



December 2017

# Nautilus SCUBA Club Newsletter

Cairns QLD Australia



**Dive Trips**  
**Club Meetings**  
**Guest Speakers**  
**Trip Reports**

Editor: Phil Woodhead

Cover photo: Phil Woodhead



## Local dive trips and get together information

\*Please note that the news letter does not publish prices on trips offered



For our January Trip we have provisionally reserved 12 places on Tusa 6 on Sunday 14th.

Tusa does not reserve a spot until payment has been made in full.

To pay and book, or for more information, call Tusa directly on 4047 9120. You will need to be at E Finger of Cairns Marina at 7:40 for an 8:00 departure.

Remember to tell them you are a Nautilus member.

Once you have booked, please let Mark know so he can keep track of who is going. [markearney54@gmail.com](mailto:markearney54@gmail.com) NB Tusa allows unguided diving, and they also have Nitrox tanks on board (subject to availability).

Merry Christmas  
and Happy New Year

Happy and safe festive season to all our club members, and a special thank you to all the Nautilus Committee members for all their hard work in 2017

January 2018						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Club meeting

Legendary Lake Eacham BBQ

More details to follow, keep an eye on your emails.

Special dives will be organised in addition to the regular monthly day trips, these could be with Reel Cray-Zee, Rumrunner, and could be day trips or weekend trips to the reef or the Yongala. Better watch your emails for future announcements.

## Solomons Part II – Honiara shore diving with Tulagi Dive

By Michelle Barnes Photos by ReefFishGeek

After a fantastic week diving the Florida and Russell Islands on Taka, a dozen or so Nautili opted to stay on in Honiara to continue the adventure with Tulagi Dive who specialise in diving the World War II wrecks of the Iron Bottom Sound. As a keen wreck diver I had been particularly looking forward to this segment of the trip, and though some of us were tempted by the option of the deeper wrecks in the sound, with time limitations and considerations of flying after deep dives we all looked forward to exploring the wrecks available from shore based diving. The land and sea campaigns of Guadalcanal took place between August 1942 and February 1943 with heavy losses on both sides, resulting in an American/Allied victory and following the Battle of Midway is considered the turning point of the War in the Pacific.

After farewells to the crew of the Taka and the departing Nautili, the tender dropped us at the dock and we walked the short distance to the shop. Our destination for the day turned out to be the wrecks known as "B1" and "B2" which we had dived the previous day, but as they are both very large Japanese cargo ships we were very happy for a second dip on both. The style of the trip immediately changed as after a week of being pampered on Taka, our gear and tanks were loaded in the back of one truck and ourselves in the other. The previous day we had dived off Taka with a short tender drop to the wrecks while today we had close to an hour of bouncing on the wooden benches, but with their usual good humour and fortitude the Nautili held on tight and enjoyed the ride! Photo's are from the next day as we learned staying in wetsuits provided extra padding, and sun/rain protection as needed.



Alex B and Dave M opted to stand, looking dodgy in their hoods, planning to rob a bank to fund more diving maybe?

Our first site was "B1" or "Boneghi 1", named of the local beach but otherwise known as the Hirokawa Maru, a 508' Japanese cargo ship that had been converted to anti-aircraft support for troop landings. It was close to shore when attacked and was beached, and now rests in a depth of 3-55m. We kitted up on benches at the beach and were soon in the water with a good idea of which parts of the massive wreck we wanted to revisit, including some garden eels in the shallow sand. Even though my dive buddy is the ReefFishGeek I am useless at fish id but saw lots of beauties, including the perennial wreck dwellers Golden-lined Seaperch.



## Solomons Part II – Honiara shore diving with Tulagi Dive

By Michelle Barnes Photos by ReefFishGeek

Gear and Nautili loaded back on the truck and a short drive we arrived at "B2", the Kinugawa Maru where the engine block is picturesquely exposed. This had been a favourite dive of many of us, the bow having formed into a lovely coral garden. Shallower than B1 we popped down to the rudder at 27m and then made our way back up the ship. Both wrecks are broken in parts



and been salvaged so there are plenty of opportunities for swims throughs. I enjoyed the scenery in the "jail" before ascending to the gorgeous bow section where we revisited the unusual brown coloured Orange-fin Anemonefish and many other lovelies.

As we had come straight off Taka we had not yet checked into the King Solomon Hotel in Honiara, some of us still dressed in exposure suits proceeded to do so. The receptionist didn't blink an eye so maybe we were not the first to do so? The hotel was built bungalow style into a steep hillside and has a unique transport system, a small cable car on tracks that travels up and down, perfect to avoid carrying heavy dive gear up many steps. The rooms were adequate, with a few dripping taps and intermittent hot water, but comfortable enough. Honiara is a small city and most everything is in walking distance and dinner that night was at the very good Indian Restaurant nearby. Breakfast for the hotel is provided by the pleasant Bamboo Bar Café next door with a nice selection of continental food, hot buffet dishes and eggs cooked on request.

Revitalised by big mugs of good coffee from the café, the truck picked us up for a longer drive to new sites, a Japanese submarine and American B17 bomber. Out of Honiara the scenery is lovely and the roads improve, and we enjoyed the ride.

The I1 submarine is of historical significance with an interesting story. Disabled after an attack it was grounded on a reef, but the Americans were suspicious of continued Japanese activity to attempt destroy their own submarine. Investigation resulted in retrieval of code books which were used to complete known partially cracked codes. Several weeks later the intelligence was used to intercept

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By Michelle Barnes Photos by ReefFishGeek

Imperial Japanese Navy Commander-in-chief Admiral Yamamoto, his aircraft was shot down, and the Japanese lost their primary strategist. After a long but easy surface swim through a channel out to the reef we dropped down and followed the wall, the shape of the submarine instantly recognisable despite the mangled bow section. Resting between 14-28m the midsection was opened by salvage explosives and there are swim through opportunities. With a bit of a swim back we were able to explore the reef and sand, the ReefFishGeek very pleased to spot half-black Clown Anemonefish.



Our next dive was on a B17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber, lost after being attacked returning to Henderson Field in Honiara. After a surface swim we were to accompany our guides Alwin and Cedric to find the wreck on the sand. Visibility at the surface was so poor we couldn't see our own fins and as I dropped down I wondered if I should have grabbed hold of my buddy. Fortunately visibility quickly improved at depth and we spotted "Bessy" lying on the sand at 16m. The tail section is missing, the right wing buried and damaged cockpit, but she is very impressive with left wing and props intact. Under the fuselage is the Goodyear Pirelli landing wheel, looking to be in perfect condition. As always it's a sobering effect to dive these sites, thinking of the people involved in both sides of the conflict.

Dinner that evening was a classy affair at the high end Coral Sea Casino where we enjoyed a delicious



meal and great company while overlooking the sound. Most Nautili opted out of diving the next day in preparation for flying on Friday, but myself and Akiko decided to carry on with some conservative diving while the ReefFishGeek was staying on and could continue diving anyway.

We had one more shore wreck to see "B3", and while it had less coral and fish life than it's two neighbours was seriously huge and with more time and tanks would be great to explore. Though it had a maximum depth at 45m we spent time in the shallows, the ReefFishGeek happy in the muck while I poked around the rust.



## Solomons Part II – Honiara shore diving with Tulagi Dive

By Michelle Barnes Photos by ReefFishGeek

My final dive of the trip was back to B2 which we all enjoyed having the site to ourselves, revisiting our favourite sections and familiar friends like the beautiful Richmond's Wrasse. Mindful of no-fly limits Akiko and I were out of the water exactly 24 hrs before the flight the next day, very proud of ourselves for following our plan and happy to have enjoyed another dive on a favourite site. Finishing earlier than usual we got back to the shop with plenty of time to wash gear then spend the afternoon wandering around Honiara. Dinner that night was at the Tenkai Sushi restaurant which had been the pickup point to embark Taka, a popular choice with tasty food and refreshing local Sol Brew.

We had a lovely final night talking about our wonderful trip, fantastic dives and great company, and most importantly making plans for the next one!



# Diving Coral Sea with Spirit Of Freedom, Dec 14-17, 2017

By Alex Reef Fish Geek

It started when I decided to enter the Nautilus Photo Comp of 2017. The reason I wanted to participate is that a part of the competition was getting your photos printed in A3 format. I wanted to get some prints of my favorite photos so I figured it was a good idea!

What a great and pleasant surprise it was to hear that one of my photos was selected as a winner and the prize was a 3-Day trip on the Ribbon Reefs on Spirit of Freedom! I decided to pay a bit extra and upgrade to the 4 day trip to the Coral Sea.

The lucky participants of the 4-day trip get flown to Lizard Island on Thursday morning by a low altitude scenic flight which is by itself a great experience. After about an hour of enjoying the coastal and reef views from the plane we landed on the island and quickly transferred to the Spirit of Freedom, a 37m single hull liveaboard vessel. It is a very comfortable and roomy vessel with a spacious dive deck.



We were greeted by the crew and after some introductions, paperwork and a great lunch we were in the water! 2 afternoon dives on Ribbon number 9 were offered: Pixie Gardens and Pixie Wall, followed by a night dive on Pixie Wall which I decided to skip. The highlight of the dive at Pixie Gardens was chasing a small school of Silverstreak Anthias (*Pseudanthias cooperi*) which I so far managed to see only on the Ribbon Reefs and the Coral Sea.



The coolest thing on the Pixie Wall was hanging out with a Giant Sweetlips (*Plectorhinchus albovittatus*) at a cleaning station. The beautiful creature did not mind me at all while enjoying a thorough cleaning by a very busy pair of Striped Cleaner Wrasse (*Labroides dimidiatus*). The Giant Sweetlips are most commonly seen in very shallow water – this one was in about 2m.

An overnight steam brought us to the Osprey Reef and the 4 dives of the day on Friday were: Castles, Pavona, The Gap and Admiralty.

Early morning dives on Osprey are a treat and I was first in the water to check out a nice wall and awesome sand gullies on this site. The highlight for me was looking up to the surface through clear blue water at a school of Black-spotted Darts (*Trachinotus bailloni*) which looked like they were suspended in the air!

Dive site number 2 is named Pavona after a coral colony which is a prominent feature of this site. A large school of barracuda consisting of Bigeye Barracuda (*Sphyraena forsteri*) and Heller's Barracuda (*Sphyraena helleri*) was moving back and forth across the field of coral and it was a spectacular sight!

The Gap was the third dive of the day and it was a treat of small and colorful rockcods. There were quite a few different species of them. Most colorful were Strawberry Rockcod (*Cephalopholis spiloparaea*) and Peacock Rockcod (*Cephalopholis argus*).

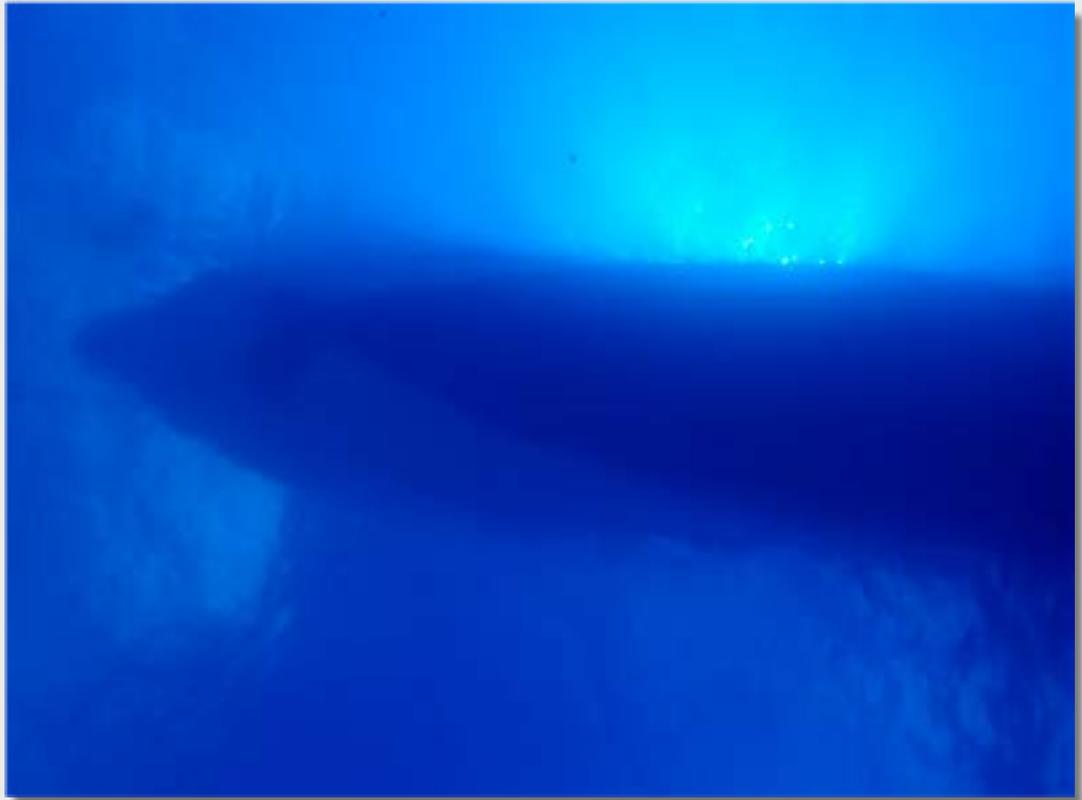
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And then, my favorite dive of the whole trip was The Admiralty! I was stunned by how clear the water was on this site! It would not be a stretch to say the viz was around 50m! I could clearly see all features of this large site. The most amazing part for me was being circled by 7 awesome looking Sailfin Snapper (*Symphoricichthys spililurus*). Prior to that, I had only seen 1 at one time, but 7, and coming very close to check me out, wow!

Did I mention how awesome the food was onboard? Our esteemed chef Simon conjured up great variety of treats. Dinner was a sitdown affair with nice drinks and conversation about diving.

Next day, Saturday, brought us more fine weather and 4 more dives on Osprey Reef: Around The Bend, Marlin Wall, North Horn and Soft Coral Wall, all these sites were near the



northern tip of Osprey. Around The Bend was a drift dive, where we drifted over a deep bommie first and then made it back to the wall and, as the name implies, around the bend of the reef back to the boat. This is where I first spotted Black Trevally (*Caranx lugubris*), a really cool fish which I only seem to see in the Coral Sea and nowhere else! Marlin Wall was another slow drift along a wall where I was surprised to see a Silvertip Shark (*Carcharhinus albimarginatus*) making a close pass. I also spent a long time with a very personable Snubnose Rockcod (*Epinephelus macro-*

*spilos*). It is a very rare fish for me to see, only the second time ever! I was very happy the fish was curious about me and kept coming out of its shelter to check me out closer and pose for many closeup photos!

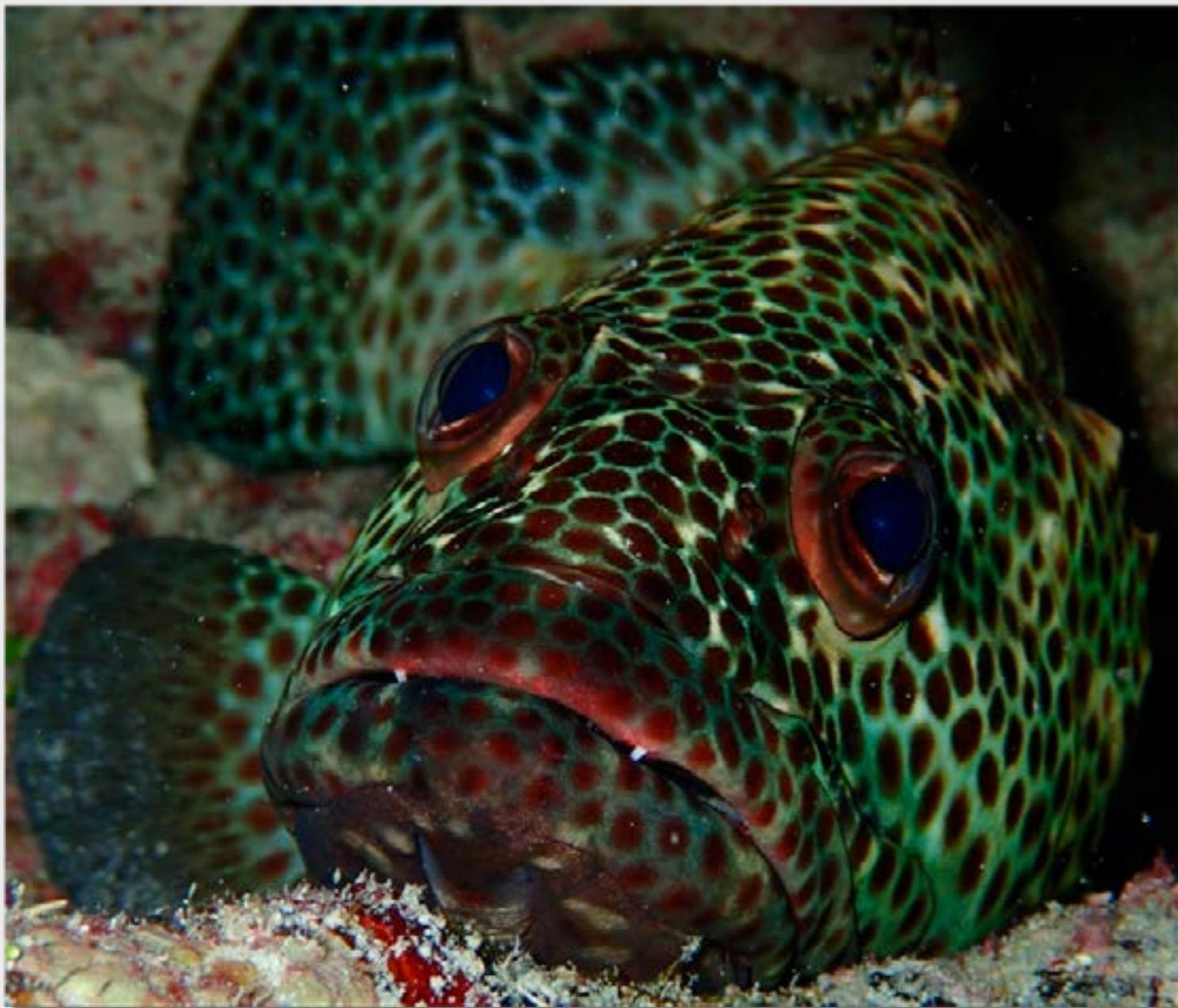
The site of North Horn is most famous for the shark feed! The crew position all the divers in a semicircle around the reef wall and the feed happens in its center on top of a small bommie. The snack for the sharks is a few tuna heads in a metal crate. Once the crate is opened, a small bedlam takes place. Around 30-40 Gray Reef Sharks (*Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos*) participate, along with a few Whitetip Reef Sharks (*Triaenodon obesus*) and a very imposing looking Potato Cod (*Epinephelus tukula*). Many smaller fish join in on all the action which is over within a few minutes after which the excited predators disperse.

Soft Coral Wall was the last dive of the day. We got a tender drop and drifted in a gentle current. Water was teeming with fish, especially in the shallows. Too many fish to list, but my favorites were large Green Jobfish (*Aprion virescens*) which have somewhat of a menacing look about them. You can see they are fast, and have awesome jaws armed with large teeth. The spookiest snapper/seaperch of them all!

On Saturday night we steamed back to the Ribbon Reefs and Sunday morning were already moored at the Steve's Bommie! We did 2 dives on this well-known site and they were a treat. Reef Stonefish (*Synanceia verrucosa*) are always there, you just need to find them, which is not easy! And I can watch forever the school of plankton feeders on top of the pinnacle feeding in the current. The fish are well used to divers here and let you come very close!

## Diving Coral Sea with Spirit Of Freedom, Dec 14-17, 2017

By Alex Reef Fish Geek



Third dive on Sunday was at Flair Point. It is sloping sand bottom with scattered small bommies ringed by the main reef in the shallows. We found a small mob of Diagonal-banded Sweetlips (*Plectorhinchus lineatus*) seemingly oblivious to divers and a great stand of Stag-horn coral full of Spotfin Squirrelfish (*Neoniphon sammara*) sheltering in its branches.

Last dive of the trip was at the Coral Princess mooring near Ribbon Reef number 3. It is a fairly large bommie that one can swim around at a lazy pace in around 40 min. I found a very cooperative Great Barrier Reef Blenny (*Ecsenius stictus*) and tried a "microscope" mode on my camera on this willing subject.

Too quickly my mini-holiday came to an end! We quickly washed and hung up the dive gear and were ready for an awesome dinner and drinks and an overnight steam back to Cairns where we disembarked the following morning.

What a great trip! It was a pleasure diving with such a pleasant bunch of people. My special thanks to the hard working crew of The Spirit of Freedom: Skipper Ross, TD Lucy, mates and tender drivers Jon and Matty, dive instructors Tamir, Jimmy and Sola, chef Simon, DM and hostie Chris and hostie Sophia for making it such an enjoyable trip. You guys are the best!

And many thanks for The Spirit of Freedom for sponsoring the Nautilus Photo Completion, which made this trip possible!

Best fishes!

Alex The Reef Fish Geek

# A week diving the reefs of TUFU - PNG

By Libby Sterling



I've recently returned from a fabulous week of Diving in PNG courtesy of Tufi Resort! This was the prize in the 2017 Cairns Nautilus Club uw photography competition (Behaviour Section).

I headed off on 13th October 2017 with Air Niugini, Cairns to Tufi via Port Moresby

After a bit of a wait at Port Moresby Domestic airport we eventually made it onto the plane for a quick 50 minute flight to Tufi International airport (photo), basically a dirt airstrip at the end of a rather small peninsula. Where we were cheerfully greeted by Rona and Brian (Managers of Tufi Resort) and taken via troupy to the resort (approx. 5 minute ride).

The resort itself is lovely with beautiful ocean and fjord views depending on which side of the peninsula you are. I had a pretty spectacular room with a balcony and view to the ocean and they really go out of their way to make you feel welcome (even with your

name on the door!). There are lots of different areas you can relax in comfy chairs and meals were taken either on the veranda of the main building or down overlooking the fjord. They mixed it up every night and arranged it so that solo travellers sat together so I wasn't "Libby no friends" at meal times. Basically the divers all sat on the same table and reminisced about the days diving. There were quite a few groups that came through that were there for the cultural experience and tours (i.e. not diving). Whilst I didn't personally do any of the cultural activities, from talking to them, I believe there is a lot to see and do.

The continental breakfast was included in the room price. Lunch out on the boat was sandwiches or rolls and homemade biscuits, muffins and fruit. We came back in for a BBQ lunch one day (Sunday I think it was).. Dinner was a three course meal. We



all came running when the dinner bell rang (3 cut down dive tanks). Dinner consisted of a different soup every night as a starter (homemade fresh bread rolls), some amazing main meals (one was lobster thermadore (OMG!!!) and then a different desert every night although we did have a couple of repeat deserts (luckily!!!), the Tufi mud cake is to die for and yes I might have eaten mine and then



someone else's (thanks Matt), the apple pie was pretty scrumptious as well.

But that's enough about the resorty bits let's talk about the most important part – the diving!!

On the evening of arrival you have a briefing about how the resort functions and then the Dive Instructor / guide magically appears with a stack of the usual paperwork and you have a pre-briefing and agree on how many dives you want to do a day and how the day runs etc. We agreed we'd like to do 3 dives a day (take lunch out on the boat) then back in time for another (4th or even 5th dive) on the house reef. At least one night dive on the house reef is a must!

The weather was perfect with glass out conditions most days which meant we could head out to the remote reefs, some of which we were only the 2nd group to dive on!



# A week diving the reefs of TUFU - PNG

By Libby Sterling



Meet Matt (aka Nomadic Scuba) (photo) he was our guide for the majority of the dives and looked after us incredibly well. As you may know I mostly dive solo these days so I wasn't sure how it was going to work with being guided (in a group with other photographers), but after the first 'check-out' dive it wasn't a problem and we pretty much got to do our own thing (in a controlled but safe manner, I could see their bubbles off in the distance so all good!).

We had another uw photo prize winner in our initial trio of intrepid travellers so that made it even more interesting (I managed to get lots of tips from Katherine who is a very keen and talented macro photographer). Matt was into photography as well so we had a blast, Chris our 3rd traveller was happy to just float around in his own world and wait for us (luckily!!!)

I think I dived 16 different reefs and 22 dives in total. The reefs were in pristine condition, water temp 28 – 29 degrees and viz varied from at worst 20 metres (excluding the house reef) to maybe 40+.



I don't think the photos will do it justice, if you've been out to Osprey Reef, the Tufu Reefs are sort of like that (sort of, same, same but different)... Walls going on into the blue, a few rubble slopes (that's where the sharks hang out), did I mention hammerheads yet? Yes there were hammer heads (three on one dive off in the blue), on another dive one was swimming right next to me (maybe 5 metres away), and I was oblivious, had no idea it was there until I heard squealing behind me, turned around and there it was, I was so surprised I just watched it swim by and no photo... other dives, one would swim past, check us out and keep going.

Lots of drift diving, marine life was diverse, sharks, hammerheads (just in case you missed the first reference), nemo, octopus, moray eels, the biggest blue tang (Dory) I've ever seen, heaps of clown trigger fish, nudibranchs, schools of fish, amazing and very large sponges, sea stars, star fish, lion fish, huge painted crabs, scorpion fish, angel fish, blue spotted rays, hammerheads, gorgonian fans, the most colourful crinoids I think I've ever seen, all different colours of damselfish... basically everything you see here in Cairns but on steroids! I still have

photos I haven't edited yet as well (I might have gone a bit crazy).

Then there's the house reef hours of fun at the end of the day. Its in the fjord and viz was variable. It's my first introduction to muck diving photography and I loved it. The local dive staff were fabulous too! Wes (skipper), Manny, Alex and Diaz, looked after us they were also very willing uw models. Basically they do everything for you and its best to stay out of their way and let them get on with it. Great to dive with, and always pointing out new critters or calling the sharks in (literally!). This was one of Alex specialties!

The diving depths ranged from 5m to maybe 40m, we did 60 minutes dives on average with a couple of 80 and 90 minutes dives thrown in. Then on the house reef a few 100 - 120 minute dives, as we combed from one side to the other. I added some extra days and diving to my prize so ended up diving with two different groups and the second team to fly in was a couple of dive instructors from Cairns (Nick and Anna) and a crazy group of four Russian guys (not much English) but we managed. One of the things I loved about the trip was the comradery and the small groups. They really made an effort to have us (Libby plus 2 other divers) in one boat and then everyone else on another...



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By Libby Sterling



Katherine



Manny and the Nudibranch



Nick & Anna



Alex and Nemo

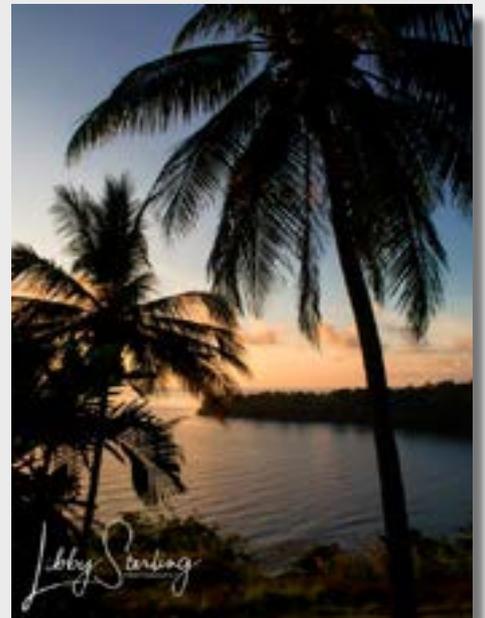
Great diving, well organised and they went out of their way to make me feel welcome and part of the Tufi family. The staff make a point of learning your name and asking about your diving etc. There is also a crazy Tufi resort mascot called Coco (I nick named him 'the wings of death') as you'd be sitting quietly or walking along the path and you'd hear the flap of massive wings (or feel the breeze of them) flying past you a bit too close. Coco is a hornbill and has a mate there, although I didn't see her. He's quite the naughty bird and has a fetish for toothpicks and biting (all be it softly)

If you haven't been there yet, I highly recommend it. Make sure you pick the prime time tho! If you go in windy season you'll be diving in the protection of the fjords rather than out on the reefs and I don't think you'll enjoy it as much. The reefs are definitely the way to go!

Again a huge thank you to Tufi Resort for hosting me. Thanks to Rona and Brian for their hospitality and Matt (Nomadic Scuba) for being an awesome dive guide. It was great to meet and dive with my fellow travellers (Katherine, Chris, Nick and Anna).

Until next time, happy diving and I hope you enjoy the pics!

Libby Sterling



# THINGS YOU MAY OR MAY NOT NEED TO KNOW



The 2018 Nautilus calendar is available from the Nautilus pop up shop.



Good tip.

Take a photo with your phone of your certification and your Nautilus Membership card, you may forget them, but I doubt if you'll forget your phone.

## Supporting the Nautilus Scuba Club



Air Niugini



MV CHERTAN Milne Bay



# PARTING SHOT



Purple-Lined Wrasse *Cirrhilabrus lineatus*  
by Phil Woodhead