

SLOEPMOUCHE - 46' Norman Cross trimaran - 5' draft – Jan - Aug 2013

Subject/ Area: Our favorite boatyard in over 22 years of cruising is here in the Philippines

As you can imagine, we experienced quite a few boatyards over the years ... most of them thinking about going back in the water and away ... as soon as we were out! This place is so nice that we actually enjoy our haul out! Yes, you read well ... we are not stressed ... we like to peacefully complete all the boat projects on our list ... and why not add some to take advantage of this ideal place! But I hear you thinking, this is a plug for this company they probably work for by now! So we like to point out right away that we have no affiliation of any kind except being very happy customers of the Holiday Oceanview Marina & Boatyard on Samal Island, Mindanao, Philippines (entrance: 07deg11'94N-125deg42'74E).

We heard about this new marina about 2 years ago when it was built and we loosely corresponded with Ellen & Kjartan, the marina/boatyard managers, via her blog and emails. Early 2012, when we heard about Sail Morotai 2012 Rally departing from the marina in Sep '12 to Indonesia, we knew that it would be a perfect opportunity for us to check the marina and decide if we wanted to come back here after the Indonesian rally to start our major haul-out projects. What we saw during these 3 weeks pre-rally convinced us to come back. So in January 2013, we made it back here from Indonesia - North Halmahera (see previous letter).

If you like to see details about anchorages on the way here, please, check the super informative website of Commodore Terry's on Valhalla
<http://yachtvalhalla.net/harbors/oceanview/oceanview.htm>

You can rent a bike and drive around Samal Island. We did it several times and visited the 3 waterfall areas. One is Hagemit waterfalls, real close to Alfonso's restaurant where cruisers often go on WE. The Hagemit falls are best visited on week days if you like to avoid crowds of locals coming from Davao on WE. The less visited Tagbaobo waterfall and small pool can be found at 7° 0.497 N - 125° 46.660 E.

As I predicted when we first discovered the marina, it is becoming more and more popular as good experiences spread around. The number of boats probably doubled in a year and they are now thinking about expanding the marina grounds.

Latest update about Holiday Oceanview marina (2019)

Since the abduction of the 4 hostages and the release of only 2 of them, one being Kjartan the yard manager, nothing has been the same anymore at the marina. Nobody really replaced Kjartan in his absence and he has not returned to run the marina. Therefore, no real work has been done by yard workers for a long time. Only hauling out and storage on the hard DIY, then launching. Few cruisers stay there anymore and the owners seems to neglect the marina/yard business while the construction of the hotel slowly continues ...

Last you read from us was when we came back from Sail Morotai 2012 Rally to Indonesia. Since then we hauled out for 18 months at the Holiday Oceanview Marina in Samal, near Davao, Philippines. After sailing our 1980 Cross trimaran since 95', we were due for a major haul out. In our 20+ years of cruising, we never saw any boatyard anywhere that suited us better than here in peaceful Samal Island near Davao City! The main reason why it took us so long was that we felt so comfortable here that we decided to do several big boat projects and take our time to do them well. We both worked 50h/week and we hired 2 very nice and

hard working Filipinos, Alex & Roldan, who live 5min away from the yard. They were non-qualified so we had to train them in all jobs we wanted them to do (sanding, epoxying, painting, wood working, ...) and they did well. Not 100% top quality but the quality/cost was a good value. We also hired several professionals to help us with projects that needed more assistance. We had Kjartan, the marina manager help us with several difficult jobs as well as getting fiberglass and epoxies from him. Kjartan does not give you unreasonable promises to get the job so most cruisers are nicely surprised by the quality, speed and cost of his labor. We were the first clients of Jonathan Stevens, now operating as Bentley Yacht Services, a multi-talented and enthusiastic Australian living on Samal. At first he worked quite a lot for us and the work went well ... until later, when he could not resist offering his services to the numerous sailors who started arriving in the marina as it got more popular. Being overly optimistic and wanting to help everyone, he quoted them jobs that ended up much slower, sometimes more expensive and not done as well as quoted ... a situation that got him in trouble with many cruisers ... a shame as he is quite talented and a can-do man! His optimism gets him in over his head sometimes. We also had the help of Lorenzo, a Filipino home building contractor that loves wooden boat building. With him, we reinforced the wing decks with local wood and epoxy, as well as the main mast deck support. We had interior home designer store, SKS, make us new galley counters in a pseudo Corian. We had very good local welders modify our davits as well as make new stanchions. Anyone wanting details of these professionals will find them in the marina clubhouse info book written by passing cruisers.

In August 2013, there was the Sail Derawan rally to Indonesia but we were far from ready to participate. At the end of August '14, we had the Sail Sangihe rally to Indonesia with stops slated at Sangihe Island, Morotai and Raja Ampat, so we made sure to be in the water before then and ready (or as well as we could) for departure. We really well had to, as I, Luc, had accepted to be the Filipino rally participant's coordinator working with the marina and ASWINDO, an Indo non-profit organization promoting yacht tourism ☺ About 18 boats came from many areas to join this rally. On top of our usual busy social activities in the marina, like weekly potluck BBQ, Filipino dinners, game nights, cinema nights, special birthday outings, ...the Holiday Oceanview Marina management treated us with many events and services. This year, as last, they offered 2 weeks free berthing, complimentary extra provisioning trips, help getting Indonesian visas, and clearing out of Philippines with Immigration and Customs, and complimentary rally festivities, like a field trip to Eden Nature Park, and the Kadayawan Festival, games, prizes, and BBQ Dinner. They hosted a great Kick-off party for the rally, after the Briefing session given by Dr. Aji Sularso, President of the ASWINDO association. The evening featured a copious buffet, colorful cultural dance performances, presentation of souvenir sacks, and beautiful commemorative plaques for each boat. The yachties presented a thank you card to the Marina owners, Boboy and Jean Bangayan for their generosity and support. You probably start to get a picture of why it was hard to leave! Nice staff, good security, typhoon-free area, reasonable rates, an actual full-fledged long-term haul out facility, conveniently close to a big and safe city with int'l airport, ... to name a few. Check www.HolidayOceanviewMarina.com for more details.

During the pre-rally events I organized a rescue pyrotechnics workshop to give a chance to sailors to get hands-on experience with distress flares as well as discovering the new generation of flares: the rescue laser flares and lights made in the US (not China) by www.GreatlandLaser.com Greatland wants to support sailors, so, any cruiser participating in any yacht rally can use the coupon code "rally" when they order on line to get a special discount. A great gift! . We did some distance testing at night when we were sailing towards

Indonesia and we could see the laser quite a few miles away! Other participant-initiated activities were 2 flea markets, conferences about cruising Palau, Philippines, and Indonesia, Google Earth Charting and Open CPN, a SSCA Ham Exam session, and a SSCA Gam!

This brings us to cruising notes taken during this Sail Sangihe 2014 Rally. This was the 3rd year for a Philippine to Indonesia rally. These rallies are a great way to visit Indonesia. Besides all the fun, festivities, and help with visas and clearance by the Filipino hosts, the Indonesian govt has waived the fees for the CAIT, a permit to cruise Indonesian waters, which normally costs \$150- \$250, and involves an agent who provides a sponsorship letter. ASWINDO has coordinated this arrangement with the govt, and acts as sponsor/ agent for the Rally participants. (The last 2 yrs, there has also been a leg of the rally that originates in Malaysia and merges with the Philippine leg at their entry point into Indonesia, Sangihe Island.) Coming from Davao bay, many boats decide to stop in Sarangani Island to cut the trip in two equal legs to Sangihe. Unfortunately, in September, the winds are southerly or southwesterly so it might be a lot of motorsailing and beating. The wx had been mild, but GRIBs were predicting strong winds in the coming days. The yachts that “beat feet” and left promptly, got into a very protected bay on Sarangani, the last Filipino territory, and last chance to use our Philippine internet connections. We stayed a day, while the wind howled outside, and visited the friendly Islanders.

Sarangani: entrance WP 05deg 28' 7234 N – 125deg 27'9674 E. We decided to enter the sheltered bay to relax for 2 days and meet the people of this tiny village at the southern extremity of the Philippines. People were friendly and we were even able to access internet via our mobile phone (with our existing contracts). Enter the bay with good light as there are some places where you could run aground, in the channel as well as in the end of the sheltered anchorage. We anchored at 05deg 28' 5881 N – 125deg 28' 5881 E in less than 40ft, mud. Some of the fleet anchored instead off Balut, supporting the swell because the internet connection was the fastest they ever had in the Philippines!

Dear SSCA,

We are now using Bonbonon lagoon, south of Negros Oriental as our new base to explore the Philippines and to leave the boat when we go away. In this letter we will cover both that base as well as our 10-week cruise in very near Visayas.

Bonbonon lagoon: As previously written, Bonbonon is an excellent typhoon hole where you can safely leave your boat when away. First of all, the chances of a typhoon coming are quite slim as the lagoon is situated far south in the Philippines (just above Mindanao). It is well sheltered from the ocean waves and swell as you have to enter via a dogleg and once far enough inside, you have no direct line-of-sight to the ocean. Most boats here are on moorings, their own, or rented from the 2 local Filipino families that cater to cruisers. Rates are about 1,000-1,200 P/month (~25US) what is quite reasonable. The concrete blocks won't drag as the bay bottom is very thick mud but you better check the chain and lines as these might not be checked or replaced often enough! I counted about 45 sailboats now in the bay with only a third of the owners present. Some have been here for years .. Some might be here forever. The cruising community has the opportunity to meet every Wednesday at Emma and Bernard for a buffet dinner (200P/p), every Friday at Arlene and Boy Restaurant for a great buffet dinner (200P/p) or every Sunday at Rowina & Bruce for a fixed dinner served buffet style. (200P/p). Bruce is an old American expat who built his house here so long ago. You can buy water at either places, we like Emma's since we can fill our jugs directly in our dinghy at mid to high tide.

One of the drawback (and advantage!) is the place is quite isolated and you have to either go to Siaton (30min) or Dumaguete (1h) to provision for anything. By the time you read this, the new road should be completed so perhaps you won't have to ride the back of a motorbike (habal habal- 15min/50P) to get to the main road to flag a big yellow bus (Ceres – 1h/50P) to get to Dumaguete. If you only need some fresh stuff, you could go to Siaton but then you might have to travel on the back of a moto as very few tricycles would make the trip (again with the new road complete, there might be soon a jeepney (small local chicken bus) passing by Bonbonon. But most yachties go to Dumaguete where Immigration is located, as well as bigger supermarkets and the rest. The best way to go shopping in Dumaguete for the day is to call Nigel, a very friendly Australian expat who runs a small resort at the entrance of the lagoon. He goes to Dumaguete at 8:30 and leaves from Dumaguete at 14:30 every Mon-Wed-Fri. A donation of 200P/p helps him cover the maintenance of his old van ☺ For that, you go beach your dinghy by his small boat yard or near the town/fishermen docks nearby (a big new dock is being built for future ferry service with Mindanao). The Globe wifi coverage in the bay is ok to good (as much as it can be!) so you will be connected!

Dumaguete: Immigration is located right in the center of town, near Lee's supermarket. It is located in a small corridor, a small office with only 3-4 people. Ask anyone in town, everybody knows because Dumaguete supports a big expat population of retired foreigners living, most of them, with young Filipinas to take care of them. Provisioning can be done at the public market (fresh stuff) or in supermarkets like Lee and Robinson. There are lots of fast food restaurant and inexpensive local restaurants. There are also quite a number of restaurants to appeal to the large ex-pat population. To refill your propane bottles (US tanks ok), the easiest is to take a tricycle on the Valencia road, past Hypermart about 1km, and

have your tanks filled at LPG Auto Gas (a gas station that will pump LPG directly in your tank. They will convert the number of kilos you need into number of liters for the pump (take just over 16l for a 9kg/20Lbs tank and cost 500P). If you need anything shipped to you, you can contact Fedex or having sent by Postal service in Dumaguete. Normally getting things via USPS gets in duty-free but when we used Siaton post office, we ended up charged a lot of import duties so beware. Getting things via Balikbayan boxes will be slow (1-2 months by boat from US) but should be duty-free! One of the largest shipping companies in the Philippines, LBC, offers a service called shippingcart.com which provides you with a US address and consolidates things that you buy on line and for a reasonable cost, ships to any address you want in Philippines. We heard that some people use this service and do not get charged duty (unconfirmed) The site says duty is included in their shipping cost.

Apo Island: Only 12nm away from Bonbonon, this short easy trip was perfect for a shake down after 2 months in the previous peaceful lagoon. We took a public mooring just in front of the main village and park office (09deg 04.658' N / 123deg 15.998' E). This beefier mooring was recommended for yachts by the Park Rangers that came to see us. Apo has a reputation to have some of the most beautiful diving in the Philippines, so it is crowded with many local "banka" dive boats from 8am to about 2-3pm. Be prepared to have up to 3 bankas tie behind you while you are on a mooring. After lunch, Jackie dropped me ashore as it was not easy to land on the lee shore at low tide between the hard coral fringing beach. I paid the Protected Landscape & Seascape fees of 100P/pers (one time general admission fee), 250P/day for the boat and the optional 200P/pers/day scuba diving fee. I had a quick chat with the divemaster at the hotel/dive center on the left. Apparently the best diving is around Rock Point West, the southern tip of the island. In the afternoon, despite mild wx forecasts of 2-5kts, the wind started to pick up all the way to 15kts from the SW... making for an uncomfortable evening and most of the night (glad we were on our stable trimaran!). In the morning, we moved around 8am to the mooring at Rock Point West 09deg 04.303' N / 123deg 16.041' E. That way, we would dive before the arrival of all the local boats coming from Dumaguete, Dauin & Zamboaguita (lots of local bankas with few divers as we were here during weekdays, probably much more crowded on WE). We left a 50ft trailing floating line off our stern so local boats could tie up behind us to let their guests dive the site (only 1 mooring on each dive site – 10 dive sites around the island). That mooring was also made of thick blue propylene line tied directly on a big coral boulder. We dived from Sloepmouche and had a relaxed dive to 70ft along the wall. Lots of healthy corals and schools of small fish. The real treat was to film a turtle chewing bits of coral for breakfast. When we came back there were 2 bankas tied up behind us and their divers jumped in as we were coming up. By the time we washed our gear and stored it away, the boats had left so we left the mooring ourselves (another dive boat came 3 min later!). Since we had too rough a night last night, we decided to check the moorings on the NE corner of the island in order to be better protected if the same local winds were visiting today. The 4 moorings on the East side were quite crowded and we heard that the area on that side had been damaged during a past typhoon so we went all the way to the northern mooring (Coconut dive site). After waiting around for a local boat to leave the mooring, we were able to pick that mooring at 09 05.132' N / 123 16.389' E. right in a calm area protected from the SW trades. Close to the shore but deep enough for our 5ft draft. The swell was minimal. Even here, Globe internet signal was ok. We swam ashore with Zonne & Zotke and they enjoyed a run amidst the few coconut trees on the steep shore.

Siquijor Island: We ended up motorsailing in very light SW winds the 18nm to Calalinan on the North coast (09 13.022' N/ 123 29.773' E) in 20ft sand & hard rubble, about 1nm west of Siquijor Town ferry dock. Nice beaches, crystal clear water ... nice view of the shore. Once we knew that we would stay here for a while because there is plenty of interesting to do ashore, we anchored closer to the ferry dock in a hard bottom covered by a fine layer of sand, rapping our anchor chain, on purpose, around some dead hard coral boulder so we would not drift anywhere. Well we did because we experience winds from all directions. The normal trades at this time of the year is the SW winds but apparently day winds do come from Cebu (NW) but by luck they are mild and if not at least of short duration. To go ashore, we anchored our dinghy on the other side of the ferry dock, in the shallow area where ferries do not dock and tied a long aft line to shore to keep the dinghy away from the docks. Siquijor is one of these nice islands where tourism is just at the right level, important enough to have lots of activities and restaurants but not having open airport, the tourists are not spoiling the islanders life and attitude. A tour of the island is a definite tour to do with many points of interest to visit: waterfalls, caves, nature reserves, spring pools, museum, historical buildings and more. If you like caving, check out the Cantabon Cave up on the mountain as well as a visit to traditional healers there. The Cave tour is really nice: you have 2 guides just for you, you are provided with helmets and headlights. Cost is 500P/up to 3 pers for the guide and a small extra for the headlight. The tour take about 2 hours walking in the river bed up to waist deep ... more or less depending the wet/dry season. We did the cave twice and the second time, Zotke and Zonne were the first dogs to visit the whole cave, we heard! We made a special video of the event. That you can watch, as always, on www.youtube.com/sloepmouche

There are several nice restaurant/resorts. We recommend the Danish Lagoon Resort for a great meal with generous portion a sailor will love. If you miss a big home-made burger, try his! If you can eat 2 of them, they will be on the house! A great way to get info on the different tours, restaurants and resort is to check the reviews on Trip Advisor! Globe internet works kind of slow but it works!

Siquijor Island turned out to be a great stop with many things to do in all sorts of catagories. We got there at the end of the dry season (end of NE-lies, transition to SW-lies), and stayed over 2 weeks! We anchored at first near the town pier of Siquijor Town where the ferries come in from Dumagete, Cebu, and Bohol. We developed a technique of putting out a stern anchor and a long, long painter, disembarking at the steps on the opposite side of the pier as the RORO dock and then pulling the dinghy at a diagonal angle so it was held off the cement no matter what the wind, and would still be floating even at low tide. The drawback of landing on beaches all around the island is that there are long flat shallow areas that leave you high and dry at low tide or having to swim out to the dinghy at high tides. Those who have a light easily carried dinghy or landing wheels have an advantage. Watch out for the black spiny urchins!

Siquijor Is is right now, at a perfect stage of development where there is transportation and good roads all around and over the island, not too many tourists that it's spoiled, but enough that there are many facilities, restaurants, small resorts and amenities that appeal to Westerners at prices still a bargain compared to the same things in our own countries. Having been in Philippines for a few years now, we have a sharp in-take of breath when we see a meal at 350-400 pesos, but when we realize that it translates to less than \$10 US, we grin sheepishly and enjoy a chicken cordon bleu, or steak with real cream sauce that could cost us the double back in the good ole US of A.

The island is the perfect size that you could do a round island tour in an 8 hour day and have a little time to spend at each site. The Tourism Dept. has a very good map and a well-done

picture book to give you insight. There are old Spanish cathedrals, bell towers and convents, varied natural features right next to the road, like mangrove and marine sanctuaries, waterfalls, caves, and forests and views of bays and beaches. You can pick transportation to fit your budget: Rent a motorcycle for around 350p (1US ~45p) or to be sure not to miss unmarked sites, hire a tricycle w/ driver and have room to carry things or share expense with 2 other friends (1200-1600p). Or take an organised tour with a tour bus.

We suggest allowing a minimum of 2 days, 3 if you want to go diving with a dive center, to appreciate this island. 1 day round island, 1 day to go to interior to Cantabon Cave (fun for those who like to scramble and wade the cave's underground stream for an hour each way, guides and helmets and lamps provided for a small fee.) and Mt Bandilaan, the highest point on the island.

Altho we anchored in front of Siquijor town which was alright in SW winds, and around the corner in Tambisan port on the NW side when the winds shifted NE, there were some surprises of diurnal (or night) wind shifts that brought some rocking and rolling for short periods of time. We are glad to be on a wide, stable multi-hull at those times.

Others have told us that there is anchorage in Lazi and Maria bay. The only drawback being that they are far from the major commercial and restaurant/resort area, and the south part of Maria bay is shallow and far from the major ring road.

Take time to explore Siquijor. The best part is that it's only a day sail, 28 miles, to Siquijor Town from Bonbonon, so you can make several trips or run back to the safety and the calm waters of Bonbonon (Tambobo Bay) easily.

Sumilon Island: A small uninhabited island full of tour boats coming for the day. We took a mooring at 09deg 25.78'N-123deg 23.54'E in 20ft of coral rubble. Mooring is made in rubber line (from tires) and attached to a coral head. Far enough from any shallow reefs to swing 360deg. This one seems is closer to shore but seems more out of the current for overnight mooring in calm conditions than the South moorings where wind against current makes for chop and running over mooring. Globe Internet Ok. We did not snorkel or dive but it should be ok.

Whaleshark Encounter Area: Just 2 nm from Sumilon, the place is very exposed so only a day stop. We took one of the few available outside moorings at 09deg 27.74'N-123deg 22.92'E, only about 50yds from the whaleshark area. You first need to go ashore to pay your mooring fee (1,200P) and then your snorkeling or diving fee 1,000P or 1,500P/pers. You will have to listen to a briefing, pay your fees and then wait in line as only so many people are allowed in the water at the same time. 30min session, no closer than 5m from any whaleshark. Feeding and swimming is from 8am-noon every day. Very busy ... everybody is inside a buoyed area ... Not very natural but guaranteed encounter.

Balikasag Island: Another island, inhabited this one, full of day boats bringing zillions of tourists from Bohol this time as this small island with beaches and diving is just south of Panglao. We took a mooring tied to coral head in 15ft of water but very close to small bankas. Moorings are not made for sailboats but should be ok in mild conditions. We were well protected in 20+ knots SW wind storm. Plenty of moorings all around but always check as usual.. Globe internet good.

Bohol Island

This is our second visit to Bohol island since we already cruised the South coast and anchored in Tagbilaran harbor earlier this year (see our notes in August 2016 bulletin).

Tagbilaran is a good base to explore Panglao Island and even visit some of the interior of the island since lots of public transport go from/to Tagbilaran.

This time, we wanted to cruise the West coast of Bohol and visit some of the interior from that side.

Calape: we anchored at 09 53.34'N-123 51.06'E in 17ft mud with nearby mangroves. Not a bad place in case of stormy wx as protected from the outside seas but still long fetch inside the whole area. Globe internet ok. By dinghy you can land in the river mouth at the town of Calape. The town has a special food market on Thursdays and is located right on the main road along the island with many busses to Tagbilaran. From here, we used a combination of public transports (big A/C bus, moto taxi and 'chicken' bus to go to Antequera to swim in Mag-Aso falls. Nice pool and amazingly devoid of any trash anywhere as local young clean the area every morning. With only 20 Pesos (50c US) as entrance fee, it is a bargain!

Cabilao Island: We picked up a mooring from the Cabilao Beach Club at 09 53.10'N-123 47.562'E. We checked with management and they let us it for one night as they did not need it this time of the year. We had a very nice dinner at the resort that night. Perhaps some other time, we will go diving with them around the island.

Tubigon ferry wharf: We anchored at 09 57.29'N-123 57.27'E in 15ft sand in exposed anchorage. Interest is to be next to ferry dock with multiple daily fast ferries to Cebu. I did take the 745am ferry to go do some things in Cebu City and came back on the 430pm ferry. Only about 75min each way and a cost of only 210P ... only difficulty is that neither of the 4 ferry companies take reservation or sells tickets in advance! So you have to be at least 45min before in line at the ticket counter. The ferries going from Tagbilaran take about 2h each way but you can purchase your ticket in advance (also online). Globe internet OK From Tubigon, we decided to go back to Antequera to explore more of the caves, rivers and waterfalls. This time, we had our friend,,Antolin "Bong" Hibaya, met us on the main road south of Calape with his side-car. So we took Zonne & Zotke with us in the bus (cannot take the A/C with pets but no problem on the non A/C). Antolin is a very nice tour guide in Antequera, personable with good English and a side-car, ready to show you anything you are interested in his area. After being the first tourists ever to visit the new lake that was formed after the 2013 earthquake and go on a bamboo raft, we hiked along the river to swim in several pools at spring and waterfall. We also visited some caves in the area. At the end of the day, we visited the Kilab Kilab falls in San Isidro and Antoling drove us back to the boat ... We invited him onboard for his first trimaran visit and some home bread and beer! We motorsailed the 20nm N to Getafe harbor and anchored off *Handayan Island* at 10 09.33'N-124 10.04'E in 36ft mud. Well protected from all winds except west.

Away from ferry dock in Getafe (multi-daily motorized bankas to Cebu) and the dock on Handayan Island. Globe internet ok. From here we went to the Danao Adventure Park, a nice project by the local community, for the local community. Lots of interesting activities at very affordable prices. Take a trip on the skyride, zipline or even try the Plunge! They also have a small kayak trip on a fairly calm river, you can do root climbing and wall rappelling. We also did some caving there!

Talibon: We anchored at 10 09.58'N-124 19.74'E in 10ft of mud, near the town and ferry dock in order to go to the market and post office. We then moved to nearby to *Jao Island* and anchored at 10 10.28'N-124 20.86'E in 15 ft of sand/mud. Off clean property ashore. Watch out for shallow areas in the vicinity. Globe internet ok.

The whole north coast of Bohol did not impress too much because of it's murky water and not much to visit ashore! We thought that it would be easier and quicker to access the attractions in the center of Bohol from there but actually, unless one rents a bike, it is easier to use public busses if starting from Tagbilaran.

On our way back to Tagbilaran, we stopped at *Cabgan Island*: We anchored at 09 58.70'N-123 59.82'E in 20ft and less, mud bottom convenient anchorage when going south to Tagbilaran. Globe Internet OK.

We made it to Tagbilaran just before we finally had days of constant strong SE winds! Where were these when we slowly motorsailed up to the north of Bohol?? Jackie went to Cebu immigration with one of the ferries from Tagbilaran to obtain her Emigration Clearance Certificate, required from any tourist that has been in the Philippines over more than 6 months previous to their flight out. You can only obtain that letter from the Immigration offices of Davao, Cebu and Manila. That letter is only valid for 1 month so we decided to be in Tagbilaran just about 1 month before her flight to Europe so it would be much easier to get to Cebu for the day via ferry from Tagbilaran than later when we would be back in Bonbonon. Since I was flying myself (Luc) to Europe just 3 weeks later, we had to get on our way fairly soon. And we had promised to spend a few days in Siquijor again to do a little more filming to produce a Souvenir DVD to be sold to benefit local communities. So we decided to cut our trip in several short legs, easily managed despite forecast of 20Kt+ of SW wind. We motorsailed from Tagbilaran to a mooring on the north side of Balicasag. By leaving early morning, at first light, we had moderate wind until about 10am ... we had a nice afternoon and good night of sleep there. The next day, we motorsailed close to the wind to Siquijor. At first we thought about anchoring in Maria Bay but then we thought to go from there to Bonbonon later would be long and hard so we decided to try to sail to Siquijor town, protected and much shorter distance from Bonbonon. But as we zig zag our way all the way to the East coast, as soon as we passed Bitaug Point NE corner of Siquijor, at around 2pm we were hit by 25kt on the nose and big seas so we decided to turn back and sail easily downwind to Bitaug, on the north tip, where we had wind but little sea and swell. So we anchored at 09 18.094'N-123 37.639'E in 30ft hard bottom with superficial sand. Clear water (I even scrubbed some of our bottom and our dogs swam) We rested one night here before rounding the point early morning to go to Siquijor town with less wind

Note: Some new legislation is afoot concerning pleasure vessels in Philippines waters. It covers Philippines registration, inspection, safety equipment requirements and more. Apparently these will apply also to any foreign vessel in the Philippines for more than 60 days! If Philippines are making it more painful for yachts to visit, Indonesia on the other hand is finally making it easier for yachts to visit ☺

Talibon town and ferry dock: we anchored at 10 09.58'N-124 19.74'E in 10ft of mud, near town center & public market open every day as well as near ferry pier. Globe internet ok. We dinghied and med-moor to ferry pier wall and bought fresh stuff at local market right there.

Jao Island: to be away from town, we just motored less than 2nm away to Jao Island. We anchored at 10 10.28'N-124 20.86'E in 15 ft of sand/mud. Be careful to avoid the shallow isolated reef with less than 10ft deep at high tide .. and the visibility in the water is too poor to see it. Off clean property ashore. Globe internet ok.

Dear SSCA,

After being on our permanent mooring in Bonbonon, south of Negros Oriental, for 6 months, we were again ready to do some exploring of the Philippines, this time the western part. Since we had 3 Schipperke puppies to train before they go to new homes, we were hoping to find lots of beaches for their training and lots of fun activities to do with them.

Bonbonon lagoon on the SE corner of Negros: We are very happy of our choice of a new permanent base since we left Davao. We made a strong mooring in this almost landlocked bay but so far we have not experienced any typhoon in the area, and these are quite rare and mild! We recommend this peaceful & friendly area if you want to leave your vessel unattended or just relax and do some boat projects on your own (no theft reported). See our previous letter for more details.

We left the serenity of Bonbonon in early March to start a 7-month cruise in the Visayas & Palawan. To make this letter easier to read, we compiled all anchorage information in a table at the end of this letter.

South & West side of Negros

First 10nm, we sailed with wind behind (wrapping effect), then motor sailed close-hauled. Our first stop was Taboo Twoo anchorage right in front of Ulrich's (ex-cruiser met in Bonbonon) house, plenty of space around, be careful for numerous isolated sticks in the general area, where small bancas attach themselves to fish at night. Ulrich (D) invites all cruisers to visit him :) Light onshore breeze during northerly wind season, small swell. Best is to land dinghy just north of the small rocks lining the beach at this level, then pull dinghy to high water mark on the beach. We had a nice dinner with Ulrich & his companion. From there we had about 10nm of motor sailing in very light wind followed by 10nm of beautiful sailing with the NE winds coming from the bay we were passing across. Our second stop was Cansilan Point, protected from NE wind waves behind a sand bar. Rolly with afternoon wind from SW. Nice dinghy trip up the river. (the puppies' first cruising expedition!)

We then motored in light wind to Catmon Pt. Calm, no swell. We went by dinghy to nearby beaches and Ubong cave on the west side of Catmon point.

We sailed into nearby Nabulao Bay to check the anchorages we heard about but were not inspired by the bay so we went just a little farther north to anchor in Campomanes Bay in front of a nice beach. The bay is so far back that no swell came in. There is a marine park at the north end of the bay entrance and two small floating fish parks inside the bay. We took Linda from s/v Hawkeye and our 5 dogs for a dinghy expedition outside the southern entrance of the bay and explored some hidden beaches and small caverns. What fun the puppies (and their parents) had discovering rock-scrambling, dark caverns, and sensory over-load of stinky seaweed, soft digging sand, and splashing in the wavelets on the white hot beaches. Every beach also had a fun training session, as Schipperkes can become "Wild Indians" if they don't learn discipline. As the saying goes, "if you don't train Schipperkes, they'll train you!"

After 2 nice calm nights we motored the 6nm to a little bay that looked quite beautiful on the GE photo, and that we were told about by a boat that anchored there but touched on the way in! The entrance looked very narrow and shallow at one point but we fortunately got a

trace from the cruiser who had been there just a week before. Note: you can get Filipino harbor entrance routes and anchorage waypoints (including all ours) from Terry Sargent www.Valhalla.com We went in very carefully wishing for sunshine instead of the cloudy sky we had. Going in mid-rising tide, Jackie got a very detailed look at a few coral heads for a couple boat lengths where the coral makes a bar across the deep passage, but we made it in slowly without touching! We anchored in, what we named Perth Paradise lagoon, (no name on the chart, and locals couldn't give us a name) well protected from all directions by reefs and rocky islets. This small bay reminded us of Palau with its rocky islets. Narrow entrance passage with shallow spot so better enter at mid to high tide rising (see harbor entrance route). 2 local resorts: C Resort (northern) and Perth Paradise Resort (southern). Nice infinity pool and good, inexpensive Filipino meals at the PPR which is hidden from view of the anchorage around the corner. We took the dinghy to explore the outside of the lagoon and snorkeled in the lagoon pass (and saw the two coral heads that come closest to the surface so we could plan the route to avoid them going out).

After just 5nm North, we found Cartagena bay to be ideal to explore the 2nm coast south by dinghy with hidden caves and pristine beaches! From this bay, it is fairly easy to take a bus to the town of Sipalay, about 7 km away. We landed the dinghy at a concrete landing to the far right of the beach as you look ashore, but later found out it's much better just to beach land your dink in the middle of the community, and walk inland asking for the bus stop. It's only a few 100 yds to the main road where you can catch a big bus to the largest public market in the area.

We took advantage of a 2-day break in the strong NE winds to get N and NE.

Our first 10nm leg took us to Sojoton Bay where we were protected from the light Southerly breeze. We anchored with shallow area on the west side and fishing traps on the shallow part extending quite a ways from the beach. Right next to the highway, so easy place to get on a bus to go to a big town to repair anything.

The next day, we took advantage of a 36h break in the NE monsoon due to some depressions in the area to motor sail in very light wind to **Guimaras Island** (where we would not even consider going if against strong NE winds!).

We anchored in well-protected St Ana Bay in front of small fishing village and stone pier leading to the road system. Several fishing parks are in the bay as well as several resorts with beaches. We took a half hour habal-habal (moto-taxi) to Jordan (pronounced Hor-dan) to buy some fresh food at the Sunday morning market. If you need a big city for repairs or mall shopping or supermarkets, you can take a ferry from the Jordan Wharf to Iloilo. We did not need any thing, so we cannot report on it. Guimaras is famous for the sweetest mangoes but we were just a few weeks too early in the season for the abundance (mid-May they have the Mango Festival). We took an island tour (visit our YouTube channel to see it). From the anchorage, you can do a dinghy expedition, out the bay entrance and to the North, for some snorkeling and visit of a marine cavern into which you can drive with the dinghy to find at the end, a swim thru window that takes you out the other side.

After a few days in this protected bay, we motor sailed back South in light wind to the Taklong lagoon, well protected from all sides. After we anchored, I went by dinghy to register with the Taklong Island National Marine Reserve office, that you see on your port side when entering this typhoon protected lagoon. This was one of the rare anchorage with no mobile or internet. But Winlink has a new station in Batangas (near Manila) DX1M, with excellent signal on the 40m band (the Cebu winlink station is off the air). Great area for dinghy exploration of mangroves, rocky cliffs with caverns and snorkeling, ask the friendly park personnel for where to go. The marine reserve is run locally by the people of the communities around the bay. It shows that the people really take an interest in making sure

that the area is well-run. We were lucky to be there for their anniversary festivities, and were surprised it's already 27 years in existence, because it was well-kept, people still enthusiastic, and many new buildings and structures recently built, so there is ongoing support and interest....something too rare in Govt or foreign sponsored projects.

Note: March is the end of the NE trade wind season and we hoped that the going North in the lee of West Negros would not be too hard against strong winds and seas. At the same time, we hoped to get some NE to help us going west towards Palawan. With just a little patience, planning in function of the wx, we did quite well actually! We did a lot of motor sailing but the seas conditions were not bad at all so the timing was right!

With the trade winds blowing well again, we had a nice sail (after such a long time!) with wind aft of the beam and then behind all the way to Siraan Point on the SW tip of **Panay island**. We anchored in front of Siraan Hot (warm) Springs & Resort. As protected as Naso Pt anchorage in NE winds. Easy beach landing to relax in springs facilities (entrance fee of 60P for barangay - Pinoy type of setting, meaning a little tacky ☺).

We were now ready to go west to explore one of the most touted places in the Philippines, Palawan. Our first leg was 65nm long so we left before dawn to make sure we could reach Cuyo Harbor before sunset. The NE trade winds were forecast at 15-20 but there is a big wind shadow behind Panay that might give us some light wind for the first part of the passage. Windytv.com was right on! We had to motor sail the first part of the trip with very light wind and some adverse current but then about noon, we started to get more and more wind on the beam and we ended up pure sailing at 8kt+ with 25-30 Kts. Only in the last 2 miles to Cuyo Island anchorage did we have the wind on the nose. Passing between Cuyo and Bisucay Island, we had to avoid numerous sticks on shallow areas .. glad we had good light and a fast last half to arrive before sunset to avoid those sticks and some unmarked shallows on the way into the harbor.

East of Northern Palawan

We anchored just 5 min after sunset in Cuyo Harbor right in front of the beach with 30 kts blowing over the low sandy beach... an exciting ending to a long day. Can be very windy during NE monsoon (we had 25-30kts+ for 3 days) but sea was calm enough behind the protection of beach strip and reef. Alas Globe internet is still very poor .. you might barely get your emails! We stayed put here for a few days, waiting for reinforced trade winds to pass before continuing on towards Palawan.

This is one of the best places in Philippines for kite-surfing and everyday we could watch them in front of us in shallow waters. Thomas (ph: 0919-4084094) rents good motorbikes to tour the island and sells home baked bread, pizzas & other special foods. We had a fun day going all around this small island. We had a nice lunch at Anino Retreat, owned by another Ulrich (Swiss-German) & Victoria, on the opposite side of the island, a very nice intimate resort with a great kite surfing beach too. Internet is reported very good on this side. We watched an expert kite surfer, in 35kt winds, maneuver his way thru a line of incredible breakers that would make even surfers pale. It was amazing, but if he had made one false move and crashed, there would be no way for any one to offer any help! Ask for Heidi at the fresh market. She is a super nice lady and a friend of sailors. She can tell you how to prepare banana blossoms, and seaweed "noodles" that we had never seen before, and which tasted just like noodles. We got fresh fruit juices, many vegetables and fruits including delicious sapotilla fruits (called chicos in Philippines) All Cuyo grown produce are organic. March/ April is cashew nut harvest season, and the people of Cuyo collect, dry and sell raw

cashew to the larger cities for income. Jackie LOVES cashews and was able to buy them for 350p/ k, half price! You might be able to buy the regurgitated bird spit, that is used to make the famous Bird's Nest Soup that the Chinese adore, for only 100,000 p/ k. from the folks that bravely scale the cliffs of the islands to collect this prized product. (ask Heidi) People on the island are quite nice and deserve their peaceful reputation. Many ex-pats are moving here for the kite surfing season away from the crowds in Boracay, then go home for the typhoon season,

Our next passage was a 48nm, finally really pure sailing with the wind and seas on the aft quarter to Calandagan Island. Many fishing vessels anchored here in deeper water. Fishing village ashore. A good place to only spend a night before the next leg as the anchorage was rocky. After another sailing passage, rougher for the first 2 hours, we anchored off Casian Island. Be careful for shallow reefs that rise abruptly (some have small fishing huts on them). Looks like mostly fishing villages around both islands.

Often cruisers in SE Asia complain about too few good sailing days: either no wind or too strong or in the wrong direction. For our day passage to round the top of Palawan, we finally got one day of perfect wx with moderate seas and had a beautiful sail in 10-15kt, close-hauled sailing in between nice islands & islets. In fact, we did not stop at a possible anchorage at Binulbulan Island 16nm from departure but continued for another 16nm just on the west side of the North point of Palawan.

West side of Palawan

We anchored in Daguyon Bay in front of private beach & small communities of fishermen on 2 other beaches. If coming from or going to N between the islets, and the mainland, watch for shallows extending out far from shore. You may pass over large shallow reef areas only 12-15 feet deep, but we did not see any isolated reef sticking up as long as you are well away from a rock or shore.

From there, we then motor sailed to **El Nido**. Be careful when approaching the anchorage in front of the town as plenty of shallow areas are quite far from the beach .. best is to first come over to the west side of the bay closer to the high rock islands to find the deep channel before approaching the town. What a magnificent setting it is, with the high, jagged cliffs towering over the buildings and bay. The town was quite crowded just before Easter with mostly Filipino tourists (Foreigners mostly come around Xmas/New Year during their winter).

Caveat on El Nido: in the last year, the amount of tourist activity has exploded. New accommodations, restaurants, and most of all, tour companies offering tours and diving out at the islets of Bacuit Bay have sprung up out of control. The shoreline is choked with layers of tour bancas with long lines out fore and aft, and spidery arms out both sides. Sewage facilities are over loaded, and the water at the beach is nasty, gray, and oily. (Altho out where we anchored, water was clear again) From about 8:30am to 5:30 pm, the beaches and attractions at all Bacuit islets are packed with bancas coming and going. At Small Lagoon, at least 20 bancas at a time are lined up at the entrance like a WalMart parking lot, and inside the lagoon, there were 50 to 100 life-jacketed tourists taking burst shots selfies (maybe capturing a little of the awesome natural scenery). Luckily, we yachties can get these wondrous natural features to ourselves with a little planning. But it is a shame to see how over trafficked the area is, and the amount of trash left on otherwise idyllic beaches.

The town offers many restaurants & eateries. Many offer wifi internet but often slow. We had nice seafood grilled at Maas Grill & Restaurant where you see and choose what you want fresh on the grill. No real supermarket other than a Chinese general store south of town (50P tricycle ride) near the public market of Coron Coron.

Before cruising Bacuit bay, we asked a few dive centers in town what were their favorite dive sites and read cruisers' past visit notes to find out where we wanted to explore by dinghy. Finding decent & safe anchorages near attractions is often not very easy. The first time we went to Miniloc Island we could not find any suitable anchorage so we ended up sailing back north to Cadlao Island on the SW corner. We anchored in front of small beach. We could have anchored closer to the beach but wanted a conservative 360deg swing in case of currents or changing winds. Was ok in 12 kt SE wind with boat facing the wind & small waves. That puts you very close to the snorkeling area off the east side of Dulimacad island. This island, nicknamed Helicopter Island has also a renowned tunnel dive we enjoyed early morning before any dive boat arrived: Nice short & easy scuba dive in a tunnel that is about 30m long at a depth of 12m max. Entrance is at 12m near the North tip of the island, right under the rocky cliffs. Just about the time it gets too dark to see without a light, the tunnel makes a right turn, and shortly you will see the glow of daylight at the other end of the tunnel. If you continue straight, you'll go into a dead-end chamber with high ceiling in which you can actually surface. Bring a flashlight to see schools of small fish & soft coral on the ceiling at the end. Easy to anchor or tie you dinghy on the cliff and do the tunnel both ways or circle back via the outside.. The next morning, we decided to try again to find a suitable anchorage around Miniloc and found a small shoal area about 65ft deep just west of Simizu island. This is the only safe anchorage we could find near Miniloc island. It is more than 30m deep around the shoal but it is quite far from any islets so that you could drag a long time before being in trouble. In calm conditions (and with a stable trimaran) this was a good base to explore the beautiful area by dinghy, all nearby! We went by dinghy to explore the Big lagoon (driving the dinghy inside and touring around like local bancas). Then anchored our dinghy outside the Small lagoon and snorkeled in while most people came through the narrow opening by kayaks they rented at the entrance or just swam in. We also dived on a narrow coral ridge that crosses from South Miniloc to Shimizu Island with some nice corals and schools of fish (yellow snappers). Depth: around 12m. Watch out for currents going one way or the other with the tides and watch out for boat traffic (tour boats). Best is to not surface in the channel or to dive with surface float and tender above. We also dove around one of the Tres Marias islets: It was an interesting shallow dive circling the second island in this group of 3. There is a banca mooring to use, as you are not supposed to anchor in this marine park area. No diving is allowed off the southern island of the 3 we were told by a banca of rangers stationed there. Best depth 15m or less.

Next we decided to explore some of the Bacuit bay area where we would be better protected from the changes of wind direction predicted for the coming week. Our first anchorage was at Lagen Island in front of the only accessible beach on the south side of Lagen Island (the others have private signs!). Less than 1nm dinghy ride to visit the Cathedral Cave located at 253deg from anchorage on the west side of a rocky islet. You can enter the impressive high-ceiling, multi-colored cave on Pinasail Islet with you dinghy and snorkel to see the schools of tiny fish seeking the protection of the cave entrance. Snorkeling ok around these 2 rocky islets. Possible anchorage on the SE end of the island on the wide 10-13m area between the island and the mainland eastwards. You can easily pass between Lagen island and a visible sand spit which can be left to starboard. (Was a great place to run the dogs!) From here we motored just 2nm (big passage!) to the SE of Malapacua island. We anchored in front of a beach at end of village. From here you can go by dinghy to the deserted beach on the east side of Lagen Island where nice snorkeling can be found along the drop off. Time to go back to the fresh market of El Nido but this time we anchored on the south side of El Nido peninsula, at Corong Corong beach at the back of moorings of bancas & resident sailboats. It is a little difficult to land anywhere on the beach as there are several rows of local bancas anchored fore and aft in the way. (not as many as El Nido, but still a hassle) If you land near

the left side of the native houses on stilts, you will be near a paved road that leads to the main road. Easy access then to the public market by foot as it is only 200 yards from the beach. There is also a well with hand pump where you could get washing water in jugs.

We then started to head south again as we wanted to get fairly quickly to Sabang to tour the underground river and then work our way back north slowly with any wind hopefully from the south now! (that did not really happen as we kept getting very light winds from all directions until the end of May).

Our first 5nm passage was to Cudugnon Bay, in middle of the bay. Watch out for abrupt shoaling towards the shore and the shallow areas on the south side (easy to see with good light). From here you can dinghy to the Cudugnon Cave and beach where there is a beach bar and picnic palapas. We were not asked an entry fee. We read that tourists pay some kind of nature conservation fee when they arrive in Palawan but we were never asked and are not sure of the details. The cave entrance is to the left end of the beach where the rock cliffs begin and could be hard to find as the sea almost gets to the entrance at high tide. You can ask the guy at the bar or banca guides if you cannot find the entrance.

Our second passage was about 15nm to Malampaya West Bay. We checked it as we were about lunch time and liked what we saw! We anchored in front of small beach, in clear water. Had a swim and a beach training session with our 5 Schipperkes! A short 6nm motoring in no wind brought us to Fowlers bay where we anchored in clear water in the middle of a nice bay with 3 beaches. We snorkeled on the point north that we had passed to enter the bay ... surprisingly we even saw some fish of an eatable size! We also found a deep cave you can swim or snorkel to via a narrow passage about 50m (we even had the dinghy in midway. Saw some bats and a 2-foot lizard on the rock. That tunnel finished by a big chamber without ledge to climb out. After a 18nm passage motoring in less than 5kt wind, we arrive in Arton Beach where we anchored in clear waters in front of nice little deserted beach. After just 6nm, we anchored off the Secret Paradise Resort in Mayday bay. But as the English owner, Mark, was absent, it was nicely implied that we were not welcomed ashore or even to anchor in the small bay. So we left and sailed just 4 nm away to what looked like a promising anchorage on the GE chartlet, Cacbolo Island. We anchored in front of beach & small well-kept backpacker accommodation. Other than 2 fishermen, nobody was there (tourists just left) but heard roosters and dogs. Next day sailed 17nm to get to **Sabang**, home of the famous Underground River, the longest navigable in the world and voted one of the 7 New Wonders of the World! This is as far south we were planning to sail, as further south it could be more risky as far as getting kidnapped by terrorists ... and we were not ready to sail to Malaysia yet so from here we went back north to continue our Visayas cruise. We anchored in front of town, near the dock where bancas take off to go to the river. We had to really pull strongly on the anchor for it to really dig well in the very dense sandy bottom. Good we did because we experienced a quick rain storm with 20kts of wind coming from the sea twice and thus boats turned 360 deg. We did not drag and did not get too close to any of the numerous bancas anchored around us for the night. Landing ashore is tricky at low tide, because the bottom is shallow for a long distance. We attached the dinghy to the floating pier next to the dock where all the bancas load the folks going to/from the Underground River. But when we came back at low tide, the dinghy and "floating" pier were high and dry and on rocks and coral. Luckily conditions were mild with no waves coming ashore so the dinghy gently got left on the rocks without damage. We just had to wait til the tide came back in. Best to book ahead during tourist season, The vans are found close to the Underground River Tour booking office. The Regular underground river tour can be purchased there at the Sabang pier office but you might have to book a day earlier if the number of tourists has been reached for the day. Regular tours run about 45min, covers

1.5km of navigable river and cost about 750P/pers once all the different fees are added. A special 2+hour tour covering the whole navigable part (4,3km) can be booked, but only at the office in Puerto Princessa. Cost is about 4,000P for a permit for up to 4 pers + 250P/pers environmental fee/pers + 1,100P for the banca (up to 6 pax) to go to the river entrance and back.. Best value is to be a group of 4 to split the various costs. You cannot use your own dinghy to go to river entrance and you cannot anchor your boat there any more as it is a marine protected area! We booked the long tour and asked to take our tour as early as possible in the day. We were picked up at 7am, and actually got to the river base before the employees! Nice and quiet that early in the morning. We even had time to video some big monitor lizards and some monkeys. By 8am, we were the first canoe entering the underground river: just the 2 of us with 2 guide/paddlers. It was nice to do almost the whole tour without seeing anybody else until close to the end. Bats, birds, nice stalactites and stalagmites ...the tunnel is immense inside. There is one large chamber with a 60m high ceiling! No motors are used, so you hear only the sound of the paddles in the water accompanied by bats and swallows navigating. Only our guides had headlamps, but gave us one to help with filming. It was difficult to capture the immensity of the whole thing. Would recommend you take a big flood light to enhance the experience. Despite the sheer number of tourists visiting the site everyday, (a friend told us it was the Philippine's biggest money making attraction) it was a worthwhile experience! (see the video on our Youtube channel)--- Another small attraction in Sabang is a small waterfall that can be seen from the coast. You can either walk there 1.5k from the town dock (not sure whether you can swim in a pool at the bottom), or take the dinghy along the rocky coast the opposite direction of all the boats going to the river and in about a km you'll see the small falls on the coast. It's not possible to land the dinghy on the rocky swelly coast.

Since we were back from the tour before lunch, we sailed to a Marofinos Bay, just 6nm away. We found here much less swells and a peaceful place. Got to go to a small deserted beach with our 5 crew ☺ We then sailed just 9nm to Denay Beach in another peaceful anchorage in clear water.

Our next stop was **Port Barton**, a place recommended by several friends. Indeed people here are friendly & less shy and the town is as clean & uncrowded as El Nido must have been just 10 years ago! The bay is shallow, so we eased our way in as far as we dared, avoiding the many sticks (but no problem to go in between them). We anchored in front of town beach and had only brief spells of swell coming in. You have to land your dinghy on the beach and pull it above high water, or anchor out and wade or swim in. We landed in front of the 2-story Coast Guard Station/Tourism Office. The gas station is located here too. The many Tourist bancas usually take up beach space as they load and unload pax. Interestingly enough, there is no public market in Port Barton, to our chagrin since we'd used up our fresh stuff thinking for sure such a popular place would have a market. But there are several stores with at least basic fruits and veggies at not much higher prices than El Nido. If you are lucky, you'll arrive when they just get a new delivery. There are lots of choices of eateries, coffee shops, ice cream, and 2 Scuba Dive Centers. No supermarket. You can book a van or a jeepney to Roxas (1 hr) or Puerto Princessa (4 hrs) for more sophisticated shopping. There's a limited public market in the uninteresting town of St. Vincente, but it's not worth going with the big boat (lots of coral reef unmarked on the way). Just wait til El Nido to load up again, or if going South wait til Sabang and take bus to PP (only 2hrs away).

Things to do: We did an easy walk (90min) to the Pamuyan waterfall along the principal dirt road, then the last 15 mins on forest trail after you pass the Welcome Center. There is a covered area to leave dry gear, and a nice refreshing pool to swim in. You can access

another different waterfall (Malau Falls) from the same trail by turning left, crossing the river and following a stream that leads to a multi-level waterfall (about 10 min walk)...smaller but with pool at bottom. But beware of small leeches in the pools here! We didn't find out we could visit 2 waterfalls in the same trip, so ended up doing the 90 min walk twice!

If you are a waterfall fan, there are 2 other falls accessible from Port Barton, but involve taking a boat ride first. Ask about Nikko Falls, and Bigaho Falls.

Meet Brian, the owner of Kiwi Lodge, and share stories with a fellow sailor.

Our next anchorage was less than 2nm away, in front of the Mermaid Resort, run by a nice couple (Filipino guy w/ Chinese wife. We had some meals here and went with Jeffrey and Lossy (Lucy) on a island hopping tour with snorkeling at Twin reefs (lots of live hard corals) and near German Island (where we had lunch) to snorkel with turtles at Turtle Point, and Lowly island, which is a low sand spit in a shallow area between their resort and Port Barton.

Next, we motor sailed to Boayan Island. We anchored in front of a private property, covering the whole cove, belonging now to a Manila corporation. You will be visited by security watchmen to let you know that you are not welcomed ashore (unless invited). This private place is also dedicated to protect endangered birds, wild monkeys & lizards and they created a marine area where reefs are grown and replanted around the bay. But we got permission to anchor in the middle in the cove away from coral rehabilitation areas as long as we didn't discharge anything in the water and ran dinghy at low speed as it is a marine conservation area. This small bay is well protected from all direction (we had light NE wind). There is a very nice wreck full of fish (lots of lion & scorpion fish) that is marked and part of a marine reserve of the village. You should ask the chief for permission to dive the wreck and offer a small donation. This wreck is a fishing boat that, in 2011, was quickly driven away from the village when the fishing nets caught fire and there was risk of explosion. The vessel sunk to a depth of 25-35m depth. The chief said the name of the boat was "Germil".

We then motor sailed close-hauled to what is often mentioned as some of the nicest beaches in the area: Emergency Point. We anchored in front of the small village but could not find anyone speaking English.

Malampaya Sound: After another 13nm, we anchored in Inlulutoc bay in front of a beach with a few families living there. Sheltered anchorage. Several beaches around. Poor snorkeling with reefs in bad shape.

Our next anchorage was on the south side of Alligator Island in front of Peter (D) & Anna's house (looking to sell! / John & Sissy own the other house but don't live permanently here since 2003). They were cruisers that swallowed the anchor, and in the old days, many sailors would come to visit, but 20 yrs later, the place and people are tired. (but still nice). The whole passage between Alligator Island and mainland seems to be around 11m deep so this could be a place to sit a typhoon. Globe & Smart antennas are on the north side so the island shields from their signal but perhaps anchoring closer to the extremities of the island would allow line of sight on the antennas???

Running low on fresh food, we sailed to Pancol only 7nm away. We anchored in front of the very nice new community pier where we left our dinghy to take a 30-min tricycle (200P/RT) to TayTay fresh market. At very low tide, you may have trouble getting back out if you came in close to land. Taytay is actually on the East side of Palawan so you do cross the island! The market there doesn't have a big selection of fresh goods but was adequate for our provisioning until a week later in El Nido. If you need gas or diesel, take you jugs with you in the tricycle as you won't get a better price than at the Taytay fuel stations (El Nido and Liminangcong especially are more expensive). Taytay is on the highway running the length of Palawan, so if necessary, you could catch a bus to Puerto Princessa (5-6hrs). Next day,

we anchored above Sail Cliff in one of the most scenic little coves in Malampaya Sound. We had surprisingly interesting snorkeling around the small islet that separates this cove in 2 parts (you could also anchor in the other part. It is a little deep and you need to anchor quite close to the shore to find 40ft of water.

On our way out of Malampaya back towards Bacuit Bay, we went via the Endeavor Straight to check out prices of fuel and gasoline at the fishing community of Liminangcong. We anchored in front of fuel depot and found that there is easy access to dock & slightly cheaper than in expensive El Nido (but abt 25cUS more per liter than in Tay Tay!). After lunch, we continued to Guntao Island to go with our dogs to a nice beach. With the calm wx predicted, we took the chance to anchor in this less protected area than Liminangcong (but more scenic and with no boat traffic!).

Next morning, we motorsailed just 6nm to Tapiutan, another highlight area in the **Bacuit bay**. Made a temporary mooring here in 11m of coral reef in order to go explore the area by dinghy while the boat is safely moored without damaging the corals around. Used a 20kg float ball on chain u/w to avoid chain breaking corals as the boat swings in different directions. Note: later, we saw a local mooring ball about 0.8nm north of here, near this island, just past the Matinloc Shrine and after the scenic beach picnic area on the point. Look to the port side. This mooring maybe for a dive sight. We did not check it. Not far from the Matinloc Shrine, and still in Tapiutan bay, is another natural attraction, Secret Beach. Just look the opposite direction from the Shrine, for bancas all lined up near the rock cliffs. There is a small swim through where you end up in a hidden cove on the other side of the cliff with a small hidden beach. It's definitely not a secret any more. In the same area are -other little caves and swim-throughs

After a few days again around El Nido to provision and have some good meals ashore, we motorsailed to the north as we had to be soon in Coron, Buswanga to pick up boat parts coming from the US via www.shippingcart.com You register with them (free) and they give you their consolidator's address in Hayward, California. You order anything online (only a few obvious prohibited goods) and Shipping Cart will keep it for up to 30 days with no storage fees. Once they receive an item for you, they take a photo of it and email it to you so you can decide to accept or refuse the parcel. You can order the forwarding of your packages online with instant quotes for airfreight (10 days) or sea freight (6 weeks). The price quotes include insurance up to 500US (extra for a fee) and any customs duties (quite low in this special case ☺). They called us to let us know that the 1st parcel arrived and to ask us to pick it up within 7 days. Surprisingly the parcel arrived about 10 days before the ETA so that was good but we could not dilly dally to get to Coron. But our 6-week cruise along Palawan west coast as far as Sabang was just the right amount of time for us.

Summary: If you like isolation and mangrove-type anchorages, you will love the Malampaya Sound. If you love very scenic jagged karst island formations with many attractions to visit (but also many day-tourists), you will love Bacuit Bay. It has been compared favorably with Palau & Thailand and we agree that this is one of the nicest cruising ground in the Philippines. Our timing was good as far as sunny wx (no rain until May), light winds (Southerlies are just weakly showing up end of May). Naturally the disadvantage is that you end up doing a lot of motoring unless you can sail in 5Kts of wind.

After 6 weeks of great cruising along Palawan west coast, here we are now exploring this interesting group of islands nearby to the NE. BUT FIRST! In our last letter about El Nido in Palawan, we forgot to tell you an important tip...in the public market at Coron Coron, the best buy of all of Philippines: the green edged mussels!! 45 pesos a kilo, at this writing, less than \$1! Luc had to make sure to get this information out! (you know, Man from Brussels, 6' tall, and full of "mussels!"). We regaled several times on Moules Frites. (Mussels and fries, a Belgian national dish). They get them fresh all the time from the farms.

Linapacan Island

After first checking an anchorage NE in the first big bay but finding it uninspiring, we decided to explore a little further. We almost ran aground on some isolated shoal incorrectly charted on Navionics and not showing on the GE charts. By luck we were on the look out for that shoal indicated by Navionics so Jackie did eyeball watch and I was motoring slowly ... when suddenly the shoal she should have seen safely on our port side, ended up right in our path! We had to actually back out a bit and go port of that shoal. Our first anchorage was still on the north cost but NE in the last bay east. Before we even anchored we had a banca with a security guard asking where we were going because this area is mostly occupied by a pearl farm. When we indicated that we would anchor away from it, near the village on the beach, he said it was ok. One of the reasons that made us choose this anchorage were several interesting sea caves to explore by dinghy and snorkel along the cliffs NW of anchorage. We did that with our canine crew that afternoon. Turned out that the little non-descript beach was made of millions of pebbles of semi-precious stones, or marble, of myriad colors, purple, pink, amber, green, red, black, blue...polished by the waves and glistening in the waves like jewels. Just magic,
Our next passage now brought us near Culion Island.

Culion Island

We tried to anchor in Dicabaito bay in either the Southern or Northern bays but found depths either too deep (70ft+) or too shallow! Very scenic area that we were sorry to leave, being unable to explore due to lack of secure anchorage. We continued just 4 nm more to Dipalian Island where we anchored on a shoal in front of a nice beach.

Busuanga Island

We came directly to the capital, Coron in order to pick up our boat parts. We anchored in front of town, among the permanent moorings of tour boats. Lots of space to anchor in about 10m in this big natural harbor, but watch out for unmarked isolated shallow reefs scattered around in the area! You can tie up your dinghy at La Sirenetta Restaurant or at Sea Dive complex, easy to see from the anchorage. Quite low water at low tide far from shore, and your outboard might pick up a lot of weeds in your prop near the shore so be prepared to row. The other choice is to go to the floating dock near the left yellow tower (old zipline), on that big reclaimed land (the public market is located on the far end). Since we arrived mid-May, we had some thunder & rain briefly about daily: great to fill your water tanks but makes town & market a bit muddy. The market area could easily be renovated but the selection is not bad at all. Pretty much everything comes from Manila, as it is very hard to grow things around here, we have been told. But we also heard about small organic farming.. Hopefully a growing trend!

There's a LBC office here to receive packages ordered from the US via shippingcart.com and an airport (½ hr w/ shuttle van) with daily flights to Manila. A nice panorama hike you can do is to walk up to the big Cross and the Coron lighted sign at the top of a hill overlooking the town (no charge).

While tightening the alternator belt, I discovered that the alternator was not producing anymore! A visit to Rudy Electrical showed that 2 diodes were bad and caused the remaining 2 legs of wiring to cook and break some soldering. Nonplussed, Rudy was able to order the right gauge wire in Manila and replaced all the diodes with the set of spares I carry in case. I immediately called Amptech (M Power Manufacturing in Forth Worth, Texas) and had a knowledgeable & helpful technician/salesman confirm what Rudy recommended to do. I ordered another 6 diodes (these are quite special and beefy, not easily found while cruising in remote places). The tech was surprised that anyone even rewinds these days. Indeed the labor cost in US/Europe would be more than the 80\$ a new stator would cost but here for less than that & faster I can get the alternator completely rebuilt. After chasing after Rudy (has another day job) and waiting about 2 weeks, I finally cornered him in his shop. He showed me on his makeshift bench that it was producing and looked ok. But after mounting it back in the engine (a pain), I tried running it, and it produced for all of about 30 seconds, then nothing and some smoking parts. Apparently Rudy is better at analyzing than fixing!! I got 50% of the labor cost back but lost half of my spare diodes ... I will have to wait now to get the ones from the US ... by luck, we always carry a spare alternator!

We replaced our freon-leaking old Adler Barbour Cold Machine by a new Engel Conversion Kit. When we have a chance (Cebu), we will try to get the leaks in the piping of our A/B evaporator soldered and perhaps will install it again in our custom freezer/fridge box if we are not satisfied by the cooling of our new Engel conversion kit. (evaporator only cools to 0 degrees C, which may not be enough in our big box. Otherwise, the Engel consumes a lot less energy than the old unit, even running constantly.

After a week here, we were happy to leave and start exploring and diving. Our first trip was a easy 12nm to the west side of **Sangat island** on a free boat mooring consisting of 3 cement barrels about 16m deep connected to ~10m navy chain followed by ~ 25m big blue propylene line with plastic floating barrel and spliced eye pickup line. This mooring put you to dinghy distance from several shipwrecks nearby. Just a little South of this mooring, about the level of a very small boat mooring, right between the rocks ashore are hot springs: at high tide, you can feel the warm water and see the thermocline. Wild monkeys can sometimes be seen on the cliffs ashore. Going north, just after the mangroves begin, if you are here at very low tide you can find your way along the shore to a small walled enclosure around another hot spring river. Relax in fresh warm not hot water. We did a dive on the Olympia Maru, just 1/4 nm away among the pearl farm buoys, at around 8h15 and were back onboard by the time the tourist boats arrived... a good thing as visibility was not that great to begin with. It is a Japanese freighter / cargo ship 120m long - Max depth 25m - Min depth 14m. Pick up the red mooring ball tied to the stern or black mooring ball tied to the bow. *History: It is not certain which ship this is, some called it the Morazon Maru or the Taiei Maru. Possible dives on the wreck and things to see: Deck levels are at 18-24m, so it is a good wreck to start with your wreck diving experience and since there are so many masts it is easy to make your ascend to the surface! An interesting dive is to go into the first cargo bay in the stern, then dive through a narrow hole into the second bay and continue to the engine room (with boilers), then dive back on deck.*

Animals to see: There are some nice black coral bushes, usually covered by clouds of glassfish and juvenile barracudas and if you take a look you will find some hidden predators like scorpion fishes or wasp fishes calmly sitting there waiting to catch their dinner. There are also blue sponges with the beautiful white and black Jorunna funebris nudibranchs."
For more info on the Coron wrecks, you can look like we did on <http://starfish.ch<dive<Sangat.html>

After the dive, we decided to head for civilisation as I needed to book airfares and thus needed internet. We motored just 8 nm to **Pearl Bay/ Puerto Del Sol** bay where we expected to find much activity but it was dead quiet as we arrived .. I guess low season now! There are a few yachts being stored here on the YC moorings. The bay is very beautiful and protected, and shoal yachts can get up even further into the Cylone Hole. Even though there are several resorts on the hills surrounding the bay, they all agreed to stick to architectural guidelines that give the bay a beautiful homogenous look with the striking white buildings against the densely forested green hillsides. It's refreshingly nice compared to the architectural mish mash and kitch infecting so many of the tourist areas of the Philippines, like El Nido, Coron, and the Sabang area of Puerto Galera.

We took a mooring in 4m mud. Moorings belonging to the Puerto Del Sol Yacht Club are free if you patronize the nearby resorts. Check-in with the Puerto Del Sol resort (N of here) Long term storage possible. NW side of the bay entrance, you have the Busuanga Resort (more high end, intl resort type). SE side of entrance, you have the very friendly Al Faro resort. Dive center located at Puerto Del Sol resort. Surprisingly and sadly, Globe internet: none; Smart mobile: none. Internet access with Globe is ok, when up at Al Faro bar/restaurant as you have then line of sight to a far away Globe cell tower in the north. Both other resorts have satellite phone services (was down at PDSR at this time). Easy access to the highway (45min to Coron). You can probably book a shuttle to town with a resort. The bay is well protected except from strong SW. In case of typhoon, it should be possible to sneak into the back part of the bay (<2m depth). While here we dinghied just outside the mouth of the bay to the Okikawa wreck on a red mooring on stern in 10m on deck. Visibility was better on this wreck (lucky day?) and we enjoyed exploring the outside as well as some of the inside.

After a few nice meals and some relaxing in Puerto Del Sol, we decided to go diving. We tied Sloepmouche to the wreck moorings as these appear sturdy enough to hold a bigger vessel in mild wx conditions, as we have now in this "between season". Our first dive was on the Akitsushima Wreck, a Japanese Navy Seaplane Tender 113m long. Max depth: 38m / min 17m / Average 26m. We gave a line to a diving banka that was already moored when we arrived (no 2nd mooring here at this time). This one is for experienced divers (deeper penetration, currents at times). We left for a short 4nm to the Ekkai Maru where we tied to one of the 2 moorings. We had lunch and interval time here while several diving bancas arrived and they kept tying to each other on the second mooring. After a dive, this time with very poor visibility but interesting penetrations with better visibility inside! We were visited by 2 young guys from the nearby settlement .. nice guys, who appreciated an older mask we had that was looking for a new face to fit ! (they never asked for anything and only once were we asked the 50P/diver/dive fee we heard was requested from tourist dive boats). With the mild wx, we decided to stay overnight here in order to dive a nearby wreck first thing the next morning, before any diving boat arrives. Next morning, we just moved 1/2nm to the Irako wreck for a deeper dive and our only dive of the day. We explored the Irako Wreck, a Japanese refrigeration/navy provision store ship (147m long / Max depth 43m / Deck 28-35m).

After a stop in Tangat hot spring again to swim with our 4 Schipperkes, we decided to anchor in a well protected anchorage. With Luc flying away for a few days, to deliver one of our puppies to her new owners and to do a marine survey in Davao, we wanted a safe anchorage in case of stormy wx and not too far away from Coron. **Dicanituan Bay**, just near the western edge of Coron town was the perfect place: well protected all around, dinghy dock ashore near main road, internet coverage. Actually a few local sailboats are moored here permanently! We also met Plong and his assistant at the small marina who was able to repair our outboard. Quite lucky for us to find one of the rare outboard mechanics in the Philippines as most boats are not using outboard but simple Honda air-cooled engines.

With Luc back, we decided to circumnavigate **Coron Island** in 2 legs with overnight in a very protected anchorage. Our first clockwise leg from Coron was 15nm. On the way, we saw a few very enticing beaches with a possible day anchorage so we had lunch at one very cool beach and a swim and run with our 3 dogs (only 1 puppy left) on the eastern point. We anchored in 13m sand area near a series of nice small deserted beaches with small caves and sea pools. Afterwards, we motored the last 7nm to Calis Pt Cove. This scenic bay ranks with the Bacuit Bay in Palawan! We anchored in 10m on a sand patch between corals. Eyeball your way over the coral bar into this very scenic cove. There's plenty of depth, but you need good light to avoid the one or two very shallow heads. We anchored just inside of the coral bar so as to avoid the many buoys further in, (seaweed farms) and perhaps deeper depths. Excellent protection from all winds except North and then you can probably tuck you way in at the head of the bay and still be protected (altho in deeper water or near reefs and buoys). Several nice beaches around and the Cathedral dive site is very near. Next day, we explored this beautiful bay by dinghy only leaving our footprints on some of the beaches. We also did a scuba dive in **Cathedral Cave** in order to film it in video. Abet, the caretaker of the site showed us the black mooring ball about 100ft from cliffs. Went by dinghy from Calis Point anchorage very near and anchored dinghy in 10m between the mooring and cliffs. The entrance is located under a very orange colored part of the cliff ... To explore the cathedral in scuba or free diving (if you are very very good!) go to base of the cliffs (more to the left) and look for a small crevice about 7m depth (it is not obvious that this is the entrance). Pass thru it (it is very short, narrow and you will be at 12m deep) and you end up at the bottom of a sand mountain. Follow it up, you will see the daylight, and you arrive in the cathedral! You can surface into the cathedral as it has a huge chamber with a big opening high up that lets light thru. The ceilings offer very nice stalagmites and other formations. If you are an experienced cave diver, you can also explore a second chamber that has no light and very few small air pockets (be careful because the opening is at the bottom and if you kick the silty sand, you might not see anymore daylight coming from the cathedral area). This anchorage and cave are so far our choice as the most picturesque area in the Calamians .. it rivals with the best areas in the Bacuit Bay! Glad we came here!

After more provisioning in Coron town, we sailed to **Culion Harbor, on Culion island**. We visited the small historical leper colony, church and fort. Got a small info sheet from tourism office showing 8 nice waterfalls on Culion island but they seemed hard to go to, mostly needing to go by boat. We did not want to circumnavigate the island, as good anchorages don't seem to abound and it would take us too much time ... but it's always with regret when we miss visiting any waterfall!

We then sailed back to Busuanga to dive more WWII wrecks and see our friends Todd & Janet on their Pirate boat charter who just adopted Jimmy (Cornell), (because of his name!) our last Schipperke puppy (I brought the second puppy to a nice family in Manila).

Continuing north on **Busuanga Island**, we took a leisurely cruise near several small islands looking for a safe anchorage near good snorkeling and a nice beach. Due to some overcast wx at some point and lack of finding a good overnight anchorage, we ended up going the 16nm to picturesque **Black Island** where we knew there was a mooring on another WWII wreck. With bottom at 90ft deep just 100m from the beach, we were happy to check the mooring and find it was sturdy enough for overnight.

After a good night of sleep, we explored the Nanshin Maru, Japanese tanker/oiler, 40-50m long. Stern top lies at 20m facing the shore, bow rests in 30m. Small, easy wreck to dive with great visibility due to currents (we dove at slack tide and had no current). Perfect for leisurely exploration and photos/videos; no dangerous penetrations possible. From the wreck mooring, you dinghy or swim ashore to a nice steep beach. Small palapas are erected for day visitors (also overnights??) A small community of 5 people live here. There are caves only a few hundred yards away, kept very clean (no trash or graffiti). Bring some torch lights if you like to explore more fully. Some shallow areas are filled with seawater. You might be asked a 200P/pers fee to dive the wreck & explore the caves combined.

After these nice morning activities, we motored (no wind) to **Calauit Island** where the **Calauit Safari Park** is located. 5m mud. Calauit Island has a game park established in 1976 with a variety of African and Philippine species. The game park welcomes visitors, for 400P/pers fee and a 1,000P jeep fee if you like to be driven around for a 1 ½ hour tour. (you won't see much more by jeep, only be finished sooner since the road has not been fixed to go further on the island) If you have always wanted to hand feed a giraffe, this may be your big chance. If you have visited other similar parks, you might be disappointed as this park feels old and is somewhat run down nowadays, especially since typhoon Yolanda a few years back. Other than giraffes, zebras, Calamian deer & some hidden antelopes, there are not many free range animals to see! A few animals like monkeys, python, small fresh water alligators, wild pigs, ... were in cages. Since our tour started at 7am and was already finished at 830, we decided to make the 20nm + to the NE side of Busuanga right away. Be careful rounding the NW point of the island because of large shallower areas. We had planned to pick up a mooring at the Club Paradise Resort on a small white beach island just off the main island of Busuanga. When we saw a tender approach us, we erroneously thought they were going to indicate a mooring ball but instead we were chased away by skiff before we could even think about anchoring! . Sailors NOT welcome anymore (read they were in the past). So we continued another 4nm to a different resort we were told were welcoming to cruisers. As we neared the point of land, we were engulfed by a rain storm that lasted until we got near the resort (good timing after an instrument approach!). After we entered Port Caltom bay and neared **El Rio Y Mar Resort** we were welcomed by dinghy and friendly personel who gave us a "sailor rate & guidelines" print-out. Mooring fee 500P per night plus a consumable fee of 500P/pers/night that can be used at bar and at the restaurant. You have to pay an extra 1000P/pers per day for the use of the resort: swimming pools, showers, kayak, standup paddle board, billiards, table tennis, snorkeling, hiking, wifi. Dugong Dive Center is located here on premises. After, we indulged ourselves in the superior cuisine at their restaurant and went diving on the wreck as well as looking for dugongs (unfortunately saw one for only a few seconds, unlike guests the previous day), it was time to head for one of the 3 top dive spots in the Philippines: Apo Reef.

We sailed a first leg to Tara Island, which was recommended even though it's 3nm out of the way, because it offers better protection than Nanga Is. There was a nice sand spit beach about a mile away that Zonne and Zotke could run on w/o leash. We miss those puppies tho.

Busuanga Island, mostly around Coron offers, altho not the nicest WWII wrecks we have seen in our traveling, some of the easiest to dive access for cruisers. Each wreck has typically 2 solid moorings attached to it and access is open to private vessels. Some small boat might come to collect a very modest 50 Pesos (1US\$) per diver/per dive for the marine park to benefit local communities. If both moorings are already taken, you can give a line to one of the dive boats there to tie you up behind them. All GPS positions are found in the anchorage spreadsheet below and are included on Valhalla anchorages that can be shown on your OpenCpn charts. If you have a compressor onboard, you can dive to your heart's content. If not, you could probably arrange with one of the many local dive centers to rent some extra tanks ...

Our second leg took us away from the Calamians to Apo Reef and Apo Island (part of Mindoro island, not the Apo Island off Negros). We motorsailed in light wind and had a comfortable passage to Apo Island.

We first took a mooring right in front of the park (also dive site called Barracuda). We checked at the park office. Fees are 650P/snorkeler and 2,450P/diver per 48h; pretty steep with the majority of dive moorings missing now in July, the low season (in September supposedly they will install new helix type of moorings?). The guys at Dugong Dive Center told us that every year they raise the fees and rake in the pesos. Not long ago, it was 500p/diver. We then motored to the prescribed anchorage area between the South and North reefs. We tucked in, protected also from the west by the barrier reef. If you use this anchorage, look out for 2 shallow reefs seen in good light that you'll get behind before anchoring. Next morning, we motored back to Apo Island to dive the South and SE points. The wx was so mild that we decided to spend the night on the South Point mooring after checking it. At 130am, we had a short rain squall that had us up on watch but it went quickly and was not too windy. Next morning we went by dinghy to dive Ego's Wall (missing moorings): great visibility but not a lot of fish and only patches of nice coral. Then when we were about to go dinghy diving for an afternoon dive, we saw a big black front approaching and we had the engine running in case the mooring broke. With gusts over 30kts and a very confused sea where we were, we could not bring the dinghy up in the davits neither leave the mooring without risking being pushed on the reef behind. After over half an hour watch, we were able to leave in 15kts, go in the lee of Apo Island to bring the dinghy up and then motored back to the overnight anchorage between the North & South reefs. Next morning, we dove on Manta Pt but saw no mantas or much of anything (must not be the time of year) and dove Shark Airport the next morning. It was Luc's 4,000th dive (since his first open water 42 years ago .. does that make him older??) Jackie made a chocolate cake that was shared with the park personnel (not underwater ☺). Anchored again in the channel between the N & S reefs systems, we decided to make a dive, finally together, around the boat as nobody ever dove here since we had randomly anchored on a shoal. Poor visibility and nothing special made it a dive not to remember! So while Apo Reef is touted as one of the best diving spots in the Philippines, we were quite disappointed by the overall interest of our 6 dives. Past typhoons have undoubtedly damaged the reefs and perhaps we were not there at the best time for pelagics but according to the park rangers, the only special seasonal sightings are the Thresher Sharks seen in Jan/Feb normally. We even followed the dive center's advice and dived the sights when there was current to attract the feeding pelagics, even though that meant we had to dive one at a time towing a float while the other stayed in the dinghy for safety and pick up. Also we dived only a few of the 19 dive sights all around the 20 mile circumference. (The Park's GPS points of all the sights are on Vahalla's website now) What was also sad to see is that the park rangers did not have a VHF useful to keep contact and in case of emergency. They did not seem to patrol or have any project going on.

They looked mostly there to sleep and collect fees. Quite a different experience with our experience in Helen's reef in Palau (see previous letter).

After almost 4 months exploring beautiful Palawan, we continued on to visit some other highlights of cruisers in the Philippines.

Mindoro Island

Our first stop leaving Apo Reef was Pandan Island where we picked up a mooring right in front of a venerable French resort, described in Lonely Planet as rustic but fun. The main attraction is that you can swim with big turtles and snorkel/scuba on reefs around the island that have been well protected since the opening of this resort, thanks to the fanatic vigilance of the French owner. Dinner buffet 475P/pers at 7pm with bar open all day. Alix manages the resort since the passing of his father Dominique in 2015. Our understanding is that if you take a mooring, you should take either a lunch or a dinner buffet/ day. We only stayed one night and had dinner there and were not charged anything for the mooring.

A 28nm motor sail in light SW winds brought us to Tubili Pt. facing what looks like a resort on Tubili Point. Open to SW swell but OK for 1 night intermediate stop in light wind & swell. Luckily for us, the swell died down, as did the wind in the evening, and we had a good night of sleep. Next leg was motor sailing with light wind from aft, 32nm, to just East of Del Monte Pt where the raster charts show a 5 fathom shoal that sticks out well from the shore. Otherwise, the water is over 20m deep right up to the shore. This area is just 30nm from Puerto Galera and was thus a nice overnight stop. The area is coral boulders of different reliefs with very little sand patches between. The water was very clear so we could easily see where the too shallow boulders were located. We anchored using a buoy to not damage some live corals or get stuck short-chained around a boulder. Small fishing community ashore with shy kids.

Next day, we made our final leg to famous Puerto Galera. Motor sailing in light wind, we entered Puerto Galera bay via the west passage (the east passage has an unmarked nearly invisible electric power line going across it! Luckily it was indicated on the charts we got from Terry on Vahalla's website and anchored in a bay not far from the PG Yacht Club mooring area. Very wide area available to anchor with only a few unattended boats. The shallower area was hard bottom with scattered dead coral boulders; there are several other coves in the bay to anchor but you are further away from town and Puerto Galera Yacht Club. Be aware of the Air Juan seaplane landing and taxiing to the beach. It uses the sand spit beach in front of where we anchored as it's passenger pick-up point. Depending on the wind direction, you may end up on the approach/ take-off "runway". We have some good video of the plane only a boat length away speeding past us spewing mist and spray as it gained speed for take off!

Best to book a flight on Air Juan via Alona 0917-824-3551 if you need to fly to Manila (20min flight from the small beach facing this anchorage. I had to go to Subic Bay to make a survey and flew with Air Juan to Subic Bay via Manila (7,000P/OW); it took only a little over 1 hour versus the 8h journey via ferry and 2 buses. They also fly to Borocay and other locations. If you anchor in the bay we did, anchor off the buoyed area marking a small marine protected area. Short dinghy ride round the corner towards the town pier to PGYC moorings (350-450P/night with free shore shuttle, VHF68) and from there to PGYC dock to the right in the mangroves. Look for the white sticks marking the channel to the club dock and follow them

carefully especially at low tide. You can also tie up your dinghy in front of town to walk to market (best not leave dinghy there after dark). Puerto Galera Yacht Club is very welcoming and has a newly finished restaurant & bar. Curry nite every Wed at 289P/pers and BBQ menu every Friday; hot/cold showers; book exchange, and various activities depending the season. The PGYC personnel is very cordial and helpful! Restaurant was closed on Mondays (maybe only in the wet season) but the office is open. We got packages delivered c/o PGYC, no problem :)

Patrick de Backere, a friendly Belgian, sells Victron Energy equipment including solar panels at good prices. He is installed just up the hill from the Tourism Center right where you put your dinghy (out of the way of the banka ferries that go to the city of Batangas) We were happy to spend over 2 weeks in the area, doing some scuba diving with Capt Gregg's and touring the local attractions. Is the bay a good typhoon hole? Probably not the best due to too many big local boats here which would all shelter in the bay. The PGYC moorings are quite close to each other and could have some good fetch if blowing from the North. The Xmas typhoon that hit in 2016 caused some havoc and some yachts were damaged when a big local ferry broke loose.

Puerto Galera has many advantages, and we can see why many cruisers stay here. You can take a ferry to Batangas, a large city with many supplies. Or go to the smaller city of Calapan by jeepney or bus for supplies, supermarkets, and malls. The local public market is quite adequate, and the one supermarket had some surprising items for foreigners. If you need to extend your visa, you can go on Tues or Thurs to an annex office in town where Immigration officers accept your papers and fees, then return your Passport with extended visa the next Tues or Thurs, saving you a long bus ride and a day in Calapan. There are tourists and active expats so there are nice restaurants, bars, accommodations, and amusements everywhere. There are dive centers of all levels including very technical and deep diving for the locals. There is a branch of the Hash House Harriers (folks who run/hike torturous terrain in the hills for fun). There are sailing races and kid's sailing at the PGYC. There are historical areas to visit. An Extreme sports center with paintball, ATVs, and shooting range, a Golf Course in the misty mountains with a challenging course and great views from the heights to the sea. For touristy amusement, go to White Beach area and enjoy late afternoon and sunset at one of the myriad of beach side bar/restos and enjoy the fire shows taking place all down the beach as each establishment tries to out do it's neighbors with the most spectacular. Our resto's show featured gorgeous long haired beauties clad only in bikinis slinging blazing balls of flame at the end of chains and doing daring feats that would raise (or blaze) your hair, only to find out from our hosts that the performers were all boys! Wow, you'd NEVER guess. (For a glimpse, see our Youtube video on Puerto Galera tourist activities on our Sloepmouche channel.)

A 34nm passage brought us on the east side of Mindoro, We anchored for an overnight to break the trip in Lumangbayan in good sand in front of a long beach with fishing bankas. Big phone tower . Overnight stop in calm wx (current sometimes against wind!). Despite being in the SW wind period, we lucked out to have less than 10kts wind so we were able to sail from Lumangbayan to the south anchorage in Campo de Maestro.

Campo de Maestro Island We anchored in Agbatang Bay in front of beach & small village. The next day we motor sailed 45nm south in the Tablas Straight, passing many inviting beaches and anchorages that must be quite good during NE monsoon but now were quite uncomfortable even in the light SW wind.

Tablas Island We decided to anchor in Looc Bay, just behind the reefs at the entrance of the bay. Perfect protection during SW wind, for overnight calm anchorage. Glad we did hide behind the island and reef because in the middle of the night we got a rain storm with 25kts from the NW but here we were OK!

Next morning, we had a beautiful motor sail in 5-8kts of SW wind, passing on the East side of Carabao island, to Borocay.

Borocay Island We anchored in front of multi-story hotels in construction. Docking wall and arch in rocky point just south of anchorage. A military ship was docked here. Zillions of water sports (parasailing, bananas, jet skis, ..) are passing seaward of here during daylight hours. A dinghy ride around the north end of the island rewards you with small deserted beaches (perhaps the last in Boracay!), several small sea caves with bats in the trees over the rocky cliffs and some snorkeling spots. Despite being so touristy, it was well worth swimming in crystal clear waters, seeing and walking on fine white sand beaches. We also enjoyed making a tour of the island by dinghy! Leaving around 0830 so the wind did not pick up yet, we went clockwise and had smooth seas the whole way. A feast of nice colors and every kind of resort, restaurant, beach palapas, and water toys to appreciate, from the viewpoint of the dinghy! The coast generally looks best from the ocean and it was nice to sit in the dinghy with fresh air on our faces as we zoomed by. Afterward, we took our 4-legged crew to swim and explore some small caverns on the north tip. Happy the mild wx let us come down this way in the SW monsoon season.

Panay Island We sailed eastwards along the north coast. Our first anchorage was Omdoi. Our next passage got us to Roxas, Bay Bay Beach where we dinghied to the beach right in front of the renowned fresh seafood restaurants for a nice seafood dinner with the locals. Then we made another ~35nm to Gigante Island where we anchored in a spot well protected from both monsoon winds. Caves and beaches to explore nearby. Visited an inner lagoon a little south of here but it was not worth the 20P fee! Much nicer in Palawan!

We then motor sailed to Guintacan island, anchoring in dead corals as an overnight stop to Malapascua island. We toured the island by dinghy to see the beaches and coastline and visited some dive centers ashore. Scuba diving is the big activity here, where they say you can dive with thresher sharks. (If you go at 4 am when there is a chance to get a glimpse of them but then there is not much more to see at that site) Didn't seem worth it.

There are dive sites around the island as well as every isolated shoal, island & rock in the vicinity (sometimes more than 15nm away). We did not dive so cannot report on it (perhaps next year, we'll go back and spend some time there??). To cut our passage to Port Carmen, we spent a day at Cangaman Island. We anchored behind a sand dune. The island itself has some basic accommodation and lots of day trippers (not deserted as read previously).

Cebu Island: a short 35nm trip brought us to Port Carmen, one of the main yacht repair facilities in the Philippines. In the North Cove, near Pt Carmen town, you find 2 yards: the Mumby brothers (building aluminum catamarans in the mangroves) & Mike Allen (still looking for anyone to rent the whole yard or part thereof, as he has retired). The issue with Mike Allen's place is it's very shallow all around so limited who can get in there, and he has been boxed in by locals. Then in the Southern area, you have the Republic Dockyards where they haul-out and work on big steel cargo and other huge vessels. Between these areas are Zeke's and Pepe's, 2 cruiser friendly "marina" & small haul-out facilities. You med-moor in some narrow canals, packed in next to each other. People here are either away and just looking for a safe place to store their boats or they are doing some serious boat work. Zeke's

has a very good team of workers doing epoxy, fiberglass, and wood work, welding & steel construction and other specialists. Zeke's bar hosts a weekly potluck BBQ on Saturdays but it starts a 4pm(!) as the bar/mini-restaurant closes daily at 6pm. But, at least, when the bar and personnel leaves, you can still finish your drinks and conversation in this upper bar with a view. Since we are quite wide and hate being like sardines in a marina, we chose to anchor with 6 other yachts in a small area surrounded by shoals and shore.

We anchored and later rented a mooring here in 5m depth from s/v Mango while we worked on our engine and gear box. Tricky entrance to that cove surrounded by shallow reefs! Several sticks mark shallow reef but it can be confusing when new to the area. Follow satellite chart and route very carefully! It's actually better to go at low tide because you see the areas that dry and it's easier to see the deeper channels.

No matter where you are in the area, don't be surprised by dirty water and terrible industrial smells. We had the pleasure to meet again some of our long time friends. Gunter on s/v Tao helped us fixing engine issues & others; Harold on s/v Tagtraumer helped us install a new hydraulic system that finally has our new Raymarine autopilot working (this time with a hydraulic pump, and different pump and cylinder, after 4 years on strike!). We enjoyed the company of Jan & Laura s/v Anaconda who got into the huge project to completely rebuild a half sunken NordHaven (best of luck to them, what a big project! They do mostly by themselves!). A 1h bus ride gets you to Mandaue & Cebu City when you need stuff from the big city; a 15-min multicab ride gets you to Danao or Port Carmen for basic food provisioning and simple boat parts.

After 3 weeks, we motor sailed in light wind to Mactan Island about 18 mi from Carmen. We anchored in the channel just outside of the Cebu Yacht Club marina entrance. Anchoring there is now discouraged by a new govt restaurant, and a new dock where the excursion boat to a nearby island picks up passengers. Soon the entire shoreline will be developed by malls and restaurants. The CYC is just under new management. At 200US\$/night to med-moor, with your own anchor in a dirty and poorly maintained marina, it did not seem a great deal to us. Perhaps the new owners will soon match price with service provided, either lowering the price or upgrading the marina to international standards. If you take your dinghy into the marina proper to go ashore, you will be charged a hefty fee. But we were happy to meet David, the owner of a small chandlery (expanding) & excursion charters. We had his Canadian inboard/outboard mechanic replace the bushing and seal on our outboard: well done at reasonable cost; we also got 260l of diesel and some gasoline at his fuel dock, where you could dock your big boat but where we took the fuel by Jerry-jugs in our dinghy. Price were only a few pesos more than at gas station so we did not try to get fuel our ourselves with land transportation.

Cebu is one of these overpopulated cities where one gets stuck for hours in the traffic. While some boat parts can be found, many will not be and ordering online will be preferable to a goose chase in crazy traffic. If you are looking for the best deal on a upscale buffet restaurant, check The Vikings at the Cebu City SM mall. For less than 20USD/pers you get Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Mexican, Italian, grilled food "a volonte" (all you want) with fancy appetizers and desserts. Free juices, soft drinks and beer will please most also (wine for extra). We had the chance to eat at Vikings in Davao during our years there, this time we indulged ourselves once in Cebu City. If you need to renew your Philippines visa, we recommend going to the Immigration office in Gaisano mall on Mactan Island (it is near and very fast service). If you need an Exit Clearance letter, you can go to J Center Mall in Mandaue (a lot more waiting time if you just need a visa renewal). Any foreigner residing more than 6-months in the Philippines or any Filipino/a national needs to get a special Exit Clearance letter issued only in 3 places: in Manila, Davao and Cebu in their main office only!

Yachts can get this clearance also in Puerto Princessa. New visa renewal rules have done away with the previously non- optional expedited service fee, but now the Immigration workers who no longer get this extra money, are getting revenge by no longer offering same-day service...now it takes 3 days!

When all done, we were ready to sail south towards Bohol. Alas, we got current against us, got a plastic sack wound round the prop from the tons of plastic trash floating in the channel, and the wind piped up to 20-25 against us so we ended up spending most of the day just to make the 8nm to the south entrance to Mactan channel. Fortunately, the possible anchorage we could hope from a look at the satellite photos, just north of Kawit Island, in a little corner in front of another SM Mall, turned out to be good in 240deg wind that decreased in the afternoon. Next day, the wind was not as strong but right on the nose to our destination of Cabilao Island, near Bohol so we decided to take a long tack until we reached the coast of Cebu. We ended up in perfect calm anchorage in Naga, in front of town between 2 factories.

From there, taking advantage of 48h of almost no wind, we motored first to Tambisan Pt on the west side of Siquijor (45nm) and from there direct to Bonbonon the next day (22nm) (see previous letters for anchorage details).

After being based in the Philippines for the last 6 years, we were ready to start exploring nearby Malaysia and Thailand. But having enjoyed last year's cruise in the Visayas and West Palawan so much, we decided to revisit some places and discover new areas, mostly the East coast of Palawan and for a grand finale: Tubbathaha reefs, the top dive spot according to the grapevine. This first letter will cover the Visayas and East Palawan. Having some work to be done in Port Carmen and good friends to visit, this year we decided to go north to the top of Cebu and ride down the end of the north monsoon winds south towards Puerto Princesa. We dreaded fighting against these fiercely north winds but it turned out that in March, they are much milder with several periods of very light wind. So with some patience and timing, we had no difficulties (albeit some motor sailing) to get north to the tip of Cebu. See anchorages details at the end of this letter.

Siquijor Island: One of our favorite islands here. The wind directed us to Lazy bay this time. We anchored just SW of the town pier where a ferry was docked for long repairs. Easy shore access via several sets of stairs in the concrete pier wall that connect you with town. Fresh market nearby. Regular jeepneys runs take you to either San Juan or Maria bay and Larena ferry town on the NE side. You can also take a 25P tricycle ride to the very nice Cambugahai falls (no entry fee!) and walk back downhill 30min to get back to pier. Siquijor is a very nice island well worth visiting! We went to visit our friend Johnny, owner of the Danish Lagoon Resort and Jo, a German expat living around Larena. Amazing the way you can get friends while cruising! Over 1 year ago, we sailed past Jo's house on a promontory on the north coast, and he was so surprised to see a sailboat passing by and anchoring later on the East coast (see previous letter) that he looked at us with his binoculars. From the name of our boat on the hull to an internet search, he got to our website and sent us an email to invite us to his home for a visit! It took almost 2 years to come back to Siquijor so this time we invited him onboard so we could finally meet and the next day we visited his home. Was wonderful to find we have so much in common!

Bohol Island: After a easy direct trip from Siquijor, we anchored once more in Tagbilaran Harbor. This time we met Walter, a Austrian expat interested in our old Trojan batteries. So happy by the bargain we gave him, he lent us one of his cars for 2 days so we were able to visit Bohol's highlights not seen on previous visits ... like Chocolate Hills and some waterfalls on the SE corner of Bohol. Got some coconut milk made ice cream at Buzz Cafe. We anchored one night near Cabilao Island to cut our motor sailing passage to Cebu City.

Cebu Island and outlying islands: After another easy motor sail from Bohol, we anchored for one night just outside of the **Cebu Yacht Club**. Got some fuel at the marina fuel dock, but gasoline has to be arranged specially, so best to just jerry jug it with a tricycle. The new management came to its senses by re-instating the docking fees of before: newcomers get to stay up to 10 days for the regular daily rate. As a multihull, that rate is about 250 US\$! So if you want to stay a week in Cebu City, this option is ok. We anchored out in the free anchorage in front of the YC entrance and accessed shore at the boarding dock of the ferry boat that does day trips to the Camotes Islands. It is increasingly harder to find anchorage in this area as the shoreline is increasingly developed and don't want yachts blocking their sea access. That leaves anchoring in front of shanty town which might invite thieves.

Next day, we motored in light winds 18 miles to **Port Carmen** and anchored near Zeke's marina & boatyard. We had some social time with our friends Jan & Laura (s/v and now M/V Anaconda), who did an amazing job restoring a sunken NordHaven. Had Gunter from s/v Tao fix our old Adler Barbour fridge and solved the mystery of our faulty alternator that could not be repaired ... but in fact was repaired, just did not show up as producing current. Long story short: our backup alternator was an isolated-type so all the current was going thru the negative shunt but the repaired one was a grounded-type so most of the current went directly to the batteries via the negative cable to them and only 1/3 went thru the negative cable from alternator to shunt! Beware! We had some electronic repairs made satisfactorily by Regie (0922-5075367) who works around the yards. For more info about the yard, anchorage, provisioning in the nearby towns of Danao and Carmen, see last year's letter. Many yachties come to Zeke's and Pepe's yards here to get work done that they say is very good, or use the facilities to do own work, but we are not attracted at all to this place. The yachts are all jammed together in two small cul de sacs of water that are so narrow, there is only space to barely pass the docked boats which will have to untie lines crossing the channel to let you in. The area is dusty with cargoes loading cement day and night, and crusting up your decks and rigging. The area stinks either with industrial waste or the burning of toxic materials. When it rains walking to the bus stop is full of mud holes. And the area is depressingly ugly. On the positive side, it's only a 10P trike or bus ride to Danao, which has a nice clean, concreted public market, and there is now a new SM Mall and supermarket with a nice coffee shop. There is also a vet clinic run by govt vet who works at the slaughter house. Maybe not the best credentials, but Dr Rocque was very nice as well as his staff, and helped Zonne deliver her puppies when she had difficulties. As soon as the pups were born, and we had made a provisioning run to Cebu by bus, we were ready to get out of there.

If you'd like to order Tanduay rums wholesale, you can contact Ricky, their Cebu salesman (0917-6961785). He can offer you best case prices with free delivery on Cebu.

After our second litter of Schipperke puppies was born and having had a nice buffet dinner at the Cebu's Vikings in SM Mall with our friends Will & Trish s/v Shanghied, it was time to get underway to round the tip of Cebu.

Our first stop over was in **Santiago Bay on Pacijan Island, Camotes Islands.**

The area is reputed for its nice beaches and snorkeling. We did a scuba dive on the wall, right behind our anchorage as you have to anchor quite far from shore due to shallower depths. Neither diving or snorkeling was better than average, but then again, we might be spoiled! Nergie, the owner of Camotes Fun Divers was helpful in giving dive site info and you could go dive with him around the island. What we enjoyed was renting a scooter (500P/day) and circumnavigating both Pacijan and Poro islands. Great vistas, mostly good roads and lots of swimming caves (caves with crystal clear water inside) worth visiting and some small waterfalls (during dry season). Several modestly priced local restaurants line the west corner of the beach for lunch & dinner. Nice island where tourism is only limited.

Calangaman Island: as last year, we anchored behind the sand spit. The island itself has some basic accommodation and lots of day trippers. Will and Trish enjoyed the snorkeling and diving in the area.

Malapascua Island, mostly a diving resort area, offers a rolly anchorage on its south side (as wind and currents diverge). Overpriced restaurants (for Philippines) line the beach on the south side. The attraction is the dive where you might be able to see Tresher Sharks but you need to get ready at 4am as they are best encountered at sunrise on Monad shoal a few

miles WSW away. Very busy with tourists and hopefully not getting overcrowded like El Nido or Borocay, which will be closed to tourists for six months following concerns of unregulated overdevelopment and damage to its once pristine shores.

Bantayan Island: After a pleasant downwind sail on genoa alone, we first tried to anchor off the SE side of Santa Fe point. Safe anchorage from shallow bommies can only be had very far from the shore beach as the whole plateau is shallow and wide. Our friends Will & Trish just grounded in the area a few days ago and had to limp back to Tambobo bay to haul out and repair damages! Not wanting the same fate, neither roll in the swell coming in the area, we sailed a few miles down the coast and anchored in much better conditions near Sulangan. Next day, we had another relaxed downwind sailing towards the north of Negros. We anchored off the small island of **Mambacayao Daku**, near a fishing settlement. Nothing special other than swimming with the dogs from the boat to small deserted white beaches on the west side of island.

Negros Island: With weak northerlies forecasted, we took a chance to anchored off **Sagay City**, near the town pier. Lots of bouncing around if more than 10kts of wind from North because the area is so shallow that breakers develop on the beach. Easy dinghy docking behind a wall on the East side of the jetty, near the bankas on the wall. We just happened to luck out and hit the fresh market on the only day of the week, Wednesday, before noon, right at the dock. Short tricycle ride to old Sagay and to New Sagay town on Highway. The progressive Sagay City Municipal Tourism Office was interested in a video about the attractions in their area and the way they help the local communities to transition to eco tourism and preservation of their natural treasures rather than over fishing or unsustainable activities. They arranged to show us some highlights, and we made a promotional YouTube video for them which is featured on our YouTube.com/Tropical Sailing Life channel. By banka, we visited Sayak Island Mangrove Eco Park and Carbin Reef marine sanctuary which features a giant clam area of the largest specimens we've seen in Philippines. (200-hectare reef around a sand spit that's almost covered at highest tides.). Great seafood meal can be part of the tour. Nice food at local restaurants : Ton Ton and RC's, Glenda's, and Mama Auring Garden Restaurant. Worth visiting is Nunelucio Alvarado, a local artist at his Artlink Studio and coffee spot right on the beach west of the jetty. The Children's Interactive Museum right at the jetty is also worth a visit especially if the children are putting on a presentation tour. The murals and the bright enthusiastic young people are great. Tours can be arranged with tourism office.

We learned that Negros Occidental had its yearly festival in **Bacolod**, the Capital a few days later so, with a perfect timing like that, we took another fast sail down to Bacolod. With stronger northerlies now, seas can be rough with possible tidal current against wind and with shallow plateau far from shore. We spent some time trying to find a comfortable anchorage but the only option was behind a ferry jetty. Alas the NE swell goes under the pillings and makes the anchorage roly. Did not land ashore as no easy way sighted. We had checked if possible in harbor just south and shallow bay south of it but did not find anything suitable due to boat traffic or shallow depths or no protection. We don't recommend anchoring here in the N monsoon season.

Looking at the charts, it looked like we might be able to find a possible anchorage below Pandan Pt so the next morning we had another fast sail downwind to Pulpandan in 2m good sand/mud after navigating thru shallow sandy/muddy bottom ... best done on a rising tide mid to high tide. Recommended course is to approach the port from the west then only go down parallel to the coast a few hundred yards from the coastline to anchorage (see raster charts). If coming directly from the west to anchorage, your course would take you

across shallow sandbar. Protected from NE tradewinds waves, a good alternative anchorage to go to annual Bacolod Festival (1h by bus/jeepney). Wind waves won't be high at all despite the 2+ kts current running NW/SE along the coast line and further at sea. Pull the dinghy way up the beach in front of green roofed/fenced house of Pulupandan's very welcoming Municipal administrator, Mr Federico Infante (09996688844) or near one of the small bangka ferry landings 100yds down the beach. We went to see some festival events during 2 days. We were excited to see such a large area devoted to Organic farms and organic products of Negros. There were pavilions representing each Negros municipality with local foods and culture. There are bird and dolphin watching tours in Pulupandan for anyone interested.

After days in busy cities and rough anchorages, we were now looking forward to sail to one of our favorite anchorages in the Philippines!

Guimaras island: After another fast downwind sail, we anchored again in Taklong Lagoon, which is a protected area run as a cooperative effort by the local communities there. Last year we were there for the 27th anniversary party, and were gratified to see how well kept the park facilities and areas were, and that the communities worked happily together after all those years. The bay is well protected from all sides on the south side of Guimaras island. Register at the office after arrival : fill in the guest book and pay the park fees. As of March 2018, the official fee for yachts is 5,000 P/day! The park manager understands that this fee is quite steep and a reasonable agreement can be made. Very nice rangers. Most visitors are Filipinos and come on the WE and in vacation periods. Good snorkeling spots and mangrove exploration. Several beautiful white sand beaches. Enjoy a laid-back life with snorkeling and beach bumming. There are also a few sea caves you can take the dinghy close to and swim around and climb up the rocks.. Zotke and Zonne were very happy to swim and explore the area! Our 3 puppies had their very first beach experience here and were not afraid to touch and taste the salt water.

Panay Island: After 5 nice days enjoying relaxed days in the park, we had another nice sailing passage this time going west to the SW point of Panay Island. We anchored again in good sand in front of Siraan Hot Springs & Resort for a quiet night as far as seas but noisy with shore music (Friday night). Next morning, we had a easy motorsail with 10kts west wind (wrapping wind effect around Panay) to San Jose de Buenavista, a provincial capital. Went to the big municipal market to load up on fresh fruits & veggies. Found some alternator belts but could not refill our propane cylinder (only Iloilo has a refilling station). There was a small annual festival in the city, not nearly as big as at Bacolod, but we found booths with organic local products, and pork as naturally fed as we could find.

Palawan and outlying islands: Looking at windy.com wx forecast, it looked like weak westerly to NW wind so we left at the crack of dawn to make landfall before sunset and we did with about 20 min to spare! We anchored off **Tagauayan Island** in corals with sand patches. Well protected from mild NE wind. Some current but calm waters so we had a good night of sleep before getting underway. But as we were leaving the island, a little further up, we saw some nice deserted beaches and the crystal clear water got us to postpone our departure and re-anchor just half a mile away, facing the small channel between 2 islands. Deserted beaches and snorkeling around. We hiked to top of some hills for wonderful aerial views of the reefs, and beaches ...brilliant colors from whites, blues, greens to brown hues .. a pleasure for the eyes. Many local bancas fishing all around the area during day and night. Some came and we bought some fish and traded for green mangoes & papayas. After some dinghy exploration with the puppies on the beaches and snorkeling around, we left the next

day for another favorite anchorage, **Cuyo Island**. Less tradewinds than last year, as we are 1 month later in the year so only a few kite surfers here now. Met Heidi again, one of the public market vendors who is a favorite of expats as she is a trustworthy, can-do lady and offers fair prices. Got coconut milk freshly pressed, local cashew nuts and other fresh fruits and veg. April thru June is the time of the cashew nut harvest, and you can get the cashew "apple" fruit to make jam (or wine) and the freshly sun dried raw nuts at prices 200 to 300 p cheaper than retail. Jackie LOVES cashews, so we loaded up. It was also avocado season, and Heidi's were some of the best buttery ones we've had. We rented her son's moto at 50P/hour to go visit Thomas, a German expat that delivers fresh bread, pizzas and some delicacy products sought out by the expats who live here 6 months each year during kitesurf season. Went also back to Anino Retreat. The only problem on Cuyo is very poor internet connection: Globe has a strong signal but no or super weak internet connection. Locals use Smart but speed is poor at best. Last year was the same so one can guess the island is just too far from other populated areas with repeaters ... Our 5 Schipperkes enjoyed the beautiful sand spit beach ahead of our anchorage every afternoon so they love Cuyo too. Each day the puppies got better and braver at playing in the water and learning to keep the nose up while swimming. (you can see the films on our YouTube channel) We were able to sail or at least motorsail to **Calandagan Island**, sometimes with the wind almost behind to use our twin headsails. We found even more high-sea fishing boats this time and the tiny beach shore more crowded with local fishing shacks and bankas. After a good night of sleep, we set sail for Dumarán and the East coast of Palawan!

Another easy sail to Araceli on **Dumarán Island**. We anchored at first off Maraquit Island in front of the beach. Good calm anchorage in NE wind. Several deserted beaches nearby.. Globe internet: no signal here using the USB dongle but ok if using a smart phone??. Next day, we went around the small port and up the narrow channel and anchored in well protected lagoon. You have to carefully navigate in the deeper channel as per satellite photo and anchor between many fishing stick areas. Short distance to jetty where dinghy can be left near the Coast Guard station. We had a small tour of the area so we could make a short film where tourism is only just an idea pretty much :) Another cashew nut island, we got nuts more thoroughly dried and better quality than on Cuyo for only 50p /k more. No public market but you could find locals who can help you source some fresh stuff. From here we sailed 16nm to Bacao on the SW corner of Dumarán and anchored in front of deserted beaches with coconut plantations & some mangroves. Small fishing communities nearby. No Globe internet here.

With rain squalls passing on the side, we had good winds to sail the 32nm to **Roxas, Palawan island** proper, where we anchored in front of town. Easy dinghy landing at pier with concrete steps. Municipal market walking distance away. From here public transports take you to the west coast: Port Barton, El Nido or down to Puerto Princesa if needed. From here we motorsailed to **Green Island Bay** and anchored at **South Verde island**. Next we sailed to **Honda Bay** and anchored first south of **Bugias Island** in a bay protected by coral reefs. We also anchored relatively close to Snake Island on a seamount of coral rubble about 35 ft deep. Otherwise, everything else is 70ft deep even right up to the fringing reef in front of the long beach and sand spit on this tourist-stop island (not seen any tours while here during the week). Both Green Island and Honda Bays offer lots of small islands, mostly with mangroves and some beaches here & there but anchorages are not so easy to find as the deeper bottom often come abruptly up with shallow reefs fringing the islands. We have not been impressed by an abundance of healthy sea life or visibility but perhaps it is due to the numerous local fishermen fishing these easy areas for centuries ...But we found some nice places to let the puppies play and get some more training to come and follow and gain

strength and enjoy their days with us as Sailing Schipperkes before they will go to their new owners.

A easy 22nm motor sail in very light winds brought us to **Puerto Princesa**. where we anchored right off the center of town near the Fish Port and the main cargo wharf. This anchorage has the advantage to be much closer to town than the AYC (Albanico Yacht Club), and it's free. You are right in front of Baywalk which is animated at night with food vendors specializing in fresh fish and seafood and the famous Crocodile Sisig, and occasional events. Security here does not seem to be a problem and it is easy to put your dinghy (with a stern anchor) anywhere along the Baywalk wall. (Note: when we left, Luc had to dive to untangle our anchor chain from a old metal wreck!) We anchor our dinghy either side of the Fish Port jetty where small local cargoes and ferry and fishing bancas are unloading. Be careful of the extremely long floating stern lines trailing behind the docked boats. It is possible to get some water there from a spigot on the corner near the passenger waiting area. The great thing about Puerto Princesa is the anti-litter regulations. There are trash cans and dumpsters all around the port and town.

Provisioning: The fish pier leads you up right into town: access by foot to SM mall, the small NCCC supermarket, and the old public market is just across the street.. Walking, multi cabs or trikes take you to good provisioning available at the usual SM, Robinson and NCCC malls/ supermarkets. Altho don't expect to find much in the way of expat specialty foods or things like whole wheat flour, quinoa, or specialty nuts, grains, and seeds. Goods at the fresh markets (old one near our anchorage or the New market further away at the North bus terminal) are also limited probably because PP is the last in line to get fresh cargo. The best day to go was Tues late morning as this seemed to be the time when the vendors got new shipments and I could find things like cauliflower, broccoli, celery, leaf lettuce and ice berg. Even common veggies like Napa (Chinese) cabbage was rare and dear. The old market is like a rabbit warren of narrow isles, and different levels, veggies scattered around every where between other goods and fringing the meat and fish market. The place where I found the cauliflower and the like was diagonally across to the right as you look at the market from where you come up from the fish port. Walk down to the Unitop, cross the street and you are on the edge of the market where they sell fruit. Walk all the way to the end of the fruit stalls and turn left into the market. The 2 vendors that sell cauliflower etc are the first large vendor on the left and the one down the narrow isle that forms the corner of the first vendor's stall, in the same relative position as the first vendor. Ask if they have something you don't see, and ask the price each time. One can be much cheaper than the other, not always the same one, depends on the item or the day. May/June was mango and avocado season, and since Palawan has a fruit pest that the rest of the Philippines doesn't, they can't export off island, so the many varieties of mangos are cheap and very tasty. The avocados were also very good, solid, not watery, and plentiful and cheap. Yum! Another treasure that we found was the coconut grinding place that had a hydraulic press, and would squeeze out the pure cream for you at 3p more/ coconut. Jackie's arthritic hands rejoiced. The pure coconut cream can be frozen. We bag them in 1 cup pkgs and can break off any size frozen bits for cooking or desserts. No pasteurizing, additives or stabilizers added as in the canned or powdered stuff. Find the vendor one block behind the street where you come out from the fish pier. Easy way: Walk all the way through the Chinatown Center mall. You'll see coconut vendors on that street. The one with the press is the one just to the left side of Rap Rap Coco. And if you like mussels like the man of Brussels, get plenty of delicious and super inexpensive mussels from Palawan!

Restaurants: Since we like seafood and a nice restaurant ambiance, we went with Robert & Heidi s/v Drac to Kalui. We recommend it! BTW, Robert is the oldest active sailor I think we

met so far! He is 93 and still does some boat maintenance like painting the waterline! 5 Circumnavigations in the last 40+ years with the last one taking 18 years. An inspiration to us! We also went to the Albanico Yacht Club Sunday buffet lunches (400P/pers, every other Sunday) and met some cruisers there as well as got on the WiFi and exchanged some paperbacks (still read these as well as Kindle books :) **Misc Services:** After some extended research, we did find a place where they will recharge US propane tanks with ball valves (we have the standard aluminum US 20 Lbs). Randolf Store (a sari-sari store like millions of them) is situated opposite of the United Evangelical Church of Palawan, a tricycle ride away. Even more lucky, we had our aluminum CO2 tank refilled at Industrial Gases next to the UNO hotel. We use that one as engine room dry fire extinguisher as well as for recharging our own sparklets for our Soda Quick/Soda Stream soda water maker. Both types of tanks are harder and harder to get refilled around the world. The best money changer (with the best rate) is AS Money changer on Rizal Avenue: we exchanged our remaining pesos for Malaysian Ringitt with them and there rate were more than 5% better than the money changer located in Robinson mall.

Activities: If you are stuck in PP to wait for crew or parts, there are several activities you can do to enjoy your time here. If you did not discover the Underground River yet, you could take a day tour there or make it an overnight (see our previous letter about West Palawan). You can take inexpensive local transport to go for a swim, picnic and relax in nature at the Olangoan (Olanguan) waterfalls, community-based project located in Barangay Binduyan. Take a multicab to the New Market terminal (15min from Old Market)) and from there a shuttle van (150P/pers) or bus (90P/pers) that takes the North National Highway towards Taytay. The bus will drop you right at the Binduyan waterfall welcome booth (just before arriving in Binduyan town). You will be assigned a guide (400P/group) and after also paying a small entrance fee of 50P/pers, you will hike (~40min) across and along the river. The path was recently maintained with new bridges and steps when going up the hill or across boulders. The hike is very easy and mostly flat. Several pools are inviting you with the best ones at and above the waterfalls! Facilities include solid tables to have lunch and well maintained bathrooms. No trash around, what a great pleasure! If you like noisy crowds of locals, visit on WE and public holidays .. otherwise come during the week! After the easy walk back, wait next to the highway to hop on the next passing bus/shuttle back to PP.

Our next letter will cover everything concerning visiting and diving in the reputed Tubbataha Reefs National Park

Before you sail to Tubbataha: You have to obtain a permit from the Tubbataha Protected Area Management Board. You can contact them via www.tubbatahareefs.org for info on rules and documents needed. Once you have all the documents ready and a fair idea of your visit dates there, you can visit them at their office, a short tricycle ride away from the anchorage. The office is hidden out of sight with the Shell corporate building right behind the Tom Tom restaurant (tricycles know this restaurant) on Manalo Street extension. In my contacts with the management, I felt that private boats were just tolerated versus the 16 commercial dive charter boats that bring in obviously a lot more fees to the park and are easier to control. I offered to make some video to show the positive work of the park rangers and to give some equipment but did not create any interest! Our timing to go right at the very end of the season worked perfectly as we were not in the way of anyone since only 2 boats were there only during our first 2 days! Your permit covers a specific 7-day period (no more days permitted). The fees in 2018 were 5000p/pers (\$100 US/pp for a week) and 3,000p to 6000p for the boat, depending on size. If your dates change, contact the office asap. Here is the list of documents required in 2018: copy of boat registration, last port call clearance, crew list, record of custom arrival, record of custom boarding when you first arrived in the Philippines, copies of passports, certify you have a holding tank & AIS transceiver. You have to keep your AIS on and stay in touch by VHF radio with the rangers and report any movement. Strictly forbidden to go ashore except at the ranger station ... Big fines for any violation. The park opens from April to the end of June. We took a chance going so late but we lucked out with a 10-day period of light winds mid-June.

Things to consider if you go with your own boat: During the season, there are 16 commercial dive boats running dive charters and there are 19 mooring buoys around the 3 reef systems, and though some charter boats just drift in open water for the night, getting a buoy can be a game of musical chairs. We were lucky that by the time we went, only 2 boats were still chartering and the rest had left for the season. Unfortunately, the rangers had already pulled out some of the moorings, as the office did not inform them we were coming so we missed being able to dive at the south of the South Atoll. If you buddy boat with another sailboat so you can make safety surveillance for each other, it gets even more tricky for the moorings. Lastly, the diving at Tubbataha involves deep drop offs and mostly drift diving in moderate to strong currents, so you should have experience in these conditions and good security measures for surface safety and pick up. An option some friends took was to leave their boat in a secure port and go with one of the many choices of dive charters.

Clearing Out of the Philippines : Just before we left, we cleared out first with Immigration (at Robinson mall). No cost other than the Exit clearance certificate, required if you have been present in the Philippines for more than 6 months (1240P/pers). You have to give them copies of passport info page as well as copies of all pages with temporary visas since your arrival, a copy of your boat papers, 2 crew lists. You will get your clearance paper after waiting there a short time. From there you have to check out with Customs (on Manalo St, same long street as Tubbataha Park office). Customs requires copies of passport ID page as well as the page with the immigration exit stamp you just received; a copy of the crew list with immigration stamp you just got, copy of the custom declaration of entry into Philippines; copy of your yacht papers; a copy of the Immigration Exit clearance document (If you were more than 6 mos in Philippines). Cost 115P and you have 48h to leave port.

Our time in Tubbataha: After a easy motorsail in 10kts of Southerly wind, we arrived in Jessie Beazly Reef first. The ranger station about 15nm away called us on VHF (they could already see us on their radar) and 5 min later, 8 out of the 9 rangers came to visit us in their sleek fast patrol boat, thinking when they left that we were a fishing vessel. We gave our permit copy to a ranger named 'Second' and he reminded us of the no fishing, no discharge and other rules. After straightening the decks, we did our first scuba right there from the SE mooring we were on, as the northern mooring was missing. It was quite an exercise to pick up that mooring in a strong current that was running almost reverse on the wind; the current did not give any slack to the mooring line that has a float tied at the loop but no smaller pick up line! Hauling up that heavy line and 20 liter float after 2 tries to snag it in the crazy current was no mean feat! Luckily for us, the wind was very light after our arrival mid-day so we stayed here overnight. The Park Rangers were much more welcoming than the bureaucrats in PP. They monitored VHF 16 and our AIS signal. The 9 Park Rangers are in fact a mix of representatives from the Park, the Philippines Coast Guard, the nearby island that owns the reefs. We dove along the SE wall as well as the NE wall and the best dive as far as multitude of fish was at the end of the afternoon (often the reefs seems more alive then). After a 15nm motoring in calm waters we picked up one of 3 moorings at Shark airport on the NE tip of the north lagoon. Here too, picking up the mooring when there is current is not easy. The current must have picked up just after our arrival, as the seas got very turbulent just north of us, eventually overtaking our mooring. We learned that during about 1 hour, when the East current along the north side of the reef meets the southerly current coming on the east side of the reef, this area is called Washing Machine, apt name! Thankfully this happens one time a day and does not last long. We did several wall drift dives with little or strong current on Shark Airport and Sea Fan Alley. After a few dives in the area(also Sea Fan Alley), we motored in calm wx along the west side of the north lagoon to Malayan Wreck. More wall diving after snorkeling on the remains of that shallow wreck. Luc was even lucky to see a whale shark cruising by while diving on the Malayan Wall. Moved to Wall Street for another nice wall dive and another whale shark sighting for Luc. Next day, we went to Amos Rock where the Park patrol boat came out to have us fill their forms promising compliance with the rules, and having a holding tank, which they took photos of. You can dispose of wastes 2 nm away from the reef area. We did not visit the Ranger Station since they came to us, but were curious to see it built on stilts over a small islet that covers at high tide. They sell souvenir items there, mostly to the Live-aboard guests that come to visit.

Rather than speak about each dive site and what we saw, we'll give a general overview of what it's like to dive Tubbataha's 3 atolls. It was indeed the best diving we've done in the Philippines from the perspective of dramatic drop offs, great visibility, vibrant marine life, as well as fish variety, size and action. It may well be the last sanctuary for marine life in the country. We have dived some of the world's premier destinations and have become rather spoiled, so we are pretty hard to impress. Tubbataha was not the best of the best, but it WAS refreshing to jump in and see the amount of vibrant colors and lively action of the reef dwellers and passing sizable pelagic visitors. The moorings are positioned mostly right on the edge of the drop offs. In some places, the most life and color are on the plateau on top of the wall, and more drab and lifeless the deeper you go along the wall, but some places like Sea Fan Alley, had huge colorful fans and soft corals and giant barrel sponges thriving as deep as 30 meters or more, in a rainbow of bright colors that came to life with the dive lights. It was great to see sizable vivid fish that you could approach with a camera and fill the frame. Great to see old friends such as Napoleon Wrasse, Clown trigger fish, Emperor angels, Masked angels, Sweet Lips, and Pajama fish, many varieties of butterfly fish, and clouds of those small neon colored fish that dart in and out of the hard corals. There were

also an impressive number of and variety of large groupers that were approachable, a sure sign of an area that's been protected from fishing for a long time. We spotted a few Black tip and grey reef sharks and many White tip lagoon sharks commonly. Blue spotted Jacks frequently cruised all sites like packs of coyotes on the hunt. Untimid turtles were pretty common. And when lucky, off in the blue or closer up, we could see great schools of barracuda and jack and snappers and spade fish, and once in a while a tuna, and Luc was blessed to get close enough to a Whale Shark on two different dives to get some great footage with a Go Pro...that's CLOSE! This season, we heard of many whale shark sightings...also mantas..and at one site, if you go to 50 meters or so in the right place, hammerheads. The week we dove, the currents were slight or moderate, except once in a while when a phenomenon would occur on the corners of the reef system where two different currents would come together and boil and churn and create upwelling or down drafts, or as we noted before, the washing machine effect where you could be swept half a mile away in no time. Supposedly one can see a lot more large pelagic fish action when the currents are strong. Perhaps that could have something to do with the phase of the moon. At any rate we enjoyed doing some great diving again..what a pleasure.

We dove every dive with a dive buoy on the surface the whole dive so that the person in the dinghy doing surface surveillance could find the diver at anytime. Much easier than trying to follow bubbles, and less stressful. The buoy is a little more of a hassle for the diver, but worth the peace of mind. Being only two, we had to take turns diving because you realistically can rarely dive from the big boat on the mooring and navigate back even in light current.

Tubbataha is not a easy place to dive from your own boat, especially if no buddy boat or crew, but the diving here was indeed the best we have experienced in the Philippines. Far better than Apo Reef which is said to be #2. Don't let bureaucracy discourage you to visit ... diving is well worth it!

Sailing to Malaysia:

Sailing from Tubbataha to Kudat at the end of June turned out better than we had feared months ago when we planned our cruise. The south-westerly did indeed start around the beginning of June but we were still in that 10-day period of very light SW wind at the very end of June making for very calm conditions in Tubbataha for the diving and anchorages and made for a passage to Kudat motorsailing against very light wind and current. If trade winds had been strong in June, we could not have dived and our passage to Kudat would have been miserable! Sailing from Tubbataha direct to Kudat has the advantage to be well away from the South coast of Palawan which is an area of Abuh Sayef terrorists and their accomplices. In Puerto Princesa, I spoke with the Coast Guard Commander and he recommended to not stop and anchor anywhere south of Sir James Brook Point. We have friends who stopped in Rasa Island on the way to Sir James Brook. It looks as if during the past 2 years the terrorists are finally getting a hard time with the combined military forces of Philippines, Malaysia & Indonesia. One can hope that some day soon, these terrible kidnappings will be in the past!

We are now in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo and love it! After 6 years based in the Philippines, it is nice to deal with a different culture! Our next letter will cover our arrival & haul out in Kudat and cruise along the West coast of Borneo..