

## Indonesia

When we heard about Sail Morotai 2012 Rally departing from Davao, Philippines in Sep '12 to Indonesia, we knew that it would be a perfect opportunity to do our first cruise in Indonesia. As with any Sail Indonesia rally, all the paperwork was facilitated by the rally organizers and this time, because this leg of the rally was sponsored by the Indonesian govt itself, several of the official fees were even waved! Ellen from the Ocean View Marina, on Samal Island, near Davao City, was the Philippines-side coordinator. She acted as liaison with the Indonesian officials and sent in all the paper work for us ahead of time to secure the CAIT and entry registration. She rounded up sponsors from private businesses in the area and organized all kinds of fun activities for the participating cruisers. The kick-off party was fabulous with sumptuous buffet, a performance of Cultural Dances from Philippines and Indonesia, fireworks, and plenty of cocktails from the Tanduay Rum folks. About 25 boats from different countries gathered at the marina in the weeks preceding the rally and really enjoyed their time there. We really developed a community spirit with the other boats thanks to Ellen and the Holiday Ocean View Marina staff. Many will even come back at the marina after their cruise in Indonesia, like us.

Our first sailing leg was from the marina to Talaud. We motorsailed with the wind hard on the nose, wind that varied a lot in strength as it often does in the North Pacific. We dodged the fishing boats in the Mindanao bay and made good time to Talaud (200nm away).

**TALAUD:** Anchor just outside the nav markers of harbor area in 30ft in coral rubble, very poor holding on a lee shore in the southerly winds (03deg59'91-126deg40'40E). The officials had come especially to clear us all into Indonesia, as Talaud is not a port of entry. We all had our CAIT and a 2-month visa from the Indonesian embassy in Davao City so we cleared in without problems. We were welcomed warmly with dances, dinner on the beach on the first day and a lunch on a nearby pretty little island the next day. We were all sorry to sail away so soon but the festivities in Morotai were to begin soon.

**MOROTAI (Daruba town):** This time, we sailed most of the 150nm, (no wind for the last 20nm). Good holding in 30-40ft, sand (02deg03'23N-128deg17'25E). What a great welcome once again ... all cruisers felt like visiting dignitaries! We had guides from tourism helping us to get laundry done, fuel (we even received 100 liters free) and gasoline delivery, free tourism pamphlets & T-shirts, ... We were invited several nights for dinner by the different authorities (Regent, Governor, Local Council). We had a bus tour around town & WWII artifacts; we had a boat trip to 2 small islets nearby. Sept. 15 was the anniversary of the Battle of Morotai during WWII, an important turning point in the war. They had built a new WWII Museum commemorating the event and honoring General Mc Arthur. Sail Morotai banners were flying all around the small town, fountains were flowing, and the govt had even built an equivalent of an Olympic Village! The President of Indonesia came on that day, and the yachts participated in a "Sail by" along with all the visiting Warships, and some colorful local boats. (Too bad the organizers didn't think about the fact that warships, even at minimum speeds of 8 kts, quickly out distance yachts motoring at 4-5 kts!) Everywhere, we were treated like celebrities, and the Indonesians all wanted to have their photos taken with us to show their friends!

After everyone left, our Commodore friends Roger & Lucie on s/v Catimini stayed with us another week to star in some small videos we made to promote local tourism in Morotai. The highlight was the trip to 2 of 7 waterfalls (called the 7 steps), which included the cars having to drive over very precarious log bridges to get there.

**TOBELO:** We decided to explore some of the East coast of Halmahera on our way to Raja Ampat. We anchored off Kumu Island, just opposite of Tobelo Harbor on a shallow coral shelf (room for 2 boats)(01deg43'720N-128deg01'163E). We elected to use the frequent and inexpensive water-taxi to go to town (only ~25 cents US/pers) ... that way, we did not have to leave our dinghy in the dirty harbor. Tobelo is one step up from Morotai as far as local businesses & fresh food market. Prices were lower than in Morotai probably due to more abundance of locally grown produce here. We were able here to get a local propane tank and do the transfer ourselves (not easy to do ... we had to modify a local tank regulator to connect to the valve-less Indonesian tank. ... more details on this procedure in various cruisers forums). We visited the Kantor Bupati where the fancy tourism office is located. As in previous towns, we were warmly received. We went diving with the govt dive center located on nearby Kakara Island (they picked us up on our boat). Did 5 dives from the island, on seamounts and on the underwater volcano with warm water vents ... We really enjoyed the numerous soft corals and reef life here so far. Despite dynamiting, the reefs are healthy when you know where to go! (Another good reason to go with the locals.) An Australian guy, Jono, was in the process of trying to start a dive center here and went diving with us as a guide. We took land tours to see three fresh water lakes, one waterfall hike (beautiful, with a rock arch), hot springs (perfect soaking temperature after hiking), and WWII artifacts in Kao (not that exciting). We had numerous meals in inexpensive local restaurants. We visited some small hotels/resorts and were impressed by the Kupa Kupa Beach Cottage well run by Ona and Lutz (German), inexpensive and located on a nice beach. We had bought a dongle with local SIM card so we could do Internet and it worked slowly and intermittently here. (as in many places later on this side of Indonesia). Don't bother to buy the expensive dongle w/ capacity for 7.2 speed (unless you're going to use it in other places with much better Internet capabilities).

We heard about the 2012 Raja Ampat ( 4 kings) festival happening Oct 18-21, 2012 so we decided to quickly sail there (ended up more like motoring there!) to see this event that would give us a good chance to see the cultural traditions from that area. These are the anchorages along the way on NE side of Halmehara

**BOBOLO bay:** Our first convenient anchorage to avoid too many overnights on the trip to Raja Ampat. We anchored in this small bay in 45ft, corals (01deg32'125-128deg30'958E) as advised by our friends Walt & Jane on s/v Callisto. Natives paddled to us to offer us coconuts. Anchorage was roly with weak shifting winds every so often. No easy way to go ashore but we were in a hurry anyway. Note: don't try to anchor on the side of the bay near the village (too deep), and avoid the shallow area between the 2 sides of the bay. You'll end up on the side fairly close to a tall cliff.

**LELAI Pt (lee of Petak Pt):** Another convenient stop enroute. We anchored in 30ft, sand, quite far from shore.(01deg24'170-128deg44'657E). Due to big 6m swell, we could not go ashore.

Now, we leave North Maluku province and enter the Raja Ampat province, Our Diving highlight!

**WAYAG archipelago:** A magic place that should not be missed if visiting the Raja Ampat region. If you enjoyed the scenery of the karst islands of Vavau in Tonga ... this is even more dramatic. Great photo & video opportunities. Incredible scenery. This is the area that appears on all brochures of Raja Ampat. Some live-aboard dive boats installed 2 sturdy moorings here that one can tie to when available (please, vacate when any passenger boat

needs them). Mooring 1 = 00deg10'187N-130deg01'072E / Mooring 2 = 00deg09'800N-130deg01'473E. Good snorkeling and scuba diving reported on the outside. Nice secluded beaches at low tide. We spent only one afternoon here as we were enroute to the Raja Ampat festival ... but we vowed to return here later ... this time for a week or two!

**WASAI on WAIGEO island:** It took us some effort to find this new (less than 6 yrs old) Capital town as it did not show on our old CM93 ... and to make things trickier, the town is located about 30 nm East of the Waisai Pt and bay we do see on our chart! We anchored in 30ft of black sand/mud from river estuary at 00deg25'800S-130deg49'410E. One note, if you are approaching from the west; you will see a pile of rocks in the bay, stay offshore until you see these rocks well on your port side when you turn in toward the big cement "pier" w/ monument. There is very shallow reef to their west side

The annual 4-day Raja Ampat festival was a very good introduction to the region. The event is mostly like a fair for the locals. (We saw maybe 5-6 accidental tourists). We were treated with plenty of cultural performances, both traditional & contemporary ... got to sample local foods, including the famous BBQed larvae kabobs. The fair had booths from all the different resorts/dive centers so we had a chance to meet lots of people and plan where we would visit next ... We enjoyed the marching parades, the boat parade, the dancing and the nightly contemporary music concerts. On the closing night we were even treated with fireworks.

But for us, Waisai will always be a very sad memory too as this is where Zwetke, our 3-yr male Schipperke went missing. We think he jumped in the sea during the fireworks and for some reason, did not swim back to the ladder as we taught him to do. He must have been disoriented by the fireworks, and either never reached the shore or was lost ashore ... or maybe was taken (we were actually gone most of the day so don't know when he disappeared). We spent several days searching for him and alerted the local population for no results other than one boy who swore he saw Zwetke 2 days after his disappearance, but we think he might have been mistaken as nobody else reported any sightings

For scuba divers, we recommend the Raja Ampat Dive Resort,

[www.rajaampatdiveresort.com](http://www.rajaampatdiveresort.com) located just a few miles west of Wasai (00deg26'398S-130deg44'429E) We did 7 scuba dives with them to GREAT dive sites with an abundance of soft corals, myriads of fish (big schools of small and big fish) and even a close encounter dive with manta rays. Arif, the Indonesian manager/dive guide, is very friendly, competent and professional with attention to details, especially safety. We also went with them in Kabui bay to explore caverns, wall paintings and other natural curiosities. We took the speedy dive boat through "The Pass" a river-like waterway between Gam Island and Waigeo that forms a short cut from Pef Isand to Kabui Bay. We went with them for a short walk at sunrise/sunset to see the famous red birds of paradise and also had a very nice dinner at the resort. They have fast dive boats and do not hesitate to take you long ways out! We anchored at 00deg27'52S-130deg45'52E on a 15-40ft shoal and they picked us up on our boats ... but they promised to install some moorings just in front of the resort for future visitors. The diving was the most spectacular and colorful with the most exotic sea creatures we have seen in many years of coming across the Pacific. Because of its geography, it is one of the richest areas of marine biodiversity in the world. The dive with the mantas was the best manta dive we've ever done...and it was the worst time of the year, according to operators!

**KABUI bay on WAIGEO Island:** A nice calm bay to snorkel or explore by dinghy. We anchored on a small shallow area in 30ft at 00deg23'68S-130deg42'03E. It's a peaceful natural area where one feels isolated from it all. Plenty of karst islands to explore by dinghy to hear & see endemic birds, snorkel around the islets, see bats in caves, ... We even dinghied through the narrow and scenic channel that separates Gam from Waigeo ...

possible by sailboat but we are glad we did not do as we saw the shallow waters on the west side and the swift currents passing thru this 1-nm long channel.

**SORONG:** A very busy port with a fair size city. We anchored in 50-60ft at 00deg 52'88S-131deg 15'11E in front the Hasamina harbour where the dive charters (Indonesian-type boats) use the rickety wooden dock to transfer passengers and cargo. Lots of fishing boats are anchored in this busy place and I got the feeling, entering the harbor in the late afternoon, that this was the kind of place where things get stolen and disappear very quickly to places far away. Because one of our davit winches was broken, we had been lazy for weeks; we left the dinghy in the water, even at night. I should have heeded the little voice in my ear that showed me the image of the dinghy stolen... we would have avoided finding the 2 dinghy painters cut the next morning! By luck, our friend Roger (now nicknamed "oeil de lynx") spotted our dinghy with his binoculars. Sure enough the dinghy was loosely attached within a raft of 3 big night-fishing trimarans ... but no trace of our 15HP Mariner! The lock had been cut and the dinghy plug opened. By luck RIBs float even flooded so we recovered our Carib dinghy, which would have been far more difficult and expensive to replace than an outboard. A few weeks prior, I had been considering selling our 5-yr old Mariner to replace it with a brand new Yamaha. Thanks to the Sorong thieves, I ended up getting a new engine right there, right then! When I talked the next day to some other cruisers there, we found out that our outboard was already the 4<sup>th</sup> outboard stolen in the past weeks ... so beware if you anchor here! We wasted our time to declare the theft to the marine police but you never know. As when anchored in any official port, we did check in and out with the harbormaster. No cost associated with the procedure of getting a new inter-island clearance. In town, we were happy to re-provision at SAGA, the mini-mall supermarket. You can find plenty of fresh produce, frozen foods, bread, ... In fact you will find a lot more "White Folk" (westerner) food (real cheese!, ham, French butter...) because all the live-aboard dive charter boats (about 40 of 'em) provision for their American, Australian, and European guests in Sorong. Yellow public buses take you there or anywhere close in town for 2000-3000 Rp /pax. Another interesting area to yachties is the place where we bought our outboard: Semeru Teknindo Lestari, Eksan Hamadan speaks English. Take the "A" bus and get off near a store with a big sign: MultiMart. It's across from the big gas station/convenience/liquor store (Yes, Liquor!)

Another good source if you need any special marine parts is PT Intraco Dharma Ekatama, located at Jalan Rajawali No.66, Sorong. These guys, raised in Singapore, are very helpful and efficient. While they might be a little more expensive, they can provide many services like ordering parts from Java, money changing, fuel provisioning...) Niko Saputra ; mobile number: 0852 5477 6088 or Victor Saputra; Mobile number: 0812 4833 831

**BATANTA Island– off BIRIE Island:** We anchored close to the Papua Paradise Eco Resort to do some diving with them. One boat could possibly anchor in the bay on the backside of the resort very close to the end of their jetty on the shallow area. Perhaps the resort will have installed some moorings by the time you visit?? We elected to anchor on top of a large shallower flat coral plateau in 10-30ft at 00deg46'22S-130deg45'11E. This area is totally exposed to all sides, but in Nov, the wx was mild, and rolling was acceptable for a tri. There is a tidal current that switches 180 every 6 hrs. Chris & Lea, the managers, were very friendly and we gave them one of our old SSCA bulletins as they plan to become cruisers themselves someday. We also tried to go to the nearby Batanta Waterfalls but could only see the first one because of earlier torrential rains that made the outpour of water too dangerous to walk another 40 min to see the second fall. The boat trip thru the mangrove channel was nice, tho. Papua Paradise is a Hungarian owned resort with many over-water

bungalows, a nice buffet restaurant for guests (but Chris and Lea might be convinced to let yachties buy dinner depending on space and food availability). We had a nice meal with a great pasta dish, as their cook just returned from an Italian cuisine workshop...great change from Indonesian. They accept walk-in divers on space available basis, as houseguest satisfaction is necessarily their first priority. The seasonal visibility was down, and roaring currents are the norm in Raja Ampat, but the best dive we did with them was a totally calm dive under a pier in less than 25 feet, where we spent over an hour poking around and discovering amazing bizarre sea creatures with wondrous shapes and forms and behaviors. Raja Ampat is famous for this kind of "muck" diving, where you just poke around in boring looking surroundings and discover these wonders of nature.

**MANSUAR Island** – Off the Raja Ampat Dive Lodge. We tied to one of the 2 moorings in front of the resort at 00deg34'59S-130deg36'85E. Difficult otherwise to find any place to anchor in less than 100ft! This is space-available mooring, and the caveat is that it's pretty often that at least one mooring will be needed every 2 days. If you are one boat, not 2 like we were, it should be no problem. Deka, the manager was very nice and made us feel welcome. The resort is beautifully blended into the surroundings and is was the most upscale of those we visited in RA. We indulged ourselves with meals at the resort as well as to scuba diving with their dive operation. The divemasters were not as personable or competent as those of the other 2 resorts we dove with earlier, but they were ok. Unlike Arif of RA Dive Resort, most Indonesian dive guides from the majority of dive resorts and live-boards are not certified as Divemasters or Instructors...that being said, some veterans are much more skilled and conscientious than any rookie Instructor.

**PENEMU Island:** We were lucky to be able to pick up the big mooring located at 00deg34'307S-130deg17'098E in 130ft of water. It belongs to the Seas Conservation NGO that is trying to protect the Fam islands group from dynamite fishing. Their big live-aboard was leaving for Sorong for a few days. We dinghied into the small inner lagoon on the East side (you could eventually find your way in with your sailboat but it might not be easy to find a suitable anchoring depth) and walked up the trail, about 200 yards left of the local dwelling in the bay. If the old man is there, he speaks good English and can direct you to the trailhead. Great photo/video ops from up there. The lagoon is like a mini Waiag, with lots of smaller karst islets to dinghy around. It's like winding your way thru a maze, discovering new views around each corner. We also did a scuba dive from our dinghy. We dove "Galaxy" one of the dive sites described in the CI book "Diving Indonesia's Birds Head Seascape". If you plan to dive on your own, we really recommend that book that describes and gives GPS points for lots of great dive sites in the area (alas, no easy anchorages or waypoints). Warning: Unless you are very experienced in diving tricky and challenging currents, we recommend diving with the dive centers that have surface security personnel that can pick you up at the end.

**FAM Island:** We anchored at 00deg38'96S-130deg16'96E in 30-40ft. We went by dinghy into the small bay, where we found a pier and a big road leading to the 3 villages. The people from the first village gave us a tour around their tidy village. When we came back, both s/v Catimini and us were visited by a small canoe with 6 or 7 guys aboard saying they were the Port Captain and Coast Guard appointees for Fam and Penemu. They tried to use their uniforms to extract some clearance fee from us but when we told them that so far, we had not been asked to pay anything for any of our port clearance papers, they did not know what reason to make up to charge a fee. They asked for cigarettes, alcohol and anything at all. We gave them a few trinkets just to keep them in a good mood and to not create a

negative atmosphere ... small gifts are better than theft later or arguments. Having got meager pickings, they might not bother other cruisers later!? They do seem to get some kind of fees from the live-aboard dive boats. We told them it's normal for the commercial boats to pay since they are making money from Indonesia's beautiful resources, but we are just passing visitors.

**KOFIAU Island:** We anchored at 01deg09'312S-129deg50'893E in 50-60ft between the small island village and the beach on the main island. We were immediately greeted by lots of canoes with kids ... we were the entertainment for the month ☺ Unfortunately for us, from sundown to sun up, we heard the religious, pre-Christmas celebration (on 26<sup>th</sup> of Nov) via the very loud loudspeakers! It seemed the Moslems and the Christians wanted to see who had the loudest sound system!

From here, we rejoined Halmahera Island. We passed the southernmost point and rounded up on the west side. We did this on a night passage, being sure to give a wide allowance for inaccuracies on the charts. Luckily we had a full moon.

**GURA ICI Islands:** We could not find a good anchorage around Leley Island, so we anchored at 00deg07'80N-127deg12'86 in 30ft of sand off Gunange island. We did not go ashore but this was a convenient overnight stop on our way to Ternate Island. Nice scenery and a big enough area for more than 2 boats to anchor. We ended up coming back in Leley Island by speedboat (2-3h) from Ternate. Diving is supposed to be good around here; even a dive spot with mantas ... but everything has to be arranged in Ternate first.

**TERNATE Island:** We anchored at 00deg47'10N-127deg23'50E in 30ft on hard coral and coral heads. There is only room for 2 boats to anchor because even tho the shelf is shallow, the holding is quite poor, and you have to lay a lot of anchor line...and there are strong tidal currents with unpredictable directions of flow. Everywhere else around is above 20meters (70ft). We were right in front of the special tourism dock that is guarded 24/24 so no theft should be expected! The governor keeps his official yacht there! After our outboard had been stolen in Sorong, this was a relief! Alas at low tide it was difficult to get on the dock, as the former ladder was gone ... Make sure you use a stern anchor to keep your dinghy away from the local boats and the dock. The tourism office has local guides to assist you while here. We were invited for dinner at the private English school run by Rusdi a very bright and enthusiastic Indonesian who has US and UK accreditations. The school has over 300 students and offer courses from kindergarten to adults, 7 days a week to suit everyone's schedule. The 4 of us cruisers were the guests of honor and speakers to 50 students who attended. It was all fun and we were happy to help them practice as well as to have the opportunity to spread some goodwill and inspirational messages. Mr Rusdi also arranged a tour with students and their parent's cars, to take us around the island to see the sights. Many students came with us to practice their English and it was a win-win for all. We were also invited at Mr Bla-Bla's (nickname!) English school for English public performance by students.

Ternate offers 2 malls with more upscale products than found in the other cities visited and has a big fresh market. Lots of inexpensive local food. The supermarket in the Mall is large and modern, but did not offer the range of specialty choices in "western" food that Sorong did. (We heard that Manado (Sulawesi Is) was the best, followed by Sorong, then Ternate) We were able to get diesel and gasoline here easily with the help of the fellows on the dock.

Contact Azis (North Maluku Province Culture and Tourism office) or Samin (Saa-MEEN) (at RRI Radio station) for help if they do not find you first!

December was a month filled with events where we were invited: to 4 different weddings! (one at the Sultan's palace for one of his sons), to the Kora Kora boat festival as well as a big cultural event for the visit of Indonesia's vice-president. Quite amazing to have people in the street smile at us and calling us "Mister" no matter what gender we are! Lots of people seem eager to learn English and like westerners and western consumerism. (In some ways, it is sad to see the negative influence, like the one-time-serving-throw-away wrappers and water bottles. All these things just get thrown in the streets and end up in the sea ... Still the local culture is strong so it is quite a different world for us. We stayed here one month and were quite busy interacting with locals the whole time! If you have animals onboard, be very careful here that they don't fall overboard as the current can be swift in the anchorage. After losing Zwetke in Wasai, we lost Zenne here after Xmas! This time, the circumstances are even more mysterious! It happened in the afternoon, we were onboard at the time ... no barking, no noises, ... she never would have jumped and had never just fallen overboard at anchor...she didn't swim back to the swim ladder, or couldn't ... very bizarre and so, sad! It was almost as if she had vaporized. We looked for her for hours and nobody saw her ashore! We hope she ended up happy in a new home because we sure could not find her! We are so heartbroken to lose both our dogs, especially in such strange circumstances, and so close to one another. Indonesia was a jinxed place for us...a place of nice experiences and terrible experiences. I have to look if somebody invented a small kind-of-epirb with a VHF frequency up to 1-2 miles that activates automatically when wet. That way, we could use any portable marine VHF on that channel to zoom in on the beacon signal. Let us know if you ever heard or saw something like that ... I will investigate and see if I can perhaps find someone to build us such a useful gadget!

**JAILOLO:** We made ourselves a mooring in the tiny harbor at 01deg03'534N-127deg28'181E in 10ft off a dead coral head at the edge of a small 40ft patch between the dock and us. The harbor is well protected and we were glad to have made a mooring as the wind switched 360deg in each rain squall ... Would recommend that you do visit Jalolo, but do it with the fast, inexpensive ferries and book a lodging. Contact Jalolo Culture and tourism office. Ask the tourism folks in Ternate. Our impression of the area is that of cleanliness and lots of flowers and plants around the houses that are more spaced than in other cities we visited earlier. It was more rural, a LOT cleaner and healthier than the city. Houses were brightly painted; the people seemed to take more pride. Don't know if there is a correlation, but Jailolo is a large majority Christian, with the Dutch influence. It was a pleasant relief from Ternate City. We visited 2 traditional villages and a large plantation of nutmeg, cinnamon, clove, durian, and other local spice specialties. We went to a hot spring and mangrove river trip and drove to "Regret" mountain where we had a perfect view all around the bay. There are great views of towering volcanoes everywhere you look.

**Return route from Ternate to Davao, Philippines:** After 4 months of cruising this small part of Indonesia, it was time to take care of Sloepmouche in a good boatyard. So we decided to go back to the Philippines making short hops when possible and take advantage of wx windows ☺ Our first leg was Ternate to Jailolo bay. We anchored west of the harbor on a small isolated shoal at 01deg02'89N-127deg27'23E (25ft, coral rubbles, space for 1 boat). We were in calm water there despite rainstorms passing and winds changing from NW to NE. Our second leg was to 01deg15'65N-127deg25'20E in front of a small village (25ft, good sand, but roly with NW and N swell, we did not sleep so well that night). Our third

leg up the coast of Halmahera brought us to lovely **Loloda bay**. We anchored at 01deg40'69N-127deg34'03E (38ft, good sand). This bay is well protected from seas coming from any direction. It also comprises some interesting looking islets, one even boasting a waterfall. We dinghied over to the 2 waterfalls and swam under them. Near the NE entrance of the bay is a new fish processing plant (they gave us a tour) and on the South side of the bay, there is a village where people welcomed us warmly too. It was a perfect place to wait for the bad wx fronts to pass before heading NW towards Mindanao. From there we both sailed and motorsailed 3-day non-stop until the entrance of the bay of Mindanao.

**General comments about cruising in Indonesia:** "everything is more difficult as compared to the 50 countries we visited in our 20-yr of cruising so far". Most people are quite nice, don't take me wrong! But most of them do not speak English, or French, or Spanish ... so there is a bigger language barrier. Then the bureaucracy is quite heavy and it shows in many ways. We had to go see the local immigration office to extend our visas and we ended up spending about 5 hours during 3 separate visits (some said we were lucky to be quickly served!) and instead of a one-time 4-month visa renewal we were hoping to get (being a participant of Sail Morotai), we only got a miserly 30-day extension! That makes cruising much harder if you have to renew every month from the same, or, different bureau of immigration along your route. How can you cruise relaxed when you have an immediate date with an immigration office somewhere far away? This leads me to the 3rd frustrating thing in this part of Indonesia: not much wind to really sail anywhere so we end up motoring everywhere, thus putting wear and tear on the engine and buying lots of fuel! That is a 4<sup>th</sup> frustrating subject: buying diesel or gasoline! Only the government stations can sell it and they do not fill jerry jugs from just anyone. The BS reason is that the prices of fuel are subsidized by the gvt for locals. Whoever comes with a car or moto gets fuel at about 50 cents a liter (quite inexpensive indeed). But anyone not having a car/moto has to either buy from the company hdqts at over twice that amount or find someone that illegally resells his fuel (with a profit). This is difficult for all the local boats- fishing as well as charter boats and makes it quite difficult for cruisers to re-fuel! Our fuel tanks being quite low, we had to jump thru hoops to get 300 liters of diesel that I now filter into the tanks very carefully as fuel here is not very clean and tends to plug the filters quickly and thus caused us engine problems. To get money to buy fuel and other things, one has to go to the banks, a 5<sup>th</sup> source of difficulties. Just to exchange some money, like US dollars, is a whole adventure. Every bank will either decline changing or they inspect the bills and only accept the more recently printed (after 2006) and in mint condition ... any little mark or fold in the bill is an excuse for not accepting it! Perhaps I should start printing our own so they can be in mint condition for their acceptance??

7<sup>th</sup>, Many cruisers were disappointed by the lack of skilled people to repair much of anything ... our society of selling junk and throw it away instead of repairing has it's feet well implanted here too! Cheap Chinese products are overtaking quality products because of their lower prices. 8<sup>th</sup>, internet connection is often poor or non-existent. 9<sup>th</sup>, I should add that anchorages are quite deep and/or not well protected from swell or mild winds coming from unpredictable directions, ah ah! But to end up on a cheerful note, lets say that our past experiences and learning, gives us a big advantage dealing with all these problems. ... many local people are very nice and helpful ... and the diving is really fantastic here in Raja Ampat. Check our 20 or so videos covering our 4-month Indonesian cruise on [www.youtube.com/SLOEPMOUCHE](http://www.youtube.com/SLOEPMOUCHE) as well as the other 150+ videos we've made. We have already around 250,000 views and many subscribers! Hopefully these videos will entice visitors in these exciting places! We also enjoy reading cruisers comments as well as local people who now live overseas and miss their islands ...



## 2<sup>nd</sup> letter

**SANGIHE (Tahuna harbor)** on the west side of Sangihe Island was our first port in Indonesia. Tourism office and local authorities were all ready to take care of the fleet. About 14 boats arrived from the Philippines and 6 came from Malaysia. A series of moorings (about 30) had been installed on the north side of the harbor so we did not have to anchor in deep water. Alas, most days, we had swell in the bay making the anchorage uncomfortable and access ashore sometime hazardous and not for the faint of heart with the floating dock (more like a bucking bronco!) that had been made for the events. Entry formalities were painless and easy because officials were at special tables right at the dinghy dock.

The festival was held for the local community, with us, the cruisers, as honored guests. We enjoyed several days of cultural activities and sight seeing tours. The hospitality and the number and kinds of activities that the Fest Sangihe organizers arranged for us amazed us yachties: 1. A boat tour on the govt. Coast Guard boat to the family village of the Vice Regent, in the south of Sangihe, where we were greeted with by a “brass” band with instruments fabricated from local bamboo, then a lavish lunch put on by all the women in the village, then a demonstration of a traditional fish “round-up” out on the reef. (Great fun!) 2. Another day; a bus tour to the home of the last Sultan of Sangihe, met his 93 yr old daughter, the Princess, had a Bentor ride, (a kind of motorized rickshaw) to the forest to see the production of Sago (Sagu) Palm flour, another great lunch buffet, a beach visit, topped off by a sunset vista watching paragliders glide down to Tahuna city below. 3. Next day, we had an Indonesian culinary demonstration from a top Chef from Jakarta, then the city officially broke an Indonesian record by putting on a display of 259 different dishes made from Sago, a fabulous lunch for the whole town, and in the afternoon, a bus trip and a short bush hike to a beautiful waterfall!!

Each evening there was some kind of entertainment: local social dancing, bamboo brass band orchestras, vocalists, comedians, and more. We were always seated as Guests of Honor on stage. The last night of the Festival, we yachties were given a farewell buffet dinner, then invited to the best seats in the house for the closing statements by the Regent (Bupati), followed by a dynamite rock band concert by a hit group from Jakarta, “Armada”. Judging from the screaming, swooning, and singing along of the young girls, the group is quite popular in Indonesia. They must have been jealous of us old lady yachties, who got up and “rocked” the last song with the lead singer! All these activities and meals and more were offered to us at no charge as part of the Sail Sangihe Rally.

Each vessel also received 100 liters of free diesel ... so we could replenish what some of us had used to come ☺. Those who know Indonesia know just what a gift this represented. Petroleum products are highly controlled and rationed. Even locals must wait in long lines and jump through hoops to get them. Coordinating, obtaining and distributing 1600 liters of fuel is no easy feat. We were so appreciative for this effort. Sadly, there were some yachties in the group who complained when the fuel wasn't there when they wanted, or that their Gerry jugs were not full to the brim, or had spilled fuel and sand on them. One participant purposefully said they had to leave a day early, and when the locals made the special effort to get it for him, the boat did not leave and stayed until the end. When the gift givers get that type of reaction after putting out so much effort, they just may decide that it's not worth doing anymore for so little thanks, and next year there may be no free fuel.

After the official activities, we had Marcello, a young start-up tour operator, offer us very moderately priced tours to a waterfall, volcano hike and scuba in the bay. Several cruisers dove on the Japanese wreck right near our moorings. Most cruisers were very impressed by

the attitude of local people towards us, the foreign visitors. Some of us wanted to have more time in Sangihe as well as wait for better wx before continuing to Morotai and our request was granted, the festivities in Morotai were postponed for a few days. That worked well as the ones who braved the inclement wx arrived around Morotai early so they could laze around in the small deserted outer-islands. The ones like us who stayed longer in Sangihe had a great time at a waterfall and had more great restaurant meals, contributing more to the local economy!

**MOROTAI (Daruba town):** a short update of our January 2013 letter. This time the floating dinghy dock was at the end of the bay instead of at the main harbor facility.

What a great welcome once again ... there was no planned festival at this time but the tourism office, working with, local authorities organized a few special events for us, the visiting cruisers.

Some folks had problems getting money at the local banks, which didn't exchange cash, or had ATMs that didn't like certain credit cards. So get what you can in Sangihe or later, in Tobelo.

The guides from tourism were so helpful. The main coordinator, Arfi (who remembered us from Sail Morotai 2012) was so contentious to help us to get things done, like laundry, getting drinking water, fuel and gasoline delivery (again, not an easy job, as fuel is rationed), as well as offering a bus tour and a modestly priced boat tour to Mac Arthur's island and neighboring small islands. We also had the option of going on a modestly priced boat tour to waterfalls and do some scuba diving. Arfi, always so polite, so eager to please, and so quietly efficient did a great job of catering to our requests, keeping us informed, and putting up with complainers. We had an official welcome with traditional dance and nice buffet lunch, a couple dinners, and some fun dancing with the local officials while waiting for the Regent to arrive and give us a brief speech, and some spiced coffee and dessert. The last evening, a bunch of us yachties invited all the tourism staff to a Thank-you dinner, and they were moved to tears when saying farewell.

We again spoke with the ASWINDO rally liaison, Mr. Humphry to speak to the organizers in Raja Ampat, and since no special dates had been planned for events there, the cruisers got together and agreed on the best date to plan arrival in Wasai so the local authorities would get most of us together at the same time. Luckily officials were amenable and said to just show up and they would organize something for whoever came.

A few boats decided to take their time and enjoy the sights while going to Raja Ampat, and some even decided to head for other destinations. We heard that there was a Gemstone festival in nearby Tobelo in a few days so headed there first.

**TOBELO:** Since we had a great time here 2 years ago, we enjoyed coming back. SSCAers Catimini and Carina joined us.

We all were formally invited as VIP guests to the Opening of the Gemstones Festival and the dinner at the Kantor Bupati (Regent's Office), which was held for officials from Jakarta that came to judge the gemstones exhibited. We saw all kinds of jewelry made locally with semi-precious gemstones from North Halmahera.

We met Yus, the tour liaison from the Tourism Office again and did some scuba/snorkeling and touring with him, including a walk to a different waterfall than that of 2 yrs ago, and a very beautiful one it was too. See our previous letter (2012-13) for more details. The volcano was very active at this time, so we all got volcano dust on our decks!

Jan and Laura on Anaconda finally caught up with us here, having had technical difficulties which made them miss the start of the rally. We were so thankful to have met up with them because Jan was a marine surveyor for 17 yrs and has a lot of mechanical and technical experience, skills that turned out to be a godsend for us. Since leaving the marina after our lengthy haul-out, we realized that something was wrong with our shaft-transmission alignment, and were having a lot of metal grinding and packing gland problems. We had decided that we had no choice but to go back to Oceanview to resolve the problem, which meant canceling our plans for Raja Ampat, and a long-anticipated trip to Palau. Jan took a look and said, "I think we can fix it". So in the middle of nowhere in an anchorage with nothing around, Jan jumped in and courageously proceeded to realign our engine and replace 2 engine mounts which had not been touched in 30+ yrs. Without his help and optimism, we would never have had the courage to attempt such a thing ourselves. We were so grateful, and thankfully compensated him even though he had not asked for anything and was just helping out a fellow cruiser. It's meeting people like Jan that really makes the cruising life so rewarding. People still exist who still help their fellow men with a generosity of heart, and we find so many of them out here on sailboats.

**WAYAG archipelago:** A magical place that should not be missed if visiting the Raja Ampat region. Two years ago we could only stay here for 1 day as we were heading for the Raja Ampat festival ... but we vowed to return here later ... and this time we stayed for a week! We convinced Anaconda they just had to experience this place, and we had some great fun together exploring, diving, and sharing meals.

There are several areas you can anchor in good sand within the maze of islets of West Wayag islands. The 2 big moorings were still there if you don't have good light to find yourself a favorite anchorage.

We did find the path to a stunning overlook: Go to the northern-most big boat mooring...from there, with your back to the open ocean and facing into the lagoon, look to your right hand side to the ridge of karst rock formations (south of you). Now look for a long white sand beach that uncovers at low tide and almost disappears at high tide. You will need to be careful of shallow reefs if the tide is especially low. Once at the beach (the tourist boats often plant sticks near the beach to tie the dinghy to), walk into the forest and you will find the path that starts up the side of the mountain. The path is easily seen as you ascend up the rocks. The only tricky part (where we almost gave up) is near the top. The beaten path leads to a very dangerous looking crevasse that looks too hazardous to climb. Just back track a ways and you will find the path takes a sharp left as you descend (right, as you face upward) that takes you around the hazardous area. It is worth the climb; the views are breathtaking, as you can see both sides and both moorings and the incredible colors and formations of Wayag.

We also dinghied everywhere in the lagoon and snorkeled in several places near both entrances. We dinghied to the west entrance (too shallow for any boat) and snorkel drifted inside. We had some nice dives on the isolated rock islets NW of the main entrance. Check the dive guides for info and pay attention to strong surge and currents .... Nice pristine sand beaches covered at high tide with a few exceptions, where we had a great beach BBQ with Jan & Laura. Wayag is a real pleasure for the eyes: such beautiful colors, all blues, greens and white! We could easily come back some day and spend weeks here peacefully ☺

**KAWA Island:** We anchored right on the equator at 00deg00'24N-130deg06'69 in one of the bays on the east side. On a little island nearby we visited the monument erected in May this year by the hydrographic and tourism offices to mark the equator. The passengers of many charter dive boats in the area must visit this place. From here it was a dinghy ride to dive

One Tree Rock. For safety, we took our dinghy and Anaconda took theirs. If we had encountered strong currents, we would have taken turns diving; one team making surface watch or following the bubbles of the others for a drift dive. We had a great dive with lots of fish there. The diving around the several isolated rocky islets is probably good because of the current bringing nutrients. A few bays below, we visited an old abandoned copper mine settlement. Some cruisers a few weeks earlier did find some fresh water to fill their tanks but we only found dry pipes so perhaps it goes with rain and not from a spring?!

**MINYAIFUN Island:** We anchored in a channel between a small islet and Minyafun at 00deg19'51S-130deg12'16E in good sand/ 55ft. We visited the small village (they have a small dock you can tie the dinghy to). We had fun interacting with the villagers and buying some fruits (bananas & sugarcane) and vegetables (kang kung) despite our minimum Indonesian and their English not any better. We shared this anchorage with SSCA Commodores, Jon & Sue (and their daughter Amanda) on s/v Ocelot.

**Kabui Bay and The Passage:** This interesting bay of beautiful karst islands is located between Waigeo Island and Gam Island. Coming from the west, we decided this year to enter the bay through the west pass (The Passage, or Kabui Pass). It is important to time your passage carefully since the current can run more than 5kts either way. Best is to anchor at 00deg26'2625S-130deg33'1663E on a 10-30ft seamount (watch out for another seamount just 100 yds to the west as that one dries at low tide! From there you are close to the entrance of the channel and you can explore it by dinghy and get an idea of current strength and tide direction. It is about 1,5nm from this outside anchorage to the inside anchorage just off the Kabui Bay Yacht Club (Warikaf Homestay). We anchored at 00deg25'42S-130deg34'19E in 45ft of sand & coral rubble. We went in about 1 hour before high tide so we had a mild current with us through the passage. This pass is one of the popular dive spots in Raja Ampat and you most probably will see some local dive boats doing drift dives here with their customers. Follow them and you will find the bat cave and another cave that you can snorkel or dive into and come up inside and see light and trees and vegetation through the roof.

When you go visit Daoud Mayor, the manager of the homestay you will need to use smile, gesticulation and imagination to communicate with him or ask one of the dive guides passing by to translate for you. Daoud let you use and take all the spring water you need, he can also spearfish and prepare a meal at the restaurant. Passing cruisers help him with technical stuff and small gifts of useful items like gasoline for his outboard and household items. We now dubbed his place the Kabui Bay Yacht Club and decorated with old flags and banners, and installed an LED light in his restaurant hut, and filled the battery to his solar panel w/ water (he didn't know he was supposed to do that), and hope the battery will recuperate enough to run the light.

**WASAI on WAIGEO island:** The Sail Raja Ampat 2014 organizers, with the help of the local govt., installed nine beefy moorings widely-spaced in an out of the way area along the south coast just before getting to Wasai. Position: 00deg26'46S-130deg 46'71E in front of Waiwo Dive Resort. We dove to check this mooring and we were impressed at how strong it was built ... not like most flaky moorings we see in other places! Under the gigantic orange soft-sided, reflectively taped mooring buoy, there is 15ft of beefy chain with oversized shackles clamped to  $\frac{3}{4}$  in steel cable then another piece of chain shackled to a giant eye embedded in a concrete block of approx 4 ton. It turns out that the owner, Becki, of the Waiwo Resort was the one to get the moorings made. The resort welcomes cruisers. You can book some diving or meals and climb up the hill to see birds and a nice vista. You may

even see a “cuscus”, a possum type animal in the trees of the resort. When we stayed on the mooring 4 days and did some diving with them they even offered a ride to the Wasai public market and refilled our drinking water bottles. We also got wash water from the spigot at the resort. From what we heard, theirs was the most reasonable rate for diving in the area (approx \$50 usd). All the dive centers basically go to the same areas to dive. Meals were basic Indonesian, but tasty and nicely presented. We finally got internet aboard, which we hadn't had since Tobelo. See the short video we made for them: [http://youtu.be/Y1G\\_XkwDR14](http://youtu.be/Y1G_XkwDR14) During the strong south winds, 2 boats found a small space in the ferry terminal harbor but there is not much room and you get ferry wakes. 2 yrs ago, we anchored in 30ft of black sand/mud from river estuary at 00deg25'800S-130deg49'410E right in front of the town. One note, if you are approaching from the west; you will see a pile of rocks in the bay, stay offshore until you see these rocks well on your port side when you turn in toward the big cement “pier” w/ monument. There is very shallow reef to their west side. The 5-6 boats that braved the strong winds and made the effort to be there for the rally activities, were welcomed by the 'Raja Ampat Tourism folks and treated to festivities, and activities and some nice gifts, including a dinner and cultural dance show at Aiwa Resort, and an all-day snorkel trip to some of the fabulous reefs, and a beautiful coffee table book featuring the most stunning photos of Raja Ampat, the richest area of biodiversity on the planet.

**Ayemi Islet, East part of Batanta Island:** We anchored at 00deg48'762S – 130deg 53'6208E in 30ft of sand and coral rubbles. Watch out for pearl farm buoys in deeper water but it is easy to pass between groups and anchor in the shallower water off the beach. Calm anchorage making a perfect break between Wasai and Sorong if you have the wind against you.

### **SORONG:**

A very busy port with a fair size city. We anchored in 40-50ft at 00deg 52'88S-131deg 15'11E in front the Hasamina harbour where the dive charters (Indonesian-type boats) use the rickety wooden dock to transfer passengers and cargo. You can leave your dinghy behind the police and other boats at the dock. No problem during the day and convenient to load up stuff. We really locked everything at night and had the dinghy raised way up in the davits to avoid outboard theft, which was rampant during our visit here 2 years ago. Bought some gasoline (benzine) via John (cell ph: 0822 3844 4120) ... he was correct and delivered the gasoline a few hours later. Friends did get diesel (solar) from him without problems. We also anchored in much cleaner water and peaceful place south of Doom island, a small island right off Sorong town at 00deg53'497S-131deg13'818E in 30ft of good sand. In strong southerlies, you could anchor on the north side of the island. We checked out of Sorong, (one of the few ports with Customs to check you out) to sail to Palau so I had to see different govt agencies to do that. I first went to the harbor captain (3/4 miles walk to the left when you leave the gate of Hasamina Harbor, on the main road). Gave him our last internal port clearance (Tobelo in our case). No fee, no difficulties. Then I went to see Customs (up the hill, just opposite of where you come out of Hasamina harbor). Also friendly, I gave them all the required paperwork (printed from the documents emailed to us by the rally organizer (Dr Aji Sularso). They said that they would need to come aboard to inspect the vessel and that after that we would have to leave at once. I told them that we were only leaving the next day after checking with Immigration. They said it was fine; they would already prepare the paperwork and would wait my return the next day. Jackie did provisioning at the Saga supermarket again as well as the local market (you can take inexpensive public transport. On our departure day, we went to the Immigration office, a

yellow bus ride away (Bus "B") and had our passport stamped out. Only a short waiting time, no fees. After a last provisioning for fruits and veggies at the local market ("pasar") (another yellow bus ride away, 4,000Rp/pers), I went to see Customs again. Everybody was very nice and after waiting about 45min for the superior to arrive, we went all together on the boat for inspection. I took both agents by dinghy and they took some photos of the outside of the vessel and came aboard for the paperwork. They stayed in the cockpit. Easy & friendly, no fee. It is nice to see that govt agent's corruption is being eradicated little by little ☺

Footnote: Other rally participants had differing experiences when renewing their visas for another 30 days. Be sure to have a new sponsorship letter for the renewal. Stories ranged from not-very-nice immigration people who charged 1 million rp/ person (about \$100 us), but got the visa same day, to 1 million for 2 people, to people having to wait 4 days to 1 week for the process to be done (computer down w/ Jakarta office), but the fees less, to what should be the norm: application papers given one day, extension given the next and cost about 350,000rp/person. This is Indonesia. Take it all with equanimity, but don't get taken!

We have been in Indonesia for 2 months on this third visit and have enjoyed our time here again, despite some challenges particular to Indonesia (see our 1st letter).