



# RAJA AMPAT HOMESTAYS

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WHAT TO EXPECT  
AT YOUR HOMESTAY

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MERIDIAN ADVENTURE  DIVE



# RAJA AMPAT HOMESTAYS

Helpful Tips Which Allow You To Understand Your Homestay & Enjoy Your Vacation to its Fullest!

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## RAJA AMPAT HOMESTAYS

If you are looking for a more cultural holiday then Raja Ampat homestays may be the right fit for you.

What you will be is the guest of an Indonesian/Papuan family, staying on family owned land in what was once the only type of housing built in the islands. The term "homestay" is used because this is how this type of accommodation is referred to by both their owners and Indonesian tourism promotion agencies.



Homestays are the most affordable accommodation option in Raja Ampat, though they are not comparable to similarly priced places elsewhere. The rooms are of basic construction and amenities and electricity at most is only available at night. Wi-Fi is rare, none are air-conditioned, bathrooms are what they refer to as "dip mandi" bathrooms which consist of a tub of water with a ladle for washing, and they do not offer room service. What the homestays do provide is three meals a day, unlimited drinking water, tea, coffee and a cultural experience of a life time.



## CONSTRUCTION STYLE 2

Rustic, would be one term to describe the traditional Raja Ampat Homestays. There are no bricks and mortar, just bush wood or sawn timber framing, walls and a roof of palm thatch and floors may even be sand. The view from your window will generally be unimpeded by glass, simply lift the thatched panel covering the window opening, prop it up with a stick and take in the scenery!

The homestays range from a single room with one window, to large four room bungalows with verandahs and possibly even a common room. The truly traditional homestays have bedrooms and living areas only, no kitchen, bathroom, toilet or laundry are found in a Papuan house.



Entry to most houses is obtained through a sliding thatch panel with no locking mechanism, gaps between panels and floor boards means that you are truly one with the local environment.



The local wildlife will share your shelter from the elements. Insects and lizards roam freely, it's best that you keep any food in sealed containers to avoid any unwanted wildlife guests.



Take care if using portable stoves or other naked flames indoors, and be extra careful if you leave mosquito coils burning unattended – palm thatch huts are obviously eminently combustible!

### 3 HOMESTAY FURNISHINGS

#### BEDS

If hotel style mattress and base sets with plush duvets and feather pillows is your expectation, then the homestay adventure is not for you. Most homestays provide a mattress on the floor or on a raised, fixed platform.

The beds are usually equipped simply, with a sheet, pillows and bolsters. The essential mosquito nets are almost always provided and normally in good condition. That said, it is considered a good idea to travel with a needle and thread, just in case mending is required.



#### OTHER FURNISHINGS

There is just one homestay that has a lounge room with armchairs and occasional tables. Many provide beachside dining shelters with large tables and bench seating. Some even have decks over the water with hammocks and table settings, while established homestays always provide bungalow verandah furniture. However, with all that said, most homestays are sparsely furnished with just a couple of chairs or bench seats and a small table.

#### STORAGE

Don't expect to find cupboards or wardrobes, though your room may have some simple shelving. If you want to ensure that you can hang things up, then it is suggested that you pack a line to travel with. There is no provision for secure luggage storage in any of the homestays, so either leave your valuables at home or you may prefer to keep them with you. Loss through theft is not heard of in the homestays and the highest risk posed is by unscrupulous other travellers.



#### BATHROOM & TOILET FACILITIES

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If an ensuite bathroom is a luxury that you cannot live without, then ensure that you book the "VIP" homestay experience. If you do not, then expect to share the toilet and bathroom facilities with other guests. They are usually housed in timber-framed palm-thatched huts which have floors of sand, timber, crushed limestone or occasionally concrete.

Bathing is almost always achieved by bucket and ladle in a style of bathrooms referred to as “dip mandi” bathrooms. Very few homestays have real showers, but many have piped fresh water to replenish the large container from which you bath. Waste water, however, is not plumbed but channelled away to seep into the ground. It is for this reason you are asked to only use environmentally safe, biodegradable soaps and shampoos.



One note regarding bathing water is that it is predominantly fresh ground water, but on some of the smaller islands the water is brackish due to the proximity to the ocean. If you do not enjoy bathing in slightly salty water, then it is best that you avoid these islands.

Toilet facilities are either western pedestal or squat style toilets that are flushed by hand using a bucket and ladle. The toilets are connected to septic tanks and toilet paper is usually provided. Due to the remote location of many homestays the toilet paper supply may be low, so it is suggested that you have some with you if you can't go without it.

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## KITCHEN AND DINING FACILITIES

Communal dining facilities are usually in the form of a dining shelter, a roofed area or hut with tables and bench seats. Meals and drinks are provided and served in this shelter at designated times. Some new homestays serve guest meals on bungalow verandahs until they are able to build shelters.

Drinking water is always freely available in the dining facilities at the homestays. Flasks or urns of hot water with free tea and coffee making supplies are available at all hours. Though it should be noted that the lack of permanent and consistent electricity supply means that very few homestays have refrigerators.



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## ELECTRICITY & INTERNET

Electricity is supplied at the homestays, from their own generators, therefore due to high fuel prices they are only run for limited periods of time. The vast majority are run from sunset until about midnight with only a few running all night. Charging of your devices should be planned, some homestays provide plug points in the room but plan as if they do not. If you would like room lighting outside the generator running period then it is suggested that you take your own LED light source.

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## LAUNDRY FACILITIES

Be prepared to wash your own clothes by hand as no homestays have laundries. Some do offer to perform the service for you for a small fee, but regardless you should still bring biodegradable laundry detergent with you to complete the task.



## 8 HOMESTAY SERVICES



Formal hospitality training is most certainly a rarity amongst the homestay adventure experience hosts and in fact many homestay owners have very little English. Communication is normally not a problem however, as there is almost always someone around with enough understanding to convey the message. If you do not speak any Bahasa Indonesian, it is suggested that you save some standard phrases to help the process.

The homestay hosts all want you to have the best experience and they all have fantastic local knowledge. They are able to organise guides, boat hire, transfers and excursions, but they will not be available around the clock to cater to your every need, they are your host not your servant. Independence is required on your part to maintain supplies of things like toiletries and any other consumables you'll need. Remember to plan ahead, as shops are few and far between and their stock is limited in both range and quantity.



It is important when dealing with your Papuan hosts and the wider community that you remember you are an ambassador for your country. Always do your best to stay smiling and being polite, even when dealing with a service issue. A rude or overbearing attitude or raising your voice is extremely unlikely to result in a positive outcome and will reflect badly on those of your nationality who come after you.

## SUNDAYS

Sundays are a day of rest, church and community activities for your hosts in Raja Ampat. Please be respectful of your host's right to a day off, resist the temptation to pressure your hosts to take you anywhere on a Sunday. This includes, but is not limited to, scheduling your arrival or departure on a Sunday.



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