

# LEMBEH & SILADEN

SULAWESI, INDONESIA

OCT 22-NOV 10, 2019

Anacortes Diving Adventure Team



Mike, Liz K, Peggy, Kelley, Dale, Liz W, Wayne, Bob, Mary

# Lembah & Siladen, Indonesia

Oct 22-Nov 10, 2019

Route—Seattle—Singapore--Manado aboard Singapore Airlines and Silk Air

Pre-departure:

We all met up at 6 PM at the dive store and headed for Seattle to overnight before our flight out Tuesday morning. It was raining buckets! The drive was a white knuckler just coming through Mt. Vernon. We made a quick stop for dinner and we all arrived in one piece. A few of us went out for a drink to calm our nerves from that horrible drive. Time for a good night's sleep.

Day 1

Everyone is up early as we catch the shuttle to the airport. Because we are staying for 2 nights in Singapore our luggage is to stay "in transit" so we don't have to lug all our dive equipment to the hotel. Of course, this becomes a problem right away when they say they can't do it. After much confusion, discussion and double checking we find someone who can actually pull it off. There was a work around and we just had to find the right person to take care of it. Good thing we showed up early as we had the counter pretty locked up until they got it figured out. The lesson here is if you are staying more than 24 hours than they really aren't supposed to keep your luggage in transit. And I do believe that with some airlines it might be only 12 hours. Once on the plane we settle in for the 16 hour direct flight to Singapore. We do have to start the flight off with a Singapore sling



cocktail to celebrate the start of our trip. The flight seemed to go on forever but pretty soon we were landing in Singapore. Time to go horizontal! Off the plane we go to immigration and customs and then make a stop at the Singapore holiday stopover counter just outside baggage claim. They give us our transfer tickets, a quick run-down of what our stopover includes and then it is just a short wait for the next bus to pick us up. Luckily we didn't have all our bags because they weren't too happy taking a bunch of suitcases. The transfer was only supposed to take about 30 minutes and it

had to be a good hour before we finally arrived at the Peninsula Excelsior hotel. A quick check in and then to our rooms for a good shower and some horizontal time.

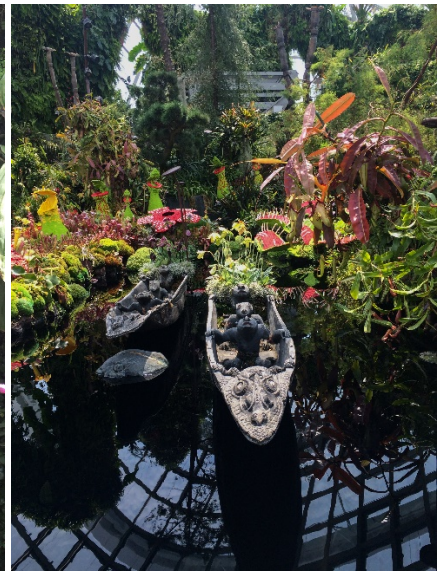
Day 2

Well, we were awake around 3 AM, but laid there until 4:30 AM and then just gave up. Fixed a coffee and watched the sun come up over the city. Bob and I ventured out of the hotel around 7 AM and checked out the area. Made a quick stop for breakfast and then back to the hotel to meet up with the group at 9 AM. Mike & Liz came over from their hotel and then we are off and exploring. Today we are doing the Marina district, with the



large wire trees and gardens. Along the way there was plenty to see like the Merlion with the Marina Sands Hotel always in the background as it looks like a large boat on top of a couple of pillars. There is a sky bridge to pass through the hotel to the other side. After checking out the trees, we decide that we are going to the Flower





Dome and Cloud Forest. The displays in the flower dome are amazing along with the wooden animals built into the displays. The Cloud Forest has a huge waterfall and you start at the top and work your way down literally spiraling around on the walkways. Time for lunch so we jump into cabs and go to the nearest food hawker



stands. It is high noon and completely packed. You can't even find a place to sit. It is overwhelming with all the choices. I just can't make a decision! There is literally every type of food you can imagine.

Everyone is on their own to try and find something to eat. The food is all really good and everyone was happy with their choices. Did I say that it was hot? I think it might be 100 F out, so we decide to go back to the hotel for a little pool and relaxation time before going back out tonight. We enjoy a few beers around the pool and then everyone is meeting up at 5 PM to start our evening tour. Our first stop is Raffles Hotel at the Long Bar. This is the home of the original Singapore Sling.

We grab a seat and discover that the going rate for this prized drink is now \$33 S! Wow, they are really proud of this thing. Oh well, we are here so we better do it. The drink itself is pretty good, I'm just not sure there was any alcohol in it. Back to our hotel to pick up Mary and then it is off to catch the MRT back to the waterfront. Since



we walked all day, we didn't really want to repeat that and Singapore has a great subway system. Mike & Liz have been here a lot so they are very familiar on how it all works, so with their help we arrive in the right place. We are back at the trees since there is a light show so we grab a seat and wait for the trees to light up. The show lasts about 15 minutes and is done to music. Pretty cool and well worth the walk back down. Then there is a light show at the Marina Sands Hotel along with a laser show in the little harbor on the backside of the hotel. Nobody is hungry for dinner and we are all starting to feel a bit worn out so we catch the subway back to the hotel and end our evening. Tomorrow is our flight to Sulawesi in the morning, so time for bed.





### Day 3

We ended up waking up again super early so after coffee, we call everyone to tell them we are leaving early. Surprise, everyone else is up and ready to go too. We grab a cab and it is about a 20 minute ride to the airport and cost \$20 S. I think this ride takes longer normally but no one was on the road at 6:30 AM. Our luggage had stayed in transit and we already had our boarding passes so we just make one stop for immigration and we are good to go. The rest of the group arrives and we have breakfast before going to our gate. This is when you want to grab anything from duty free to take with you. Before they let you into the seated area at the gate, you will go thru security one more time. Our flight departed about 15 minutes late and it was a 4 hour flight to Manado. Customs and immigration are easy and once outside it is torrential rain. Our crew from Dive into Lembeh is waiting for us so we load luggage in the truck and then the group into 3 vehicles and away we go. It will take about 90 minutes to get to the resort. Once we left Manado the rain did let up and it was dry pavement the rest of the way. Upon arrival at the resort, we are handed ice cold towels and juice as we sit for our briefings. Then they show us to our rooms so we can unpack and then have a dive briefing right before dinner. Other than a couple of people the resort is nearly empty as a big group has just left. After a wonderful dinner, I am done so early to bed for me.

### Day 4

Another 3 AM wake up. I really hope I get on this time zone soon, these early mornings are killing me. The upside is a cup of coffee on the porch as we enjoy the quiet time before the sun comes up. There are no roosters or dogs barking. Just the sound of the waves hitting the beach as the birds are starting to sing. This is what recharges the soul. First breakfast is out at 6:30 AM this consists of fruit, toast and cereal. Our first dive is 7:30, and our group of 9 is on 2 boats. Since the resort is nearly empty and we are the only group here we have our





own guide for each buddy group of 2. Once back at the resort we have our big breakfast, a short break and then dive 2 is at 10:45 AM. This is then followed by lunch around 1:00 PM and the last dive is at 2:30 PM. We are back at the resort around 4:00 PM and you still have time to do a house reef dive. Everyone is still about tired from travel so we all opt for cold drinks and relaxing in our onsens (hot tubs) on our decks. Dinner is served at 7:00 PM and tonight Ben is giving a slideshow of underwater photography. Most of us can barely keep our eyes open and I barely make it to bed. I think it is only 8:30 PM!

## Day 5

What a great night of sleep, finally! Woke up at 5:00 AM, perfect timing for coffee on the porch. Another 3 dive day today, followed by a night dive. We have had all kinds of great critter sightings from Coconut Octopus, Wonderpus, Mimic, Flamboyant Cuttlefish, Frogfish, Nudis, Seahorse etc. The most interesting thing was yesterday Peggy saw a Flamboyant Cuttlefish being born and today Liz W saw the same thing. So lucky to see it



actually happen. The coloring is so brilliant and they are super tiny. I was trying out my 105mm lens with a new 10X diopter today and it worked perfectly. The night dive delivered with loads of Frogfish running around, a couple of Bobbit Worms eating the catfish, all sorts of Pluerobranchs and Nudis. This was a great way to finish out the day of diving. Back to the resort for a quick hot tub and dinner. John puts on a slideshow for us to show all the strange critters here in Lembeh and maybe a new twist on how to shoot them. We can barely keep our eyes open so off to bed.



## Day 6

Another beautiful day with sunny skies and a nice breeze on the water. Our first dives had a lot of current so we were doing a bit of muck stick walking. Both groups were treated to a Hairy Octopus which is extremely rare to



see. Our guide Marsel just stumbled across it on our way up the slope. Second dive was a bit more relaxed with just a little bit of current. We even saw Mandarin Fish during the day time. Our third dive of the day was right in front of the resort where we found the Pontohi Seahorse and the Lembbeh Seadragon. Super difficult to get a shot of either one of these critters. Our fourth dive today is a house reef shore dive which the guides took us out



anyway. Here we found a couple more Pontohi Seahorse and more Lembbeh Seadragons. Towards dusk there were even Mandarin Fish to see. The coral off the resort is in really good shape with lots to see if the visibility wasn't so murky. A nice dip in the hot tub with a cold beverages and then time for dinner.

## Day 7

Here we go again. Another sunny morning with calm seas and we are off and diving. The Blue Ring Octopus is still elusive, but the guides keep looking. On the second dive we did see the Green Hairy Goby which is super

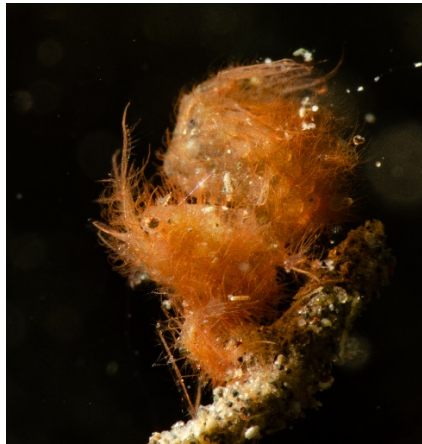




difficult to shoot and was only in 5 feet of water. After the third dive the other boat came back and apparently found the holy grail of Nudibranchs, the Melibe invisible. Hard to tell it is even a Nudibranch. For the last dive, Peggy, Wayne and myself are off to see if we have any luck with the Mandarinfish. There were Mandarinfish but only a couple of matings. That's how it goes sometimes. Mary, Mike & Bruce went out for a night dive and found all the usual critters. Lots of Octopus, nudi's, etc. Back to the room for a nice relaxing hot tub before dinner and that ends another day.

## Day 8

Happy Halloween! Today is our last day of diving, so it is only a 3 dive day. This is the day that we will look for all the things we haven't found yet. Our dive starts out with a beautiful coral dive up shallow as we work our way down deep to find the Fire Urchins with Coleman Shrimp the slope changes to what almost seems barren. Very strange. We find lots of Urchins with Shrimp in them and they are almost always a pair of Shrimp. The larger one being the female and the male is smaller. Up in the shallows there is a coral head that when you look inside it has a million Catfish looking out. Almost like they are trapped, it is really weird to see. We did finally find



three different Hairy Shrimp on our last dive and Bob found a Stargazer. It's been a fun week with lots of new critters that we haven't seen before. Time for a soak in the hot tub to warm up with a cold beverage to end our day. A little pre packing before getting a much needed massage and then dinner. Peggy is the only one with a Halloween costume this year and it's a good one! Congratulations to Mike & Liz who are celebrating their anniversary today. Time to pack before leaving on our next adventure.

## Day 9



Up bright and early to enjoy one last cup of coffee on the porch before the chaos of today takes over. Siladen Resort is picking us up by boat and we are diving our way around to the other side. Time for the wide angle lens as we say goodbye to muck diving. Since we will need all our dive gear and cameras it is a super easy pack this morning. The crew from Siladen shows up around 7:30 AM so we can start getting loaded up. The van arrives to take all the luggage by land to the resort. We settle up and say goodbye to the crew at Dive into Lembeh as they serenade us with their goodbye song. We load on the boat and we are off to dive the



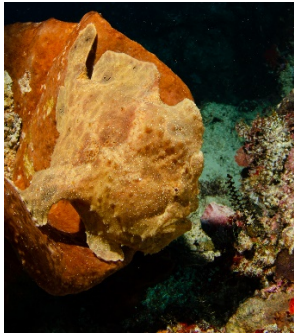
Banka Islands for a couple of dives. Here we have beautiful soft corals and the fish life is amazing. Gorgeous day out on the water today. After our two dives we pull up to a beach for lunch and since it looks like rain we opt to just eat on the boat. This was a good choice as it did start to rain midway thru lunch. It is now about an hour



boat ride to the resort. This big boat really gets up and moves. Since it is low tide we have to use a golf cart to get to the resort on the point. We settle in, have a meeting at the dive shop and finish up with cameras. Time for a cold beverage in the pool, which is salt water by the way. The pool is beautiful but no sunset tonight as the clouds move in. Back to the room for a quick shower and then time for dinner. It is served buffet style and tonight is BBQ night. The food is delicious and a lot to choose from. The wind has started to howl and the lightening is just off in the distance. By the time we are ready to call it a night, the thunder is rolling in and here comes the rain. Time to lay in bed and listen to the rain beat on the rooftop. All the plants will be well watered by then.

## Day 10

A little cloudy this morning but flat calm. Sitting on the porch this morning with a cup of coffee and there is no sound of roosters. Amazing. Two resorts and no roosters, this has got to be a record. As we take off from the resort there is a big swell coming in today from the high winds of last night. Change of plans with the swell and





big currents so like all the other boats we are hiding today. Our first two dives were wall dives with plenty of critters. We had lots of Turtles, Giant Frogfish and smaller stuff like Pontohi Seahorse, Nudis, Halimeda Ghost Pipefish etc. Back to the resort for lunch and a little down time before meeting back up for the afternoon dive at 2:45 PM. Our third dive is a wall, but we found a ton of macro critters along with some Eagle Rays that flew by. Once we are back at the resort the group is in for the night dive. The captain takes us over to the mainland of Sulawesi for some white sand muck diving. The night dive was 70 minutes of crazy critters! So many things to see from tiny Frogfish, small Squid, Nudis, Ornate Ghost Pipefish, crabs and shrimps galore. Back to the resort for a late dinner and off to bed.

## Day 11

Bob and Mike are down for the count. Looks like a head cold is going around. They are both taking the day off to recover. The rest of us are on our way for a couple of morning dives. The visibility on the first dive is incredible. It is so clear and there are Turtles everywhere. I think that is all I shot the entire dive. The second dive was the same until the switch of the tide and then the vis went to dirty. Back to the resort for lunch. Dale, Mary, Wayne & Liz W all go on the third dive while Peggy, Liz K and I opt for the Mandarin Dive. You can't do the third dive and Mandarin Dive because the third dive gets back to late. So we lounge around the pool and beach all afternoon with Bob until 4:30 PM. It's a 20 minute boat ride over to Bunaken Island to where the dive is located. Upon



arrival there is one other boat and the vis looks terrible. Surprise! It is just as bad underwater as it looked from the surface. Bummer. We do see the Mandarin fish cruising around before dusk, there are lots of them. Then when the time comes they seemed to have disappeared and the pair I was watching only came up twice and were gone. They are much smaller here than over a Lembeh. Oh well, you have to try. Back at the resort we find the group still in the pool so we have a drink and then it's time for dinner. The local villagers have come over to sing while we are eating. It's amazing what they have made into instruments. It is blazing hot tonight on the beach with not a breath of wind. Time for a cold shower and some air conditioning!

## Day 12

Another sunny day and we have Mike back on the boat and Bob is thinking about it for the afternoon dive. Today was all about Mister Toads wild ride. We had current on all 3 dives in every direction. Up, down, back and forth which took a big toll on everyone's ears. Bob did join us on our last dive and it was a drift along a small wall that was covered in beautiful soft corals. It was a Nudibranch stampede for those with their macro lens on. We did have an Eagle Ray sighting on the first dive, 3 white tip reef sharks in a cave with a huge Turtle. The fish life on our second dive was spectacular. There had to be millions of Pyramid Butterfly



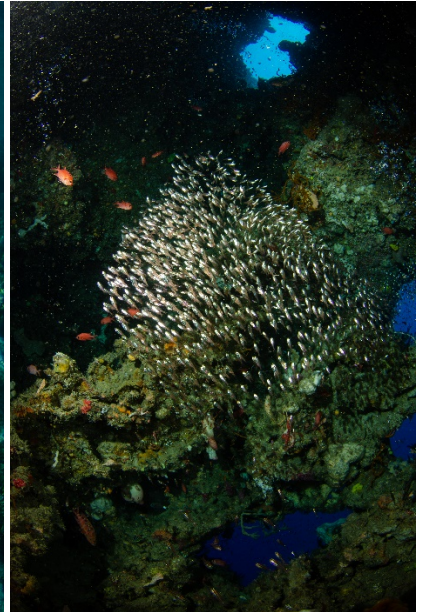




fish swarming the wall. A big Tuna cruised the wall down deep too. Congratulations to Mary for finishing her 1500<sup>th</sup> dive! Everyone opted for the pool and cold beers instead of the night dive, so we enjoyed the sunset from the pool. Another delicious dinner outside to finish off our day.

### Day 13

A sad day today as Bob has made the decision that he is done diving. His sinuses are just not equalizing and better to be safe than sorry. The rest of us take off for our morning dives and once again we are wall diving and I had another Eagle Ray come past. Not a lot of current today which is a nice change from yesterday. Our second dive was a little uneventful even though we saw a Maori Wrasse and a Black tip reef Shark down in the blue. The



most entertaining part was the intro's to scuba that were going on over head and the people never kicked their feet. The instructor was just dragging them around it was absolutely hysterical. Back to the resort for lunch and then our third dive we headed went back over to Bunaken and did another wall dive and this one had a swim thru with some glass fish and another cave held a huge school of Catfish. Everyone opted for the night dive tonight which wasn't as good as the first one we did, but I did get to shoot one of my favorite macro critters, the candy crab. Or soft coral crab. It just sat in one place which was good since I was practicing with my new diopter.





This thing is quite challenging to shoot, but get it right and the results are amazing. Back to the resort to meet up with Bob and Dale for dinner.

#### Day 14

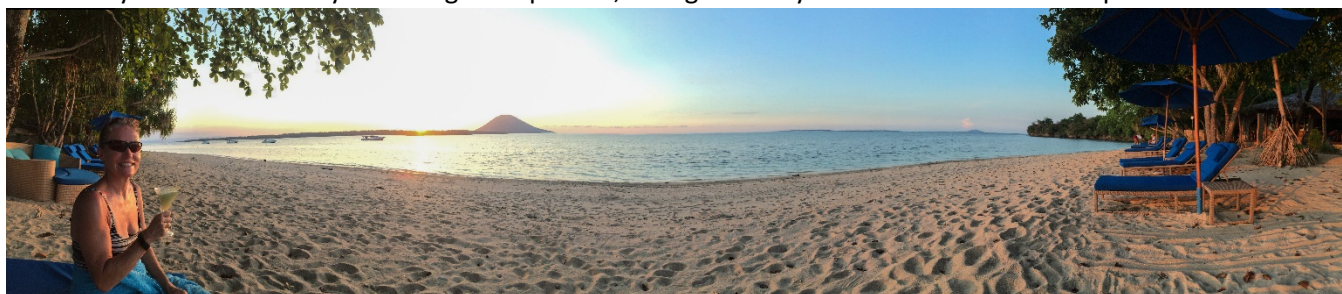
A little overcast today which is nice as it is not as hot. Some coffee on the porch with Bob to start the day and then the rest of us are off and diving. A couple of relaxing wall dives with loads of schooling fish and of course the ever present Turtles. Once again you can choose to do wide angle or macro on these dives, so whatever you prefer to shoot is available. We catch up with Bob for lunch and then out for the afternoon dive we headed back to the mainland to dive this amazing divesite that we didn't really get to enjoy the first time because we had so much current. This time with just a little current we were able to really see all the macro critters but also the



beautiful soft coral hanging on the wall. I think this had to be one of my favorite dives. I decide that this is it for me while the rest of the group decides to do one last night dive. I meet back up with Bob in the pool and Dale is joining us as well. Tonight we have live music on the beach and an incredible Asian night buffet with fresh Tuna Sashimi that just melted in your mouth. We sit around and enjoy the music and wait for the group to return from the night dive. We shut down the place and it is only 9:30 PM. We are so lame, but no one else in the resort is awake either.

#### Day 15

We have a leisurely morning with coffee on the porch before going to breakfast. Only Liz, Mike and Dale are doing the two morning dives while the rest of us start packing up all our stuff. Bob and I have a massage scheduled for 90 minutes of bliss. After that, we enjoy some relaxing pool and beach time before meeting up with everyone for lunch. My camera gear is packed, dive gear is dry so time for a little more pool and beach time



with a few cold beverages. Late afternoon we all regroup for the new soursop daiquiri in the pool and then off to

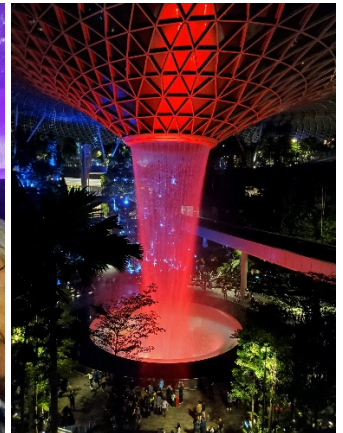




the beach to watch our last sunset of the trip. This was the perfect way to spend our last day here at the resort. We all take a quick shower and then meet up at Wayne & Liz's cabin for some pre-dinner drinks. Time for our last dinner on the beach with way too much food as we finish up and waddle back to our cabins.

## Day 16

We have a leisurely morning starting with breakfast as we are not leaving the resort until 10 AM. We take our last golf cart ride to the boat and off to Manado for our flight. It is a hot one today and the boat ride takes a good 45 minute since we are no longer in the fast boat. Once on land we quickly load up 2 vans for the ride to the airport which takes about an hour. We head to the counter to check in which seems to take forever, so it was a good thing we had plenty of time. Immigration is a breeze and we grab a quick bite before going into the gate for the flight. Our plane is late on arrival and now there is a bathroom in the back that is not working and unless all the people in business class agree to let people come up and use the bathroom we will not be leaving on this plane. Luckily everyone agreed before we could load the plane. We departed about an hour late and we have about a 4 hour flight to Singapore. We say goodbye to Mike and Liz while the rest of us make our way to the transit hotel in terminal 3. We check in and decide to go see the new "Jewel" terminal which has this incredible waterfall that is 5 stories high. The bad part is that you have to clear immigration to do it. We do it



anyways and it is pretty easy going as we catch the skytrain to terminal 1. There are a ton of restaurants and shops circling the waterfall which is surrounded by an indoor garden or forest. It is quite spectacular to see. Definitely worth clearing immigration for. We are all hungry and thirsty so we stop at Jack's Steakhouse for dinner. We are just leaving when the light show on the waterfall begins. Pretty cool what they can do with lights, lasers and smoke. We make our way back to terminal 3 and easily clear immigration and customs. Time for one more nightcap before going back to the transit hotel for a good night sleep before our long flight tomorrow.

## Day 17

We wake up early, shower and then back into the terminal to forage for food and coffee. We wander around a bit before meeting up with the group at the gate. This is the long haul home with a direct flight to Seattle. Our flight departs about 40 minutes late, but we should make up that time in the air.





Thank you everyone for joining us on this amazing trip to Sulawesi. We valued our time spent with all of you and seeing all the incredible life both above and below the water. We look forward to traveling with you all again in the near future.

Cheers, Kelley & Bob

