Atauro Island, the base of our expedition in Timor-Leste, lies just a short boat trip away from Dili, Timor-Leste’s capital, but the island’s rough beauty could not be in any starker contrast with the chaos and traffic of the city. Flying fish and seabirds accompany every boat making the journey across the channel, with dolphins and whales often welcoming travellers as they reach the island. A handful of small villages are scattered along the coast, overlooked by volcanic mountains covered in fragments of tropical forest and low vegetation. The crystal-clear water around the docks shows a glimpse of the stunning coral below, Atauro’s most beautiful feature.

Rising up from the waters at the heart of the Coral Triangle, Atauro is blessed with extraordinary marine biodiversity, which makes it a key area for conservation efforts. The island and its waters are, however, very poorly known, and data to support effective conservation measures is directly needed. Volunteers play a key role in this, working side by side with a growing community-based monitoring team and mapping out previously unknown – and truly spectacular – reefs, seagrass beds and fish populations. All this information is made available to the communities of Atauro, who are using it to understand their marine environment and how to manage fisheries and biodiversity in a sustainable way. With fishing being a main source of income for many families, sustainability and conservation are key concerns for the community.

The presence of our expedition staff and volunteers in Beloi
greatly contributes to building trust and a strong relationship with the community. The people of Beloi have been exceptionally welcoming, and we enjoy an open dialogue with the community. This relationship is what is allowing us to start the conversation on alternative livelihoods and marine management.

Our priorities for the future focus on providing scientific and technical support as the communities start the process to establish fisheries and conservation regulations under Tara Bandu, the local customary law. Tara Bandu is a powerful legal tool that rural and coastal communities use for land and marine management, and has already produced a permanent no-take zone on the pristine reef in front of Beloi. We are developing our participatory research actions and exploring resources, fisheries, priorities for management and conservation with the community in order to provide effective, science-based solutions that will result in sustainable fisheries and healthy ecosystems.

Our Timor-Leste programme is still very young, much like the country itself, and it is developing very quickly. Moving forward, we will continue working both under the surface and inside the communities, monitoring marine ecosystems and assisting in the development of sustainable fisheries.

It is going to be an exciting time and we hope that you will be joining us on our journey.

Nick Piludu
Conservation Manager, Timor-Leste
Join us on a new and exciting action packed, off-the-beaten-track two week adventure to Timor-Leste!

Asia’s youngest country, rugged and remote Timor-Leste is an unexplored paradise packed with treasures. On this exclusive adventure you’ll dive and snorkel in the turquoise waters of the world’s most biodiverse oceans, exploring vibrant coral reefs and unspoiled beaches, experiencing the culture and surrounding landscapes of this beautiful country all while contributing to meaningful conservation.

PRICE: £1995

START AND FINISH: Dili
EXPEDITION LOCATION: Atauro Island, Timor-Leste
AGES: 17 and above
GROUP SIZE: Max 8
DURATION: 2 weeks - 19th August to 1st September 2018

“This expedition was a fantastic experience, from learning a new language and getting to know a new culture, to practicing my diving skills in one of the best dive spots in the world and learning about marine biology. And all this with a team of fantastic people!”

- Nadia Graca, March 2017
Bathed by the deep waters of the Banda and Timorese seas, Timor-Leste is part of the world-famous Coral Triangle. While it covers less than 2% of the earth’s oceans, the Coral Triangle hosts more than 75% of all known coral species and almost 40% of all known coral-reef fish species.

In this 2 week trip you have the opportunity to join our team on Atauro Island to experience the incredible diving opportunities, explore the islands culture and history and contribute to community led conversation in a global biodiversity hotspot.
HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE

- Marvel at the pristine reefs of Atauro island, a wonder of the coral triangle and home to more species of fish than anywhere else on earth

- Meet expert field staff and community members working to protect Timor-Leste’s spectacular waters, and enjoy exclusive conservation and wildlife talks

- Relax in exquisitely beautiful surroundings and experience Timorese culture in a rustic hideaway

- Atauro is a whale and dolphin hotspot, you’ll see some of these incredible creatures at close quarters, including Spinner, Bottlenose, Striped, Risso’s, Fraser’s and Rough Toothed Dolphins; and Blue, Sperm, Cuviers, Melon Headed and Pilot Whales

- Hike across Atauro Island to visit and dive the islands first locally managed marine area

- Discover Timor-Leste’s dark history and bright future on a private walking tour of Dili, the nation’s capital
WEEK 1
- Introduction to the trip and meet the team
- Locally guided day tour through Dili visiting some of the capital's highlights such as the iconic Christo Rei
- Departure to Beloi on Atauro Island incorporating a full day whale and dolphin survey tour
- Site tour of Barry’s Place - home for the next two weeks!
- Introductory lectures, such as presentations on data collection methods, coral bleaching, coral, fish and cetacean ID and more.
- Diving and/or snorkelling on some of Atauro's incredible coral reef and seagrass habitats
- Homestay experience and trip to Vila to visit the local Bonecas de Atauro and Jewelry cooperatives

WEEK 2
- Attend Beloi market - a weekly highlight on the island!
- Hike across the island to Adara on the west coast and stay in beach side huts
- Dive and/or snorkel in the Adara tara bandu - the island's first locally managed marine area
- Take the boat back to Beloi circumnavigating the north end of Atauro island - pass incredible scenery and keep your eyes open for resident whales and dolphins!
- Depart Beloi and return to Dili incorporating a full day whale and dolphin survey tour
- Overnight in Dili before your flights home

This schedule is an outline only and is of course subject to change based on local conditions at the time. You’ll be in the incredibly capable hands of our team throughout and we’ll work hard to ensure you have a wonderful and worthwhile experience.
DIVING
WHAT TO EXPECT AND EQUIPMENT YOU MIGHT NEED.
DIVING ON ATAURO ISLAND

There is no doubt that the highlight of your adventure with Blue Ventures in Timor-Leste will be the incredible marine environment. Thousands of fish fly past your nose as you dive or snorkel over the reef and into the deep blue beyond.

Truly spectacular coral walls fringe the island with stunning habitat easily accessible from the shore. While we can’t guarantee you specific wildlife sightings, there really are few, if any, better places in the world to explore rich coral ecosystems bustling with life. During your stay you will be helping survey these corals to determine the impacts of predation, climate change and disease using Coral Watch methodology.

The deep ocean channels of the Wetar and Ombai straits surrounding Atauro plummet more than 3,000 metres deep and are a major migratory route for marine wildlife moving between the Pacific and Indian oceans, including a number of whale and dolphin species. In addition to dive surveys you will play an important part in surveying these marine mammals.

Much of Atauro Island’s marine environment is uncharted and undived. In addition to the survey dives you will also have the opportunity to undertake exploratory fun dives to really soak up this magnificent ecosystem. The sites we visit offer divers the chance to encounter a wide range of the habitats you will learn about during your time with Blue Ventures.
SAFETY FIRST
Our primary consideration when working in such a remote location is safety. All diving is carried out according to the Blue Ventures Diving Protocol, and under the guidance of the Expedition Dive Manager. You will be fully briefed on the Diving Protocol upon your arrival on site.

A rigorous casualty evacuation plan is in place with links to the nearest recompression facility and is constantly updated to ensure that it runs as smoothly as possible in the case of an emergency.

DIVE EQUIPMENT
Blue Ventures provide BCDs, regulators, tanks, weights and air free of charge.

All personal parts of your dive gear need to be brought along and can’t be rented or borrowed from Blue Ventures. You need to bring a mask, snorkel, fins, booties, exposure protection and a dive computer.

As part of your pre-departure materials you will receive a comprehensive dive kit list with detailed explanations and links to suggested products in case you need to buy anything in advance.

The options to buy dive gear in Timor-Leste are extremely limited, so we strongly advise against leaving it to the last minute. Unfortunately, shipping or sending your gear from overseas is also not an option. In short, you need to bring the items requested along as part of your luggage as otherwise you may not be able to dive.
APPLICATION PROCESS

1. **Apply online**
   Complete our simple online form at blueventures.org/apply

2. **Secure your place**
   Pay your £250 deposit and agree to our Booking Conditions to confirm your participation.

3. **Get ready for your adventure!**
   Get access to your Volunteer Portal where you can upload travel documentation and access everything you need before you leave. We’ll help you prepare everything you need for the trip of a lifetime!

Apply now!