

INDONESIA'S NEW TOURISM PROJECT COMMENDED BY BRITISH GUILD OF TRAVEL WRITERS

Shark and manta sanctuary honoured at industry gala awards



14th November 2014 – Indonesia's trailblazing decision to turn Raja Ampat's entire aquatic territory into a sanctuary for sharks and manta rays has been honoured by the British Guild of Travel Writers. On 2nd November 2014, during a prestigious gala awards dinner at The Savoy Hotel in London, the sanctuary was bestowed with a 'Highly Commended' award in the category of 'Outstanding New Tourism Project' in recognition of its marine conservation work.

The awards, which took place on the eve before World Travel Market 2014, were attended by many of the 300 members from the British Guild of Travel Writers - including noted writers, editors, photographers and broadcasters - and are designed to honour and celebrate global tourism projects that deserve greater recognition.

The Ministry of Tourism created the Raja Ampat tourism project in February 2014, declaring the region's entire four million hectares of coastal and marine waters a shark and manta ray sanctuary. This means that all harvesting sharks and manta rays, including both manta and mobula species, are protected under Indonesian law - thus making it the world's largest sanctuary for manta rays.

Home to over a quarter of the world's marine life, Indonesia is famous for its world-class diving and exciting underwater beauty. The waters surrounding Raja Ampat are particularly spectacular, boasting 540 types of coral, over 1,000 fish species and 700 different types of mollusk. This real-life tropical aquarium in Papua is comprised of five unique underwater sites, each teeming with a huge array of marine life.

As a haven for diving and snorkelling enthusiasts, those visiting Raja Ampat have the choice of swimming alongside whitetip reef sharks or gigantic Queensland groupers in **Cape Kri** or they can discover the multifaceted landscape of **Mike's Point** which was bombed during World War II before descending 40 metres deep to spy the hidden wobbegong also known as carpet sharks. The more

confident can squeeze down the 25 metre-wide ***Terusan (The Passage)*** where they will be greeted by octopus and cuttlefish.

Those looking to come into contact with huge manta rays will find them gliding through the waters of ***Mali Island***, which is also home to World War II plane wrecks. The fifth diving hotspot takes enthusiasts to one of the largest islands in Raja Ampat, ***Misool Island***, made famous for its reef-covered walls and rare inhabitants including tiny pygmy seahorses, ghost pipefish and harlequin shrimp.

With a huge array of biodiversity in one location, the Ministry of Tourism is making a conscious effort to preserve its incredible underwater world. The 'Highly Commended' Raja Ampat shark and manta sanctuary is good example of how initiatives can positively impact the tourism industry.

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About Indonesia

The Republic of Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world, comprising more than 17,000 tropical islands fringed with white sandy beaches. Among the most well-known islands are Bali, Java, Kalimantan (formerly Borneo), Papua, Sulawesi (formerly Celebes), Sumatra, and the Maluku Islands (or better known as Moluccas, the original Spice Islands). The destination offers richly diverse cultures and heritage, beautiful beaches and ecotourism along with green rainforests to trek through and deep blue pristine seas to dive and swim, and the warmest, most hospitable people on earth to welcome UK visitors.

www.tourism-indonesia.co.uk

For media information and images, please contact:



Sarah Habicht and Guy Hough at Hume Whitehead: 0845 498 9987; sarah@humewhitehead.co.uk / guy@humewhitehead.co.uk.