

Exploring the Last Frontier

Francesca Webster recently had the chance to visit Indonesia's Raja Ampat and explore this untouched region aboard the spectacular *Dewata* with Pacific High.

Recognised as one of the world's last frontiers, it is no surprise that Raja Ampat was recently named among National Geographic's top travel destinations for 2025. Comprising over 600 spectacular islands, the archipelago sits within the famous Coral Triangle, and is home to over 70 percent of the world's marine fauna and flora. It is, however, not a destination for the faint of heart. Sitting to the far east of Indonesia, on the western peninsula of Papua New Guinea, travellers face a long journey over land and sea to reach its aquamarine shores. What awaits those who make the journey however, is a lush and magnificently unspoilt world, both over and below the water, making it a haven for scuba divers and birders alike.

One of the great advantages of it being so hard to get to, of course, is that Raja Ampat sees only a tiny portion of Indonesia's annual tourism, making it one of the most attractive destinations for superyacht owners and charter guests, particularly those looking to explore the region in solitude.

Like many other regions of Asia, Indonesia has strict regulations when it comes to superyacht charter and the commercial vessels operating in Raja Ampat must be Indonesian flagged. What makes it unique, is that the vast majority of vessels on the water are also traditional in their styling, built in the Indonesian *Phinisi* style, meaning that very few contemporary boats can be found on the water, replaced instead by the wooden hulls and twin masts of the UNESCO recognised vessels.

For those seeking an authentic *Phinisi* sailing experience, few offerings rival the yachts crafted by Pacific High. Built

in accordance with time-honoured traditions in South Sulawesi, northern Indonesia, these vessels are the result of meticulous craftsmanship and cultural reverence. Founded in Bira in 2018 by Yann Martinie de Maisonneuve, together with partners Peter and Charlotte Gaslgaard, Pacific High has, to date, completed three stunning yachts – *Nataraja*, *Dewata*, and *Senja* – with the fourth, the 36-metre *Sanya*, slated for delivery in August this year. They are also due to begin construction on another 44-metre and 54-metre this year, which will join the charter fleet in 2027.

Each yacht is constructed at the company's 5,600-square-metre beachside facility, nestled among palm trees and capable of accommodating up to four builds simultaneously. Here, traditional *Phinisi* techniques are thoughtfully combined with modern technologies, resulting in vessels that are as technically accomplished as they are timeless.

Over the past seven years, Yann has drawn on his deep-rooted expertise in maritime operations and *Phinisi* craftsmanship, going back over 16 years, to bring these remarkable yachts to life. His unwavering dedication to preserving Indonesia's seafaring heritage is reflected in every detail – a harmonious blend of age-old artistry and contemporary luxury. Complementing this vision is Pacific High's specialist design team, which works closely with clients to transform personal visions into bespoke realities, delivering vessels that are both functional and profoundly individual.

During a recent visit to Indonesia I was lucky enough to step aboard *Dewata* and experience the unmatched Indonesian hospitality for myself, here is an insight into our charter;



Photo: Bahri Najm



Photo: Oliver Astorlogio

Cruising with *Dewata*

While many yacht charters in Raja Ampat begin in Sorong – the bustling capital on the Papua mainland – we were fortunate to embark in Waisai, located on the island of Waigeo. From the moment we spotted her from the shore, the yacht stood out effortlessly with her distinctive blue hull and a warm welcome from her eleven-strong crew awaiting our arrival.

Crafted from traditional Indonesian ironwood, her aesthetic is a seamless blend of timeless elegance and local craftsmanship. Her layout spans two principal decks, thoughtfully arranged for both comfort and style. At the fore of the main deck, a sheltered lounge provides a breezy, shaded retreat, while a central dining space offers the perfect setting for relaxed breakfasts and leisurely lunches. Towards the aft, two generously proportioned double staterooms with en suite bathrooms await – each boasting

a shower with what must surely be one of the finest views over the water. This section of the deck also includes a private terrace with an alfresco dining area and sun lounge. Cleverly designed, the entire aft can be closed off to create an exclusive owner's deck, offering privacy and direct access to the swim platform.

Above, the upper deck delivers the best vantage point onboard. Shaded sunloungers invite guests to take in panoramic views – especially mesmerising while crossing the Dampier Strait, a world-renowned migratory route for whales and dolphins. In the evenings, this deck transforms into an open-air dining space, where lights strung between the masts cast a warm glow, setting the stage for sunset cocktails and starlit dinners.

The interior has been designed to instantly relax her guests, with beautiful linens and local fabrics used for the furnishings and the traditional wood holding place as the cornerstone of the design.



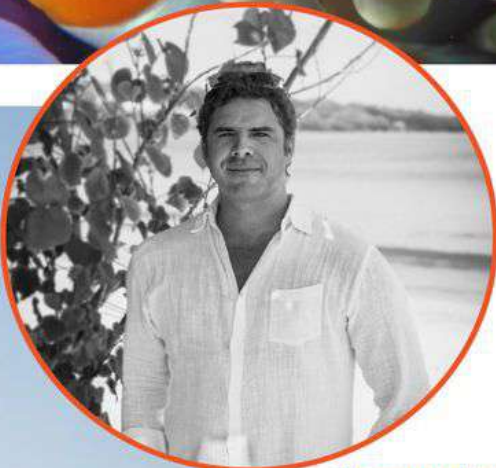
An adventurers paradise

As passionate scuba divers, both my husband and I were thrilled by the opportunity to dive directly from the vessel – a privilege that elevated the entire charter experience. The presence of a knowledgeable dive master onboard opened the door to some of the region's most secluded and pristine sites, often untouched by other visitors. Each morning began with the anticipation of a new underwater adventure, thoughtfully planned with the crew, who provided beautifully illustrated dive site diagrams to ensure we were well-prepared for the unique conditions and features of each location. We explored a number of iconic dive sites, including the extraordinary Melissa's Garden – renowned for its vibrant coral garden spread across a submerged reef, showcasing some of the healthiest and most diverse hard coral formations in the region. Cape Kri was another highlight, holding the world record for the highest number of fish species spotted on a single dive – over 350 in total. Alongside these celebrated destinations, we also had the privilege of visiting a number of lesser-known spots, which were, almost without exception, completely deserted apart from ourselves. Perhaps the most unforgettable moment came when we had the rare chance to dive with oceanic manta rays – not just once, but on multiple occasions. It was a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience. The expertise and

attentiveness of *Dewata's* crew and dive team made each dive not only safe and seamless but also genuinely spectacular. For guests who prefer to stay above the waterline, the region offers an abundance of opportunities for exploration and relaxation. Snorkelling reveals vibrant reefs just beneath the surface, while the yacht is well-equipped with kayaks and paddleboards – amenities we thoroughly enjoyed. Gliding across the water by paddleboard, we were able to discover a number of idyllic sandy islands, each one more picturesque than the last. Beyond the aquatic adventures, Raja Ampat is equally renowned for its rich biodiversity on land – particularly its endemic bird species. Chief among them are the mesmerising birds of paradise, whose elaborate and theatrical mating displays draw nature enthusiasts from around the world. Thanks to Pacific High's longstanding relationships with local communities – whose deep knowledge of the land is essential to locating these elusive creatures – *Dewata's* crew were able to arrange an unforgettable experience for us. In the early hours, we departed the yacht at 4:30am and trekked into the rainforest, eventually reaching a bamboo hide high in the trees. There, as the dawn broke, we watched the Red Bird of Paradise perform its otherworldly courtship ritual – a truly magical moment, and without question one of the highlights of our Raja Ampat adventure.



Photo: Oliver Astrofago



The superyacht experience

No account of our journey would be complete without reflecting on the exceptional experience of life aboard the yacht herself. From the outset, the onboard team delivered a level of service and hospitality that far exceeded expectations. The chef crafted a menu that was fresh, vibrant and beautifully imaginative – each meal a celebration of local ingredients and global culinary finesse. Meanwhile, the onboard masseuse ensured we remained completely relaxed throughout, adding a deeply restorative dimension to our time at sea. The crew of Pacific High proved, without question, that the charm and authenticity of a traditional sailing yacht can rival – and in many ways surpass – the luxury of a modern motor yacht. To bring our charter to a memorable close, *Dewata* cruised to a remote private island near the Fam Islands, where the crew had arranged a breathtaking beach dinner. Beneath an elegant awning, with lounge chairs set up on the sand, we dined as the sun dipped below the horizon – a truly magical finale to an unforgettable voyage. ●



Photo: Oliver Astrofago