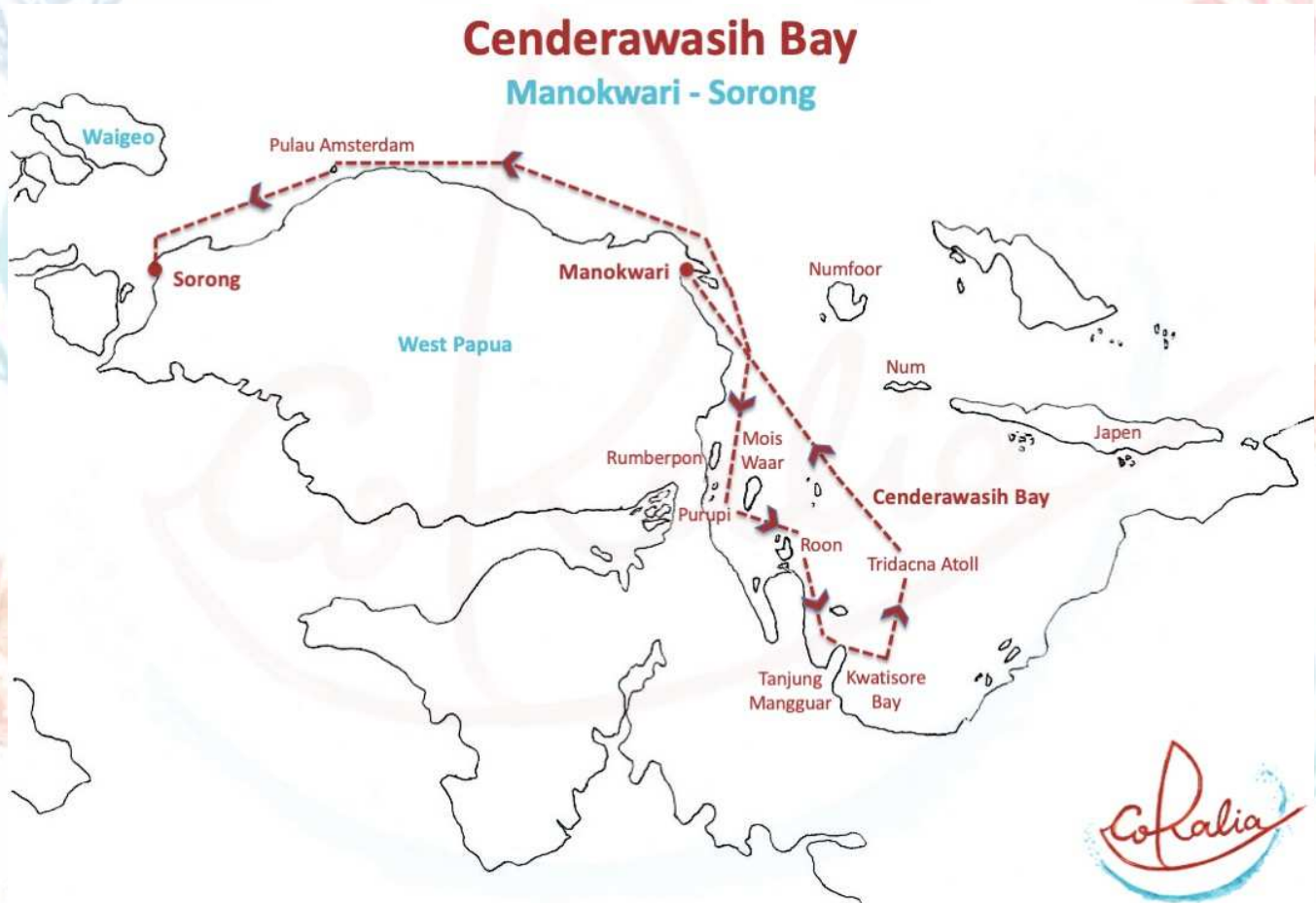


Sample Itinerary: Cenderawasih Bay

from: Manokwari, to: Sorong

Please note: this is a sample itinerary. Itineraries may change without further notice due to weather conditions or other unforeseen circumstances.



Cenderawasih Bay western edge is a National Park and Indonesia's largest. This area is part of the Bird's Head Seascape, along with Raja Ampat and Triton Bay. It is a new dive destination, complete with the highlight for many, the whale shark encounters. The entire area is unspoiled and has a very small population, with many parts uninhabited. In the Bay there are over 500 different species of corals and you will see some of the healthiest hard coral gardens. There are dramatic walks full of sponges and atolls full of schooling fish.

From Manokwari we will head out into the National Park. There are some critter dive sites that we can explore either at the start or near the end of the trip. At Pulau Purup there are several dive sites and we will spend the whole day here. On the southeast tip there is a sloping reef with many elephant ear sponges and other soft corals. Here we could get our first glance of an endemic fish only found in Cenderawasih Bay – a flasher wrasse *Paracheilinus waltoni*.



At the other sites you can see schooling fish, especially fusiliers, barracuda and another endemic fish, this time in the damselfish family *Chrysiptera pricei*. Reef sharks can also be seen cruising the shallow hard coral reefs.

Roon is our next stop. There are ridges lined with hard corals and sloping walls with sea fans and colourful soft corals. Divers can look for bumphead parrotfish, reef sharks, schools of fusiliers and turtles. There is even a small waterfall on the beach that flows into the sea.

Close to Roon is Pulau Rippon. There is a wreck of a World War II plane with the rest of the dive site forming a slope with pretty corals. At another spot the white sandy bottom rises up into stunning coral patches covered with soft corals and elephant ear sponges. There are turtles, schools of surgeon fish and barracuda alongside some interesting macro subjects. Yet another endemic fish can be seen around Pulau Rippon. A dottyback *Pictichromis caitlinae* can be found in cracks and crevices.

Tanjung Mangguar has one of the most beautiful dives in Cenderawasih Bay. The site is completely covered in soft coral and attracts a lot of fish life. A school of barracuda hangs out here, along with trevally, fusiliers and surgeonfish. Look out into the blue for possible sightings of manta rays, mobula rays and sharks. The shallows here are also impressive. There is a good night here too.

Next we will go to Kwatisore Bay for the chance to see whale sharks. The whale sharks come to feed at the bagans (fishing platforms) here. This is a natural behaviour, the whale sharks have learnt that if they suck on the fishing nets the fishermen's catch comes out of the holes! The fishermen believe these huge fish bring them good luck. They throw handfuls of fish to the whale sharks to keep them close to their bagan.

We will arrive in the area in the late afternoon to ask the fishermen who have seen whale sharks that day. We can then arrange to visit early the next morning. If we get lucky we might see more than one whale shark and they have been known to stay with us for hours! Having close-up encounters as the whale sharks circle round and round, opening their mouths wide and sucking in the fish, is one of the most incredible experience you can have.

On the way back up to Manokwari we will spend some time at the Tridacna Atoll. There are several dive sites in this area. Here we dive at deep drop-offs and fringing reefs carpeted in soft corals, large barrel sponges, sea whips and massive elephant ear sponges. The surrounding deep ocean means that the dive sites here are some of the fishiest in the Bay.

We will stop close to Manokwari on the way out of the Bay. During World War II Manokwari was occupied by the Japanese and there are some excellent wrecks that we can explore here. There is a huge Japanese freighter and a former coastal patrol boat that are now encrusted in corals and home to lots of marine life. After two dives we will cruise overnight to the next spot.

On the way back to Sorong we stop at The Junkyard. This dive site is on the south corner of Pulau Amsterdam. Here small boats and barges were scuttled and they have now turned into a nice artificial reef. We will do two dives here before cruising overnight to Sorong and enjoy our goodbye dinner while underway.