

The Junk – Best of Thailand Manta Expedition with the Manta Trust

8 Nights - North & South Andamans



Join the June Hong Chian Lee and the Manta Trust on this unique itinerary exploring the very best diving that Thailand has to offer, taking in the highlights of Hin Daeng, Hin Muang, Koh Haa, Phi Phi, The Similan Islands plus Koh Bon, Koh Tachai and Richelieu Rock.

What to do?	The Basics:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suitable for photographers	Reefs: A mix of colourful reefs, submerged pinnacles and boulder sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A mix of large and small life	Large Fish & Pelagics: Mantas, Whale Sharks, Eagle Rays Macro: Everything you can dream of and more!!
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colourful Reefs	Night Dives: Up to 6
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Boulders and Swim-throughs	Experience Level: All Levels, expect some currents
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manta tracking, research and education	Extras: Presentations from Manta Trust guide, manta identification and tracking



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Schedule

Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a night dive. The diving day has a typical schedule as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing & Dive 3
- Snack, relaxation
- Briefing for Sunset or Night dive (or: dinner first, followed by Night dive)
- Dinner

For your final day aboard we schedule 2 morning dives to allow plenty of time for off-gassing before disembarkation and your flight home. The Cruise Director is happy to listen to requests from guests to visit or remain at certain sites and providing it is possible and the schedule allows, then guest's requests are respected.

Itinerary

Please note: we wish to show you the very best diving possible but a number of factors can determine where we visit. Weather, tides, currents and how busy a site is with other dive vessels all play a part in the Cruise Director's decision of which route the yacht takes. Whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specified dive site in good time.

The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best in offering diving at alternate locations should we be unable to visit those sites listed below:



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The South

Koh Phi Phi

With mini-walls and shallow coral gardens predominating, there are a host of dive sites to choose from around the Phi Phi national Park. *Hin Bida, Koh Bida Nok, Koh Bida Nai, Pilay Wall, Hin Dot* and *Ao Maya* all offer something special. Wildlife is hugely varied across the sites with black tip reef sharks common, tigertail seahorses, ornate ghost pipefish, cornet fish, octopus, scorpion fish, blue fin trevally, barracudas and more.

Koh Haa

Possibly some of the most underrated diving in the whole of Thailand, Moo Koh Haa (literally 'five island group') sits almost halfway between Hin Daeng and Phi Phi and is part of the Ko Lanta National Marine Park. There are actually several dive sites around Ko Haa but the highlights are *Ko Haa Lagoon, Ko Haa Neua*, and *Ko Haa Yai*. Around these amazing islands you can see pinnacles, walls, boulders, caverns, and swim-throughs. Ko Haa lagoon is ideal for night dives, courses, and snorkelling, while *The Chimney* and *The Cathedral* offer things that you cannot see on other Thailand liveaboard itineraries with caverns, swim-throughs and chambers littering the sites. Ko Haa has varied marine life too, with ornate ghost pipefish, morays eels, octopus, hawksbill turtles, sea horses, and marble rays.

Hin Daeng & Hin Muang

These two sites are pinnacles (translating directly as Red Rock and Purple Rock) in open ocean, reaching down to over 70m, and are best known for manta ray and whale shark encounters but, whether they are sighted or not, the sites also offer giant moray eels, pharaoh cuttlefish, schooling rainbow runners and snappers, barracudas, groupers, fusiliers and blue fin trevally. On the pinnacles, there are fields of Magnificent Anemones, walls of Hemprics soft corals, and huge gorgonian sea fans.

The generally good visibility and dramatic topography combined with huge fish numbers makes for excellent liveaboard diving.



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The North



Similan Islands

The above water scenery will provide stunningly beautiful white sandy beaches with small forested areas. Dive some of the following sites; **Boulder City, Sharkfin Reef, Anita's Reef and Honeymoon Bay.** Under the surface you may see: Leopard (zebra) shark, blue spotted stingrays, clown trigger fish, rabbit fish, scorpion fish, snappers, emperor fish, giant trevally and angelfish. The coral gardens, bommies and boulder formations are wonderful to dive.

Elephant Head Rock, visible from the surface, this is the biggest pinnacle in the Similans and has some fantastic swim-throughs. If lucky you might see some white tip reef sharks, batfish, trevally and barracuda can often be seen on the perimeter of the boulders and if you look closely in the cracks and in the rubble you can see smashing mantis shrimp, porcelain crab, moray eels and cleaner shrimp.

Koh Bon

Often, this the most likely place to see manta rays on this itinerary. You are likely to see Napoleon wrasse, sweetlips, octopus, blue fin trevally, giant moray eels, great barracudas, fire dart goby, spiny lobster and nudibranchs of many types. The dive sites vary from wall diving to gently sloping reefs and from submerged boulders to coral gardens.



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Koh Tachai

This island is famous for its pinnacle dive site and more relaxed reef diving. Normally, turtles, barracudas, pipe fish, and nudibranchs can be found here. There is also a chance to see bigger species in this area like manta rays and whale sharks, especially by late January until April.

Richelieu Rock

This limestone pinnacle was arguably named after General Richelieu, a Danish commander in the Royal Thai Navy in the period 1875-1902. There are gorgeous purple dendronephthya soft corals covering most of the pinnacle and other areas covered in magnificent sea anemones as well. Barely breaking the surface at low tide, this horseshoe-shaped outcropping, slopes steeply to a sandy bottom at 18 to 35 meters (60-120 Ft). This site offers great diversity for such a small and isolated spot. It also offers excellent multi-level diving and, because it's a high-profile reef, there's always sheltered areas to hide from current. The marine life is prolific and includes amongst, many other things; Pharaoh cuttlefish, large octopus, all 5 varieties of anemone fish of the Andaman Sea, variety of moray eels, ornate ghost pipefish, smashing mantis shrimps, harlequin shrimps, tiger tail sea horses, Spanish mackerel, frog fish, many schooling snapper and occasional sightings of manta rays and whale sharks.

Top Side

Along the route there are some incredible views from the boat including verdant forests and deserted beaches. There will be several opportunities to leave the boat and take a walk on the islands. A walk up the trail to Sail Rock is definitely time well spent! You can even be entertained by marine life while relaxing onboard with The Junk with dolphins cruising along with the boat not an unusual sight.



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About the Manta Trust



Formed in 2011, the Manta Trust is a UK and US-registered charity that co-ordinates global mobulid research and conservation efforts. The team is comprised of a diverse group of researchers, scientists, conservationists, educators and media experts; working together to share and promote knowledge and expertise.

The shared mission of this team is to conserve mobulid rays, their relatives, and their habitats, through a combination of research, education and collaboration.

The goal is a sustainable future for the oceans, where manta rays and their relatives thrive in healthy, diverse marine ecosystems. The Manta Trust takes a unique, multifaceted approach to mobulid conservation, which sets us apart from others in the field. Our approach revolves around three fundamental pillars: Research, Education and Collaboration.

As part of the mission to raise awareness and provide education on manta ray conservation, the Manta Trust has teamed up with regional eco-minded tourism operators to provide 'Manta Expeditions'—a series of liveaboard dive and snorkel trips that focus specifically on getting our guests in close proximity to manta rays, whilst imparting expert knowledge and skills.

What to Expect

A core focus of this expedition is to not only provide close encounters with manta rays, but to enthuse and educate guests in marine conservation issues and the environment surrounding them. The Manta Trust has ongoing research and conservation projects located all around the world at many of the ocean's top manta ray dive destinations. Through a series of presentations on topics covering local marine species and habitats, they also ensure that divers leave with an increased awareness of the threats these graceful creatures are facing and how they can help beyond their holiday.

Citizen Science & Photo-ID Workshops

Workshops in collecting and recording manta ID images cements the theoretical and practical aspects of the research being conducted by giving divers the tools to get involved, knowing that they are contributing meaningful data to the project. During this trip with Manta Expeditions, you will have the opportunity to experience and participate in cutting-edge conservation research to protect one of the ocean's most majestic animals. Manta Trust scientists will be collecting photographic identification images of all mantas encountered throughout the expedition. For those interested, the trip leader will provide workshops to any guests that wish to get involved. All manta rays encountered during a trip will be added to the regional database, and guests will be invited to name any new mantas that are identified.



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Every manta sighting is crucial information in developing effective management and conservation strategies for these increasingly vulnerable animals. Through these workshops, divers will be able to enjoy world-class marine encounters, whilst knowing they are also contributing meaningful data to Manta Trust's research and conservation efforts.

About Your Trip Leader – Jamie Monmaneerat



The winner of Miss Scuba International 2012 and project leader of Thailand Manta Project, Jamie has always been fascinated by the oceans and their inhabitants. Over the last 5 years she has been traveling, diving and promoting marine conservation to the world. With so much love for the oceans, Jamie furthered her knowledge and received her diploma education in Marine Biology with distinction at Oxford College.

Jamie's devotion to manta rays started when she learnt about manta gill trade back in 2012. Although frustrated, she stayed optimistic and dedicated herself to the conservation of these majestic species. In 2014, she spent 3 months working with the Manta Trust in the Maldives. After countless hours in the water with hundreds of manta rays, Jamie decided to develop the experience and knowledge she gained in Maldives into a manta project in her home country. In 2015, Thailand Manta Project was established with the goal to research the Manta population in Thailand and increase local protection to manta and mobula rays in Thai waters. Since then, Jamie has been dedicating her time to educate and raise awareness on manta rays and marine conservation in Thailand and its neighbouring countries.

Apart from her love for manta rays, Jamie is also very passionate about diving, with over 4 years working experience as a PADI dive instructor in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Join Jamie on board Manta Expedition, and she will be sharing her local diving knowledge as well as giving presentations on manta rays and how you can help make a difference to the current ocean crisis.



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