

Wakatobi's delicious escape

SWAYING PALMS, white-sand beaches and sparkling waters filled with lively coral reefs: these are the perfect ingredients needed to concoct a tropical island escape.

Combine them in a location that's away from it all but easy to reach, then garnish with five-star service and gourmet meals.

Now you have a truly tasty recipe for relaxation. And you can call it Wakatobi.

Wakatobi Resort is located on a small island in central Indonesia. It is reached by direct charter flights from Bali, where arriving guests enjoy the assistance of an airport concierge team that can also arrange a Bali stopover excursion.

At the resort the atmosphere is upscale but understated, with a collection of waterfront villas and bungalows set in a palm grove facing the ocean.

These private residences feature traditional stonework and rich woodwork, and also incorporate a full range of modern comforts including air conditioning, private verandahs and decks, Wi-Fi connectivity, outdoor Asian-style shower rooms and plunge pools.

The resort is an international favourite with divers and snorkellers because it's located within a private marine preserve that is home to some of the most pristine and bio-diverse coral reefs on the planet.

Directly off the beach is the House Reef, which has been named the world's best shore dive. Guests can explore this vast underwater garden day and night.

Each day, a fleet of spacious, custom-built boats also carries guests to more than 30 exceptional diving and snorkelling sites. Attentive dive/snorkel guides provide concierge-level service both on boats and under the water. They are also experts at helping guests find rare and elusive marine life.

Ashore, guests enjoy water sports, spa services and activities such as village tours and Indonesian cooking classes.

Wakatobi is also known for its cuisine, which is elevated to gourmet levels by a talented culinary team that creates a delicious mixture of regional and international favourites, and is happy to fulfil special requests.

On request, the staff can create a private candlelight dining experience or special picnic lunch on the beach.

The resort also offers a range of exclusive services, such as private dive and snorkel guides, or all-day charters on a private boat equipped with a kitchen, open-air dining area and upper deck for sunning and stargazing.

More adventures and indulgences await those who combine a stay at the resort with a week-long cruise on the luxury dive yacht *Pelagian*.

This 35-metre vessel carries a maximum of 10 guests with a crew of 12 to ensure each

guest is provided with spacious en-suite accommodations and the highest levels of service.

The yacht cruises through a wide swath of the Wakatobi archipelago and visits the famous critter-rich dive sites of South Buton Island.

An additional aspect of Wakatobi Resort that many guests say adds to the experience is knowing that they are contributing to the protection of the coral reefs they come to enjoy.

A portion of resort revenue is used to fund the private marine preserve and is also channelled to area villages for social programs and direct payments as part of an award-winning cooperative conservation program.

For all these reasons and more, Wakatobi is the perfect setting for an island escape that blends natural beauty, attentive service and delicious nourishment for both body and soul.

■ wakatobi.com

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