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SEABIRDS AND ISLAND LIFE WITH GERT DE JONG

From the Komodo dragons of Rinca and the marine life of the Wakatobi National Park, to the seabird colonies of the Banda Sea and the nutmeg forests of the Banda Islands, this exceptional cruise will introduce you to wildlife, birdlife, aquatic life, remote island cultures and the illustrious history of the spice trade. On some islands, tropical forests climb from mangrove encrusted coastlines to mountain slopes. On others, parched savannah thrives. Tiny islands are home to small fishing communities, coral reefs line tranquil atolls, and volcanoes rise dramatically out of the sea. Indonesias remote and uninhabited islands support regionally and globally important breeding colonies of at least 15 seabird species. Colonies are usually situated on islands, cliffs or headlands, which mammals have difficulty accessing. Seabirds are a vital component of the marine ecosystems of the Banda and Flores Seas, and their presence serves as a good indicator of the health of the wider marine ecosystem. The seabirds also play a valuable traditional role as indicators of fish shoals, and as such are of great economic importance to the local fishermen of the region. Nowadays, however many species are threatened by human activities, while predation by invasive rats ranks among the top dangers. In the company of Gert de Jong, an inveterate seabird expert who is looking at ways to protect the last remaining seabird breeding islands of Indonesia, you will have the opportunity to participate in a conservation project aimed at recording the numbers of frigatebirds, boobies and terns on the islands of Kakabia, Moromaho and Gunung Api. Note: This cruise travels from Flores to Ambon; guests will meet the ship in Labuan Bajo, Flores, and will disembark in Ambon. The airfares

are not included in the cruise price but we will be happy to assist you with any information and local flight reservations. In order that we can make a timely start, please make sure you arrive in Labuan Bajo before 10.00 am on the



morning of Day 1.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - Labuan Bajo

When you arrive in Labuan Bajo, we will meet you and transfer you to the harbour, where you will be welcomed aboard the Katharina. You will have plenty of time to settle in and get acquainted with the crew and fellow passengers over lunch as we cruise to the island of Rinca. From the ranger station of Loh Buaya, we will set off on a ranger-led nature trek in search of Komodo dragons, which are indigenous to this small group of islands. Hopefully the ranger will also be able to show us the dens and nests of the dragons. Rinca is well known for its diverse wildlife, so we may spot monkeys, wild buffaloes and

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deer as well. From the top of the hills, the scenery is breathtaking. After our trek, we will find a quiet spot for a swim and a snorkel, before heading northeast to Bonerate.

Day 2 - Bonerate

We will wake up at Bonerate in the middle of the Flores Sea. Here, we will visit the main village with its sandy streets and houses built on stilts in typical Makasseresse style. On the beach we may be able to observe the construction of the elegant Lambo boats. Afterwards we can swim, snorkel and enjoy the beaches at the northwest side of the island. Later we'll continue cruising in a northeasterly direction.

Day 3 - Kakabia

Today we will drop anchor off the little island of Kakabia for a day of bird counting, exploring, swimming and snorkelling. We will take the tenders and go ashore, and we can expect to see frigatebirds and red-footed boobies.

Day 4 - Tukang Besi

Day 4 heralds our arrival in the Tukang Besi archipelago, also known as Wakatobi, which is world famous for its pristine coral reefs. We will have two days to wander around this uniquely diverse ecologic area inhabited by a tribe of daring seafarers, shipbuilders and maritime traders. We will look for small coves and inlets and the best soft corals; we will meet fishermen, watch the local blacksmiths (tukang besi) at work high up on steep rock plateaus, and visit local markets. As always we will be on the lookout for the perfect spot for a beach barbecue. While we are in the Wakatobi National Reserve, we should see pods of dolphins both spinner dolphins and spotted dolphins inhabit these waters, and we may even be lucky enough to see pilot whales or sperm whales. In the evening we will depart for

Moromaho Island.

Day 5 - Moromaho Island

We will wake up to the view of Moromaho. This coral island is surrounded by an expansive flat reef that can only be crossed at high tide on a small boat or kayak. On and around the island, there is a large, old large coconut plantation, great reefs and mangroves to explore. We can swim, snorkel, bird watch and bird count, we should see parakeets, and there is a stable colony of breeding red-footed boobies on the island. However, despite the fact that Moromaho is now protected because it is included in the Wakatobi National Marine Park, it is likely that great frigatebirds, while still roosting, have probably stopped breeding here. Situated in the mangroves, the great frigatebird colony is sustaining a certain disturbance and exploitation by plantation workers who live and work on the island for a few months each year. They use the mangroves for wood and collect eggs and birds. Also fishermen from neighbouring islands occasionally enter the mangroves and disturb the colony and collect eggs. Several species of migrating shore birds from both Asia and Australia winter here; the island is a breeding ground for green turtles, and there are also megapodes breeding here and small fruit bats. In the afternoon, we will embark on our longest leg of the cruise, our journey to Gunung Api in the middle of the Banda Sea.

Days 6 & 7 - Gunung Api

Arriving at Gunung Api, which sits alone in the middle of the Banda Sea, we'll encounter an enormous, noisy colony of seabirds, predominantly frigate birds and gannets. The birds may circle and swoop towards the Katharina expressing protectiveness of their habitat. There are many volcanoes in Indonesia named Gunung Api, which quite simply means fire

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mountain. This Gunung Api is a huge, four-kilometre-high volcano, but almost all of it is submerged, and we will only see the top 300 metres above the sea. It has had some large landslides over the course of the last 200 years and the last volcanic eruption eradicated most or all vegetation from the island but its not known when this eruption took place. The volcano is active, however, with smoking vents around the crater. Most striking is the increase of breeding birds on Gunung Api; the vegetation here has been increasing since the beginning of the 20th century as have the number of pelecaniform seabirds. Renewed vegetation creates a breeding habitat that results in an increased population of boobies and frigatebirds. The volcano is home to an amazing variety of seabirds including red-footed boobies, brown boobies and masked boobies (all of which are tropical gannets), shearwaters, terns, frigates, brown noddies and red-tailed tropic birds to mention but a few, and for some reason this island in the middle of nowhere is home to a multitude of banded and olive sea snakes. Brown boobies breed under vegetation and red-tailed tropicbirds breed under trees and in the crevices of rocks. Masked boobies breed only on bare ground, and they are disappearing due to the increasing vegetation, which is covering the bare rock. Gunung Api is really inaccessible; it still has no introduced rats, and as a result it is pristine and unspoiled with a biodiversity that is unique in Southeast Asia, so it has to be strictly protected. There is no beach or suitable landing spot, so we will circumvent the island in the tenders. The two days that we spend here will be very relaxing, a time for swimming, snorkelling as well as reading and, of course, bird watching and bird counting. We will depart towards the end of our second day, cruising onward to the Lucipari archipelago.

Day 8 - Lucipari Archipelago

The Lucipari archipelago presents a group of four wooded islands, which are uninhabited but occasionally visited by fishermen from Buru and Ambon. These volcanic outcroppings in the northeastern part of the Banda Sea are populated by terns and spoonbills and several other bird species including the orange-footed scrubfowl, the nicobar pigeon and the pink-headed imperial pigeon, as well as salamanders, crabs and butterflies, all living in perfect harmony and an apparent absence of fear, reminiscent of the Galapagos. We will spend some time wandering and pondering this secluded space. Cruising on to the Banda Islands, we may see Pulau Maisel, an island with the dubious honour of having an average elevation of minus 125 feet below sea level. Understandably, it has a human population of zero.

Day 9 - Banda Islands

Our arrival in the renowned Banda Archipelago generates a true sense of historical excitement. These islands, which were once the worlds only source of nutmeg and mace, are among the highlights of Indonesia; famous for their beauty and cultural heritage from the time of the Dutch and English colonisation. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the demand for the aromatic nutmeg, which was believed to be a cure for the bubonic plague, spurred exploration and shaped colonial empires with European traders selling it at a 6,000 percent markup, making it worth more than its weight in gold. The natural splendour of these islands contradicts the brutality that engulfed them during the 17th century when the Dutch sought a total monopoly on the nutmeg trade and the local people resisted. Despite their illustrious and well-documented history, the Banda Islands are a place that time seems to have forgotten. Today they retain an aura of mystery, allure and astonishing remoteness, with a quiet

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colonial ambience and an exceptional biodiversity that makes this destination truly special. We will anchor near the hacienda-style colonial hotel in Bandaneira, the only city in the Bandas, and stroll through the old town visiting old fortresses and admiring plantation mansions from the past.

Days 10 & 11 - Banda Islands

These days will be filled with visits to a few of the other islands in the group, perhaps the very small island of Run which the English traded with the Dutch for Manhattan as well as the islands of Ai and Hatta, where we will see what remains of the Dutch colonial houses and land parcels known as perken that were handed to Dutch planters perkeniers to manage. We will see more forts, as well as churches, cemeteries and nutmeg plantations. Here, the evergreen nutmeg trees identifiable by the hundreds of ripening yellow fruits that hang from their branches grow randomly in the shade of the magnificent kenari trees, which themselves yield an almond-like nut locally used in confectionary and sauces. In these rocky backwaters, we will feel on a par with the pioneering adventurers; nutmeg and mace can be seen drying in the sun outside nearly every village home. The locals use the pulp of the fruit to make syrup, jam and candy. We should be able to see and learn about the harvesting of the nutmeg and the mace, and taste some of the dried fruit, as well as enjoying some nutmeg jam and baked goods. We will also have several opportunities to explore the pristine waters and bountiful reefs of the islands. We invite the fit and ambitious to make an early morning ascent of Bandas Gunung Api volcano. This is perhaps the most famous of the Banda Sea Ring of Fire volcanos. First recorded in the 14th century, it last erupted in 1988. While this is a challenging climb up a narrow track to an elevation of about 640 metres, the reward when

reaching the top of the Fire Mountain is well worth the effort and you can revel in a stunning and unforgettable view over the Banda Sea, the surrounding islands, and the crater itself. When it is time to depart for Ambon, we will navigate through the Sonnecat (sun's gap) between Bandaneira and Gunung Api, perhaps under the escort of a Kora-Kora sea canoe, rowed by over a dozen muscled men and used in ancient times to attack the invading colonists.

Day 12 - Ambon

After an early morning arrival in the Bay of Ambon, we will have a short sightseeing tour of the city and we will visit Fort Victoria, another fort dating back to colonial days. We will then say farewell to the captain and crew of the Katharina before being transferred to the airport for our onward journey.

Please Note:

Every effort will be made to carry out our cruise itinerary as planned; however, our itineraries are subject to change at the captain's discretion. When touring at sea, weather, currents, and even harbour masters don't always co-operate with our planned itinerary, which sometimes make our planned schedules challenging or even impossible to carry out. For that reason, our written itineraries must be approached with reasonable flexibility. We reserve the right to make alterations due to circumstances beyond our control and/or other factors, in the best interests of all. It's all part of the adventure.

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YOUR SHIP: KATHARINA

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

Katharina is a mix of traditional and modern design. Her hull and rigging are traditional, while the deck house and interior were custom designed to adapt to Western tastes of space, privacy and comfort. While Indonesian traditional sailing vessels are customarily referred to as Bugi Schooners, strictly speaking Katharina is rigged as a Ketch, the foremast being higher than the aft mast. The deck area of Katharina is dominated by the 25m tall main and top masts and a large central table around which we enjoy our meals alfresco. Just aft is the main lounge and bar, accessible on the port side. On top of this main cabin there is a sun deck, where you find several additional deck chairs and comfortable day beds. Below decks there are 4 double cabins (with one extra single upper berth) and 2 twin cabins (upper/lower berth). All cabins are air-conditioned (individually controlled) and have private bathrooms with warm and cold water. Obviously, we provide all hotel amenities you may require. Each cabin has a wardrobe, a built-in mini safe, individually controlled cooling systems and soft lightning. All cabins have their own private bathroom with shower and toilet. Unlike typical ship accommodation, your cabin provides ample space to store your stuff and still move about with ease. We

know from experience that during a cruise in the tropics some of our guests discover the pleasure of sleeping under the stars and there is plenty of room to sleep on the upper deck. Mattresses as well as light blankets are available for that purpose. Spacious twin shared cabins with twin bunk beds or double bed Each cabin has a private bathroom with toilet and hot shower Washbasin and soap toiletries in your cabin Cabins have individually controlled air conditioning Towels and beach towels that are regularly changed each cabin has an individual minisafe for valuables and travel documents Free tea, coffee and mineral water Excellent food and snacks (vegetarian food on request) Excellent wine selection, cold beer and other alcoholic drinks for sale Chilled towels and a welcome drink upon arrival Outdoor sleeping facilities Unlimited use of our snorkeling equipment and 2 sea canoes Television, DVD and music



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centre in lounge



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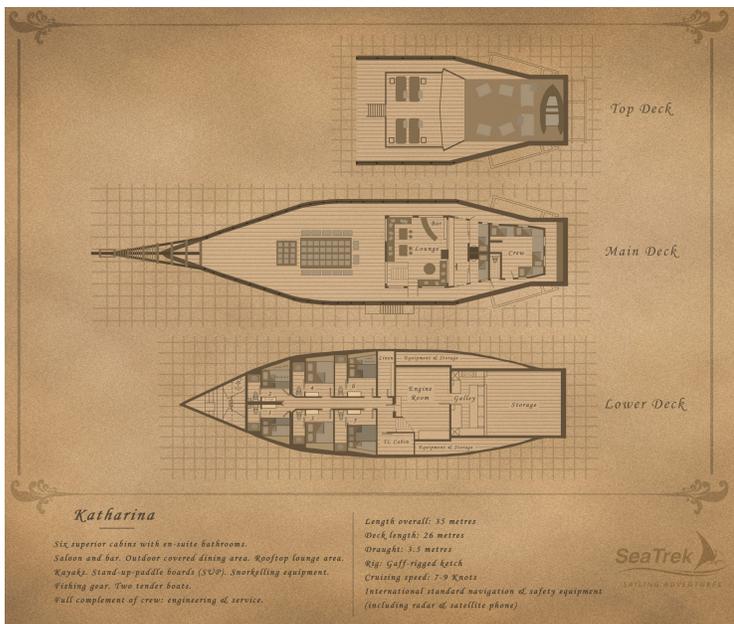
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