

The first days dives provided an exciting glimpse of what was to come.

We jumped into crystal clear water, 28 deg. for a calm introductory dive at a site called Sandbar. An amazing coral garden full of a variety of healthy corals and an abundance of colourful fish . We had our first reef hook practice at Siaes Corner and watched as an endless stream of Grey and White-tip reef Sharks, large schools Barracuda, Jacks and numerous other fish went by. We drifted through Ulong Channel, a spectacular channel with a white sandy bottom and lined each side by masses of different hard coral formations. Garden Eels, Moray Eels, Turtles

After the first day we had the choice of being taken back to Sam's boat dock or being picked up and dropped off at the end of the day right in front of the resort, a very easy walk across the grass. A no brainer really.

David arrived with his arm in a sling from a recent skiing accident, but by the end of day one he wasn't going to stay topside and was diving from day two onwards.

Our non diver, Bill, set about to find things of interest to do each day. He was very keen to visit Peleliu, the site of the World War II battle between the US and Japanese army. It has been preserved as an open air museum with many remnants left in place such as tanks, vast cave networks, unexploded ordinance, and the damaged Japanese HQ building. This proved quite difficult to arrange but finally he was very happy to get a boat tour to the island.



Days 2 - 5 followed the same routine. Each boat tailoring their dives according to their individual group interests, which included some Wreck dives, Caverns , Wall dives , or Drifts. All dives were 60 min. plus with easy backward entry into the water and assistance given to those who needed it on exiting the water. Everybody spoke highly of their very knowledgeable and experienced dive guides and of course the boat driver for ensuring that they had the best experience possible.

It makes such a difference when everything goes smoothly.

Mako



A B Boat



Tiger



The Dive Sites & Marine Life

The Corners

Siaes Corner - A point with lower intensity currents than it's counterpart, there is lots to see here. Lots of shark activity, large schools of Bumphead Parrotfish, Barracuda, Fusiliers.

Blue Corner - an awesome spot to watch the marine life in peak hour. We hooked on to the reef in a raging current that literally nearly pulls your head off. We nearly lost poor old Terry, pictured, when his hook broke but our amazing guide Sharon was quick to the rescue. This site doesn't disappoint. Sharks galore including a Scalloped Hammerhead, a massive Silvertip, and the granddaddy of all Dogtooth Tuna the size of a shark and a never-ending procession of large schools of every kind of fish you can imagine.



The Caves

Blue Holes - Four vertical shafts opens up into large caverns. The sun's rays through the blue water create a spectacular light show.

Virgin Blue Hole - A 15 met. long curved cavern with a small entrance opening up to a wide exit. A disco clam on the wall out.

Siaes Tunnel - A very deep wide cavern that offers spectacular views coming out through the entrance Soft corals, Gorgonian Fans.

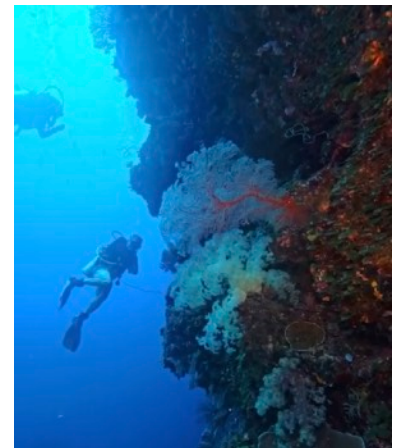
Chandelier Cave - as described by Julie below.



The Channels

German Channel - a manta cleaning station, but unfortunately the manta was a no show. Brown spotted Cod, Crocodile fish.

Ulong Channel - Get set for a thrilling ride along this gorgeous channel and try to take it all in as you whizz by. Turtles, Eagle Rays, Leopard Shark, Spanish Dancer and a huge Lettuce Coral garden each with it's own single resident. Amazing



The Wall

Turtle Cove - Our very chilled last dive. A wall with lots of soft corals and gorgonian fans, and lots of turtles resting on the shelves. Orangutan Crab and lots of macro stuff on the wall.

Here we saw a pod of dolphins fly past us and down into the depths.

Jellyfish Lake - A very large lake accessed only by boat, followed by a very steep climb and decent, you have the experience of snorkelling with non stinging jellyfish from very small to very large, who migrate across the lake following the sun. Populations fluctuate and whilst it was possible to snorkel amongst millions in the past, this year numbers are down to the hundreds. But still very cool.



Wreck Diving by Julie Golby

Boat Mako, with dive guide Yuki, chose to dive, Jake's Float plane, IRO MARU shipwreck and Hapa Dai shipwreck for a night dive.

Jakes Plane was a 3 seater Japanese Aichi Naval Float plane, a single engined plane that crashed soon after take off in 1944. In the Museum there was the recollection written by the pilot stating engine fault and an uneventful rescue. Primarily intact with the nose dropping forward and the propellers undamaged in the crash, which indicated that they were not spinning upon impact with the water. Interesting relics like the radio and ammunition were still clearly visible.



The IRO MARU shipwreck was interesting being a Japanese Navy Fleet Oiler that was bombed by a US submarine torpedo during the War and had a fire in the bow where it hit. However it took two weeks to sink after being downed by an aerial bomb damaging the aft. This wreck had swim throughs, like the galley and a tall three pole mast with abundant marine life and soft corals even clown fish and clams towards the top of the mast. Beautiful in colour it was fascinating to circle, spiralling to the top for a slow ascent and safety stop . Two 80mm HA machine guns on the bow and stern were clearly identifiable. And as an Oil transporter, many hulls with oil drums were still intact. My favourite photo was a silhouette of a soldier maintaining his post and the uninhabited garden of anemone on the deck was a photographers delight, albeit no clownfish.



The third wreck we dived was Hapa Dai for a night dive, with similar enclosed spaces to swim through. Relatively ordinary with minimal marine life exposing themselves.

Team Mako also dived Chandelier Cave which had four chambers with air pockets. Over the millenniums rainwater percolating through the limestone created stalactites and stalagmites resembling glittering chandeliers. I loved the magical single file dive out of the cave with lamps off, and the mystical green glow the entrance increasingly growing into the pristine blue and green hues of the vast ocean of Palau.

Of course, Palau is not all about diving. There is Eating, Drinking, Sightseeing, Tours, Relaxing by the pool, all of which we devoured with excitement and enthusiasm.



Dining options included ; Japanese, Indian, Mexican, Filipino, Seafood, Pizza , Pasta , Burgers & Fries. You name it, every cuisine was catered for, including Birthday Cake. And someone was always eager to join you and relive the days exciting events with of course a few beverages.



Tour Options were a plenty

Our 2 days off at the end of our diving were a welcome change and a chance to explore Palau topside. Tour options included;

Kayak tours , Scenic Flights , WW II tours to Peleliu , Museum tours , Hire Cars for self drive tours of the Island , Glassblowing, Woodcarving and Massage.

Everyone made the most of what Palau has to offer including lazing by the pool.



We dived it all, from the fast and the furious to the calm and relaxing. Palau's pristine and abundant marine sanctuary, offers next level diving at it's best. What a week ! I for one can't wait to go back and I'm not alone on that.

A big thank you to everyone for sharing photos and information along the way. A team effort.

Sharyn

