

TULAMBEN

LOCATION :	A small village on the northeast coast of Bali
TYPE OF DIVE :	Shore diving, wreck, wall, night and deep diving, photography
VISIBILITY :	12-25 metres
CURRENTS :	Zero to mild currents
DEPTHS :	3-40 metres (average depth 18 metres)
MID LEVEL :	Introductory - suitable for every level and interest
HIGHLIGHTS :	Extraordinary diversity of marine life, huge school of big-eyed trevally, 120m shipwreck, beautifully coloured wall, full moon night dive, great photographic opportunities and colour contrast with the black sand, great snorkelling site
CONDITIONS :	Black sand slope with a 120m shipwreck, coral gardens and a wall, the fist-sized black stones can make entry tricky when there are waves present

Tulamben has become Bali's most famous diving area and therefore where you are most likely to meet internationally recognised underwater photographers and writers. Tulamben Bay, like the rest of Bali, is situated in the richest marine biogeographic zone in the world. Being on the northeast coast, the bay receives very plankton-rich waters from the major ocean current that moves from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean. Coupled with the fact that the three main dive sites provide totally different physical environments, this means that Tulamben contains a stunningly diverse underwater ecosystem.

The beach is fist-sized black volcanic rocks that become sand in the shallows. This black sand does not provide the reflective properties of white limestone sand and combined with the amount of plankton in the water accounts for the relatively low visibility (12-25m). It does, however, provide a dramatic contrast, which brings out the colours of the corals, gorgonians, fish and other marine life. The hundreds of macro- species that live here both blend and contrast beautifully with the sand.

Tulamben is a wonderful place to learn to dive and to learn about underwater life. There are occasional sightings of Mola-Mola (Ocean Sunfish), whale shark, tuna and other pelagics, but it is the permanent population of Tulamben that brings people here for the first and hundredth time.

The USAT Liberty shipwreck:

This is Bali's most famous dive site. Built circa WWI, this cargo ship was torpedoed by the Japanese off Lombok. Despite attempts to tow the ship to north Bali, it was taking on too much water so was semi-beached at Tulamben. Over the years anything reusable was removed. In 1963, with the earth tremors from the last eruption of Mount Agung, the wreck slid further down the slope where it still lies (as close to the beach as it can be and still be underwater!).

The Liberty lies approximately 30m offshore, almost parallel to the beach on a sandy slope, and is suitable for all levels of qualification and experience. The wreck lies in depths from 9-30m; the shallowest part of the wreck, where it touches the sand slope, is at 5-10m. Depth along the middle of the wreck is 16-20m. The lower edge of the wreck, i.e. furthest down the slope, is 20-28m (at high tide). The wreck is 120m long, it's pretty broken up (i.e. no penetration possible) but you can still see the guns, toilets, boilers, anchor chain, etc. It is a lovely dive site, possibly the world's easiest wreck dive.

You can also snorkel on the wreck - the highest point of the stern is about 4m below the surface.

Visibility is usually 18-25m, lower when it has been raining. There is rarely a current present; at most it will be mild. During the 3 days before the full moon, there are usually waves. The air temp is 25-32 degrees and the water 26-28 degrees.

The wreck is very popular with photographers as it is totally encrusted in anemone, gorgonians and corals. The black sand provides an excellent colour contrast for the incredible variety of marine life, which includes a huge school (literally hundreds) of big-eyed trevally and over 400 other species of fish. All the fish are very tame (partly as a result of some guides feeding them, a rather unenvironmentally-sound practice), from the

goatfish and wrasse that nibble around your feet and fins during entry/exit, to the unicorn fish and surgeonfish which make a beeline for your mask (a slightly alarming sight the first time you see them!) as you swim down towards the Wreck.

You will see just about everything in any Indo-Pacific Reef Guide book if you dive here. From the minute anglerfish, neon nudibranches, ghost pipefish, shrimp/goby sets, through to garden eels and multi- coloured clouds of anthias and damsels and schools of sweetlips, batfish, fusiliers and butterfly fish. The variety is amazing. Then there are the invertebrates, the hard and soft corals, black corals, sponges with crinoids, sea fans and tunicates.

The Drop-off/wall:

This site, an old lava flow from Mount Agung, is at the opposite end of the bay from the Wreck (about a 10 minute walk along the stony beach). The dive starts off on a steep sand slope with nudibranches, flounders and goby/shrimp sets. At 12m are sponges where many varieties of shrimp and leaf scorpion fish abound, and there are many crinoids, often with attendant ghost pipefish. Continuing round to the right, the slope develops into a reef with very impressive topography, becoming a vertical wall from 15m and descending to below 60m. Visibility, best in the morning, is usually 15-20m (due to the amount of plankton in the water) and because of the location it is rare that there is a current, even a mild one.

The wall has profuse sponges, corals, black coral bushes and gorgonian fans - at 30m there's one that reaches 2m in width that we visit for the deep dive on the Advanced Open Water course. The wall, the lava spur, then reverts to being a steep slope.

The fish life is similar to that found on the wreck but being a much larger area, is less dense. However, more often than on the wreck you will see white tip and black tip reef sharks, large napoleon wrasse, big Bumphead parrotfish, some big filefish (including scrawled), and large moray eel. Late afternoon is the time to see the wide variety of lionfish that live here. There have been sightings of Whale Shark in as little as 9m of water!

The back reef at the top of the Wall, averaging 5m, contains an excellent 'aquarium section', including cuttlefish, octopus, boxer crabs and many other unexpected treasures, enabling you to finish your dive at around 5m for pretty much as long as you want to. This is of course also very popular with snorkellers.

The Coral Garden:

Running along the middle section of Tulamben beach is a shallow reef (averaging 8-12m so also excellent for snorkelling) of mainly table and fire corals interspersed with anemones as well as barrel and other sponges. The fish life, as with the drop-off and the wreck, is very diverse. It is here that you can see a surprising number of blue ribbon eels (the juveniles are black) and octopus. The variety of shrimp (including tiger shrimp) is surprising too along with the different anemone fish, plus, Painted frogfish, Leaf scorpion fish and boxer crab. The bigger fish seen here include Bumphead parrotfish and black tip reef sharks.

Tulamben Area - Seraya

LOCATION :	Near Tulamben, a small village on the northeast coast of Bali
TYPE OF DIVE :	Shore diving, muck/macro diving, photography
VISIBILITY :	15-25 metres
CURRENTS :	Zero to mild currents
DEPTHS :	20-25 metres
MIN LEVEL :	Suitable for every level, u/w photographers
HIGHLIGHTS :	Tiger & Coleman Shrimp, Boxer crab, Painted Frog fish, nudibranchs Wonderpus, Harlequin shrimps, Ghost pipefish
CONDITIONS :	Black sand slope.

The 'in' location for macro photography. 5 minutes before Tulamben Bay. Seraya's black sand slope has Tiger shrimps, Boxer crabs (although very difficult to find them out in the open with the goatfish around!),

rare nudibranchs and Barrel sponges with crinoids, Ghostpipe fish plus a variety of Cowie shells.

Outside Tulamben – Palung-Palung, Batu Kelebit and Emerald

LOCATION :	Sites located near Tulamben, a small village on the northeast coast of Bali
TYPE OF DIVE :	Boat diving ('Jukung' – local outrigger), reef
VISIBILITY :	10-20 metres
CURRENTS :	Zero to mild currents
DEPTHS :	10-30 metres
MIN LEVEL :	All levels; Alamanda – experienced
HIGHLIGHTS :	Fantastic coral formations, density and variety of fish.

Palung-Palung is almost a continuation of the Drop-off – a series of 6 rocky ridges and 5 intervening bowls. The bottom of these bowls change from one end of the site to the other – from a cover of finely branched acroporid coral to white sand at the eastern end of the site. The coral is well protected and very healthy. There are diverse soft corals and gorgonians. Here you might sight sharks and, at the other end of the scale, pygmy seahorses.

The site is suitable for AOW divers as corals are seen at depth, currents are zero to mild so conditions are excellent for u/w photographers.

Batu Kelebit is located south east of Tulamben Area. Kelebit Rocks are 2 large underwater boulders. The dive area is dramatic with steep ridges. Batu Kelebit receives deep offshore water and the visibility is usually very good. Current usually tends to northwest, however the ridges at this site provide excellent protection.

The site offers a variety of sea fans, coral bushes and sponges with sand patches between. The colour of the sand is lighter than at Tulamben Bay and provides an excellent colour contrast.

Large pelagics can be sighted here including dog tooth tuna, schools of barracuda, reef shark and bumblehead parrotfishes. At the other end of the scale, we also see pygmy seahorse.

Emerald is located in a small bay a little to the east of Batu Kelebit. There is a "wreck" of a Toyota car at this site – home to resident marine life in the Tulamben area, including a variety of Gobies.

AMED

LOCATION :	Sites located near Tulamben, a small village on the northeast coast of Bali
TYPE OF DIVE :	Boat diving ('Jukung' – local outrigger), reef
VISIBILITY :	10-20 metres
CURRENTS :	Zero to mild currents
DEPTHS :	10-30 metres
MIN LEVEL :	All levels; Alamanda – experienced
HIGHLIGHTS :	Fantastic coral formations, density and variety of fish

Amed is located on the north-east coast of Bali, about 15 mins by car south of Tulamben, along the main road, and then 15 mins on a local road. It is a sand beach as opposed to Tulamben's stony one. On the outskirts of Amed, you can see traditional salt-panning and buy sea salt as a souvenir of your visit!

As recently as 1997 the reef within the shallow bay at Amed (more accurately called Jemeluk) was extremely healthy - full of hard corals, magnificent barrel sponges and gorgonian fans. However, in 1998, Amed was badly affected by coral-bleaching as a result of El Nino that affected the reef within the bay and down to 10-12M. The reef is slowly recovering but we cannot yet tell when it will reach its former glory. Immediately

outside Jemeluk Bay are 2 dive sites, Amed Wall and Amed Reef, both of which can be done as a shore- or boat-dives. The boats are small outriggers (jukung) - long and narrow fishing boats.

Due to the easy conditions at Amed, it is suitable both for novice and experienced divers. There is very rarely any wave action at the surface, so any surface swims and ascents/descents are worry-free. There is zero to mild current, so no buoyancy problems for the less-experienced, and the opportunity to get right up close for divers who have perfected their buoyancy and enjoy all the smaller animals on offer. The water temperature can be affected by thermoclines, and the visibility is usually 14-22M.

Amed Reef

This small coral reef lies in depths ranging from 12-22M. In this area you will find many different kinds of sponges and gorgonians and the marinelife includes everything from gobies and shrimp as well as anemones with attendant clownfish to schools of barracuda and Blue Spotted Ray. Many different kinds of parrotfish, angelfish, surgeonfish and moray eel.

An area of artificial reef has been created by the diving community and local people in Jemeluk Bay. Year by year, the marine life in this area of the bay is increasing.

Amed Wall

This dive site is from 10-35M in depth and although the Wall itself is a relatively small part of the dive, there is great diving to be had here. On the Wall you can usually find white tip reef shark, Napoleon Wrasse, Green turtle and occasionally big trevally. Huge numbers of fish can be found: butterflyfish, bannerfish, snapper, fusilier and triggerfish. The deep slope after the wall is rich in corals and invertebrates with crinoids as well as fishlife. Coming shallower - hard and soft corals, bommies with sponges and gorgonians. The fish found here include Lionfish.

Amed/"Japanese" Wreck

Lying 3km south-east of Amed, this quiet little black sand bay is home to the wreck of a 20M steel freighter. The wreck lies in very shallow water, 6-12M, between a reef and the sand bottom, and is encrusted with sponges, gorgonians and coral bushes. Visibility can be greatly reduced if there is a current or any wave-action, however the bay is well-protected on both side. The sloping reef is spectacular, particularly in the bottom (15-20M) section, with soft corals, gorgonians and sponges. The reef continues in patches to 40M+. The shallowest section of reef (unaffected by the coral-bleaching after El Nino in 1998) contains table and staghorn corals and is home to clouds of damsels and anthias as well as schools of many kinds of fish.

Amed Ghost Bay

This sparse artificial reef and bare slope are easily accessed yet rarely dived. And yield Ambon scorpionfish, Mimics and Wonderpus, Baby frogfish, rare Juvenile batfish, Ornate and Robust ghostpipefish and stonefish can be found.

Highlights: Mimic octopus, painted frogfish, angler frogfish, ghost pipe fish, juvenile file fish

PADANGBAI

- Blue Lagoon/Jepun, Mimpang, Tepekong, Biaha & Gili Selang

LOCATION :	5 sites located off Bali's east coast
TYPE OF DIVE :	Boat diving, reef, wall and drift diving
VISIBILITY :	15-30 metres
CURRENT :	Zero (Blue Lagoon), elsewhere strong and unpredictable
DEPTHS :	10-40 metres
MIN LEVEL :	Beginner (Blue Lagoon) - elsewhere advanced and experienced Sharks! (Mimpang, Tepekong,
HIGHLIGHTS :	Cuttlefish, leaf scorpion fish, crocodile fish (Blue Lagoon/ Jepun) Tepekong's Canyon and Wall

CONDITIONS : Blue Lagoon/Jepun: an easy dive site, gentle white sand slope, excellent marine life
Mimpang, Tepekong, Biaha, Selang: currents can be tricky (up and down currents meeting horizontal currents) but on other days can be as calm as a mill-pond. Sometimes thermoclines around 20m

Amuk Bay, with Padangbai to the south and Candidasa to the north, is about 6km across and located along the south side of Bali's eastern point. Just north of Padangbai is Blue Lagoon, a treasure trove of marine life. Tepekong and Mimpang are islands outside the bay, Biaha is a little to the north, and Gili Selang is off Bali's northeast tip. All offer some of the most breath-taking diving in Bali. Due to conditions though, these sites need to be treated with care and respect. The currents coming from the Lombok Strait create unpredictable water movements that can result in a washing machine effect.

Mimpang, Tepekong and Biaha are all surrounded by remarkably healthy reefs, but they are generally low-lying due to the (at times) torrential current that sweeps the east coast of Bali. This current brings nutrients to these reefs and accounts for the diversity of their marine life. You will find a vast number and great diversity of fish, abundant sharks and frequent pelagic visitors set against a dramatic backdrop of craggy black walls with beautiful, healthy corals and often superb visibility. The water can be cold, although it is precisely this that makes these sites what they are: the deep basin 100km south of Bali from which upwells extremely cold water to replace that taken away by currents to the west of Bali. This upwelling brings with it some of the marine life for which this area is famous (schooling pelagics, Mola- Mola).

AquaMarine dive guides have a great deal of experience diving around Mimpang, Tepekong and Biaha. They use this experience to judge conditions at the sites, and will inform you whether or not they are diveable. Please do not try and encourage them to dive when they advise against it. You would embarrass them and may put yourself in danger if you choose to enter the water. In addition, while the sites may be diveable, they are relatively small sites and, if the current is too fast, your dive may be over in as little as 5 minutes. If your guide decides to dive a site, you must listen to and follow the briefing. You also need to stay close to your guide while underwater in case conditions change.

Blue Lagoon and Jepun

Blue Lagoon is a small bay with a steep white sand beach, located just northeast of Padangbai. The steepness of the beach means there are waves, therefore we take a 5 minute boat ride from Padangbai. The topography is not spectacular: white sand bottom, which slopes gradually to 22m, has scattered rocks, soft corals and a huge area of staghorn coral. The fish life however is amazing! A large napoleon wrasse is occasionally sighted, and the area is home to several kinds of reef shark, stonefish, moray and blue ribbon eels, nudibranches, rays, squid and octopus, leaf scorpion fish in every hue and stargazers, giant frogfish and cuttlefish.

While the diving at Blue Lagoon is easy (sometimes used for Open Water courses and popular with snorkellers), experienced divers and photographers also thoroughly enjoy the site. Visibility is 15-20m, there is sometimes a little surge and a mild current but the bay is fairly protected. The site has a good variety of sweetlips, angelfish and surgeonfish.

Jepun

AquaMarine's favourite treasure-trove. It is an extension of Blue Lagoon and has a white sand bottom. An area of artificial reef has been created – we regularly sight frog fish here. Jepun yields Leaf scorpionfish, Solarpowered nudibranch, Rhinopias (eschmeyeri and frondosa), ghostpipefish, seamoths, Flamboyant cuttlefish, Cockatoo waspfish, shrimps, crabs, Thorny seahorse and more.

Highlights: Nudibranchs, Rhinopias (rare), giant frog fish, Coleman shrimp

Note: highly recommended for u/w macro photographers.

Mimpang

Off the boat to 12m, where you will see small coral reef and white sand and small wall, maximum depth 30m. You will see trumpet fish, during the season (August-September) Mola-Mola (Ocean Sunfish). The current can be up and down and sometimes strong surge as you enter.

Also known as Batu Tiga ('Three Rocks'), Mimpang is exactly that: three large rocks that break the surface and several others below, which run in a ridge: to the north towards Bali and to the south (the richer end) dropping into deeper water. Although Mimpang is only 1km from Tepekong, the conditions at the two sites are regularly not the same. Therefore, if you cannot dive at Mimpang and go to Tepekong instead, you may well be able to do your second dive at Mimpang.

Mimpang's Shark Point offers the chance to see white tip reef. Although we don't guarantee sightings, this is where you have the best chance of seeing sharks in Bali. The current here can be strong, but is fairly predictable.

The topography of Mimpang is diverse, with sloping reefs, craggy rocks and walls - all with hard and soft corals and some gorgonians. The reef has a good cover of soft corals, with many stony corals, staghorn and table corals. There are big schools of unicorn fish and snapper, many blue-spotted rays, napoleon wrasse, moray eels, trumpet fish, banner fish, butterfly fish, triggerfish and trevally as well as the innumerable reef fish. In places you can find large gorgonians and barrel sponges.

Depending on conditions, it can be possible to snorkel at Mimpang as the reef starts quite shallow on a white sand slope rather than simply dropping off to a wall.

Tepekong

This island (a 300m long rock) offers some of the most spectacular diving in Bali, but steep walls, The Canyon, cold water and strong currents make this a site for experienced divers only. Drifting with the current you can see sharks, moray eel, rays and big pelagics. Visibility is usually very good. If conditions are not suitable, there are other good sites in the vicinity.

East Tepekong

Wall diving, minimum depth 14m, maximum 40m. Entering from the boat you drop down to 14m along a small coral reef on the slope. To the right runs a wall (depth 40m+) and to the left the small coral reef continues, with hard, soft and table corals, (maximum depth 24m). The marine life is excellent with the occasional turtle, tuna, parrotfish, barracuda, angelfish, scorpion fish, butterfly fish, sweetlips and many kinds of triggerfish. Conditions are generally easier here than at The Canyon but you can still expect to encounter surge and sometimes strong down currents. On the gentle slope at northeast Tepekong is a small, shallow (10m), semi-protected, rocky reef with bommies.

The Canyon

This dive site is located off the very southwest tip of Tepekong, max depth 40m. Entering on the steep slope just slightly north of the Canyon itself, you head straight down to 25m and enter The Canyon. If there is no current (a very rare occurrence), you will be able to clearly see the dramatic beauty of these stunning, craggy black stone walls. If there is the usual swirling current, you can still see and feel the drama of the site, but your view will be somewhat obstructed by the huge schools of sweetlips, snapper and big-eyed trevally, Bumphead parrotfish, unicorn fish, batfish, groupers, sharks (usually white tip reef

sharks) and other pelagics - which may include tuna and Mola-Mola (Ocean Sunfish) in season (September to October). These waters are rich with nutrients that attract smaller fish - damsels, basslets and anthias - and therefore larger fish too! The Canyon has some soft corals and small gorgonians.

Biaha

This rock is shaped like a banana and is about 4km from Mimpang and Tepekong. AquaMarine is one of the few companies to offer diving here, which is a pity as it offers great diving! The current here can be very strong, not only horizontally but also upwards and downwards. Most of the awkward currents are on the

northern slope. The surge also can be very strong.

There is a beautiful and healthy reef around the island, a rocky slope in the north and a wall around the southern part. This rugged black wall, with the breaking waves above, is absolutely beautiful in places and at times it is almost as if the fish are superfluous - but not quite! There are various entry points around the island, and your dive can cover almost the entire circumference of the island or just a small part, it depends on your interests and also, of course, the currents and conditions!

The inside area of the crescent (the east side of Biaha) has a cave large enough for six divers, in which white tip reef sharks often sleep. The protected area outside the cave has interesting corals with many commensal shrimp and crabs, and is home to anglerfish, leaf scorpion fish, octopus, a variety of shrimp, cuttlefish and nudibranchs. This cave could take up an entire dive (and sometimes does!).

Gili Selang

A small island lying off Bali's eastern point, like all exposed sites, at times has ripping currents. We therefore restrict this to expert divers only. AquaMarine takes a fast boat from Padangbai, and you can either dive once at Gili Selang and then go on to Amed, or dive within Padangbai and then on to Gili Selang (although that is a long return journey).

The interesting and rich sand slope to the north of the island has some stands of hard branching corals and occasional bommies, the deeper areas of the slope are more protected and therefore home to sea fans, soft corals, barrel sponges and coral bushes. Along this sand slope you may well see schools of big eyed trevally, white tip reef shark and Bumphead Parrotfish. Sitting at around 18M, moving southwards with the current, around the east side of Gili Selang, can provide you with great visibility. Here however, the slope becomes rockier, much steeper and loses any significant coral cover. Tucking into the south side of the island and coming in towards Bali, you'll get out of the current, and encounter another area of low but healthy reef with many moray eels and schooling fish including trevally. Dotted around are bommies and leather corals.

NUSA PENIDA & NUSA LEMBONGAN

CONDITIONS:

LOCATION : A 17km long island, off the southeast coast of Bali

TYPE OF DIVING : Boat diving, drift diving

VISIBILITY: 15-40 metres

CURRENT : Mild to strong

DEPTHS : 6-40 metres

MIN LEVEL : Open Water (experienced)

HIGHLIGHTS : Mola-Mola (Ocean Sunfish) in season, eagle and manta rays, sharks, schools of sweetlips, turtles

There are dive sites all around Nusa Penida's northern coast, Very good varieties of hard and soft corals; slopes and drop-offs, The water can get pretty cold at times, Being drift diving, it is not easy to take photographs here

Nusa Penida is the largest of three islands (Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Ceningan). The water here is fairly cold (due to the ocean currents) but often startlingly clear, with gorgeous corals and prolific fish, occasional turtles, reef sharks and in August to September Mola-Mola (the weird and wonderful sunfish).

Nine dive sites at Nusa Penida, three of which (Sental, Ped, SD) are along Nusa Penida's north coast. You could theoretically enter the water at Sental, drift along until you came to Ped, exit, change tanks and have a surface interval, re-enter the water exactly where you exited, drift along to SD, exit, out, back in at the same point. Generally though, due to conditions and changing currents, this is not possible. The majority of dives at Nusa Penida are drift dives and the currents are not always predictable. You need to listen to your guide's briefing and to follow him underwater. There is neither diving nor coral, due to conditions, along Nusa Penida's south coast.

Sental, Ped & SD

As mentioned above these sites are located on the coral reef that runs the length of Nusa Penida's north

coast and offer great drift diving. This reef is richest at SD but at Ped and Sental it has suffered due to coral-bleaching after El Nino in 1998 and boats anchoring into the coral. The reef has a lot of soft corals, and also many kinds of fish, such as Moorish idols, sweetlips, lionfish, moray eel, scorpion fish and napoleon wrasse.

The reef (3-25m) is mainly a steep slope with flattened barrel sponges (due to the current) and some stretches of deep wall (particularly between Ped and Sental). The ever-present current means that your dive will always be a drift dive, although the currents can change direction during a dive, and can become quite fast - you may end up exiting at Toyapakeh. Visibility is usually 18-30m.

Around 20-25m on this slope there is a good chance of seeing large pelagics (ocean-going fish) such as manta ray, tuna and barracuda because of the currents.

At SD the coral starts at 3m so it is possible (current permitting) to snorkel.

Toyapakeh

Located on the island's northwest point in the Ceningan channel, Toyapakeh is Nusa Penida's most popular dive site. Its popularity is deserved not only because it is partially protected from the current flowing through the strait between Penida and Ceningan, but also due to the good visibility and rich coral. In addition to the reef there are some very attractive coral formations with big gorgonians that provide excellent places to find fish and other marine life.

Starting at 6m this lovely reef of beautiful soft corals and thriving hard corals gives us clouds of reef fish including anthias, scorpion fish, moray eel, trumpet fish, puffers and giant trevally. Starting from the area north of the Quicksilver mooring (south of the pier), at 10m you find bommies with lots of sweetlips. It is here that our guide Wayan has, on several occasions, seen two sea snakes (he is terrified of snakes both on land and underwater!). Following the slope downwards past the 10-15m area gives big schools of fish (including jackfish and sweetlips), batfish, napoleon wrasse and sometimes turtles. Deeper on the slope (22-26m) you may have the chance to see larger pelagics including Ocean Sunfish (Mola-Mola) in August- September at 25-30m.

The current here often heads northeast, which makes for an easy and pleasant drift dive, but the current in shallow water and the current in deeper water sometimes go in different directions, therefore the direction of your dive can change as you alter your depth. The water can be pretty cold and divers often encounter thermoclines.

Crystal Bay

Upon entering this small bay, we head for inland shelter and then descend directly down to the reef at 5-12m. This hard coral reef has a white sand base covered with anemones and soft corals. The marine life includes angelfish, sweetlips, giant frog fish and many Moorish idols. It can be quite 'surgey' in the bay.

Following the north side of the bay around we come to a Bat Cave. Depending on conditions, you can enter from underwater and surface inside the cave (which is open to the sky) where bats sleep overhead; big waves may crash in through the top. Occasionally 2 small reef sharks are in the cave, but they leave when you arrive! Continuing along the (very deep) wall from the Bat Cave at 20-24m the hard corals provide homes for a lot of lobster.

Because this area is in Ceningan Channel, when there is a current present and due to the coldness of the water from the Indian Ocean, there is definitely a chance to see white tip reef sharks and eagle rays, and leopard shark if you are lucky.

Manta Point (South West Nusa Penida)

This area of the coastline features dramatic limestone cliffs that descend straight into the ocean. The swell can be stupendous, sometimes making entry impossible by mid-morning. AquaMarine will therefore pick you up earlier than for other trips.

The area AquaMarine calls Manta Point rarely has a current, but sometimes has strong surge. There is a sandy bottom at 12-18m. The water is quite cold because it comes in from the ocean (22-26 degrees). In addition to manta ray, you may also see other pelagics such as tuna and tiger mackerel.

Please be aware that if the pelagics are not there, there is nothing else to see except sea, sand and your buddy. This is the area where the pelagics come in to feed so while there is no guarantee you will see them, it is quite likely. Mantas are 2-4m in width and are harmless plankton-eaters.

Blue Corner

Blue Corner is located off the point of Nusa Lembongan, a long thin island just northwest of Nusa Penida and is a very popular drift dive. However, the current can be strong and can try to pull you downwards.

You descend to a slope starting at 10m. The slope has soft corals, puffer and boxfish. The current takes you round to a corner where there is a vertical wall (depth around 28m). Blue Corner is usually full of fish as well as shark, big napoleon wrasse, eagle rays and other marine life. From July to September you often see Mola-Mola. Please note that it is not always possible to reach the corner due to the speed and direction of the currents.

MENJANGAN ISLAND

LOCATION: TYPE OF DIVE: VISIBILITY: CURRENT: DEPTHS: LEVEL: HIGHLIGHTS:

CONDITIONS:

LOCATION : A small island off northwest Bali, part of West Bali National Park

TYPE OF DIVE : Boat diving, wall and drift diving

VISIBILITY : 15-30 metres

CURRENTS : Mild currents

DEPTHS : 5-40 metres

LEVEL : Open Water

HIGHLIGHTS : Coral walls and grottos, Turtles, barracuda, big-eyed trevally, batfish, Garden Eel Point, Anker Wreck (a small 19th-century wooden boat)

CONDITIONS : 30-60 mins boat ride (depending on the dive site) from the small harbour of Banyumandi (basic facilities), Beautiful vertical walls, warm water, white sand, Diving at Menjangan has the highest rate of DCS of any Bali dive location - be a SAFE Diver (Slowly Ascend From Every dive) and do your safety stops

Although the best diving in Menjangan is said to be from April to November (during the southeast monsoon), the island can be dived year-round as it offers some of the most protected diving in Bali. The clarity of the water can at times be amazing, and the best in Bali; October to November often has horizontal visibility of 50m+. A current of more than 1 knot is unusual.

In 1978, Menjangan became Bali's first internationally-known dive location. Consequently, in older dive guidebooks Menjangan is described as having beautiful reef flats. Unfortunately, this is no longer true. Over the years a combination of dynamite fishing and (dive) boats anchoring in the coral has taken their toll. In 1997, there was a population explosion of the coral-eating crown of thorns starfish, followed by coral bleaching resulting of El Nino in 1998.

However, these reef flats (5-15m) are now showing strong signs of recovery and will in all likelihood come back with much greater diversity than they had before.

On a more positive note, Menjangan is famous for wall diving and these walls were unaffected by the above problems. They descend to varying depths, the shallowest being 26m, the deepest 60m+. The walls offer the greatest diversity of gorgonian fans in Bali. They generally start at 10m with the flat coral reefs offering gentle conditions and lots of sunlight. These are full of small and medium sized fish. The walls are full of small nooks and crannies, overhangs, and bigger cavelettes, crevasses, etc. They are covered with soft corals, gorgonian fans and sponges.

There are only occasional sightings of large pelagic fish in Menjangan due to the island being protected from the cold currents coming in from the open sea.

The more popular dive sites at Menjangan are: The Eel Garden, Pos II, Coral Garden and Bat Cave and, for the more experienced, a deep dive (40m) to the Anker Wreck, a 150 year old wooden boat.

The Anker Wreck

No one knows the name of this small wooden boat, even if it had one, or what brought it to the area. The wreck is actually named after the anchor that still lies about 6-8m from the surface. You follow the anchor chain down the steep slope to the flattened remains of the shipwreck (35-50m), which lie across about 60m of sand. This is the deepest dive site offered by AquaMarine; we believe that the good visibility and calm conditions mean it will present no problems to experienced divers.

Following the anchor chain down to 32m, there is a second (coral-covered) anchor at the point where the site becomes a sand slope. It is here that you see the first parts of the wreck, dark against the white sand. Across the site you will find copper sheeting and bottles, the boat's cargo (artefacts, not souvenirs). There are still some parts of the boat which remain out of the sand, and which are covered in gorgonians, a sure sign of little or no currents at the site.

Here we may see white tip reef shark, a variety of sweetlips, nudibranches (Chromodoris).

The wall to the west (at 5-10m) is rich with many overhangs, cracks and caves. It's a good idea to have an extended safety stop after this dive.

Garden Eel Point

Starting this dive from the most northwest tip of Menjangan Island, following the wall southwards towards the Bali/Menjangan channel, you will see some of the most healthy and diverse coral on Menjangan. The cracks and breaks in the wall are filled with a great diversity of reef fish.

If conditions dictate that you cannot enter at the northwest tip of the island, you will enter closer to Garden Eel Point.

Gradually following the wall down from the top (5-8m) to 25m (max depth 35m), where it becomes a white sand slope, you find a big gorgonian fan with long-nose hawk fish. This area is also known for sightings of white tip reef shark, small schools of barracuda, turtles and napoleon wrasse. From the 25m point, we ascend (slowly) up the slope, over many soft corals, until reaching a huge colony of garden eels, which covers the slope from 20m to beyond where it flattens out at 14m.

From Garden Eel Point we head south to a coral garden at 5-12m. This area gives us big-eyed trevally, titan triggerfish, many clownfish in their anemones and often a surprising number of scorpion fish.

Pos II

Located on Menjangan's most south easterly point, Pos II can be beach-entry or boat-entry dive and is usually a drift dive. The dive starts at 12m, where the white sand slope meets the top of the wall. If there is a current, it is generally north easterly. Slowly descending along the wall, drifting with the current, to approximately 25m (maximum depth 50m+) we see a profusion of soft corals, sponges, small gorgonians, moray eels and lionfish. Levelling out at 25m, the current takes us along the wall to the east point of the island, a dramatic area covered in large gorgonians. Here, where we meet the waters travelling down the northeast of Menjangan, there is an upwelling of cold waters from the deep ocean. This brings with it turtles, manta ray, shark, occasional Mola-Mola and other pelagics. We also encounter thermoclines here. Our safety stop is done above the remains of the coral reef (8-12m). As there is quite a population of titan triggerfish in the area, we need to choose our spot carefully.

Very occasionally we find that the current is heading west. Almost immediately you find an area where, if the conditions are right, you can see pelagics. Descending slowly along the wall, the diversity of reef fish is remarkable: angelfish, anthias, chromis, gobies and scorpion fish. The surface of the wall is full of crevasses, cracks and overhangs which hide many treasures. There is the occasional cave too.

SECRET BAY

Secret Bay is the poetic name given by Bali's diving community to Gilimanuk Bay, adjacent to where the ferries to and from Java dock. It is about 20 minutes by road from Labuan Lalang and located in West Bali National Park. The bay is about 2km wide, very shallow (3-12m), contains two small islands and has some areas of mangrove. Being the only bay off the narrow Bali Strait, where currents can reach 7 knots, Gilimanuk acts as a catch tank (a big underwater nursery!) for many larval fish. A reef lying just outside the mouth of the bay creates a channel through which these waters are swept; this is what makes Gilimanuk an extremely interesting dive site. These strong tidal currents mean that the fish and invertebrates are extremely healthy, colourful and well-fed (also that the water is colder than generally found in Bali, around 25 degrees).

Entering the bay from the channel, the bottom is fine black and grey volcanic sand. The channel contains no coral, although the sides are scattered with bommies full of angelfish, butterfly fish and schools of razor fish and tiny reef fish that include cardinal fish and multitudes of damselfish.

Secret Bay is muck-diving (i.e. diving with a mud bottom) in shallow water with no water movement. Therefore, too much fin movement and/or less than perfect buoyancy control will stir up the bottom, leaving you with low visibility.

The best time to dive is on the incoming tide or around high tide; it doesn't matter if it is early or late in the day, as the bay will have filled with clear water from the Bali Strait. At this time, visibility can be 30m+ although there's a fair amount of rubbish floating around.

Gilimanuk Bay contains many rare macro-photography subjects including Banggai cardinalfish, nudibranchs, gobies, crustaceans, dragonets, abundant seahorses and pipefish, juvenile Batavia batfish, large areas of long-spined sea urchins with clingfish, and many other organisms. At other sites it is difficult to see juveniles as they hide to avoid predators. However, as the bay is shallow, there are very few large fish; therefore juveniles have very little to hide from.

Night diving at Secret Bay is a unique experience! You can see cephalopods of all shapes and sizes, Bobbit worms, crustaceans wandering in search of dinner, and other weird and wonderful creatures.

While Bali offers great diversity of dive sites, Gilimanuk Bay is unique within Bali. It is the very definition of muck-diving. No rich coral reefs, no depth to speak of, it is in basically a site for macro-photographers, not wide-angle, and maybe for the occasional recreational diver looking for something different from the norm.