

## TAKE ME TO THE WATER

Exclusivity and luxury still reign in some parts of the often overcrowded seas.

BY LI HAOHAN

The Konjos who live in the towns of Ara, Bira and Tanah Biru on the southern tip of South Sulawesi build boats according to techniques that date back to the 1500s. Made of teak, ironwood, and other local hardwoods, the vessels are collectively called phinisi—referring to the traditional rig type—and commonly described as a seven-sail schooner. This type of boat is associated with the seafaring Bugis people who have used them to transport passengers and cargo over the past centuries.



Opposite: The cinnamon-hued sails and off-white hull make a beautiful contrast (top left); the Afternoon deck allows guests to enjoy the scenery (top right); one of the three suites aboard the *Silolona* (centre) and the *Silolona-Papua-Asmat* pulls up alongside the longboats of the local Indonesian tribesmen (above);



### \* SILOLONA \*

INTEREST IN PHINISI schooners is on the upswing, particularly in updated, luxury models. The process of getting one made to specifications takes years and dedication, especially if the model sought is to be equipped with conveniences that are unknown to traditional phinisi schooners.

A viable alternative to enjoying a phinisi voyage is chartering one, and few surpass the luxury, service and sheer beauty that one finds aboard the *Silolona*. Seeing her for the first time is a memorable experience: her unusual proportion, make and color—from her cinnamon-hued sails

to her off-white hull with red and black trims just above the waterline, and her natural timber-colored superstructure—seem to indicate her secret life in a maritime museum or a movie set, but closer inspection brings out small details that bolster her special qualities. The joineries employed in her construction alone merit long, thoughtful discussions.

Despite her quaint outlook, *Silolona* is built for voyages following the exacting Lloyd's Register of Shipping standard for safety, stability, and performance. Registered in Bali, Indonesia in July 2004, *Silolona* is the handiwork of Konjo boat builders

from Ara. Her outlook follows closely the traditional gaff rig phinisi measuring 164 feet LOA (length overall). Powered by a Yanmar 680hp turbo engine, she cruises at 10/12 knots. She is equipped with three master suites, and two guest suites, and sails with a crew of 17, an expedition leader, and a PADI-certified instructor. As most guests explore little known dive sites, *Silolona* comes equipped with state-of-the-art diving equipment, kayaks and three tenders. *Silolona* can host up to ten guests on extended cruises.

From April to October this year, *Silolona* is once again available for





charters to well-chosen destinations highlighting the amazing aspects of Indonesia, from the Stone Age Asmat tribes in Irian Jaya, to the marine depths of Alor and Raja Ampat, and the otherworldly landscapes surrounding Savu Sea. Journeys to more known destinations such as Rinca Island in the Komodo archipelago—home to Komodo dragons, exotic orchids, long tailed macaques, and wild ponies—can be arranged as well as those to lesser known pockets of Indonesian archipelago.

A destination specialist who is familiar with the remote corners of Indonesia tailors itineraries according to the guests' wishes.

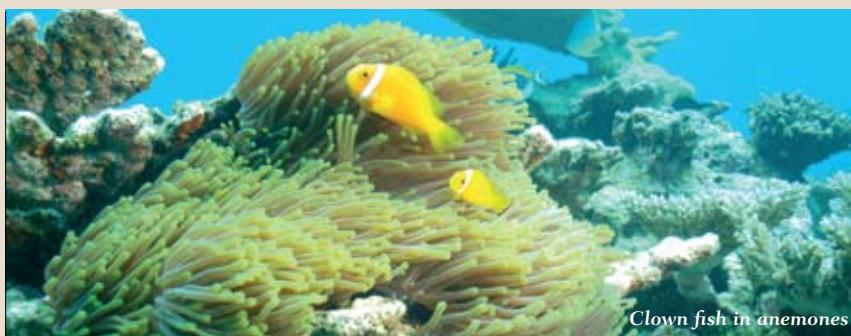
Rarely does a vessel as beautiful as *Silolona* explore the hinterlands of Indonesia—Asia's prime destination for wilderness adventure. With these bespoke voyages, revisiting a world lost to time finally becomes a luxurious reality.

*Silolona*, [www.silolona.com](http://www.silolona.com)

## BETWEEN COFFEE AND NUTMEG

THE LEGENDARY SPICE Islands stretch between Sumatra, renowned for its coffee, to the tiny isles of Banda in the Molluccas, the native home of nutmeg. Between these two colonial outposts over 17,000 islands dot 5,000 kilometers of warm tropical seas.

In July, *Silolona* drops anchor in Labuhanbajo on the western tip of the Flores Island. A Portugese settlement in the 1500s, Capo des Flores—or simply Flores—has been known for its coral gardens. *Silolona* has created a special seven-day adventure with visits to Komodo National Park and some of the world's best coral reefs. The islands of tiny Komodo archipelago are virtually deserted save the occasional passage of local fishermen who peddle fresh lobsters and pearls, and, in July, wild Komodo honey. Another stop is to remote Bajawa region on Flores Island. Here, on the slopes of Gunung Inerie, is Bena, an intact megalithic village set amidst the coffee trees. Dips into a hot spring and shopping for hand-woven textiles, or a



Clown fish in anemones

tour of clove plantations in North Bali are other high points of the adventure.

The many legs of the journey make it difficult to arrange, even for experienced concierge, but aboard *Silolona* and other chartered transfers, it becomes a pleasant adventure.

### DEEPLY DELIGHTFUL

WHEN ALILA VILLAS ([www.alilahotels.com](http://www.alilahotels.com)) Hadahaa opens in August 2009, underwater creatures will probably glimpse their first humans. The remote island in the North

Huvadho Atoll on which it is built has never been popular with vacationers who throng the archipelago. Huvadho itself is among the world's largest atolls, comprising 300 mostly uninhabited islands. It is also the deepest atoll in the Maldives, with a central lagoon plunging about 90 metres down.

Unspoiled coral reefs and diverse marine life await divers, including blue marlins, giant groupers, moray eels, manta and eagle rays, and many species of shark such as leopard, blacktip reef and giant hammerheads.—L.H.

*The Silolona sails to destinations such as Rinca Island (top left) in the Komodo archipelago—home to Komodo dragons (top right).*