



Palau & Yap Snorkeling Safari

March 31, 2015-April 11, 2015



Sea for Yourself®

Snorkeling Safaris

Dear Friends and Snorkeling Enthusiasts,

As a boy I would dream of drifting as far from the known world as I could, leaving behind the pavement of roads, and the towering mirrored walls of downtown office buildings. Invariably, my mind would follow in the wake of the early explorers, seeking the edge of the world, the realm of huge undulating sea serpents and giant ship-sucking squids. Through the glossy pages of National Geographic, I would travel, sailing in boats captained by Magellan and Cook and others, into the farthest blue reaches of the tropical Pacific.

In March 2015, we invite you to accompany us on a Sea for Yourself voyage to Palau and Yap. Covering an area of over 3 million square miles just north of the equator, Micronesia consists of three major island chains, the Caroline, Mariana, and Marshall Islands. We will visit the westernmost islands, the Republic of Palau and the state of Yap, known for their rich diversity of marine life.

Palau, with its exotic Rock Islands and pristine coral reefs, has been a premier diving destination for the last 30 years. The fact is that Palau has excellent snorkeling as well and is high on my personal list of favorites. Palau offers many of the benefits that you've come to expect from other Sea for Yourself programs: great reef and marine life, good food and hot showers, and freedom from epidemics and political insurrection. Believe it or not, the list of such places keeps shrinking. Of those that remain, Palau is at the top.

We've arranged some exciting elements that should allow us to take best advantage of Palau's natural, historical, cultural, and culinary highlights. We have enjoyed snorkeling in this island paradise for many years and it is our privilege to invite you to experience the great joys this diverse Republic has to offer.

Joel Simon



- ✓ from \$6690 per person
- ✓ 12 days /March 31-April 11, 2015
- ✓ privately chartered snorkel boat
- ✓ inner lagoon, marine lake and barrier reef snorkels, weather permitting
- ✓ resort shore snorkeling as often as you like
- ✓ snorkeling instruction from novice to expert
- ✓ marine biology lectures on a diversity of species and snorkeling habitats, local experts and guest speakers!



Trip Overview

As a boy I would dream of drifting as far from the known world as I could ...

This unique program embodies Sea for Yourself's values: a solid logistical foundation supporting excellent snorkeling, a rich educational program that incorporates specially organized excursions, aquarium and museum visits, with access to the knowledge and expertise of local biologists, researchers, and other experts.

Yap will be the first stop on our program. Here we will enjoy both the colorful elements of Micronesian culture, and an introduction to the vibrant shallow reefs containing a wealth of diverse Western Pacific marine species. Our second stop will be the remote archipelago of Palau, home to 586 islands and some of the most biologically diverse marine ecosystems on earth. Palau only became independent on October 1st, 1994 and yet it has quickly become a model for the rest of Oceania due to the protection given to its marine ecosystems. Though the country is relatively westernized, Palauans still rely heavily upon their reefs and surrounding environments for food, so they are careful to protect these resources.

Using the private boats that we have reserved at each resort, we will be able to take full advantage of the many rich underwater environments Yap & Palau have to offer. On most days, following breakfast we will meet our boat at the resort's dock and head out to one or two snorkeling sites, eating lunch back at the resort or on a sandy, shady beach. We will snorkel again in the afternoon. On several occasions, evening presentations will be given before dinner at the resort.

Whenever possible, we plan to co-ordinate our snorkeling activities with the tides, allowing us calm, protected conditions, and the chance to observe and compare fish behavior at different times of day. During the program we hope to venture into a variety of marine habitats, from seagrass beds, patch, fringing, and barrier reefs, as well as the unique marine lakes hidden in the famous Rock Islands.

We will also be able to learn first-hand about current research by visiting marine labs on the main island of Koror. Another aspect of Palau that we will encounter, is its historical role in WWII. Wreckage and remnants of the war remain prevalent, slowly being absorbed back into the lush forests that cover the islands. Over 60 wrecks, sunk during the the war, litter the bottom of the lagoon.

Our last afternoon, we will take a final cruise through the Rock Islands before our farewell dinner and flights back home.

Species great and small!

From prolific mangroves, vast sea grass beds, and unique marine lakes, to the intensive patch, fringing, and barrier reefs, the islands we visit on this safari will offer us a wide variety of unique snorkeling opportunities. Yap's reefs will serve as an excellent introduction to Micronesian marine life. Hard corals and flashy reef fish abound along the shallow channels near to our hotel. We might also see manta rays while snorkeling

Our second stop will be the remote archipelago of Palau, home to 586 islands and some of the most biologically diverse marine ecosystems on earth. Over 400 species of coral provide habitat for approximately 1500 species of fish (with new species still being discovered) and literally thousands of invertebrates. Traditional management of marine life, along with new scientific research and marine protection policies has made the Republic a model of marine conservation.

Palau offers the snorkeler opportunities to see more species of fish and invertebrates than almost anywhere I know. Several anemonefish species are conspicuous reef inhabitants, along with Napoleon wrasse, parrotfish, butterflyfish, angelfish, surgeonfish, anthias, groupers, moorish idols, and the list goes on and on. The reef fishes here are highly specialized, occupying predictable niches, like the beautiful mandarinfish that thrives in shallow inner lagoon habitat. Although not as profuse, we may also encounter hawksbill and green turtles, sting rays, and harmless reef sharks.

Surrounded by the steep Rock Islands, the sheltered lagoon reefs of Palau harbor many delicate species that could not survive anywhere else. We will also reserve time to explore Palau's outer barrier reef where we may have the opportunity to observe sea turtles and reef sharks. Here shallow reefs are flanked by dramatic vertical walls of coral that may extend thousands of feet deep. Depending on conditions, we may also be able to do some drift snorkeling. This is one of my favorite snorkeling techniques, and by analogy, can be considered a slow, effortless "flight" over vibrant coral reef teeming with color and life. And honestly, this is one of the most visually intriguing snorkeling experiences I've ever had.

In Palau, one unique snorkeling experience will be a visit to Jellyfish Lake. Surrounded by lush limestone forest and mangrove trees in the heart of Palau's mushroom-shaped Rock Islands, along with an endemic anemone species, and other fascinating fauna, it is estimated that over 15 million jellyfish inhabit this lake. What makes this a truly unique experience is that due to the lack of competitive pressure in the lake, these jellyfish have evolved into a variety harmless to humans. It may sound a bit spooky, but the jellyfish aren't slimy or aggressive. In fact, we will discourage any direct contact so that we don't harm them. And honestly, this is one of the most visually intriguing snorkeling experiences I've ever had.



Cultural highlights

Despite it being a far away and “foreign” destination, Palau offers many of the creature comforts we expect in the U.S. With U.S. dollars, English and even a zip code, it feels more like a U.S. protectorate than the independent nation it has been since October 1, 1994.

Over the past century, Palauans have adapted to shifting international influences and pressures (German, Japanese, and American), making their small country a Pacific crossroads of culture and knowledge. Rather than isolating themselves from the 21st century, they have embraced the global economy, and have become involved in international environmental and social issues.

In contrast, the Yapese provide visitors with an opportunity to become better acquainted with Micronesian culture. Longstanding, traditional ways of life are still maintained and it's common to find men wearing thu'us (a type of loincloth) and women with grass skirts in the island's small villages. It is also home to the world's largest currency, rightfully known as “stone money.” These “coins” are huge round circles of rock, some over ten feet in diameter—definitely not “pocket change”! Yap will be our first stop during this program where we will enjoy both the colorful elements of Micronesian culture, and the vibrant shallow reefs containing a wealth of diverse Western Pacific marine species.

Palau and Yap's recent history will serve as backdrop for our travels. As American forces island-hopped their way across Oceania towards the Philippines and Japan, Palau's southern island of Peleliu was the site of one of the fiercest battles in the Pacific campaign. It is likely that as we explore Palau's many islands and bays, we will pass gun emplacements, sunken planes, and shipwrecks from WWII. We may even have a chance to snorkel among some of these sunken relics.



Itinerary

Day 1

Our program begins once your flight from Guam on April 1st arrives in Colonia, Yap. We then transfer to the nearby Manta Ray Bay Hotel that will be our home for the next four nights. While a detailed itinerary follows, be aware that our itinerary will be heavily dependent upon the daily tides and currents so that we can offer the optimal times to visit particular sites.

Day 2

After a late breakfast, we receive an overview from our trip leader(s) about the geographic region of Micronesia as well as a detailed itinerary for the Yap portion of our program. Lunch will then be served. Following that, it will be time to board our private boat and introduce ourselves to the colorful inhabitants of the Western Pacific's warm tropical waters. Distances to most snorkel sites in Yap are quite short, ranging from 5 to 30 minutes by boat. B,L,D

Day 3-5

These days will be spent in and on the water, visiting sites such as Mi'l Channel where reef fish and hard corals thrive. In addition, we will have the opportunity to snorkel the gently sloping fringing reefs of Gabach Garden Walls, where the variety of marine life seems endless. On our final afternoon we will participate in a historical and cultural tour of the island. After dinner on our last day, we transfer to the Yap airport where we'll take the 40 minute flight to Palau. Upon arrival in Palau, we will transfer to the nearby Palau Pacific Resort, our home for the next seven nights. B,L,D

Day 6

Following breakfast, we plan to visit the Palau International Coral Reef Center which will provide an excellent introduction to Palau's varied ecosystems and inhabitants. Lunch will be at a local restaurant in town. This afternoon, there will be time for a snorkel off the resort's lovely beach. Dinner will be served at our hotel overlooking the lagoon. B,L,D

Day 7-10

Following breakfast each day, we will meet our boat at the resort's dock and head out to the Rock Islands and the surrounding environments, visiting one or two of the inner lagoon reefs such as Soft Coral Arch and Lighthouse Channel. Winding our way through the mushroom-like islands, we'll spend time snorkeling in several hidden marine lakes, home to unique marine life. On several days lunch will be served on a sandy beach where we can relax in the shade of coconut trees. Other days we will return to the resort for lunch. Each afternoon, we will head deeper into the limestone maze of islands, snorkeling over WWII wrecks, lovely sea grass beds, as well as patch, fringing, and barrier reefs. This area holds countless snorkel sites, including Iro Lake and Honeymoon Beach.

"Mandarinfish Lake," home to its elusive, yet beautiful, namesake, will most likely be on our list of snorkeling sites. One morning will be spent snorkeling the one-of-a-kind "Jellyfish Lake," an experience of a lifetime. Another highlight will be a drift snorkel through Lighthouse Channel. Evening presentations will be given on several occasions before we sample the fare at the resort. B,L,D

Day 11

Our last full day amongst the islands of Palau will be spent visiting one of the most dramatic tropical reef walls in the world. We will return to the resort for lunch. After one last snorkeling opportunity, we will head back to our resort where we'll pack and prepare for our farewell dinner. We will leave for the airport late this evening. B,L,D

Day 12

Flights back home departs early in the morning.



Trip Details & Prices

Trip limit

This trip is limited to 16 participants, with a minimum of 10. Due to the limited space available for this tour, reservations will be accepted in the order deposits are received. You will be notified when your space is confirmed.

Program Costs

The cost for this program is \$6690 per person, based on double occupancy. For those requesting a single room an additional supplement of \$1490 will be added to the tour cost. Please be advised that single space is limited and subject to availability. If you wish to share a room, we will do our best to find a roommate for you. If, by the time of your final payment, a share cannot be found and space is available, you will be charged a single supplement.

Deposits & payments

A deposit of \$850, plus a signed, completed reservation form confirms your registration for the trip. You will be notified when your space on the program is confirmed. Final payment, plus single supplement, if applicable, are due 120 days prior to departure.

The tour fee includes

All bus and boat transfers in Palau and Yap, meals as indicated in the itinerary, accommodations in hotels as specified, all snorkeling activities, guided cultural excursions, local taxes, group gratuities to hotel/resort staff, services of the trip leader including any needed snorkeling lessons, biology lectures, and explanations of Palau and Yap's cultural and natural history.

The tour fee does not include

International and domestic flights, flights within Micronesia, increases in international airfare rates and departure taxes, SCUBA activities, rental gear, medical immunizations, passport fees, accident/baggage/cancellation insurance, individual transfers, excess baggage charges, medical expenses, meals not specified in the itinerary, dishes and beverages not part of included meals, laundry, telephone, internet or fax charges, room service, and other items of a purely personal nature.



Airfare

Although Sea for Yourself does not issue airline tickets, we will provide recommendations for specific domestic Micronesian flights. Participants will receive an air information form with more details on international and domestic air ticketing. Tour fee is based on land package only.

Accommodation

In Yap, we plan to stay at the Manta Ray Bay Hotel, characterized by friendly staff and panoramic views of Colonia's harbor. Both these resorts feature a variety of roomy and tasteful accommodations, excellent management, and delicious food. All of our rooms have private baths, tea/coffee making facilities, refrigerators, ceiling fans, and daily maid service.

Our base in Palau will be the four-star Palau Pacific Resort. In addition to fine rooms, food, and service, this is considered one of Palau's premier hotels especially because of its location. It's tucked away on an idyllic white sand beach just outside of the main city, and it's one of the few properties that offers decent and easily accessible shore snorkeling.

Both these resorts feature a variety of roomy and tasteful accommodations, excellent management, and delicious food. All of our rooms have private baths, tea/coffee making facilities, refrigerators, ceiling fans, and daily maid service.

For this program, we've worked to create the "perfect" combination of comfort and amenities with fascinating water-based activities and the educational resources of local researchers. Our goal is to create an experience comprised of educational opportunity, excellent snorkeling, good food, comfortable beds, and hot showers.



Trip Preparation

Skill level

This program will be enjoyed by all snorkelers, from novice to expert. Our trip leaders will gladly provide any needed snorkeling instruction, from floating to free-diving. Whenever possible, we will seek out protected waters for our snorkeling excursions, but at times the surface may be choppy due to wind.

While Sea for Yourself considers snorkeling the top priority, Palau also provides certified SCUBA divers with some of the world's best diving opportunities. Although not included in our program, SCUBA diving is easily accessible through local dive operators.

Climate and weather

We have scheduled our departure for April, which historically has offered the ideal blend of comfortable water temperatures, relatively calm conditions, and less rain than other months. Daytime temperatures in the areas we will be visiting in early April range from the mid-80's to the low-90's. Although we have selected this month because of low rainfall, in the tropics, there is always a chance of rain. Water temperature during this period ranges from the low to mid-80's.

Please remember that some kind of covering (such as a Lycra suit or even pajamas!) when in the water is highly recommended as protection from sun, occasional stinging zooplankton, and to prevent coral abrasions. We strongly recommend that you consider wearing a wet suit.

Departure information

After you have reserved space on a trip and the program is confirmed, you will receive information to help you prepare for departure, including an air request form with more information on international and/or domestic flights ticketing, optional supplemental travel insurance information, a complete packing and a reading list and other useful information about our destination.

Insurance

Sea for Yourself provides participants who are U.S. or Canadian citizens with limited medical, accident and evacuation coverage under our group travel insurance policy. We highly recommend the purchase of optional baggage and trip cancellation insurance; information will be sent to registrants. Exclusions for pre-existing conditions may be waived with the prompt purchase of travel insurance.

References

Many of our participants are repeat travelers with Sea for Yourself. We would be pleased to introduce you to someone who has traveled on one of our programs.

Reservation Form

Palau & Yap Snorkeling Safari 2015

I/We wish to hold _____ spaces on the Palau & Yap Snorkeling Safari, March 31-April 11, 2015
Enclosed please find my/our deposit check of US\$ _____ (\$850 per person, made payable to Sea for Yourself)

Name 1 _____ Birth Date _____
(as it appears on passport)

Name 2 _____ Birth Date _____
(as it appears on passport)

Address _____

(If using a P.O. Box, please also include a street address)

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Fax _____ Email _____

Accommodations:

- ☐ Twin, sharing with (List name of accompanying person if not shown above.)
- ☐ Single (not guaranteed) with single supplement of \$1490
- ☐ Share (to be assigned; not guaranteed; if share is unavailable, single supplement will apply)

Waiver of Liability: I have read the schedule of activities and other information in the Sea for Yourself: Palau & Yap Snorkeling Safari tour materials and recognize and accept all risks thereof. I understand and agree on behalf of myself, my dependents, heirs, administrators, and assigns to abide by the conditions set forth under "Liability/Responsibility" and to release and hold harmless Sea for Yourself and any of its officers, employees, agents, licensees, or representatives from any and all liability for delays, injuries, or death, or for the loss of or damage to property, however occurring, in relation to this Sea for Yourself program scheduled for March 31-April 11, 2015. By signing this, I also certify that I do not have any mental or physical condition that would create a hazard for myself or other passengers.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

NOTE: Each participant must sign this waiver.

Please send your completed reservation form and deposit to Sea For Yourself, 729 College Ave, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Fax: (650) 323-1201 Phone: (650) 322-1494 Email: info@seaforyourself.com

Terms & Conditions

A deposit, plus a signed, completed reservation form will confirm your registration for one of our programs. You will be notified when your space on the program is confirmed. Final payment will be due 120 days before departure.

Cancellations & refunds

If it becomes necessary for you to cancel your trip, notice of cancellation must be received in writing at Sea For Yourself, by email, fax or postal mail. At the time Sea For Yourself receives your written cancellation, the following per-person penalties will apply: Full refund less a per person handling fee of \$250 if cancellation is made 120 days or more prior to trip departure. No refunds will be granted for cancellation less than 120 days prior to trip departure, unless the trip departs full and your space is resold. Once the trip has departed, there will be no refunds for any unused portions of the trip. Cancellation could cost you as much as 100% of the tour cost. In the event the tour is undersubscribed or sold out, you will be notified and receive a full refund of any payments you have made. No refunds will be given for unused portions of the trip.

Single supplements & shares

Please be advised that single space is limited and subject to availability. If you wish to share a room, we will do our best to find a roommate for you. If, by the time of your final payment, a share cannot be found, you will be charged a single supplement.

Possible land & fuel cost increases

Our prices are based upon the prevailing rates made far in advance of the trip's departure. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if land or fuel costs increase significantly prior to departure, it may be necessary to increase these costs. While we reserve the right to institute such an increase, since 1995 it has not been necessary to do so on any of our programs.

Liability and responsibility

While Sea for Yourself, Inc. endeavors to choose the best suppliers available, we do not have the right to control their operations and they are subject to the laws of the state or country where the service is provided. As such we make the travel arrangements described via Sea for Yourself Services upon the express condition that Sea for Yourself, Inc., and its own agents and employees, shall not be liable for any damage, delay, loss, accident, bodily injury or death, or other irregularity that may be caused by the defect of any vehicle or the negligence or default of any company or person engaged in carrying out or performing any of the services involved in Sea for Yourself tours. Nor does Sea For Yourself, Inc. accept responsibility for losses or expenses due to sickness, weather, strikes, wars, or other such causes. Any such losses or expenses must be borne by the participant.

Most travel, including international travel, is completed without incident. Still, prior to booking travel, Sea for Yourself, Inc. urges passengers to review travel prohibitions, warnings, announcements and advisories for its destinations. Information from the U.S. Government may be found at <http://www.state.gov>, <http://www.tsa.gov>, <http://www.cdc.gov>, <http://www.customs.gov> and similar sites. Sea for Yourself, Inc. does not represent or warrant that travel to its destinations is advisable or without risk and Sea for Yourself, Inc. disclaims liability for damages or losses that may result from travel to such destinations.

Sea For Yourself, Inc. reserves the right to make changes in the published itinerary, trip leaders or number of participants on the program whenever, in its judgment, conditions warrant, or if it is deemed necessary for the comfort, convenience, or safety of the tour. Sea For Yourself, Inc. reserves the right to withdraw without penalty any tour announced. Sea For Yourself, Inc. also reserves the right to decline to accept any person as a member of the tour, or to require any participant to withdraw from the tour, at any time, if such action is determined by the appropriate staff member to be in the best interest of the health, safety, and general welfare of the tour group or of the individual participant. Under such circumstances, no refund will be given. Baggage and personal effects are solely the responsibility of the owner at all times.

Dates, schedules, program details, and costs, given in good faith, based on information available and in force at the time of publication. Sea for Yourself, Inc. reserves the right to make photographs and video of any of its trips, and may use any such materials for promotional and commercial purposes.

Trip participant responsibility

As a condition to acceptance of enrollment, participants must read, agree to, and sign, the Waiver of Liability statement provided as part of the trip reservation. Participants have the responsibility to sign up for a trip appropriate to their abilities and interests. Our program materials provide information on skill level, local conditions and other information that will help you make an informed choice. We would be happy to discuss any of our trips with you to assist you in making a decision. Participants should be in good health and able to participate in the activities described in the program itinerary and are responsible for being familiar with the pre-trip information provided by Sea for Yourself, including information about equipment and clothing appropriate for the trip.

In 1995, the California legislature enacted the Seller of Travel Law creating the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund (TCRF) for the benefit of consumers located in California who suffer losses as a result of the bankruptcy, cessation of operations, insolvency, or the failure to provide travel services as contracted. This law applies only to California residents, but it does not cover foreign travel for California residents where the foreign providers are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (those registered in the State of California as a Seller of Travel and a participant in the TCRF). Sea for Yourself is required by law to advise you that this tour is not covered by the TCRF. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. Sea for Yourself operates with a trust account.

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