

## **Banda Neira: Diving Indonesia's Spice Islands**



Join M Diving on an adventure to Banda Neira, one of Indonesia's most historic locations with a long and fascinating colonial past and astounding natural beauty. On land, there are ancient forts and castles with a daunting past, as well as charming old houses, grand mansions and historic buildings scattered throughout the island.

Underwater, Banda Neira offers exceptional marine biodiversity, some of the richest in all of Indonesia. Its remote location has helped preserve its pristine underwater ecosystem, making it a diver's paradise. Get ready to take in the abundance of colorful corals and fans, diverse fish species, and other marine life in Banda Neira Indonesia with our beautiful boat.

### **Where Are The Banda Islands?**

The Banda Islands are part of Indonesia's Maluku province. If you look at the map, you'll see a group of tiny volcanic islands floating in the middle of the Banda Sea just south of Seram Island. These islands - also known as 'The Spice Islands' - may be tiny but they hold an immense past, and are also the gateway to a stunning underwater world.

Banda Neira is the largest and most populated island of the Banda Islands, the administrative center of the archipelago. Up until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, they were ruled by local clans, who traded with Chinese, Persian and Portuguese merchants. What is Banda Neira known for? The Spice Islands were the original and only source of nutmeg, mace and clove back then; they're incredible value led to the inevitable arrival of the Dutch, who gradually established control on the islands from 1605 until early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## What To Do In Banda Neira

Fans of history will love a trip to Banda Neira – it's a chance to escape into the past with the island's dark and bloody history to keep one occupied, numerous historic landmarks to explore, natural attractions and the local way of life. This is a wonderful destination for those seeking an off-the-beaten-path experience as much of the islands are still underdeveloped, offering serene and charming landscapes.

*Fort Belgica:* Impressive and imposing, the fort was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is a magnificent example of Dutch colonial architecture. It commands the tallest hill with views of the Banda Sea. Explore its star-shaped design, thick stone walls and sturdy towers.

*Fort Nassau:* Once a formidable stronghold, Fort Nassau is now in ruins. It was the site to the horrific 1621 Banda Massacre. Today, nature has reclaimed much of the fort, with vegetation creeping over its crumbling walls. Still a great place to visit for a glimpse into Banda Neira's haunting past.

*Banda Neira Old Town:* A charming colonial town that's perfect for an afternoon stroll. Explore old planters' homes, visit the Bandaneira Church and Chinese Temple and browse arts and crafts in local shops.

*Gunung Api Banda:* Hike to the top of this active volcano. The trail is relatively accessible, offering stunning views of the surrounding islands as you ascend.

## Best Dive Sites In Banda Neira

Banda Neira is located in the heart of the Coral Triangle - the geographic [epicenter of marine biodiversity](#). Diving in Banda Neira has been described as nothing short of 'mind-blowing' with Banda Neira being part of the [Banda Sea Marine Park](#) which was established in 1977, it comprises 2500 hectares, home to over [300 species](#) of hard coral and 500 species of fish.

Throughout the dry seasons, visibility can reach up to 40 metres. Expect incredibly rich coral reefs, vibrant gardens of sea fans, steep walls and huge barrel sponges. What animals live in Banda Sea? Divers can come face-to-face with hammerhead sharks, large schools of tuna, pods of dolphins, pilot whales and other large deep sea pelagics.

Macro fans will find that Banda Neira presents some good muck diving opportunities, with chances to spot the elusive ghost pipefish and pygmy seahorses and more. The Banda Sea is also home [to the largest Napoleon wrasse population](#) in Indonesia so expect to see them at numerous best dive site here.

### *Mandarin City*

A popular dive and snorkel site located off the coast of the Hotel Maulana, this is a great spot to see [Mandarin fish](#) mating in the late afternoon. Thanks to thriving gardens of coral reefs, sponges and ascidians, you'll be able to spot young batfish, pipefish, crocodilefish, different scorpionfish and large Moray eels eels.

### *Twilight Zone*

A fantastic dive site where you can spot a huge plethora of macro creatures at every turn, whether clown frogfish, shrimps, seahorses or ghost pipefish. There are also mantis shrimp, reptilian eels and tiny cuttlefish!

### *Pulau Pisang*

Also known as 'Banana Island', filled with species-rich coral reefs and beautiful tropical fishes including Butterfly-, Surgeon-, Trigger-, Parrot- and Angelfish. This dive site slopes downwards and turns into a wall that goes down 20-30 metres.

Head to *Manuk & Gunung Api* to dive with sea snakes. The waters here are also home to large schools of barracuda moving about in the hundreds.

Truth be told, there are so many dive sites around Banda Neira that it would be difficult to list them all here. However, divers can expect a significant number of dive sites catering to various levels and interests from reef diving to drop-offs, muck diving and even wreck diving. Many of these sites remain relatively unexplored, offering a sense of adventure.

### **Best Time To Visit Banda Neira**

What time of year is best for diving in Banda Sea? [Dry season](#) in the Banda Sea runs from approximately May to November, with more likelihood of rain in the months of January and February. The temperature is quite constant between 27°C and 32°C.

High season for diving falls between March and April and mid-September until late December. It would still be possible to dive in Banda Neira Indonesia outside of these months but note that the waters would be rough at times, with little and limited visibility.

### **Dive Banda Neira with M Diving**

Join M Diving on a thrilling and unforgettable sailing adventure to Banda Neira aboard our luxury mid-range liveaboard. Built from the ground up by experienced divers, JL - which means "Explore the Sea" in Indonesian - can accommodate up to 14 guests with six cabins and en-suites with hot water and AC, a large sun deck with air-conditioned dining and living rooms.

Don't forget to check out our hot offers page for unmissable deals and discounts. Go through to our website for more information and book your diving trip with M Diving now!