

# Wakatobi, Indonesia

## Kelley & Bob's big adventure

January 7-24, 2013

Vancouver BC---Hong Kong—Bali, Denpasar

Departure Day:

The skies were cold and gray as the rain beat down on the car as we make our way to the Vancouver BC airport. It's time to get the hell out of here and head for sunshine and warmth! Bob and I are going on a real vacation, just the two of us. I think the last time this happened we had taken our first trip to Fiji, I can't remember the year, but I think we have returned with groups at least 4 times since then, so it was a long time ago. We are doing it up right as we had saved all our miles for business class tickets onboard Cathay Pacific Airlines. Before boarding we enjoyed the lounge at the airport with some snacks and drinks and then just walked to the gate and boarded right on the plane. This is one of their new 777 and business class has lay flat



pods. This is the best business class we have ever flown! You are in your own area and really don't need to see anyone around you if you don't want to. Plenty of food and drink to keep us occupied for the nearly 14 hour flight to Hong Kong. To lay flat on the plane and get some sleep is incredible; you might actually feel human when you land. I have to say that the movie selection is not great so I have spent most of my time reading or sleeping. Due to our flight schedule we have to

overnight in Hong Kong this time before we catch our flight to Bali. Hotels are super expensive in Hong Kong and we are staying at the transit hotel in the airport, hopefully it is as good as the one in Singapore.

Day ½

We made a big mistake and ASSUMED our hotel in Hong Kong was IN the terminal. We went through security to stay "in Transit" only to find out we have to go out through immigration and customs to get to the Hong Kong Regal Airport Hotel. Now that we are in transit we cannot get out, so we head to the Cathay Pacific Business Class Lounge for help. They have to call someone to literally walk us out to immigration. Finally we get to the hotel and this has now be about 1 ½ hrs since we have landed. Oh well, live and learn. I should have done a bit more research on where it was located at the airport. The hotel is big with plenty of amenities and the rooms were very nice and you could not even hear the airport noise. Time for a good night's sleep.

Day 2:

This morning we make our way back to the airport and we have to go through security and customs to get back into the departure area and we weren't really sure how long that was going to take. Pretty quiet this morning at security so getting through all of that went smoothly. We enter the Cathay Business Lounge and it is bustling, plenty of food here with a fresh juice bar, espresso machine and comfortable chairs. Get here early as the place is packed! Now we just sit and wait for our next flight to Bali enjoying our latte and pan au chocolate, sounds like we are headed to France instead! Flight went well, a little bumpy, it was just about a 5 hour flight from Hong Kong. We were greeted by our Wakatobi rep as soon as we entered the immigration hall and we handed him our passports and \$25 each for our visitor pass. He then strolls us past all the other people waiting in a very long line and takes us straight to baggage claim. While we wait for our luggage he then heads to the office to process our passports. All our luggage shows up and we are on our way out of the airport. Here you pass a huge wall of money changers. Be very careful and make sure that you count all the money, do not take their word for it. It's one of the biggest scams in Bali. After talking with our Wakatobi rep we are then handed off to our ICS rep who is driving us to our resort, Alila. It takes us about 1 ¾ hours to get there, but the resort is beautiful. Perched high atop a ridge line, it is a spectacular view. It is almost like you are sitting in the middle of the jungle surrounded by the calls of all the local wildlife. Our room is small but the view from the deck is grand as well as the grounds. The infinity pool looks like it is going right off the hillside. We decide to have dinner here tonight as you are quite a distance away



from Ubud. Food was good and the view from the table was down the valley. We did have a very loud Gecko that was calling for a mate and it was the loudest call I have ever heard. Apparently he is a very large one and has placed himself just outside a drain tube so his call is amplified throughout the restaurant, pretty brilliant if you ask me. We make our way back to our room to call it a night. You can listen to all the sounds of the jungle as you sleep because the roof on our room is thatched. Pretty cool.

### Day 3



On our way down off the ridge top we stopped at a fruit stand and tasted all the local fruit in season.

This morning starts out with sunny skies and a most enjoyable breakfast overlooking the valley. And yes, they have an espresso machine! At 8:00 am we joined another couple for Tai Chi down by the pool. This was perfect to align our chi before a partial day of touring. Our guide and driver pick us up at 9:00 am and we are going to see Lake Batur and the volcano of Mt. Batur. Luck was on our side this morning as the skies were clear and we had an incredible view. From our resort it only took about a 1 hour drive as we took the back roads with much less



We had bananas, Mangosteen, passion fruit, dragon fruit, oranges and a couple others I can't recall the name. We purchased a bag full of fruit and headed on our way. We decide to make a stop to see a very touristy coffee growing operation. As we walk along the trail our guide points out all the different plants like coffee, cocoa, ginger, lemon grass etc. They have several Lewacs in a cage for the infamous Lewac coffee which the



cats eat the coffee bean, digest it and poop it out. Someone cleans it and makes you a cup of coffee out of it. Who thinks of this stuff? You can skip this one, not a stop I would do twice. Time to move on as we make our way back to Ubud to the best woodcarvers in town. We have several masks from each trip before, so we certainly need to add another one to our collection. So much to choose from it's very hard to decide, but we choose a nice one out of Ebony wood and I think it's the biggest one we have ever bought. Of course, over the years the price has changed dramatically, but you should at least pay  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the price you see on the tag. Time for lunch and we stop at the



Lotus Café for a quick bite. The Lotus Café is right at the entrance to the Ubud Royal Palace Temple and as we enjoy our lunch large groups of people start filing in to prepare for a ceremony later today. I think the pool is calling our name so we make our way back to our hotel to enjoy the rest of the afternoon. Did I mention it is the rainy season? Shortly after jumping in the pool the rain starts coming down and for the rest of the day it is just a constant deluge on and off. We are sitting out on



our patio enjoying a couple of cold Bintang's and on the table is all the fruit that we had bought earlier in the day. Something catches my eye and I look up to see 2 very large Macaque monkeys making their way toward us on the roof top. I yell to Bob to watch out as they jump down on our patio eyeing the table full of fruit. We grab the fruit and hustle inside our room as we are now being held captive by 2 monkeys. They peer inside the window at us and it is really uncomfortable and hysterical at the same time. Lesson learned. Time to start organizing our luggage as we have to depart at 5:15 am to catch our flight over to Wakatobi

tomorrow. We are so excited to start diving I hope we actually get some sleep tonight!

## Day 4

Wake up call is 4:30 am this morning as we get ready to make our way back to the airport. Our driver is there



to pick us up right on time and the resort has packed a very nice box breakfast for us to eat on the drive. Traffic is very light this morning so we make it to the airport by 6:15 am. Better to be early than late as you cannot miss this flight. If you do, kiss your Wakatobi vacation day's goodbye, it will take you 3 days by boat, car and canoe I think! The airport is under construction right now but is scheduled to be finished by October; I guess we will see upon our return. We are escorted all the way through the terminal to luggage check-in to the private lounge to await our flight. Everything is

seamless, which is what you are expecting for service from this resort. You do not have to pay the 40,000 rph domestic departure tax, it is already taken care of for you. We meet a few of our fellow travelers as we wait for our flight and after talking with several of them many are repeat customers. That is a great indication on what is to come as they cannot say enough great things about the service. Our flight departs just after 8:00 am and we are about ½ hr into the flight when an announcement is made that we have lost cabin pressure and we'll be heading back to Bali. What?? This isn't good, as many of you know how I hate to fly. The joy of almost being there has been swept away as we off load the plane in Bali and wait for further instruction. The Wakatobi staff quickly assembles and starts to come up with several different plans on what our options will be. This is equally as bad for all the people who are waiting at Wakatobi to depart and catch connecting flights home later today. I have to applaud the Wakatobi staff as they kept us informed on what was happening and as it turned out our plane would not be flying again as it needed a part that was not in Bali. Since it will be several hours before anything will happen they ask us if we would like to leave the airport and go to some place on the beach to relax while we wait for a plane. Hell yah, we're out of here! Cars are quickly arranged and take us to the Ma Jolly hotel in Kuta. Here we sit and have a nice breakfast and enjoy the ocean breeze, whatever we would like, and Wakatobi is taking care of the bill. Another charter flight has been arranged and we will be departing sometime around 12:45 pm. Take 2 as we make our way back into the airport, through security and back to the gate. This is actually a very long walk due to the construction so at least we have had our exercise



today. Back on another plane it will be a short 2 ½ hr our flight over to the island. It is a bumpy ride and I am very thankful once our plane touches down, just 5 hrs behind schedule, but still amazing that we made it here today. A short car ride to the awaiting boat and then it is just a 20 minute ride to the resort. It is quite windy today but the sun is out and it is beautiful. We are greeted at the dock by all the staff and our personal guide will show us to our room and go over all the details of the resort. We meet back up at the dive center with our cert cards and take care of all the details of analyzing our Nitrox tanks, bin assignments, boat assignments, camera room etc. Since it is getting late we decide that we do not want to do a night check out dive and opt to get our cameras set up and enjoy a cold Bintang out on the pier. The sun drops behind a cloud bank so there will be no sunset tonight and the wind has really picked up since



our arrival. Apparently, last night it really howled, so much that they had to remove the roof from the pier bar. Dinner is served at 7:00 pm and it is quite the selection. It is buffet style but all items are plated and all you

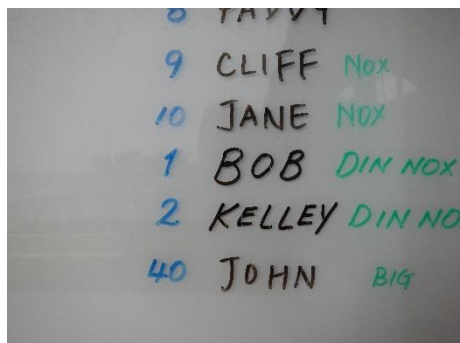


have to do is grab a small plate of whatever you like. There is fresh tuna thinly sliced, lamb, soups, salads and of course dessert. After filling our bellies we quickly make our way to the longhouse for the nightly slide show and tonight it is "habitat". This is great as it gives us a lot of information on where all the little macro critters might be hiding. The wind has really picked up as we head back to our bungalow for a good night's sleep.

Day 5



At 2:00 am the wind is howling and the rain is coming down in buckets which is so loud it wakes me up. So much for that good night's sleep! Finally around 5:30 I just give up and get out of bed. The day starts early here as we have to be on the boat by 7:30 am and being that it's the first day you're never quite sure how it all works. No worries as we found out because the staff has loaded all the equipment and suits so you don't lift a finger. Not even for your camera system. The wind is still blowing this morning and the skies are gray with very black clouds in the distance, welcome to the summer season in Indonesia. Oh well, we are going to be



underwater anyways. We check the board to see what boat we're on today and Bob is jumping up and down as he cannot believe that he has finally made #1 on the list. Oh, brother. Let's go diving. The first dive is a check out dive and we have to do a couple of skills of mask clearing and air sharing with your buddy. No problem, we whip through that and on with the dive as we spot a giant Cuttlefish just below us. We drift easily along the wall and enjoy a nice 70 minute dive profile.



Back to the resort for a quick break and then out we go for dive number 2. There are only 7 of us on each boat because right now the capacity in the resort is 14 guests, which normally holds 56 guests so there is plenty of room to spread out. The dive boats are very big and spacious and stable. Even in



this wind they are not bobbing up and down and this is great for those of us who suffer from seasickness. There is a very large head on board as well as a big camera rinse tank. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> dive we go back to the resort for lunch and then the afternoon dive is at 2:15 pm. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> dive site is called "the Zoo" which is their signature dive. Here the hard corals are unbelievable and the fish life is so abundant. Shelly our guide finds us a White Pygmy Seahorse which is about the size of a

grain of rice, and this one we have never seen before. Incredible dive site. Back at the resort we have an afternoon behind the scenes resort tour which is led by Miguel. He shows us exactly what it takes to keep this resort running smoothly from their desalination system, staff housing, compressors and all the rest. It really does make you appreciate what they do for us here with all the comforts that we are enjoying. Back at the

longhouse we have a quick beer, fill out our logbooks and then head to the managers cocktail party. Finish the day up with a little dinner and then back to the room to download photos and catch up with the day. Bob suddenly cries out for the bug spray as he has just seen a GIGANTIC spider go galloping across the floor. I leap from the chair to the bed as he slowly tracks it down and sprays the daylight out of it. It is still moving and it is BIG! Good grief how am I going to sleep now? Hopefully, I'm just too tired to even worry about it. It is time for bed as we anxiously await our second day of diving.

## Day 6

Definitely had a better night's sleep despite the spider encounter as we wake up to the humming of the Cicada's and birds singing; the perfect alarm clock. The wind is still up and the skies are gray as the remnants from the cyclone down by Tasmania are still affecting us. As the boats take off for the dive sites the skies are black and the seas are high as we attempt to locate the ridge we planned on diving. The squall is now upon us and it is dumping rain and visibility on the surface is zero so we just try and jump on a site near the wall to get



down. I don't think it really matters where you jump in as the diving is great anywhere we go. Shelly our guide finds us a nice Purple Pygmy Seahorse on a sea fan. The fish life is swirling all around us as two small Bumphead Parrot fish go swimming by. We cannot get back to the resort as the tide is too low, the wind is howling and it is pouring down rain. We have a problem with one of our engines so we



are held up about an extra ½ hr as they try and get it running so we can get to our next dive. The second dive we find all sorts of critters like 2-Sea Kraits, Octopus, Peacock Razorfish, 3-Juvenile Midnight Snappers, Bubble Coral Shrimp and a beautiful yellow Leaf Scorpionfish. The ride



back to the resort is a wild one as we have to make a channel crossing and the waves are big! Finally a hot shower and lunch and we are ready to try the house reef. The wall is vertical and loaded with soft corals and fish. A huge Turtle came swimming by with 2-Remoras clinging to its back as it finds a nice ledge to land on for a quick snooze. In one of the little caves there is a Giant Green Moray who seems to be a bit camera shy. Farther down the wall we find 2-Crocodile Flatheads sitting on separate ledges, lots of Nudibranchs, Picasso Triggerfish and a Titan Triggerfish. As we near the end of the dive the visibility takes a dive down to about 2 feet so we decide to surface and we are right by the jetty so we can easily get out. We have a boat night dive tonight so we need to get everything charged and ready for a 5:30 departure. Time flies by and it is time to board the boat. The

dive site is the Zoo which we dove the day before and it is a fantastic dive, so we have high hopes for the night dive. It does not disappoint! So many critters to photograph! Mantis Shrimp, Juvenile Pinnate Batfish, Orange





Frogfish, 4-Pygmy Cuttlefish, 3- different Flatworms, Crinoid Shrimp, not to mention all the other fish. Incredible dive as we finally surface after 80 minutes. It's 8:30 by the time we make it to the restaurant for dinner. After 4 very long dives today we are REALLY ready for bed.

## Day 7

Surprise! It is windy with black skies this morning, imagine that. At least we are still diving and the visibility is still pretty good underwater. I think we are ready for some sunshine, I mean we brought this sunscreen, when are we going to get the chance to use it? Both dives this morning were vertical walls with spectacular soft



corals and some of the largest Sea fans and Sponges I have ever seen. On both dives Bob found Pygmy Seahorse, 1 on the first dive and 4 on the second. Just call him eagle eye Bob. The sun made a brief appearance between our dives followed up by a giant squall with driving wind and rain. The third times a charm as we locate one more Pygmy Seahorse on the dive; along with a beautiful White Mouth Moray, Spadefish, and a Turtle. Bob decides to do a house reef dive as I decide a glass of wine is a better option for me. After 90 minutes he returns with reports of everything he has seen: giant turtle, huge basket stars, great Nudibranchs and cleaning stations. Dinner tonight is an Indonesian tasting menu, where they just bring out each course for us to try. It was absolutely wonderful and not too much food, it was just right. The wind has died and the stars are out but there is still lightening in the distance. We have our fingers crossed for better weather tomorrow.

## Day 8

I think I see slightly lighter gray skies, the wind has laid down and the water is much calmer than it has been for the last 5 days. By the time we board the boat for the dives we have blue skies and full on sunshine! No one has brought any sunscreen as we are all used to not needing it. The reefs are much brighter and it just makes for better diving. The visibility is still down but has cleared up quite a bit since it is not as rough. Today were are doing a dive called "Roma" which has incredible hard corals, schooling Black Snapper, and a million little fish swarming the coral heads. Here we have found a pink Leaf Scorpionfish, 2-Saron Shrimp, Flatworms, Nudis, and a huge rosette of Cabbage Coral. Second dive was Fan 38 which is a vertical wall dive with huge Sea fans. I spotted the first Blacktip Reef Shark cruise past way down deep and also a Sea Krait swimming in the blue just off the wall.



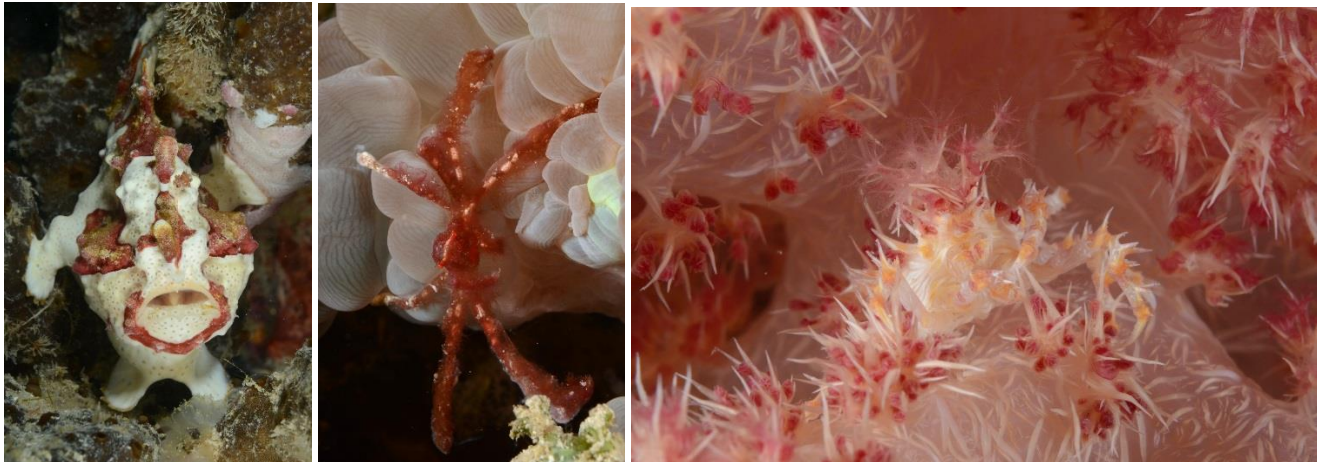
Plenty of little macro critters to shoot on the wall as well. The third dive was a site very close by and this is probably the worst visibility that we have had. Hard corals once again with small macro life as a Winged

Pipefish, Leaf Scorpionfish, Squat Lobster, Flatworms and a Mantis Shrimp out patrolling the reef. Once we are back at the dock Migul gives Bob and I a tour of the other rooms so we can see how they differ from each other. The Villas are spectacular and the view is incredible. The Beach Bungalows are a great second as you have larger porch space and privacy right on the beach. The Garden Bungalow is set back from the beach with trees surrounding you and a few have a peek-a-boo view of the water. Time for my massage, as it is very important that we check out all aspects of this resort. Later Bob heads back to our room just as very large snake is crossing the entry way, so he stops dead in his tracks and stomps his feet as the snake then continues on. He asks Miguel what type of snake might be here and he said they have Pythons! Good thing I didn't see it-yikes! We end the night with a drink at the Jetty bar and then off to dinner for another spectacular evening meal.



## Day 9

The weather looks promising, the sun is up it is windy but looks pretty good so far. Today is a switch out day as 5 guests are leaving and only 3 are coming in. That puts us down to 11 guests for the rest of the week. The first dive is across the way at the nearby Island so it is a bit calmer but the visibility seems to have gotten a bit worse due to the wind and the tide exchanges. Our second dive is Pinky's Wall which is the farthest that we



have traveled, at ½ hr away. The visibility here has probably dropped to about 40 ft but we did find 3- Orangutan Crabs and a White Warty Frogfish in 25 ft of water. Time for lunch and we meet the 3 new people that have arrived and tomorrow they will join us on our boat. Our third dive is Dunia Baru and it is a gorgeous hard coral dive with tons of swarming fish. We did find a soft Coral Crab on this dive which is one of my favorite critters. As we are underwater waiting to get back on the boat we hear a loud POP and we look around and the mooring line goes floating by Bob and I. We surface and yell to the boat; luckily we are not near any close by reefs. Back at the dock we make our way to the jetty bar to enjoy the sunshine and celebrate Jane's Birthday. At dinner they make her a lovely white chocolate cake and we all sing Happy Birthday. As we walk back to our bungalow the stars are so bright tonight we go out to the beach on a hammock and just stare up into the night sky. It is absolutely incredible how many stars you can see. In the far distance there is lightening



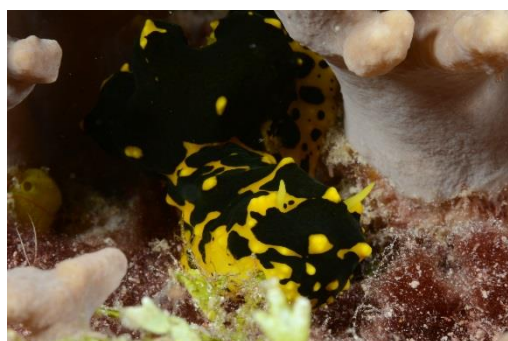
on the horizon so hopefully that will move past in the night. The night sky is one of the most incredible ones I have ever seen.

## Day 10

Cloudy and windy this morning with just a little bit of sun poking through. Hopefully this will burn off and be as nice as it was yesterday. We jumped in on the first dive and the visibility has improved dramatically! I might even be able to shoot some wide angle. The second dive was good as well with 3-Crocodile Flatfish, Emperor



Shrimp, Jawfish, Carpet Anemone Shrimp and much more. The 3<sup>rd</sup> dive was a long drive over to Galaxy where we found 2 more Orangutan Crabs, Swimming Sea Krait, Turtles, and Razorfish up in the shallows. Since the vis has been good all day, Bob and I decide to do a 4<sup>th</sup> dive off the house reef. The dive starts out good with no



current but after ½ hr the current starts up but is blowing in our face. This isn't good as we have to swim back to the pier and were not sure what the plan would be if we drifted away from the resort. So for the next hour we slowly make our way into the current back to the pier. We are exhausted! However, we had a good dive and saw a yellow and black Nudibranch we had never seen before, a huge Green Moray, and a giant Barracuda came swimming past in the blue. Time for some dinner and straight to bed.

## Day 11

Alarm went off at 5:30 am as we still have to analyze Nitrox tanks and I am switching to wide angle today. It is partly cloudy and the wind is down so I have my fingers crossed for great things today. The sun actually



decided to come out and it is a gorgeous day. There is quite a bit of floating stuff in the water so I have my fingers crossed that any of this wide angle will come out. On the first dive we had a giant Cuttlefish that just hung around and was not bothered by us at all so we took full advantage and shot a ton of photos. Second dive was Pastel which has beautiful soft corals in soft pastel colors. Third dive today is the house reef as tonight we have scheduled the night dive so there is no afternoon boat dive. Last time things did not go well so we double

check with everyone which way the current is running and put in at the usual marker. We have 5 minutes with no current and then

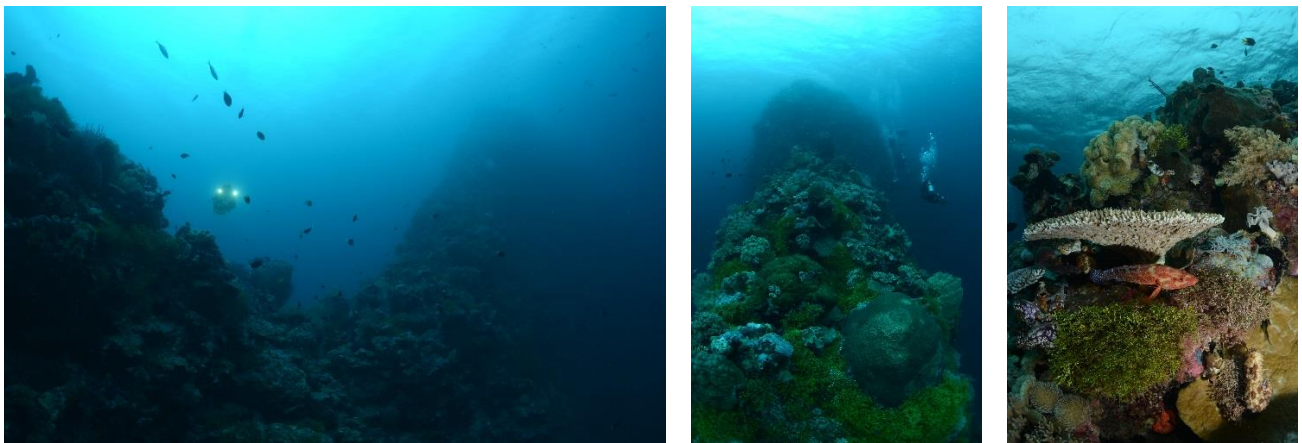
someone pulled the drain plug and away we go. Of course it is going away from the resort and this time we cannot swim against it, so we go along for the ride. We finally come to a cut where we can hide from the current and find two huge Turtles with Remoras on their back. The pose nicely for photos and then swim off on



their way. After an hour we decide to go up and in 20-30 ft of water there are beautiful orange soft corals and great fish life. We hang out for a while then send our surface marker up and by the time we surface the taxi is already on its way to us. Time for a quick break as we get ready for our night dive which we are doing the Flou-dive. We have a 45 minute class and our masks are fitted with special yellow lenses and we will use blue lights. It takes a little getting used to but as soon as it is dark the corals start to fluoresce a bright green color. It really is incredible how some corals and animals glow and others are just black. We find Spearing Mantis Shrimp that glow bright green, Scorpionfish that glow deep red, Orangutan Crab that is brilliant orange and a Moray Eel all aglow in yellow-green. Simply amazing! If you get the opportunity to try the Flou-dive here it is a lot of fun. We're exhausted so after dinner it is straight to bed.

## Day 12

We did not get much sleep last night as around 2:30 am a huge storm rolled in with heavy rains and roaring thunder. It is so loud on these rooftops I actually had to put some earplugs in! Morning rolls around and it is raining with gray skies, bummer. We are diving "Blade" today which is an hour ride away from the resort, but it



is an incredible ridge that rises up from the deep. It's a little windy by the time we arrive at the dive site but still not that bad. A quick briefing and we jump in and indeed it is a mountainous ridgeline that we are diving. I



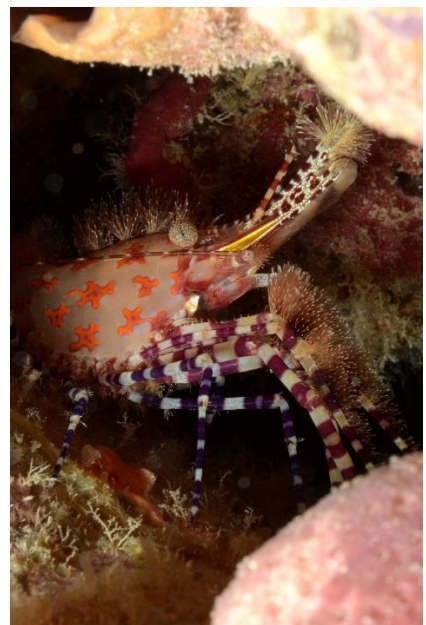
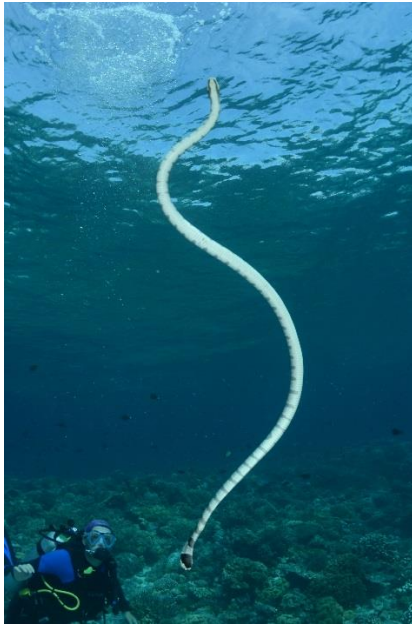
don't think we have ever dove anything quite like it. The topography was incredible and the site had some great sea life on it like a nice Blue Ribbon Eel and a Leaf Scorpionfish. Our second dive was "Fan Garden" which we found a Denise Pygmy Seahorse, tons of Orangutan Crabs and another Leaf Scorpionfish. After lunch we went to "Trail Blazer" which starts out in a sandy area with gigantic Barrel and Tube Sponges. Then it turns into a nice wall with beautiful soft corals and ends up in a hard coral garden. We did find another large Cuttlefish just hanging out. Back to the resort and after a hot shower we sit down with Jimmy as he gives us our departure information and the schedule for our last day. I can't believe we are leaving, it seems like we just got here! A huge storm rolls through again with a spectacular light and thunder show. Time for another incredible meal and off to bed.

## Day 13

We awoke to partly cloudy with a definite chance for sunshine. We board the boat for the first dive and the group throws up a boycott and demands that the crew take us to "Roma" for our last day of diving. Luck was on our side as we get our way and boy was it worth it. The dive had everything going on this morning. We had schooling Barracuda, mating Octopus, Leaf Scorpionfish and more Sea Kraits than I can count. Our second dive



was “Spiral Gardens” which was a bit of a disappointment after Roma. We did find one Cuttlefish and a whole



lot of crazy current. After we return, gear is washed and hung to dry as I race off for a facial and Bob packs camera equipment. At 2:30 pm we meet up for the village tour which ends up being just Bob and I. It is interesting to see how the locals live, very poor and modest, but you have to remember you are in the middle of nowhere. We wander around as Ezra gives us the history about the Sea Gypsy's that used to live on their boats and slowly started transitioning to live in houses over the water. Then, they just started expanding up onto the island and that was how the village was formed. As we walk the streets many of the villagers have motorbikes that they use to get to the resort for work. As one comes by us a small chicken runs out into the road and gets hit by the bike. Great, the highlight now is the flatten chicken! I guess someone's having chicken for dinner instead of fish. Some of the villagers have set up a sort of shopping section of misc stuff and sarongs.



You might want to take a little bit of money if you would like to donate to the cause. The skies are starting to turn an ugly shade of black as a huge thunderstorm is on the

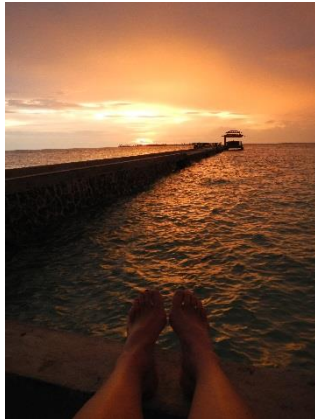


way. We return back to the resort to do a little packing then it's off to cooking class at 4:30 pm. Chef Andy teaches us how to make curry from fresh local ingredients. The rain is coming down in buckets with more lightning strikes and loud thunder. So much for the gear drying. We



haul all the gear back to our bungalow and hang it from the rafters in hopes that it will dry by tomorrow so we

can pack it up. Dinner is a buffet of sushi tonight with fresh tuna and prawns. It's so good that that's all I had for dinner....along with chocolate dessert. Back to the room to start packing because tomorrow will come early and we will have tons more packing in the morning. Yuck!



#### Day 14

Another huge rain squall with loud thunder comes rolling through in the middle of the night. It is extremely loud in our bungalow as the rain comes down on the roof. The alarm goes off early at 6:00 am as we have to get everything packed this morning for our departure. We go to breakfast to say farewell to all the great people we have met on this trip. Then it's back to the room to get all that stuff back into the bags in which they came. We get to the longhouse at about 9:30 am

to settle up our bill as we sit and wait for our departure from the resort. The plane is only running about 30



minutes behind time so we will depart the resort at 10:45 am. It is then a 20 minute boat ride to the main island and a short 5 minute car ride to the airport strip where we anxiously await our flight home. The flight lands and 26 anxious new passengers are waiting for their turn to enjoy the "Wakatobi Experience". Shortly after they have everything unloaded they wave us towards the plane and we are airborne for Bali. We

are greeted by the Wakatobi staff upon our arrival as they help us gather up luggage and take each of us in the direction we need to go. Our driver Sueta is waiting for us, so we quickly load up our luggage in the car and we are just a short 15 minute drive to the Santika Beach Resort. Check in is a breeze and we are at the pool bar having a cold Bintang by 5:00 pm. We make our way to the beach for sunset and the wind is howling as the clouds move in and there will be no sunset tonight. For dinner we decide on Café Batung Warong which is just a short walk down from our hotel. It has great food at a great price. It's been a long day so time to call it a night.



#### Day 15

Looks like a nice sunny day as we start our day off with breakfast. It is included in the price of the hotel and it's buffet style and has everything you can imagine. Our plan today is to walk to Kuta Beach and find a massage, pedicure & manicure. The wind is already blowing hard this morning as we walk along the beach heading for the main center of Kuta. Plenty of shopping along the way as the vendors on the walkway are relentless. As we wander down Poppies Lane 2, we find a shop that will do all 3 services for 120,00 rupiah, which is about \$12US. We're game as we wander inside and make sure it is fairly clean and respectable. Remember, you get what you pay for. Yes, we had an hour massage. Was it great? Not really. Did I get my nails trimmed up and looking better after 10 days underwater, yes. If you think this is the total spa experience, forget it. A real spa 90 minute hot rock massage will run you about \$45 US, which is still way cheaper than home, and is truly a great massage. After all the services we start hunting for a restaurant called Warong Nikmat, which is a local's hangout with great food and cheap prices. I think we had to ask at least 10 people for directions before we



finally found it. This place was hopping. Of course we have no idea what the food is but basically there are glass display cases where all the food is and you go behind the counter where there are about 4 ladies serving lunch. You basically point your way through the selection and hope for the best. After you have a plate full, the lady hands you a card which is the amount you will be charged for the food. My plate, which was completely full, was less than \$2 US. The beer and water cost more than the food we ate. It is hot and we are ready to have some pool time as we find our way back to our hotel. Life is good sitting at the pool bar enjoying the rest of the afternoon. Looks like we may have a sunset so we get cleaned up and go to the beach along with



everyone else as we watch some very black clouds form overhead. It only sprinkles on us but it is the first full sunset that we have had this entire trip. The only thing missing was a green flash which is when the sun hits the horizon. This was a perfect way to end our last night in Bali. We decided to wing it for dinner and as we left the hotel we took a right and hoped for the best. We stumbled upon a restaurant called "Mozzarella" which served any kind of food you were looking for, but their specialty is prime rib or steak. We were not that hungry so we only had an appetizer and salad and it was pretty good. The

place was filling up with people so that is always a good sign and I think most people were having the steak. At the hotel we finish up with our final pack as we are departing tomorrow at 1:45 pm to check in for our flight leaving at 4:00 pm to Hong Kong. Better get some sleep tonight as tomorrow will be a very long day.



## Day 16

I hear a torrential downpour outside this morning as we wake up to our last day in Bali. We have a 10:00 am 90 minute hot rock massage scheduled this morning at the Ramada next door. The spa at the Santika was booked but the Ramada has a huge spa so no problems getting in. We have a leisurely breakfast and then stroll over next door for 90 minutes of relaxation. After being smeared with chocolate oil that smells so good I think I might eat myself, we shower and head over to the pool for the last hour of sunshine before our long trek home. Our driver shows up right on time and we are just a quick 10 minute ride to the airport as our friend Bernard meets us to walk us all the way through until we hit immigration. We bid him farewell until we see him again in October. Our flight to Hong Kong is quite pleasant as we are on Cathay Pacific's new 747 with pod seating. We have 4 hours in Hong Kong before the long flight home. We are sad to leave but know that it will only be 9 more months before we are to return with our group for a great dive adventure.



Happy Travels, Kelley & Bob