



East of Flores 23rd August - 4 September 2015

Trip Report & Photos by Carolyn Tyler.

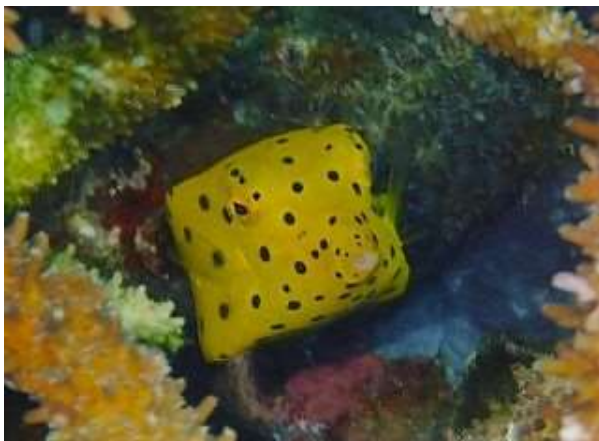
August 24:

An overnight steam from Maumere to **Adonara Island**. Day one: Our group of expat friends, most of whom are long-time Seven Seas fans, were treated to a spectacular sunrise view of a smoking volcano against a backdrop of puffy pink buttermilk clouds.

1st dive Ipet/Watupeni sandspit. The aptly named "Ray's Rush Hour" (15m) provided nonstop entertainment with blue spotted rays, juvenile harlequin sweetlips, white tip sharks, cuttlefish and the cutest little yellow spotted box fish. Beautiful soft and hard corals in day-glow colors.

Dive 2 & 3: Ipet Dropoff: Eight white tip sharks, shoals of scads, surgeon, large red snappers and two huge Spanish mackerel. In the shallows I found a pair of green and black courting nudibranchs and a pregnant boxing crab with white stinging anemone pom poms held in it's pincers to ward off predators (friends with benefits!).

Cocktails at dusk on the sandspit watching the tens of thousands of fruit bats in their feeding exodus to another island. Dreamy!



August 25:

Lembata Island; Teluk Lewaling/Nera. Dive 4 "The Cardinal" offered a mind-blowing enormous greenish moray eel at least 50cm in circumference. Purple feather worms swaying in the current, beautiful porcelain-like lettuce coral, Spinger's Damselfish, a crinoid cleaning fish, painted spiny lobster, plus a rare sighting of a juvenile blackbelt hogfish, and oodles of Cardinal pyjama fish. Yipee!

Dive 5 & 6 "Tanjung Bacatan" was an exciting deep ray and shark dive with one hammerhead, one white tip and two black tips. One large bull ray, a group of eagle rays. Lots of clown fish, anemones, crabs, and cleaner shrimp. Steam overnight to Komba.



August 26:

Komba Island. We were greeted by an exploding volcano in the pre-dawn hours and watched the nonstop fireworks show all day. **Dive 7 "Smokey Point":** Lovely corals, giant clams, rainbow-colored wrasse, huge majestic lionfish, sci-fi-esque sea cucumber, shape-shifting cuttlefish.

Dive 8 & 9 "Alice in Wonderland": Yes! This is a well-deserved name!! What a fantastic place—a smorgasbord of color and texture. Beautiful coral gardens with gorgeous vignettes of hovering butterfly fish and anthias. Jaunty little pair of black, white, and red striped nudis with yellow top tassels. Dramatically-patterned pin cushion sea star, and of course, the ubiquitous "clown" damsel fish.



August 27:

Rusa Island. We posed for our group photo. **Dive 10 "Rainbow Pinnacle"** Dogtooth tuna, schools of surgeons, millions of multi-species fusiliers and anthias, and the sad sight of a dead moray eel. **Dive**

11 & 12 "Watubalu", giant krait (I've never been afraid of these, until today), many stonefish, sweetlips, ever-graceful lionfish, a ghost pipefish, and toothless pipefish with a red bulls eye for a tail. Beautiful vistas with swim-throughs and bommies.



August 28:

Southwest Pantar Island. Dive 13 & 14 "Alcatraz" great vis with a forest of huge soft corals (yawn). Beautiful bommies with deep-sea views. Outstanding yellow, pink and orange wall. Shallows with massive hard and soft corals with a giant trevally, huge lobsters. Fluorescent orange brain coral head. Millions of brightly colored anthias in the shallows. We were guided out of Alcatraz by 25m blue whale at 50 m away. **Dive 15 Southeast Pantar "Beangabang Beach" (1st night dive).** Wow! What a great critter dive-I immediately encountered my favorite little character, a yellow cowfish. The next thing I saw was a small octopus trying to extract the snail out of a shell. Then Jeffry pointed out a baby lionfish, which an orangutan crab tried to capture (short-lived attempt) and we found another small and spindly white/transparent octopus slithering around. I was delighted by my first sighting of a jewel-toned bobtail squid (I am now off eating squid altogether!). Three more surprises: a slug or nudi (?) that resembled a technicolor "Art Car" from Burning Man, a red and white translucent shell/slug, and a white and brown striped shell with red and blue fluorescent mantle...And, can anyone help identify the mystery creature that looks like a cross between a shrimp, a potato bug, and a Vegas showgirl's skirt?



August 29:

Selat Ombai whale watching. Everyone was excited to see the big sea mammals in their seasonal enjoyment of the bounty of the Savu Sea. We caught sight of a pod of 12 pilot whales, 8 blue whales, and dolphins. Taking advantage of the relatively relaxed pace, free of after-dive drowsiness, our group played a Pirate-themed murder mystery game, with everyone turning out in full regalia with attitudes to match.

August 30 (full moon):

Southeast Pantar: Village visit (kepala dusun with special moko drum with magic mojo), walk to hot springs. **Dive 17 South Pura Island "Anemone City"** Acres of pastel patchwork carpeting of dozens of kinds of anemones with contrasting tips. Bright red orangutan crab holding onto the slender green tentacles of an anemone in the strong current. **Dive 18 North Pura "Solang Bali"** Wall dive with huge Napoleon wrasse, sea krait, and a pair of very colorful mating nudibranchs (perhaps the full moon was inciting passion below the waves as well as above!). A cheeky in-my-face clown fish photobombed my camerawork. **Dive 19 (afternoon) "Mucky Mosque"**. Rare oscillate poison octopus, white clown frogfish, large algae-covered frogfish, fire urchins, mantis shrimps, and razor fish swaying in the gentle current, and another "Mystery Creature" that looked like a cross between Donald Trump (lips) and a punk rocker ("hair"). Please help identify!



August 31:

Alor Island. Refueled in Kalabahi, visited local market with loads of fresh fruits and veggies (stock up!), village of Latafui to see the Aboi people dance. **Dive 20 & 21 "Mucky Mosque"** afternoon and **2nd night dive**. I managed to snap a clear photo of the very shy crinoid crab in the afternoon, , a blenny peeping out of a can, and a very brave and combative mantis shrimp. No one came on the

night dive with me, so I was alone with Irwan for a huge 3m octopus experience. Also saw a huge closed-up anemone that glowed like a gem, a fluorescent tube anemone, a cuttlefish light show and a rare spotted red octopus.



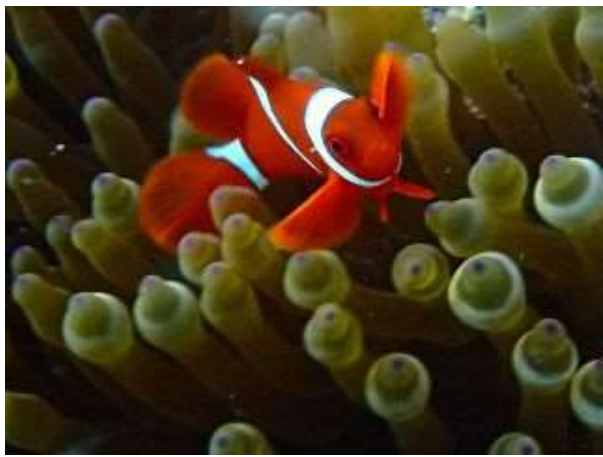
September 1:

Pantar Strait. Huge full moon tide and roiling rip currents thwarted our passage through to North Pura, so we swung around and went south to Pantar for **"The Ledge" for dive 22.** Colorful (voted "best snorkel"), soft and hard corals with beautiful psychedelic patterns, sweetlips, fusiliers and more flesh-colored clown fish nestled into purple-bottomed anemones. **Dive 23 was on Reta Island "Babylon"** underwater clothes shopping amongst abandoned sandals, sarongs, and surf shorts. Red toothed triggers and a bubble of convict blennies, bamboo fish traps and clusters of cute toby puffers. **Afternoon dive 24 "Croc's Tail".** Lots of caves, ledges, overhangs and a beautiful wall. I spotted a fairy-like juvenile lionfish with gossamer "wings" of lavender-pink, a stonefish, scads of turquoise-blue damsels, and a tiny, perfect black seahorse.

NOTE: Somewhere around here is the third night dive in front of the school, but I don't know the date. I saw two orange ruffled nudibranchs courting, a beautiful yellow flatworm, a large orangutan crab, an unusually flat and exposed delicate brittle star, an inflated porcupine puffer with his spikes out, a silly-looking anemone hermit crab, and a rare red octopus with white spots.

September 2:

Lembata Island, Teluk Lawaling/Nera, dive 25 "Tanjung Bacatan" (Jane's favorite) with enormous Napoleon wrasse, bumphead parrotfish, spotted marble rays, a school of eagle rays, 2m white tip shark, three giant trevally. Schools of pyramid butterfly fish, naso/unicorn fish, rabbit fish, schooling bannerfish. **Dive 26 Exploratory dive we named "Fan-tastic Holy Cave".** Beautiful fan corals and vistas, holes, caves and "Nemo" style clown fish, anchor anemones. Kevin and Carolyn encountered a napping 3m nurse shark that became very agitated when we surprised it. **Dive 27 "Tanjung Bacatan".** Up in the shallows, Kevin encountered the friendliest cuttlefish, who ran through his repertoire of colors and textures while I happily snapped away as the afternoon light played on the tans and golds of the corals and anemones.



September 3:

Pulau Babi Dive 28 "The Crack". This early dive was quite dark with low vis--probably better done at noon with the sun overhead. We forgot our torches, so we couldn't fully explore this fissure created during the great earthquake and tsunami in 1992. A small shark did scurry out as we approached, startling some of us. It seemed like everything we saw in the shallows was in miniature--all the fish and corals looked like they were just coming back to life. **Dive 29 "Deep Divers".** Only our most die-hard diver (yours truly) went on this last dive and actually stayed at 6m so she could keep her time for the flight the next day. The dive (or "dorkle", as we have named shallow dives) started with a lone colorless jellyfish and ended with a torrential downpour of thousands of transparent gold sweepers at 3m. In between were a yellow leaf scorpion fish, green crinoid shrimp, lilac hairy fairy crab, and a beautiful coral garden in the shallows. I thought my guide Irwan was playing a trick on me when he pointed excitedly to something that looked a hot pink hair scrunchie stuck on a piece of coral, so I ignored him. He brought me back to it and insisted I take a picture, so I unenthusiastically obliged, still thinking he was having me on. Only upon surfacing did he explain that the perfect rosette of tulle was actually a cluster of tiny Spanish Dancer eggs!

September 4:

We gratefully bid adieu to our favorite live-aboard, leaving with unforgettable memories, until we meet again.

Carolyn Tyler
September 2015



