



ROCK ISLANDS AGGRESSOR AND PALAU AGGRESSOR II

Off the beaten path, this Pacific island nation wows with big animals, diverse dive sites and stellar conditions

Show your dive buddies a drone shot from Palau and watch the jaws drop—followed by the question, “Where is *that*?”

This ultra-lush Pacific island nation, east of the Philippines and north of Indonesia, still isn’t as widely known as its neighboring destinations, perhaps because it’s a bit harder to reach.

But the fact that it is more off the beaten path only makes it more magical. For divers, it excels like no other

Pacific destination when it comes to big animals, a diversity of sites and stellar conditions.

Palau, with its dramatic drop-offs and steady currents, offers ideal conditions for divers to encounter pelagic life within recreational limits. Sites such as Blue Corner are famous in the dive community because they readily deliver action. Thirteen species of sharks, including gray and whitetip reef sharks, patrol these waters by the dozen

BOAT SPECS Length/Beam 106 feet/30 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 18/8 **Staterooms/Beds** 9/18 **Bathrooms** Staterooms have private head and shower, individual climate control, toiletries, fresh towels daily and hair dryer **Sundeck** Yes **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine



NEED TO KNOW

HOME PORT

Koror, Palau

DIVE SEASON

Year-round

DIVE CONDITIONS

82-86°F; 100-foot-plus viz; current

TRAVEL TIP

Palau's currency is the U.S. dollar, which helps explain why prices here are higher than in other Pacific island destinations. You'll want to travel with enough cash on hand to cover taxis, departure fees and any other expenses—and keep in mind that cash machines in Palau are not reliable.

to feed. Other big sightings include Napoleon wrasse, growing up to 6 feet long and 400 pounds. These big-lipped fish are known for their curiosity and tendency to approach divers. In the winter months, giant manta rays can be seen, sometimes as many as 30 at a time, at sites such as German Channel.

This island nation isn't just about big-animal diving.



Palau Aggressor II [above] and *Rock Islands Aggressor* [opposite] ply the waters of the remote island nation of Palau, submerging divers at sites ranging from fascinating World War II wrecks to clear blue holes to surefire shark hangouts. When guests need to take a break from the excitement below the surface, the boats offer plenty of amenities, as well as spacious rooms and sun decks with plenty of shade and deck chairs where they can relax and unwind before returning to the action.

Other highlights here include underwater caves, with rooms opening to air pockets where divers can surface to marvel at stalactites. Also on the itinerary are several blue holes where leopard and whitetip sharks rest on the bottom, and the walls are home to macro critters, such as leafy scorpionfish and nudibranchs. At Jellyfish Lake, guests can swim with golden jellyfish believed unique to this Palau lake.

Palau also ranks among the world's top destinations for World War II wrecks. One of the most famous is the *Iro Maru*, a 470-foot Japanese navy oiler.

The cherry on top is Palau's conditions. Visibility tends upward of 120 feet at spots such as German Channel. Currents dust away sediment, keeping it all clean—but can also prove a challenge for newer divers.

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GET MORE

The most photographed stretch of Palau remains the Rock Islands, a series of limestone outcroppings covered in deep-green jungle. Besides diving, the best way to experience this natural wonder is via kayak. The Aggressor Travel division can arrange kayaking day tours to this eco hotspot where you'll float atop pristine coral reefs and secret lagoons. Plus, bring binoculars to spy on the local bird life.

For a posh travel experience, let Aggressor Travel secure you a special rate at the Palau Pacific Resort, where overwater bungalows arc along a tranquil turquoise cove. These private hideaways feature a glass floor so guests can sip Champagne while continuing to reef-watch. Plus, large decks at the water's edge allow for anytime snorkeling. Make the most of the day with a soak in the two-person tub, a perfectly romantic spot for watching the setting sun with a view of the ocean.