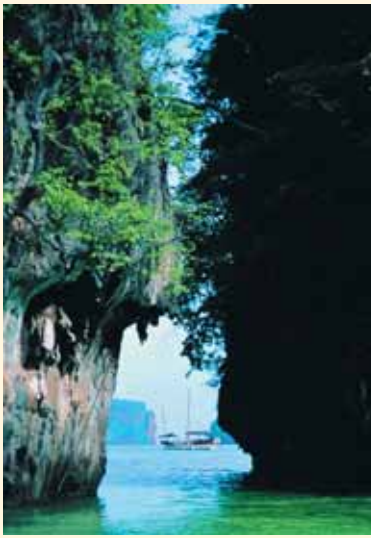


# Underwater Southeast Asia

*Southeast Asia offers the snorkeller and scuba diver a wealth of underwater experiences*



## Thailand

Thailand offers a wealth of water activities both above and below the surface, ranging from kayaking around the spectacular limestone islands off the west coast to snorkelling in the tranquil waters on the east. The beautiful islands in the Gulf of Thailand offer amazing accommodation options from the boutique to the large five star resorts for families and couples alike. Some of our favourite areas are the Similan Islands off Phuket and Koh Lanta, which offers wonderful snorkelling, diving and boat trips in its own marine national park. Koh Lanta also possesses some delightful places to stay including the charming Pimalai and Costa Lanta.

**Nick Payton**  
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## Malaysia

A plethora of underwater activities and snorkelling options await you in Peninsular Malaysia and Malaysian Borneo. The stunning islands of Sipadan-Mabul and Kapalai just off the coast of Sabah in Borneo are recommended for experienced divers and those looking to learn. Accommodation here is varied, ranging from beach bungalows to romantic chalets on stilts. The secluded Perhentian Islands off the northeast coast of Peninsular Malaysia offer fabulous snorkelling and diving in a quiet, laidback atmosphere and is a more budget friendly option than most other parts of the country. All the options are easily incorporated into a longer itinerary giving you the opportunity to discover all Malaysia has to offer.

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## Bali and Lombok, Indonesia

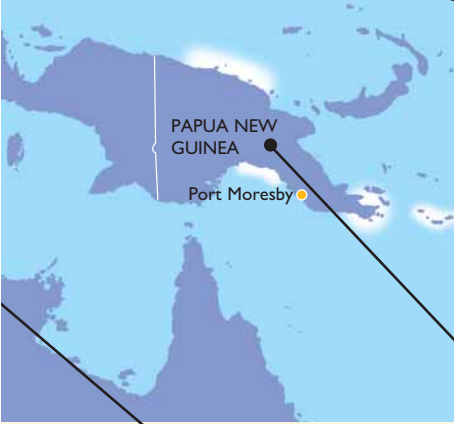
The Indonesian islands of Bali and Lombok have been synonymous with relaxation, tropical beaches and underwater exploration for decades. The best areas to visit on Bali can be found to the south and north east. In the south, the island of Lembongan, two hours by boat from Benoa harbour, offers mid range accommodation and outstanding reefs. The water conditions can vary due to the fact that it is exposed to the currents passing between Indonesia and Australia. To the north you have some fantastic and totally secluded options and are likely to encounter a family of dolphins. Lombok's best underwater experiences can be found at the three tiny Gili islands off the north west coast. Just 10 minutes boat ride from the coast, the largest of the islands has the best accommodation and facilities at the Villa Ombak.

**Charlie Read**  
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- 1 South-west Thailand
- 2 Gorgonian Fan, Sulawesi
- 3 Perhentian Islands, Malaysia
- 4 El Nido, Philippines
- 5 Madang, Papua New Guinea
- 6 Villa Ombak, Lombok

= underwater experiences



### The Philippines

The Philippines is renowned for having some of the world's most beautiful coastal scenery with an array of limestone formations, underwater rivers, cave systems and beautiful tropical beaches. Those looking for a gentle afternoon's sea kayaking or some snorkelling, should head for El Nido where the Bacuit Archipelago and Miniloc island can be explored – equally beautiful above and below water. The country is a mecca for divers of all abilities with a rich diversity of marine habitats and sightings including manta rays, sharks, and even the rare Dugong or sea-cow.

**Emma Boyce**  
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### Sulawesi, Indonesia

The best known location on the island is the 75,265 hectare Bunaken Manado Tua Marine National Park in the north. The area offers some of the most spectacular and accessible coral reef drop offs, also ideal for those who just wish to snorkel. The Siladen Resort accommodates just 30 guests in cottages and is located on one of the many islands in the marine park. Those seeking total seclusion, and with a week to spare, should head to the Tukangbesi Islands off the south coast where the idyllic Wakatobi Resort has full diving facilities in an unbelievably tranquil location.

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### Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is such an extraordinary and unexplored country that any trip here has to be extended to discover as much as possible. The underwater options are throughout the country and mainly focus on muck diving and WWII battleship wrecks, big fish reefs and fresh water caves. Walindi Plantation Resort on West New Britain has bungalows on the beach and amazing reef diving. The conservation centre at Mahonia Na Dari adds a further dimension to your trip with the chance to learn more about the marine ecosystems. The variety of marine species is second to none and whether you are gently floating on top of the water or 30 metres under you will return with amazing stories.

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