



India
SPECIAL
100 SECRETS

10

NARCONDAM ISLAND, Andamans

WHERE This remote dormant volcano is the easternmost point of the Andaman Islands (145km northeast of Port Blair). It is not permitted to set foot on land, but the surrounding waters make for extraordinary diving.

SEE From *MV Infiniti*, you may spy the Narcondam hornbill, of which there are only 300 left in the world. Underwater, the reefs are perhaps the most vibrant in the Andamans. Schools of fusiliers, parrotfish and damselfish dart past giant barrel sponges and steep drop-offs, probably formed when the volcano was active about 18,000 years ago. Migrating pelagic creatures such as manta rays, dolphins and sharks also congregate here.

STAY The shiny-new *MV Infiniti* is a magnificent 130ft boat specifically designed for liveaboard diving in the Andamans.

WHEN Jan-April

BOOK THROUGH

Infiniti Live-Aboard (www.infinitiliveaboard.com) From ₹85,000 for a four-night trip from Port Blair to Narcondam Island, including accommodation, all meals and dives

NEW WATERS

Four superb secret dive spots are bubbling to the surface in Asia, says **Laura Griffith-Jones**

YONAGUNI, Japan

WHERE This rugged speck of an island lies 108km off the coast of Taiwan and a 30-minute flight from Ishigaki Island, which is 400km south of Okinawa.

SEE Beneath the sparkling waters that surround the island lie the mysterious platforms and corridors of what some archaeologists believe is an ancient 'lost city', home to dogtooth tuna, giant trevally and occasionally whale shark.

STAY Enjoy complete seclusion at Irifune Annex Bamboo Villa, a rustic, family-run guest house in the south of the island, miles from anywhere.

WHEN Feb-April or Oct-Nov

BOOK THROUGH Inside Japan Tours (www.insidejapantours.com) From £1,900 (₹1.6 lakh) per person (based on two sharing) for 10 nights, domestic flights, eight dives and transfers

KOH PRINS, Cambodia

WHERE It's about a five-hour journey by boat from Sihanoukville.

SEE Find yourself 98ft underwater, amid creatures of all shapes and sizes—from batfish and spotted sweetlips to barracuda and stingrays. Turtles move past unspoilt coral and nudibranches, and whale sharks, too—and imagine bumping into one of those on a night dive.

STAY There's no accommodation on the island, so be prepared to sleep under the stars on the deck of ABOUTAsia's liveaboard boat, which has mattresses, pillows and blankets.

WHEN Oct-March

BOOK THROUGH ABOUTAsia (www.aboutasiatravel.com) From US\$325 (₹18,240) per person for two days/one night, including food, accommodation and five dives

ARIARA ISLAND, Philippines

WHERE This private island is tucked away in the Palawan province.

SEE Glide alongside hawksbill, leatherback, olive ridley and green turtles, huge schools of jack, eagle rays and the endangered dugong. Set sail on Ariara Island's 100ft tri-maran; it can take you on trips to some of the world's finest dive sites, including the Tubbataha and Apo reefs.

STAY Ariara Island, sleeping 18 in eight lodges and cottages, has everything you'd expect of a top-notch hideaway—an infinity pool, fine dining and private sea-view verandas.

WHEN Nov-May (March-May for the best underwater visibility)

BOOK THROUGH Original Diving (www.originaldiving.com) From £2,100 (₹1.8 lakh) per person for seven nights, including transfers and domestic flights

PHOTOGRAPHY: BOB WILD PHOTOS/STUPIDROCK/COLOIS