

PAPUA NEW GUINEA OCTOBER 2009

Departing route: Seattle-Narita-Port Moresby-Alotua

Returning route: Alotua-Port Moresby-Singapore-Narita-Seattle

Our flights were smooth, we left Seattle on time and the flight to Narita was 10.5 hours and was very smooth. We had a long layover in Narita of about 5 hours and you need at least 2 to transfer between terminals, it is a very slow process. Once reaching terminal 2, they have day rooms and shower facilities. For 500 yen (about 5 bucks) you have 30 minutes to take a shower. After a long flight and several more ahead, it's the best 5 bucks we have ever spent! Only a couple of places for food choices which was a little disappointing but filled the need. If you like to shop, then this is the place as the majority of the terminal was high dollar, high fashion. We needed to change some money into Kina and unfortunately the only money they exchanged was into yen. I have never seen an international airport that didn't have an exchange for all types of currency. This would prove to be a time issue upon our arrival in Port Moresby. Our flight departed about ½ hour late, which made our connection in Port Moresby tight for our hopper flight to Gurney. Upon arrival in Port Moresby you have to pay 100 Kina for a Visa, since we had no Kina they held our passport at the immigration counter while we had to stand in an even slower line at the money exchange. Since this was taking way too long we sent one person with all our money and exchanged it at one time, making it slightly faster. Off to customs and then re-check bags through to the last destination. Make sure to do this in the international airport, not the domestic. This is where it was going to get sticky with weight limits as we were only supposed to be allowed 70 lbs total for two bags and a 12 lbs carry on. The advantage of being in a large group is that they tend to let things slide and just to get us moving they never said anything about the bag weights, even though they did weigh them. The entire group had opted to wear backpacks instead of roller carry-ons to help disguise the 12 lb carry on limit. We just made our 40lb backpacks look like they were light! For all the scary things that are said about the Port Moresby airport we did not experience any of it, I think because we were there at 6:00 am. We shall see if we have the same experience heading home as it will be in the afternoon. The hopper flight was about an hour long and we were finally at Gurney. The adventure doesn't end there as we still had a bus and boat ride left! But at least no more flights!

We meet our driver Morris and gather up all our luggage, which by the way every single bag made it! That has to be an all time record! We fill the bus with luggage and all of us and we are off. We inquire how long

the ride will be and Morris smiles and says "No less than 2 hours", alright it's going to be a long one. After a quick stop at one of the local hotels for a bathroom break, we are on the long and wet road. Morris tells us that it has been raining unusually hard for the past 3 months and most of the roads are being washed out. OK, this could be interesting. We hit the first "river" flowing over the roadway, it doesn't look so bad, pretty shallow. We all clap as Morris navigates the safest route through the water. Our speed is slow, not sure we even hit 25 mph but a couple of times as the road is full of potholes and wash outs. Then we come to washout number 2, this doesn't look good as there is a truck that is stuck and 10 locals trying to pull it out. It of course is blocking the only path through the river. We sit watching from across the river as our hopes of reaching the resort today are slowly washing away. Another car pulls up, takes a look and then turns around, oh that's not good. A motorcycle arrives, he's going for it, he



rides half way then gets off his bike as several other men come over to help push his bike through as the bike owner rolls up his pants legs to cross on foot and not get too wet. Morris is getting tired of waiting so he starts driving our bus into the river and parks it in the middle as we wait for something to happen with the stuck truck. A bus load of people show up and are now lined up on the bank

taking pictures of us sitting in the middle of the river! I'm sure this one's going to be on u-tube! They finally pull the truck out and now it's our turn to go through and up the steep bank. Morris knows what he is doing and navigates us through the river and up the bank with no problem as we all cheer. After what feels like forever we finally wind our way down to the dock where a boat awaits to take us the final leg to the resort. We thank Morris profusely for being such a great driver and that we all arrived alive! Next stop Tawali resort and we are sure happy to be here after two days of non stop travel.

We run through the resort & dive orientation with Marni and Chris, have a quick bite to eat and we are off and getting ready for a check out dive on the house reef. Chris informs us that they have just found a winged pipefish, so we are very anxious to look at it ourselves. The little house reef off the service dock is quite good, lots of little macro critters. After the dive, our group is barely hanging on as we wait for dinner to be served, as almost everyone is asleep in their plates. Aaaahhh bed, finally-how long did it take to get here??

Day one

We leave the dock and the first encounter is with the local pod of dolphins swimming in the bay. The boat powers up and we have about 6 dolphins riding the bow. This is good luck for sure! After a 15 minute boat ride we are at the dive site and ready to go. We spent the day doing 3 dives, which were great, a mix of wide angle and macro, so a little for everyone. Late afternoon we headed back to the resort and got ready to do another dive off the service dock to look for the winged pipefish again. After a lot of looking Bob finally found it and we also located the Crocodile fish again. Finished the dive and took a shower just in time for the dinner bell. The chef here is really good with the local ingredients and the desserts have been excellent. We are still not accustomed to the time zone, so most of the group is falling asleep at the table. Off to bed for everyone.



Day 2:

Five brave souls got up this morning at 4:30 am to do an early morning dive (John, Allison, Mary, Jim & Linda). Not too bad when your internal clock is waking you at 3:30 am. They had a good time and wondered why we hadn't brought them coffee to the dock. We did three dives on the boat & then came back and did a dive off the main dock to look for the Mandarin fish. As luck would have it, I had the only pair of mating Mandarin fish tonight. As soon as we got back the power went out and the staff was scrambling. It is ten minutes to dinner time, this should prove to be interesting. Flashlights are handed out, candles are lit and everyone heads to the bar. When in total darkness, head to the bar, that's where everyone congregates. It's going to be a couple of hours before the power is back on, apparently the main cable has burned through, but dinner will be served under candlelight. Kudos to the entire staff to pull off dinner during a complete power outage. It actually was very nice with all the candles lit. We even had the birthday cake for Mary. After dinner the local village came up and did some traditional dances for us. Always great to see the local customs still being taught to the younger generation. Very entertaining. Another great day with flat



calm waters and blue sky.

Day 3:



Today was the longest boat ride yet, about an hour away to a place called Linda's Reef and Crinoid City. Both dive sites were spectacular with wide angle and macro possibilities. The visibility was the best so far with schooling fish and the reef was so colorful, with corals and anemone fish. We also saw a Pygmy Seahorse, Rhinopias and Stonefish. There was quite a commotion between dives today as it was Jesse's 60th Birthday and quietly during the surface interval he slipped into the water and swam naked around the back until he was discovered by Peggy, who then alerted the entire boat. That was some bright white full moon! Good for you Jesse! It was blue sky

and calm water most of the day, except when we came up from the third dive the skies were black and the wind had picked up and it was raining all around us. After hitting the dock, Chris tells us that the other group is running late so there is no chance of them doing the Mandarin dive, so it's no problem for us to go. That being said it is 5:30 pm and we need to scramble. Five of us jump back into our gear and hit the bottom and swim for the coral head where we had good luck the night before. We see them swimming around in the coral head trying to find the female, but no action yet. It's getting late and this doesn't look good. They keep moving for another 10 minutes and then it's all over...nothing. The Mandarin have tucked in for the night with no action...bummer. So, off we go to look for other creatures of the night and we find a couple of small octopus, flat worm and a juvenile many spot sweet lips. Dinner is definitely calling us as we quickly scramble up the dock and to an awaiting hot shower. As we enjoy another great dinner, dessert is coming as we all sing Happy Birthday to Jesse, the big 60! I hope I'm spending my 60th doing the same darn thing! Off to bed as it is another full day tomorrow.

Day 4:

This morning brings black clouds and definite rain showers for the day. Our diving is close by today, the sites are 10 minutes away. Once we arrive at the site, the rain clouds close in on us and torrential rain lets loose. That's ok as we are going diving anyway. First dive has plenty of current, we bob and weave our way around the coral heads trying to hide. Great schooling fish action if you can make your way up to the

wall. Surface interval brings more rain, can you say buckets? The locals still make their way out to sell things to us, one gentleman even has an umbrella in his outrigger canoe, at one point he really needs to start bailing. Dive two unfortunately brings bad vis from all the mud flowing into the water, heck you almost thought you were at home! We move the boat for dive three to find clearer water, surprising the rain lets up and we have good vis. We make it back to the resort the earliest we have seen around 2:30 pm, some opt for a house reef dive, while the rest of us took really long hot showers. On the deck enjoying a cold South Pacific beer watching the divers swim by on the house reef.



Day 5:

More great diving. We dove a dive site today called Tania's reef. Toward the end of the dive we came to the top and there was ripping current. Peggy was with Bob and I and Bob motioned that if we swim across the top of the reef, it's a short cut back to the boat....yea, a short cut to hell! The problem is that the current is in our face and we have to swim against it! Peggy and I slowly loose more ground than we make so we finally duck back behind the reef to get out of the current to make it back to the boat. Suddenly, I hear Bob yell underwater and I look up to see the boat floating away from the mooring. He has the end of the rope in his hand an motions for me to hurry before I'm too far away. We surface and there are 4 of us, Bob, myself, Jon and our guide. He tells us to hold on to the rope and put our regulators in, I think naively that the crew is just going to pull us in by the rope, when suddenly the boat slams into reverse and we could be water skiing! I loose my grip immediately, Bob hangs for a short time and then all three of them were off the line as well. We group together a bit confused and wait for the boat to come back and get us. Apparently, Gary had floated away from the dive site and the boat didn't want him to get too far away in the current. It was a bit confusing as Bob received quite a good rope burn on that adventure. Later that night, we tried the Mandarin Fish dive but no action.

Day 6:

Sun was shining bright today. This afternoon we did the skull cave hike at a local village. Very interesting history, the skulls were originally stored in the homes of the villagers as "prizes" that were taken in battles. The missionaries



came and decided it wasn't Christian so they needed to remove the skulls, so they moved them to one of many caves on the island. The limestone that continues to build up in the caves is slowly engulfing the skulls, almost like they are melting into the environment. Very interesting. We also hiked to the waterfall that was nearby. We are packing up tonight and getting ready to depart on the Spirit of Nuigini tomorrow morning for another 7 days of incredible diving.

Day 7:

We awoke to another torrential downpour, a group of other divers had to depart at 3:00 am to take a 3 hour bus ride in to catch their flight-I hope they made it. We had a casual morning and then waited around for our 9:00 am departure, which was a little delayed due to a broken water pump. Finally, in the pouring down rain we loaded on the Spirit of Nuigini for another week of incredible diving. We had a 3 hour run to the first dive site called Observation Point. This dive site is a true



muck dive and we finally found the sunshine. As we sit at the site, slowly the villagers paddle their dugouts to check us out and do some trading. They bring fruits & vegetables that they have grown and trade for noodles, rice, beans and scrubbing sponges. The crew tries to trade with each one of them but their numbers are increasing and they all have the same stuff to trade. Let me

just say that the pineapple is to die for. They hang out all day, we are very close to shore and some are on the beach with a small musical instrument. We are like television to them, they just sit all day and watch us, and we watch them watching us, it's kind of weird. The crew stays alert as a couple of locals are on the back dive platform area as the staff quickly shoos them away. We stay for three dives and have dinner than pull the anchor to move to a "safe" mooring. The villagers alert the crew that there are some "bad" people in the area and it would be better for us to move. It's a short ride to the night mooring and there is also a police station located in this area. There was a great lightening storm that evening.

Day 8

We awake to more rain once again as we start to get ready for our first dive at 7:00 am. There is major current and we have to pull ourselves along a current line to the front anchor line. We drop down and the reef is spectacular with soft corals and sea fans. Today John G. hits his 700th dive, then Peggy hits her 200th and I hit my 1400th dive, all in

one day. Jim just informs me that he hit his 1400th dive this trip also. The sun decided to make an appearance this afternoon and it makes for a beautiful day. A few of the villagers make their way out to the boat, we are really not that close and that is one heck of a paddle. The wind picks up a bit and one boat in particular with 5 kids and 1 adult almost ran into the bow of the Spirit and then over shoots the back and goes flying by as they try desperately to get to us. They end up on a shallow reef and start waving for the crew to help them. After we are done diving the crew takes a inflatable out and tows them back to the village. Everything is done on trade so I'm not sure what the crew received for all their efforts. We maneuver to a close by island to moor up for the night.

Day 9:

This morning brought sunshine as the anchor went up at about 5:30 am! We were headed to some outer reefs, but the wind was already up and the swells were high so we had to go to plan B which was a reef inside. It was ok, but not too much to see. Since we are blown out we head to a place where there are underwater fumaroles from the volcano. Once we arrive the beach looks like mud and they are very shallow, but we decide to go for it anyway. We all jump in and make it to the largest boiling area and you cannot see your hand one inch from your face! We are now standing at the bubbling water and no one can see it from below the surface. Oh well. While we are in the water, I think the entire village made it's way out to the dive boat. Apparently, every time we stop to dive close to the villages we have to pay them a fee for diving their reefs. It costs about 50 kina each time, but we only pay them if they bring out an official book. Many villagers try to ask for money, but the crew says no, only the person with the book. Also, the majority of the land is owned by the women. We load back on the boat



and head for Esa' ala Jetty to finish off the day doing muck diving. Today is Peggy's birthday so we have a great cake made by the staff. Three down, one to go. There were a few dolphins off in the distance today but none came close to the boat. After dinner, most of the group heads to their cabins as the diving starts early at 7:00 am, are we really on vacation? Until tomorrow.....

Day 10:

The sun was shining today and we did two different reefs that were

some of the most beautiful hard corals we have seen. We were far out from the islands so we did not have many visitors from the islands. Only one person made it out the entire day and he had to paddle from a long way away. Not much in the way to report today, just some more fantastic diving.

Day 11:

We anchored off Normanby Island at a place called Bunama. This is the best muck diving around. After the first dive there is quite a commotion with the local village that we are parked right in front of. Apparently they caught a criminal this morning. This person, along with 4 others have been stealing and ransacking several of the villages. As we watched from the boat all the villagers had gathered and had "court". The local magistrate showed up and then came out to the boat and asked the crew to call the police to come and pick up the criminal. This of course is not as simple as it sounds as the local police are about a 3 hour boat ride away. In PNG, they use the law of payback, which simply means that crime is not taken lightly and the



criminal will be killed. As the story continues throughout the day, when they had captured him early in the morning, they had carried him all the way back to the village like they would a pig tied to a pole. They then tied him up and tried to get him to talk as of the whereabouts of the other four in his group. The police are

not coming and the villagers are told they need to deliver him to the police. The magistrate shows back up in a small motorboat as they load him on for the 3 hour trip. The crew has a good relationship with this village and give them fuel to help with the delivery of the criminal. They depart and that is all we know for now. We have lot's of kids coming out to the boat today as Marle hands out pencils to them, several of the kids start chewing on them. I'm not sure, but some of them thought they were candy. We had a great day of muck diving and had a Mimic Octopus show up twice. On one of the dives Bob even played tug a war with him. His den was right below the boat, so it was easy for us to check on it throughout the day. After we did the dusk dive and have dinner, Greg announces that if anyone was going in for a late night dive they needed to be careful of the "box jellyfish" off the back of the boat. Are you kidding me? Aren't those deadly? I thought they were only in Australia. Needless to say, no one chose to go diving. Later that night as we looked off the back of the boat where the lights were shining in the water, there were about 20 of them swimming around! PNG is certainly an adventure. Marle Christensen

hit here 300th dive today. Off to bed as it is another 5:30 am anchor wake up call as we move to a new site to do some reef diving.

Day 12:

Another day of rain and wind so our scheduled dive site is out of the question as it is really rough. We head over to Linda's Mounds and do a couple of dives. Today is Jon W. birthday and Dale hit his 300th dive. We then moved to Little China for the afternoon dives and have had great Octopus action every dive. There was also a big Stonefish right at the mooring line. One nice thing is the dive sites that we go to all have permanent moorings instead of throwing an anchor. Even in the remotest location they have thought ahead to conserving the reef. There was a brief panic this morning as the kitchen crew announced we were out of coffee! There was about to be a mutiny! The coffee drinkers are in panic mode! It's not like you can run



to the nearest island supermarket. As luck would have it on the dive the crew did some serious searching and found 3 more bags of coffee. And, the Chertan live aboard is nearby and they are willing to give us coffee for the use of the phone. Done deal! I think running out of coffee is worse than running out of food for most of our group. Tomorrow we head for Samurai to look for the Mantas, our fingers are crossed.

Day 13:

Morning came early once again as we pull anchor and head for the dive site. We are anxious to see if the Mantas are there and quickly dress for the dive. We haven't spotted them but we are going to sit at the cleaning station and wait. The water here is cooler than where we have been diving. After 20 minutes of sitting still my teeth are chattering and as usual the current is blowing in our face and that is the direction we have to swim back to the boat. The Mantas are a no show so we are off and swimming into a pretty good current trying to warm back up. Second dive we jump in to do a macro/muck dive and ask the guide Junior to find us a Blue Ring Octopus. He says he is up to the challenge as we all jump in and think to ourselves "not a chance in hell". We couldn't have been in the water more than 15 minutes when what do you know a Blue Ringed Octopus! They are tiny! It is

beautiful and seems so fragile and small. We stay with it for at least a half an hour trying to find the other divers anywhere close by to show them as well. Jesse swam I think a mile looking for anyone else to share it with. At one point it was swimming through the water and a fish tried to



eat it. It lit up like a blue neon sign! The fish quickly swam off and I think was sorry he tried to take a bit. This was the first Blue Ringed Octopus we have ever seen and it was a definite highlight for us. We came up from the dive and someone had spotted a Harlequin Shrimp just right under the boat so we quickly changed a tank and jumped back in just to take photo's of the shrimp. The current has started to pick up and it is getting difficult to hold your position. There is not much to hold on to as we use our muck sticks to dig in the sand. It is seriously becoming R.A.C (ripping ass current) time to get out. We patiently wait after lunch to see if the Manta's will show after the tide change. Again a no show, so we decide to jump back in for one more dive before we move the boat. This time it was serious RAC! We shoot the Harlequin Shrimp and a few more things and then try to head to the mooring line as there is no way to make the back down line. We get out after a half an hour and are exhausted. As soon as we start the engines and pull the mooring line, guess what shows up? The Manta's! We sadly watch from the surface as we slowly drift away from the dive site. There are several as we watch their wing tips break the surface. We soon arrive at Samurai Jetty and tie up to do our last couple of



dives of the trip. Once again, as soon as we jumped in there was RAC and it was picking up. But, John had come up from his dive and said there was a Wobbegong Shark under the pier. We had to tough it out as we had never seen one of these either. Turns out there were two of them and they are about 5 feet long, really neat looking. After struggling for a short time more, I am done and calling it quits. We haul our tired butts back on the boat and make it our official last dive. Mary hit her 400th dive and 60 dives total for the trip, now that's a lot of diving! The worse part of the trip begins as we slowly start to clean and hang up all the gear to hopefully dry before we have to pack for the flight. We have dinner and everyone slowly disappears to their cabin as we are all exhausted from fighting the current. Tomorrow brings a day of rest and touring.

Day 14:

The day began really early for two cabins who awoke to a flooded bathroom of black water. One cabin had it creeping into the carpet in the cabin, so they quickly grabbed their stuff and got out. Apparently there was a pump not working and no alarms had gone off. Thank goodness it is the last day and we will move them to a hotel in Alotau before our flight tomorrow morning. We take off after breakfast for a walk around Samurai and actually walked through their hospital. You really get an appreciation for what you have in the US compared to what is here. This was a pretty upscale place for being as remote as it is. It is Sunday so it is quiet as most people are getting ready for Sunday service so not much is open. They do find the owner of the craft store and she opened just for our boat. After that, they located the owner of the pearl farm here and he came down to show us around his facility and had some golden pearls to show us. The golden pearl is unique to this particular area. They are beautiful as "Kim" the owner tells us how they go about the process which takes about 4 years from growing the oyster to harvesting the pearl. Our resident jewelry specialist Linda quickly helps all of us pick out some really beautiful pearls to take home as an incredible memento of our trip. We load back on the boat as we have a 2 hour cruise back to Alotau. We spend the rest of the time packing our bags and trying to dry our gear out as best as possible with the passing rain showers. We anchor off one of the main jetty's as Greg tells us there are people at the sea wall selling their wares so a group of us head in to check out the local wood carvings. We put the queen of negotiating Marle to work as we pick up a few more things to take home. The reality starts to set in that we have a really early morning flight tomorrow and that this wonderful adventure is coming to an end. We will spend the evening reviewing all the wonderful photo's that we took and of course a scorching game of Skipbo. Why is it every time you teach someone the game they turn around and win? We won't even mention how many games Dale won, no...he's not competitive....not at all.



Day 15:

It's a 4:45 am wake up call to finish packing, have some coffee and breakfast and wait for our bus to arrive. Greg and I had spoke the night before about how the bus coming from Tawali better be empty as our group takes the entire bus with all our luggage. He assures me they know that and of course I am skeptical, transfers are one of the biggest screwups when trying to move large groups. So it was not a big surprise when the bus showed up at 6:00 am ½ filled with a group

from Tawali. Greg jumps on board and go's to pick up another van that will hold our group. They return and stuff all our luggage in the bus with the other group and the rest of us all pile in the little van for the 20 minute ride to airport. Did I say that it was pouring rain this morning? This will be the limiting factor on whether our plane will land as there are no lights at the Alotau airport and they have to have enough visibility to see the runway. Luck is on our side as the plane touches down a little late, but at least it's there. This flight out of Alotau will either make or break the rest of your trip from here, if it doesn't show, your screwed. We did our celebration dance a little to early as we landed in Ports Moresby, 8 pieces of luggage are missing. Our next flight doesn't leave until 3:25 pm and it is only 9:00 am. We give the luggage guy all the info, he assures us that they are putting it on another airline and the plane will land at 1:00 pm. At this point you have to cross your fingers and go with the flow as you may never see your luggage again. We head up to the International Terminal to check in for our next flight and get rid of what luggage we have. Here's one of the great things about other countries, we were able to check in with what luggage we had and get our boarding passes and when our luggage showed we would just come up and check the last piece, you know that would never happen in the states! We head outside to flag down the Airways Hotel van as we are scheduled to hang out at the pool and have lunch. You know your in trouble when you tell them your group is here and they give you that blank stare like you just arrived from the moon. The group has a seat as Bob and I try to work out the details, fortunately we have a fantastic group and they just roll with it-Thank you everyone for being so great! We have a great buffet lunch and relax a little before heading back to the airport to try and claim our lost luggage. Go figure, the plane will now be arriving at 2:00 pm. Bob runs down to the domestic terminal to talk to the same luggage guy "Michael" and he assures him it is coming, they still have the list we gave them-this is a good sign-they remember us. The scene outside the Port Moresby airport has changed, it is now very crowded with lot's of people milling around. When we arrived at 7:00 am it was a ghost town. After all that we read about this airport, it seems they have really tried to take control back. There was certainly plenty of police present and any cars just sitting were told to move, a few people were peddling their wares. Now I'm not saying you don't need to pay attention and be aware but, it never felt dangerous or where we needed to be fearful. We are back at the international airport and the entire staff at Air Nuigini knows we are there waiting for this luggage-this is a real advantage of being in a group, there's more of us to be seen. It's now 2:30 pm and we are really getting nervous, those that had all their luggage went on to the gate and were

not going to let the plane leave until we were all on board. I check with the agent again, she assures me they are holding the plane for us-wow, we may get this luggage after all. It's 2:45 pm and it actually appears from a side door, amazing! We scramble trying to get it checked back in and suddenly everything is going as slow as molasses! Maybe it's just my blood pressure rocketing as I slowly see the 3:25 pm departure creeping closer. The agent assures me again, they are holding the plane, she is calling to let them know we are on our way. I have to give credit to the Air Niugini staff as they really were on top of getting our luggage AND holding the plane until we all got there. We arrive in Singapore for an overnight at the Transit Hotel in the airport. This is the only way to go! It's a nice facility, there's one in each terminal and you never leave the airport. In the morning you pick up your boarding pass and get on your next flight and all your luggage stays in transit.

Day 16:

Wake up call 4:15 am, story of our life this vacation. Everyone is up and getting boarding passes. Off to find some food and wait for the flight.

Summary:

PNG is a very unique place. It is very remote and possibly the most adventurous trip we have ever done. It is beautiful and the people that we meet are very friendly and shy. They watch us in amazement as a large boat comes into their bays, put on all this crazy gear and go underwater. We are experiencing things that you only see on the Discovery Channel. These people out here live off the land, there are no stores nearby, no electricity, doctors, police etc. Especially the farther away we travel on the live-aboard. Tawali resort is a very nice resort and their limitations are due to availability of supplies. No fish this week? They have to plan their menus around what shows up at the market. Same with the Spirit of Nuigini, you better like chicken as that is the staple for two weeks of lunches and dinner. There wasn't a big variety in the way of food just chicken, lamb and the occasional beef (over-cooked) different ways each day. Both the resort and boat had Nitrox available for the entire trip and with 14 divers breathing 4-5 tanks each a day, that's a lot of tank fills. If you are the adventurous type, rolls with the punches easily and expect that things are going to break and it will NOT be like home this trip is for you. The diving is incredible and the experience alone is worth the trip. I can pretty much say you will never experience anything like it in your life. Go with the expectations of a three star rating and you will have the time of your life. If you need a 5 star dive vacation, you have set your

expectations to high and will be sadly disappointed. Even after 8 months in dry dock the Spirit of Nuigini needs work, mechanical as well as finishing work. This makes it tough on the crew when everyone is telling you there's no water again and you don't even have the right tools or parts to do anything. In the end several people from the group leave behind tools and parts and pieces they can easily replace when they return home. If you do come out here bring school supplies and clothing. We made the mistake of leaving all our school supplies at Tawali when really the outer islands needed these supplies more. Anytime we do a trip like this it forever makes me grateful for how fortunate we are to live in the place we do and the things we take for granted everyday. If you ever have the chance to take an adventure like this, it will change your life forever.

Bob and I would like to thank our entire group for making this trip an unforgettable one for us. We hit a record number of milestones and birthdays this trip and enjoyed celebrating everyone of them with you. So thank you Dale, Peggy, Marle, Allison, John G, Jesse, Linda, Kirsten, Gary, Jim, Mary and Jon W. You are all very special people to us and we love traveling with you!

Cluck, cluck....come on now my little peeps.

