.

The list below should be used as a guide when packing.

Please note, valuables and spare luggage can be left at the hotel in Sorong.

## Gear List

### Essential Items:

The following checklist is a guideline for your trip. Contact us if you have any questions.

- Tent. One screened tent for every two people (three-man size) or one tent per person if compact. Hammocks also work well in the tropics but need to be netted and used prior to the trip to ensure comfort. Please bring a dry bag to store your tent.
- A wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water. Side flaps are a good idea.
- Light weight rain jacket or spray jacket.
- One long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A lightweight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- Two or three T-shirts.
- A lycra sun top is useful for snorkelling. A stinger suit (full lycra bodysuit) is recommended. There are no dangerous marine stingers but there is one that can cause irritation.
- One pair of light-weight, quick drying, full length trousers and shirt with long sleeves to wear during the evenings.
- Two pairs of shorts and swimwear.
- Sarong (this can double up as a second sheet).
- Mosquito net for homestay nights (double bed size).
- Sleeping sheet.
- Sleeping mat and dry bag to store it.



- 2 X 20 litre dry bags and 1 X 10 litre dry bag. Ensure all your personal gear will fit in the dry bags. Tents can go in a separate dry bag.
- One pair of Reef shoes for paddling, Crocs, Tevas or Keens (not thongs).
- Running shoes and socks.
- Small towel (a chamois towel is ideal, or a medium sized hand towel).
- Minimal toiletries (a bio-degradable soap that will lather in salt water is useful).
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries (batteries can be expensive and difficult to obtain in West Papua).
- Two 1-litre water bottles—the type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- Muesli/granola bars if you have a favourite from home.
- A small dry bag is good for holding things like sun screen, glasses, water bottle, etc. (try and avoid day packs with metal zips as they will corrode).
- Snorkelling gear is not provided nor is it readily available to hire, so you should bring your own. Really keen divers might bring a small but bright waterproof torch for night snorkelling.
- Paddling gloves- a pair that covers to the tips of your fingers are recommended as exposed fingers are highly sensitive to sunburn.
- Pillow case or very small pillow (e.g. airline pillow). It must fit into your dry bag.

**Optional items:**

- Small tarpaulin to cover your tent.
- Paddle booties.
- Camera with waterproof container (if the camera is not waterproof).
- Book.
- 10 metres of lightweight clothesline.
- Binoculars.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Additional padding for kayaks, both for under buttocks and for back support. The kayak seats can be hard.

## Delays or Problems

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures in Australia on +61 2 8901 3287.

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