



Center for Global & Strategic Studies

Islamabad

Maritime Live-Aboard Safari in Pakistan

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Published on 18th February 2020

Nowadays, Live-aboard Safari is very common across the world and is playing a significant role in revenue generation by attracting domestic and foreign tourists. Today, according to live-aboard website's sources, the top 8 live-aboard safari destinations in terms of the number of boats are Indonesia, Egypt, Galapagos, Maldives, Thailand, Mexico, Australia, and Micronesia within practice 106; 72; 59; 42; 33; 17; 15 and 8 vessels respectively. However, the concept of this profitable

business-oriented safari is quite invisible in Pakistan to where it can be quite instrumental for the promotion of maritime tourism that has huge potential to be harnessed.

Tourists are quite fond of cruise and diving excursions associated with Live-aboard worldwide. A live-aboard boat is usually designed for people to stay in it for some days and usually its services cater to around 10 to 30 people at a time. It is a self-sufficient boat that can provide a living facility with the provisions of eating, relaxing, and accommodation along with more flexibility in dive sites. The concept of live-aboard was first introduced in the Cayman Islands by Paul Humann with his 75 feet boat "Cayman Diver" in 1972.

Globally, tour operators have introduced quality services for live-aboard by taking care of all kinds of tourist's needs and comfort. There are various individual, group, and family packages available. Coralia Live-aboard in Indonesia is best known for its exceptional service standards with a wealth of knowledge about the Indonesian archipelago for 16 guests at a time. It charges approximately US\$ 400 to 500 per day for individual tourists depending upon the seasonal days. It has an impressive modern design with 48-meter length and 8 cabins; having wrap-around picture windows, living rooms with traditional interior clubbed with modern amenities including ensuite bathrooms and a day bed with a private balcony area, air conditioning, free internet, spacious dining hall with a variety of local & international cuisines, ample storage space, free nitrox, and spacious dive deck. Tiare Cruise is another Indonesian Live-aboard safari, that offers year-round luxury dive cruises with the exploration of the world-famous dive areas of Komodo

National Park, East Flores, Alor, the Forgotten Islands, Banda Sea and Raja Ampat. The third famous Indonesian Live-aboard safari is the luxurious Tiare Phinisi, that caters up to 12 guests at a time with many complimentary services and charges approximately US\$ 450 to 550 per day for luxurious facilities to the individuals.

In Maldives, Scubaspa Ying is a 50m unique live-aboard safari that expertly combines luxury scuba diving with luxury spa treatments to create the pinnacle of luxurious services at a cost of US\$ 275 to 300 per day per individual, by accommodating up to 26 divers with a variety of suites to meet the expectations of every guest. Scubaspa Ying schedules diving cruises year-round to the central atolls in the Maldives. Whereas, in Galapagos, Humbolt Explorer is a popular Live-aboard for its exceptional services to get exposure to biodiversity. Humboldt takes divers to the best dive sites of the Galapagos to discover Galapagos sharks, hammerheads, turtles, tuna, manta rays, whale sharks, and white tip sharks. It caters up to 16 guests and offers its services to an individual at a rate of approximately US\$ 400 to 450 per day.

Now, It is time for Pakistan to introduce innovative tourism products by learning from the global experiences where Live-aboard Safari can contribute towards sustainable livelihood thus important for poverty alleviation. The traditional Dhows can also be developed to attract tourists and generate handsome revenue from this unique Live-aboard tourism product.

Live-aboard Safari services can be developed on a number of sites along-side Sindh and Balochistan coastlines. Starting now, it can be introduced at Karachi first, where the domestic tourist's flux would likely be very significant, which can play an

instrumental role in revenue generation and Return on Investment (ROI) in a shorter period of time. Karachi International Airport can also complement by catering foreign tourists. Two Karachi based cruise trips can be introduced with an 8-9 days package on two different routes i.e. (1) Karachi to Keti Bunder site (Eastern Route), which is an ecologically and culturally rich area and (2) Karachi to Somiani (Western Route), which can include many beautiful sites and sandy beaches. The Western Route can also contribute towards coastal livelihoods in Balochistan by opening a window of opportunity for local communities through Somiani and adjoining areas.

Over the next 2-3 years, the same idea can also be executed at Keti Bunder in Sindh. In parallel, the potential of Kund Malir in Balochistan can also be harnessed, where 7-9 days of cruise trips may be introduced. Tourists can enjoy beautiful rides with wilderness and serene spots on their way to Astola Island and can also enjoy scuba diving, parasailing, and other water sports activities during the trip. While planning over 3-5 years, it would be equally useful to invest in Gwadar. The new Gwadar international airport would likely be functional by the time, which would lead towards the success of this unique tourism product.

To conclude, there is no consideration of any activity seen for such an important component of maritime tourism in Pakistan; however, huge potential exists which can be harnessed by introducing culturally rich colours in Dhows as well as bringing modern designs with eco-friendly practices in a sustainable manner so as to inculcate the culture of blue economy in Pakistan. A wide variety of Live-aboard Safari boats can be used with traditional to modern designs and different categories of packages for tourists' attraction. The NTCB and provincial tourism departments

of Sindh and Balochistan need to hold awareness sessions for which, active engagement with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and CPEC authority can mobilize domestic and foreign investments. At the same time, the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) should also facilitate vessel registration and licensing for Live-aboard Safaris.

