

MALDIVES

September 26-October 13, 2012

Anacortes Diving Adventure Team



Scott, Kathy, Mike W, Hal, Kelley, Marle, Phyllis,

Ken, Bob, Peggy, Dale, Mike K, Liz, Mary

Maldives 2012

Route: Seattle—San Francisco—Korea—Singapore—Male

Day 1-2

Everyone arrives at Seatac and checks in for their flights to SFO and we were able to check our bags all the way through to Male so we don't have to deal with them until we arrive. The check in at Singapore Airlines was super easy, no line, the only thing is a few people had their carry-ons weighed and had to check them. At least there was no charge. Our flights were long but everything went smooth as we arrived in Singapore and went horizontal at the transit hotel.

Day 3

Met up with Mike & Liz in Singapore and we are off on our final leg to Male. Just a short 5 hours more



and we have just finished our longest traveling duration of 40 hours! We meet our guide and he leads us to our water taxi over to the Traders Hotel. The harbor is literally just outside the steps of the airport terminal. This is one busy harbor. We are quickly whisked over to the main island and Traders Hotel is one block off the waterfront. Check-in is pretty quick as we all head up to our rooms and then up to the pool for an afternoon of relaxing. A quick dinner at the hotel and time for bed. No rush in the morning as we won't be picked up until 1:00 pm.

Day 4

A nice leisurely morning so after breakfast we took a stroll around the capital city of Male. There is a fresh fish market that is filled with various small fish as well as giant yellow fin tuna. Right next to that is another fish market that mainly has dry or smoked fish as well as a fresh produce market. It's a really hot and humid morning so we head back to the hotel to finish packing. Shortly after noon they load us back on the boat and take us back to the



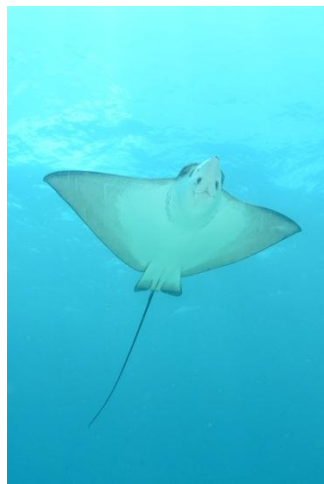
airport dock where we board yet another Dhoni that takes us to the SY Maldives Siren anchored out in the harbor. After all the briefings and paperwork we try and lift anchor, but this proves to



be quite difficult as another boat has put their anchor line right over ours. It is tight quarters in this harbor as you can literally almost jump from boat to boat. Finally we are free and we set course for a small nearby island that is Kurumba resort. This is actually where we will be staying after our live aboard trip. By the time we are suited up and ready to dive our check out dive is going to be a night dive. It is a vertical wall which we slowly explore to find lots of macro critters. Our time is up as we climb back on board for a wonderful dinner. Shortly everyone heads for their cabin to await another day of diving.

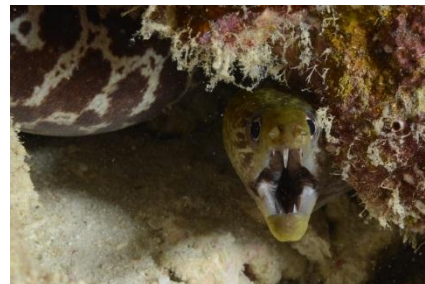
Day 5

Wake up call is 6:00am, but most of the group is already up and hitting the espresso machine. We are then off to dive a Thila (pinnacle) of soft coral and good fish action. The current is running "medium" as we work to get down before getting blown off the dive site. There are big schools of Dogtooth Tuna, Snapper, Eagle Ray and a huge Turtle. Our air is getting low so time to surface to start our day off with a nice big breakfast. Three more dives today, a couple of Mantas were spotted out in the blue, far, far, away. No pictures, no proof! Another great dinner and pretty soon everyone is off to bed.



Day 6

We are still in the Male' area as we have to pick up some parts for a broken air conditioner. No worries as we still are diving and that is why we're here. The day starts a little later at 7:30am and we do a nice vertical wall dive. Lots of macro critters, huge Turtle and Morays. The weather has been pretty good considering this is Monsoon season. The rain squalls roll through very quickly and then the sun is back out. We have our fingers crossed for some big animal encounters this afternoon. We finally have the parts we need to fix everything so we are off and running for Rasdhoo. It will take us 5 hours as we have to make it before dark due to the difficulty of getting into the anchorage. We will do a twilight dive when we arrive, and that will be it for the day. Making this long run puts us back on schedule for tomorrow. So it's an afternoon of Skipbo, reading and massages. It's a new concept for us and I think they call that relaxing. We barely



make Rasdhoo before the sunsets and we load into the dinghies for a twilight dive. Heading out to the dive site it is a beautiful harvest moon over the water. The reef here has some beautiful hard corals which we have not really seen yet, also a huge Marble Ray and plenty of Moray Eels. The stars are out in full force and we were able to find the Southern Cross. Since we only did 2 dives today everyone is wide awake at dinner and ready for a few beers. Then the announcement comes that we

are getting up at 5:15am for a blue water Hammerhead hunt. That deflated everyone's party mode and off to bed they went.

Day 7

Up at o'dark thirty getting ready for the dive, the full moon is still out and it is a beautiful morning.



Our group heads out into the blue to look for the Hammerheads, luck was not with us today, as we had nothing but plankton to see. Back at the reef there are these crazy Vlaming Surgeon fish that come and play in your bubbles. They shiver and shimy as they swim through them, and they will even bite your hair. Back on the reef we had a couple of White Tip Reef Sharks, Eagle Ray and tons of fish life. A big breakfast then on to dive #2.

Finally a Manta! Along with plenty of Black, Grey and White tip sharks and throw in some Eagle Rays for a fantastic dive. On the third dive we were treated to a nice pink Leaf

Scorpionfish and a tiny little yellow frogfish. We finished up the day with a twilight dive with more sharks, rays and plenty



of macro critters. Before dinner a group of us went over to Rasdoo and wandered the streets in the dark. I think the state department warns you never to do anything of the sort, but everyone was friendly and the streets were pretty quiet. Back to the boat for dinner and finally off to bed. We're pulling the anchor at 3:00am and steaming 5 hours to the next stop on our itinerary.

Day 8

A bit rolly this morning but not too bad as we are making our way towards Goidhoo for our first dive. Luck might be with us today as we had Dolphins on the bow for a brief ride. Another beautiful sunny



day in the Maldives! We did a slow drift on a wall and saw the biggest school of Batfish but they were very deep. Had an Eagle way come by at the end of the dive and circle around a bit and then take off. It's another 2 hour motor to the next dive site so plenty of time to relax a bit. We stop to dive a small Thila with great fish life and Mike even finds a small Frogfish. We motor for another hour and finally arrive at our night anchorage. We jump in for a twilight dive which has beautiful soft corals along a wall and

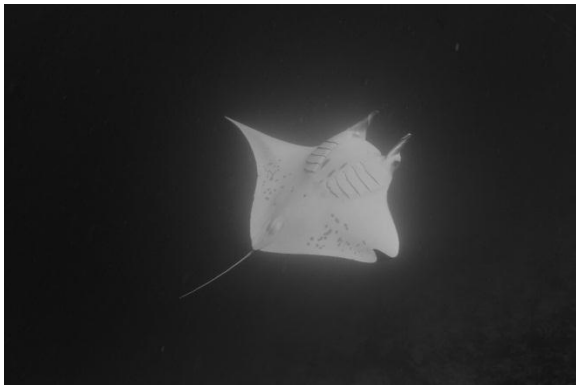
a nice Marble Ray is out hunting. Back on board we have swirling bait balls in the flood lights off the side of the boat. Hopefully something big will be swimming by later tonight. We are now in the Baa Atoll and tomorrow we will be in the famous Hanifaru Bay.

Day 9

It's going to be a scorcher today. Flat calm this morning as the sun is coming up for the 6:00am rise and shine bell. This dive will be my 1900th dive this morning so I am hoping to see great things. The Thila has a nice swim thru but there is a "medium" current and we really have to work for it. Nice ledges with lots of color and fish life as we drift along the side of the Thila. On top the current is pretty strong and we really have to work at staying on the top. We find two Morays getting cleaned, lots of anemonefish and a leaf Scorpionfish. Bob then has a little adventure of his own as I turn around and see his camera dropping to the reef and he has 1 fin on. His other fin is at the surface so off he goes to try and retrieve his fin and then swim back down to the reef in the strong current. I am laughing so hard, oh Bob, you're so silly! Just as we left the Thila apparently a large Manta came in and Dale, Mike & Liz all got to see it. This was a really good start to the day. After the second dive we go to pick up the dive guide so we can snorkel in the famous Hanifaru Bay. Once he is on board we find out from the rangers guarding the entrance that there are no Mantas in the bay today. Have no fear! We don our



snorkeling gear and head out to find our own damn Manta. We are sizzling in the sun in the dinghys and Marle and Kathy shout out that they saw a Manta. We all jump in and sure enough a Manta is in shallow water doing a sommersalt at a cleaning station. We spend about 10 minutes watching the



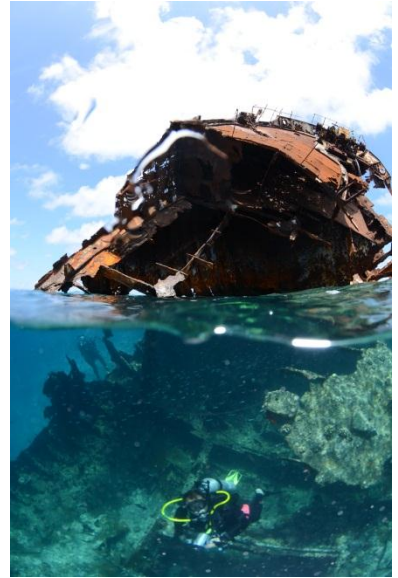
Manta glide gently below us. Pretty incredible that we were able to find one. Back to the boat for our last dive of the day and sure enough a Manta came gliding by just as we dropped down on the reef. Chalk up another good day.

Day 10

5:30am wakeup call this morning, ugh. We jump in this morning by 6:00am on a Thila we had done yesterday.

Had a Turtle and Eagle Ray come by and found a ginormous Stone Fish. Bob didn't have any mishaps on this dive so it will be a good day. We are now on a 4 hour cruise on to the next area of Lhaviyani Atoll. It is time for some sunshine. We arrive at a shipwreck half sticking up out of the water in the

channel. This dive is known for some wicked current, but luck is with us as we have none. We easily swim around both wrecks which had great fish life and are encrusted with beautiful corals. We try our



hand at some over and under shots and hope for the best. We have another 4 hour steam to the next Atoll so it must be time for Skipbo. We arrive at a Thila known for the large gathering of Grey and Black tip reef sharks. We descend down to 60ft and hook in to watch the show. There are probably about 30 sharks circling just in front of the group. A large turtle cruises by as well as a Porcupine Ray



which was huge and an Octopus out hunting. It's starting to get dark and it's time for us to go. Back on board it's a quick turnaround for a night dive. Only 5 decide to go on the dive while the rest of us enjoy a cold frosty brew and review our pictures for the day. Wonder what tomorrow will bring.....

Day 11



Beautiful sunrise and glassy flat calm water, it is really going to be a scorcher today with no wind. The 6:00am wakeup call was worth it for the

first dive as it was a small Thila shaped like a Christmas Tree with beautiful soft corals hanging off each overhang. Several Marble Rays getting cleaned around the base, couple of White Tip Reef Sharks over the sand and a little Octopus on the way up the wall. We have a 3 hour motor to the next destination so time to relax and enjoy our coffee. Since the conditions are so pancake flat the crew decides to hoist the sails for our SY Maldives Siren photo op. It is like an oven outside today! Finally

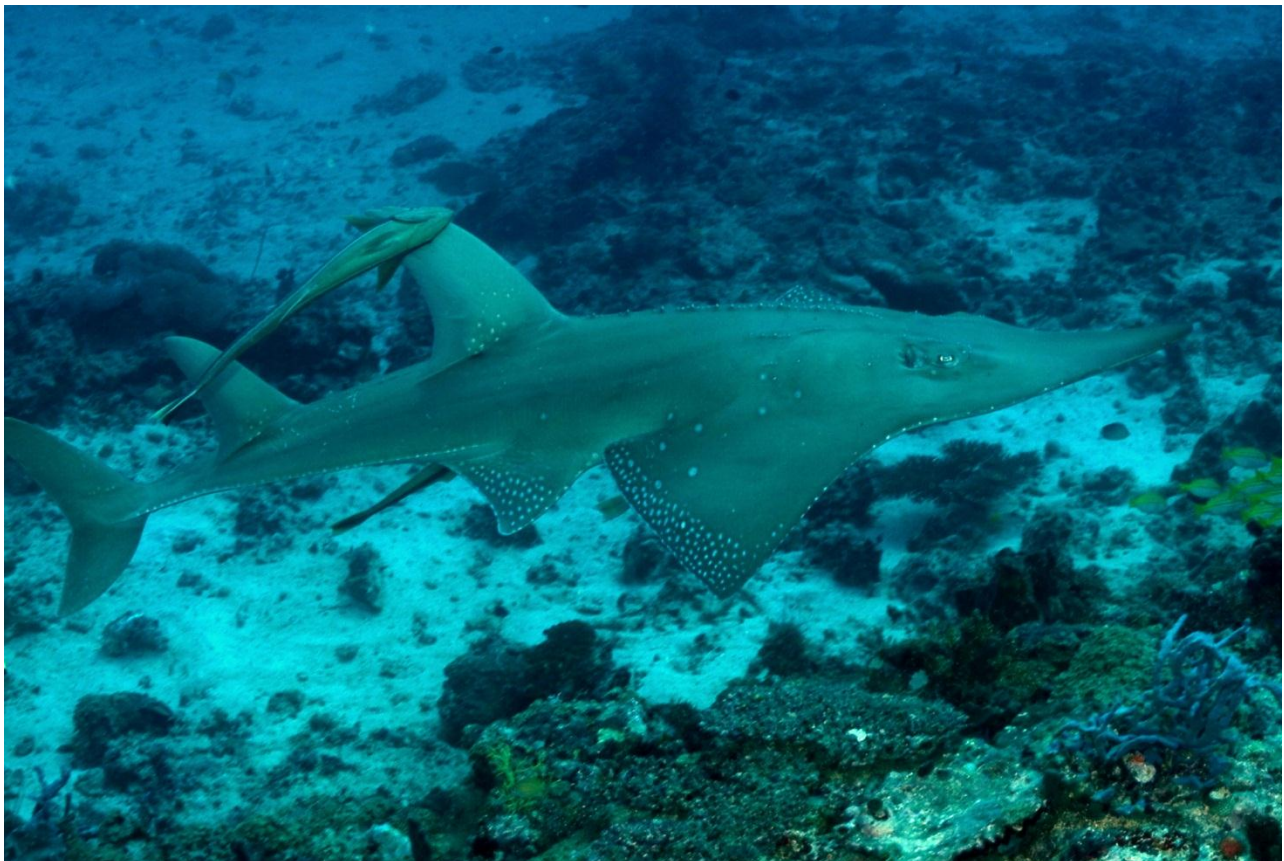


arriving at our next dive spot we all are anxious to jump in to cool off. Another great dive and time for lunch and all of a sudden we have a man overboard drill. These are all new safety drills that the crew has to go through on each charter. It's nice to see them practice so we know everyone will know what to do just in case something happens for real. Good job crew! After the third dive we are back just in time for sunset at 7 Palms Island. All the night divers get ready while the rest

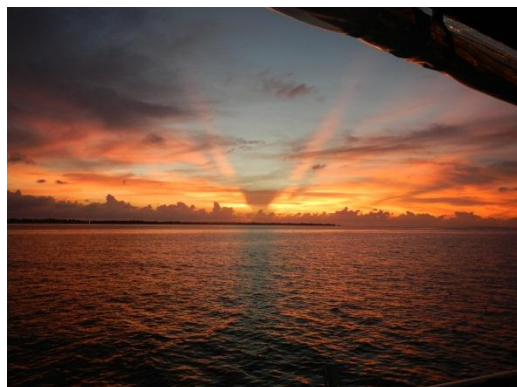
of us relax and anxiously await another dinner where we will all eat too much and then go to bed. I'm pretty sure that's how each day has gone so far, it's just too good to stop now!

Day 12

Late morning with a 6:30am wakeup call even though most everyone is up since we are used to it by now. Last full day of diving and on the first dive we found the infamous Guitar Ray. It is much larger than I thought and very odd looking.



It swam around group 1 for a while, we saw it briefly and unfortunately the last group did not see it. Fortunately, it did swim straight at Bob so hopefully he got good video. Traveling farther North today

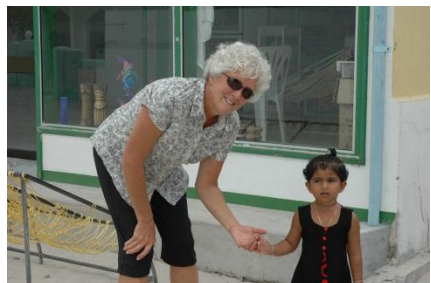


so we are closer to our final destination we stop and do another Thila which had a nice Porcupine Ray and lots of macro critters up top. The third dive had so many anemones it literally carpeted the top of the reef. We had a huge school of Jacks come by that was simply amazing, as they turned it sounded like a huge explosion. We watched the sunset when we surfaced from the dive which was a great way to end the day. The night dive is going to be late tonight as we try to make anchorage someplace close.

The night dive was quite an adventure! We had to find an island that we couldn't see; it was a long way from our anchored boat and no one has ever dove here before. Mmm could this be a recipe for disaster? After about ½ hr Megan says all she sees is sand and we were just about to call it off when she decided to jump in and says she doesn't see the bottom. So we tow her alongside the boat when we finally find a wall of hard corals. We jump and the dive is gorgeous. This has to be the best hard corals that we have seen on the trip. The current is running, but we all stay together and have a great dive. The stars are out in full force and so incredible to look at from way out here in the dark.

Day 13

Wakey, Wakey at 6:30am, this will be our last dive day of the trip so let's make it a good one. I was just thinking to myself that this trip has been injury free when BAM I slipped and fell in our shower. Didn't break anything but I pretty much figure I will be very sore and black and blue tomorrow. Both dives today had beautiful soft coral on them and plenty of little macro critters as well. Back on the boat it is a scrub of the dive gear so it will dry and some lunch. We are heading into Utheema for a



historical island tour. The tour was great as we were actually allowed in the shrine. It is hotter than blazes out today; thank goodness it is a bit overcast. We head back to the boat to start packing for the trip home. Tonight is party night as we bid farewell to the Maldives Siren.

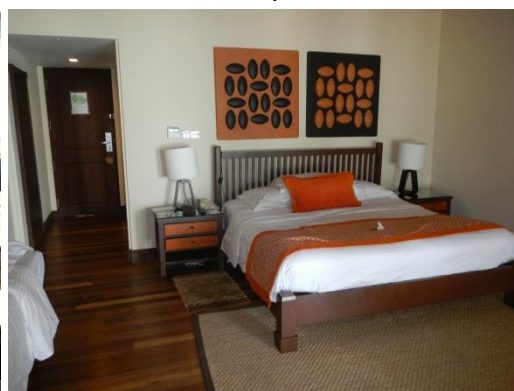
Day 14

Nobody really tore it up last night and pretty much everyone was in bed by 10:00pm. Up early as usual for the final pack as we pretty much sit around and wait to get kicked off the boat at 10:00am. We finish up with group pictures and the crew loads all the luggage in the dinghy as the group climbs into the other one. We are flying out of Hanihaamaadoo Airport back to Male. The unique thing

about the Maldives is that we pull up to the pier where there are luggage carts and then you walked



to the airport which is about ½ block away. We did not get dinged for over luggage fees I think because we checked the luggage in as a group rather than individually. The flight back to Male was about 45 minutes and as we depart the terminal our hotel representative from Kurumba is waiting for us. We roll our luggage across the road and load it up on the Kurumba resort boat. It is only a 10 minute ride over to the island where we are welcomed with cool cloths and lovely coconut ice cream.



We are shown to our rooms where we quickly change and start to explore our little island paradise. The resort is beautiful with white sandy beaches and coralline blue water. It is a scorcher so we opt for some water time with an ice cold drink. The group meets up at 6:30pm for the managers' cocktail hour before heading to dinner. It's pretty hoppin as the drinks are free but we are on the all-inclusive plan so drinks are included anyway. We head to dinner which is a buffet with plenty of great choices and of course a dessert bar which we take full advantage of. Everyone is still in boat mode so they all head back to their rooms for the night...I don't think it is even 9:00pm yet.

Day 15

Pretty cloudy morning and they are calling for rain today. After breakfast Dale, Peggy, Bob and I head out to snorkel Shark Point out in front of our bungalow. It is a long swim and pretty choppy out, but we see plenty of stuff. We have 2 Porcupine Rays, Black tip Reef Sharks, and lots of fish. Time for lunch and we meet up with everyone and Ken, Phyllis & Marle had snorkeled "Sally's Patch" and said it was fantastic. Hal went out on the dive boat, and has a 50/50 chance of seeing a Manta. Here comes the rain! It looks like it is going to be raining for the rest of the day, so we opt for the beach bar as our afternoon activity. Hal returns from his dive and gives us the grim report that there wasn't any Mantas today. Not a surprise but we had our fingers crossed that he would. Mmmm, how long have we been here? Oh, it's time for dinner? Probably a really smart idea. After dinner it's another

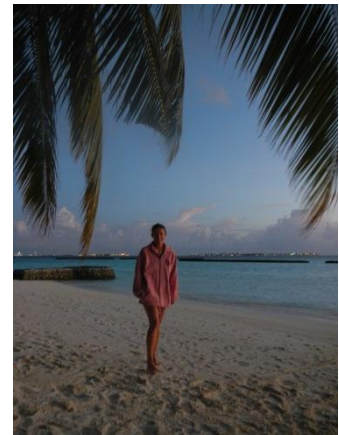
early evening, I don't even think it's 10:00pm yet, which I'm sure most of us need to go to bed anyway. We all decided to meet up tomorrow at 10:30 to snorkel "Sally's Patch" since it was so good today.

Day 16

After breakfast the entire group is out on the beach donning all snorkeling gear on the beach. The



wind is really howling today and outside the reef blocks it looks pretty rough. This is a much better dive site than the Shark Point with all its schooling Batfish and Bannerfish, a couple of Black tip reef Sharks, and tons of fish. It's a little too rolly for me so I head back in behind the reef blocks where it is a little calmer. Everyone has a great time and we see a ton of stuff. Bob and I are off as we have a massage scheduled today. I think Dale has had one everyday along with Mike, Liz & Peggy. The massage is wonderful and we both feel like jello, I just love that feeling! Times a wasting as we make our way back to the beach to meet up with part of the group to grab some sun time and an icy cold beverage. Pretty soon we have all gathered at the Sand Bar to watch the sunset, and it's a beauty



tonight. Afterward we make our way back to our bungalow and as we are all standing around we hear this loud noise coming our way. As I look up the beach I see all this smoke coming towards us and were really not sure what to do. We start to smell it and decide to duct into our place to hide out while Bob runs around outside taking pictures of this "mosquito bombing." We read in the hotel book that this is not harmful to breath and we all our a bit skeptical and opt to breath as little of it as possible. I guess a necessary evil to keep the

bugs from biting all the tourists. As the fog disappears we make our way to yet another dinner. I don't think I have ever eaten this much food on a trip! Every night I go to bed with a stuffed belly, I hope my travel clothes fit when we have to leave!

Day 17

Last day here at the resort and also the start of our long trip home. We have to check out at noon where we say good-bye to Mike & Liz as they are catching an earlier flight than us. This hotel is really set up great for all the passengers leaving on the late flight. They have a place to store all of our luggage and keep our valuables in another office location. We have full use of the facility while we are still here, but our all-inclusive stops at noon so the rest of the day is on us. Most of us make our way



out to the beach to soak up as much of that sunshine as possible. What a nice relaxing day. For those who don't want to be out at the beach they have an air-conditioned room about the reception with computers, TV, games, coffee & tea. Late in the afternoon we are at the beach bar for a quick dinner, probably our last meal before our departure. It looks like it's going to be a nice night for a sunset so we race back out to the beach to catch the very end of it on the horizon. Seemed like today was a very big wedding day today at the resort as we saw two separate couples all dressed up for the occasion.

It is now 9:00pm as we start to load the boat for the airport and begin our long journey home. It has been a fantastic trip and we are sad to see it end. It will take us nearly 32 hours of travel before we see home and the flights have all been on time so it was smooth sailing.



Thanks everybody for joining us on this incredible adventure half way around the world. We enjoyed traveling with you and look forward to having you join us again on another trip.

Kelley & Bob

To sum up our trip, surprisingly everything ran smoothly. I had my doubts, as the distance to get to the Maldives is a bit daunting. It took us 40 hours to get to the hotel in the capital city (island) of Male. Americans were not liked at the time of our arrival, due to the release of an internet movie. Later in the afternoon a protest was taking place right outside our hotel, so we all opted to stay inside and have dinner at the hotel restaurant. Best not to take any chances, after all we came here to dive, not to get ourselves in trouble over politics. The next morning we did venture out around the city in very small groups to not attract any attention to us and no one had any issues. Do dress respectful of the culture when wandering around town, make sure knees and shoulders are covered. It was interesting to see woman dressed in full Berka attire, but yet chatting on a cell phone. It is very strange to be in a place where there is no alcohol in any restaurants or on the island, but we made the most out of it and ordered a “mocktail”-which was quite good...if it had a little rum in it!

When arriving in the Maldives all transportation is done by boat. Right outside the airport you are on the water and wait for your hotel “boat” to pick you up and whisk you away to each resorts private island. I don’t think this happens anywhere else in the world and surprisingly it runs like clockwork. We then boarded our home for the next 10 days on World Wide Dive & Sails Maldives Siren. We have been on these live-aboards before and they are beautiful. The cabins are very spacious for a live-aboard and the extra room is always appreciated. The Whale Sharks & Mantas that we came to see never showed up. We realize this is not a zoo, but extremely disappointing when traveling such a long distance. The Maldives are beautiful small islands dotted across the water as far as you can see. There really is no elevation to them and most of them are surrounded by gorgeous white sand. Be prepared for a cell tower every few islands that tend to stick out like a sore thumb. There’s nowhere for any of the garbage to go so everything is burned. You constantly see black smoke in the sky from all the different islands burning their garbage. And yes, they burn everything; plastic, tires batteries etc.

We stayed at Kurumba Resort for 3 days of relaxing at the end of our trip, which was gorgeous. We went all inclusive, which did include alcohol, otherwise it is very expensive anywhere you go in the Maldives. I’m glad that we went to the Maldives and were able to experience this culture and diving, but I don’t think we would return as there are just too many other places to go in this great big world.

