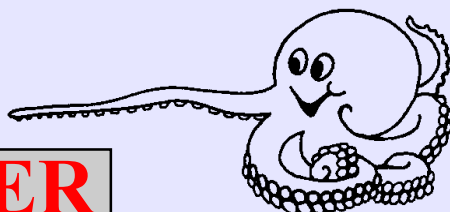


THE REEF SEEKER



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July - 2026



HEADING FOR INDONESIA

Depending on when you read this, we're likely in the final stages of getting ready to go on our Indonesia trip. We'll be in North Sulawesi, diving with our good friends at Murex Diving Resort in Manado. Although we leave late evening on July 1, our actual Indo dates will be July 3-13.

It's a bit of a schlep to get there. We start with a 17-hour non-stop flight to Singapore, have about a 3-hour layover, and then it's a 4-hour flight to Manado. Once we clear Immigration & Customs, then it's about an hour drive to the resort, where we'll settle in, fight the jetlag, and start diving the next day.

We always look forward to our Indo trips but this one even more so because Danny & Angelique, owners of the resort (which was founded by Angelique's father, Dr. Han Batuna), has been doing a lot of upgrading and rebuilding since we were last there in 2024. They've created entire new cottages, cre-

ated a new bar/lounge area near the infinity pool, and – most exciting for me – have finally built a real camera room that looks like it can accommodate 15 or more photogs with ample space to store gear and work on your housing and stuff like that. (I always jokingly referred to the previous room as a closet because it was pretty small and could really only fit 6 photogs.)

Another aspect I'm looking forward to is that they've got a new, bigger and faster boat that they'll apparently be putting us on called *Galaxea*. (I have no idea where they come p with these names. This one sounds more like a spaceship.) We've got 12 divers and 2 snorkelers overall and while we could do that number of their other boats, *Galaxea* is supposedly just a little bigger and will make things more comfortable.

We have nine dive days and will spend most of our time exploring the reefs in the Bunaken Marine Park, about 10 miles across Manado Bay, but also plan to do one day at Bangka Island and one day in the Lembeh Strait. Bangka is known for some of the most gorgeous soft coral reefs you'll find anywhere in the world (which also means it can have currents, which is what soft corals rely on) and the Lembeh Strait is legendary for being home to some of the most

unusual creatures in the world, including Pygmy Seahorses, Mimic Octopuses, various type of Scorpionfish, numerous species of Frogfish, and more.

Lembeh is where you do "muck diving" which is generally dark sand that initially looks barren but, as you take time to explore, houses all of these unusual creatures. We'll also do muck diving along the shores of Manado Bay and, while not as productive as Lembeh, still offers some interesting diving and much closer to the resort, as some of the Manado Bay much sites are less than five minutes from Murex.

So we're looking forward to another exciting adventure. Weather doesn't look too bad at the moment, with a little bit of rain the first couple of days and then clear weather after that. (It IS the tropics after all.) And we're planning, since they've got a pretty good Wi-Fi signal, on posting the Daily Top 10 pix on both the Ken Kurtis and ReefSeekers FaceBook pages. So you can follow us there if you like. Plus, I'll be doing TWARS from Indonesia on both the 5th and the 12th.

The other fun thing is that there's going to even be a 4th of July celebration there. Danny's from the U.S. and has told me he's arranged a special July 4 celebration at the resort that will even include

fireworks. So that's something else we'll look forward to.

Hopefully you'll "do" the trip with us vicariously and we'll keep you posted all along the way. And if we REALLY get lucky . . .



COELACANTH FOUND!!!

The Coelacanth (pronounced SEEL-uh-kanth) is a prehistoric-looking fish once thought to be extinct some 66 million years ago. But in 1938, a living specimen was caught off the coast of South Africa. In 1952, a second one was caught in the same region. Since then, hundreds of them have been caught by fishermen. (That's an artists' rendition above.)

They're rather raggedly-looking fish, somewhat resembling a grouper. They can grow to be as much as six feet long, weigh as much as 200 pounds, and are thought to live to be as much as 100 years old. (There's even a preserved specimen on display at the Los Angeles natural History Museum in Exposition Park if you'd like to see one for yourself.)

But in 1997, one was spotted in a fish market in Sulawesi and has

subsequently been classified as a second species, separate from the South African ones. They've been spotted sporadically over the years in Sulawesi but they seemed to have attained a cult status because there's even a large statue of three Coelacanths at a large public park along Manado Bay that's just north of Murex. They've even been featured on an Indonesian postage stamp (as you can see lower right).

The thing to understand about Coelacanths is that they live at very great depths, usually thought to be around 400 feet or so. There's a dive site that we frequent called Manado Tua, off of an extinct volcano in Bunaken Marine Park, where a Coelacanth was spotted many years ago. So we do that dive every year – which is an interesting dive in and of itself – and I tell everyone to always be looking down just in case there's a Coelacanth coming up from the depths to take a look at us

Of course, I haven't quite decided how deep I'm willing to go to get a good look at my elusive quarry. And because we'll be on nitrox, we'll have an MOD of 111' feet.

The Coelacanth for me personally has sort of become a unicorn, some-

thing I'd really like to see but know in my hearts of hearts that I'll probably never gaze upon a living one. Then again, as one of my pet sayings goes, you never know unless you go take a look. But hopefully, one comes up shallow.

This is all preludes to what I found to be very exciting news that came out last Friday (June 26) because a Coelacanth, sadly dead, was found at Siladen, one of the islands that comprise the Bunaken Marine Park. The fish was floating on the surface, retrieved, and confirmed to be a Coelacanth. From the size, it likely was a juvy. (Of course, "juvy" for a Coelacanth could mean it was 30 years old.)

So I'm holding out hope that perhaps we'll get incredibly lucky and stumble upon another one during our trip and our diving. And if we do, you know that I'm going to get some pictures and will share them with you (and the world).



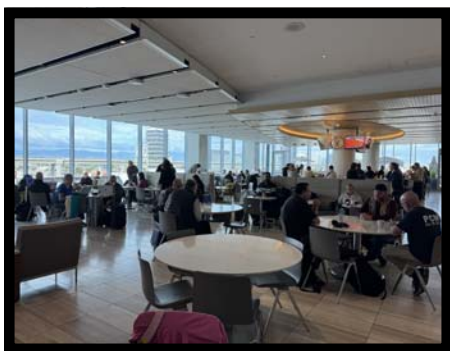
2026-2027 DIVING VACATIONS

July 1-13, 2026 • Indonesia

(We're going there now!!!)

Sept. 2026 • Philippines

August, 2027 • Eclipse & dive



UNITED CLUB CARD RULES CHANGE

I've been a United Club card member for many years which is why I've been able to take many of you into United Clubs around the world during our travels. The other nice thing about having the Club card is that you also got access to Star Alliance Clubs as well as Singapore Airlines Kris Flyer clubs.

Not so much anymore.

It looks like the rules have changed, not sure whether this is from United or from the partner airlines, but it now seems they further restricted the non-United lounge access. It used to be that as long as you were a Club card holder and had some level of United Premier status, you were good-to-go and usually could bring a guest in with you as well. But it now seems that, if I've read the website correctly, you only get non-United lounge access if you are at Gold level or above. (I'm "only" at Silver, which is the first tier of United Premier.)

I'm going to check all of this out on our Indo trip as Singapore Air is a Star Alliance member and there's a Star Alliance lounge in the Tom Bradley International Terminal. (Granted it was JAMMED the last time we were there so maybe they're having to cut back to access to reduce the

congestion.) We'll also check the Silver Kris Lounge in the Singapore Airport as well.

But if you're a United Club card holder, realize that the rules may have changed that will affect which non-United lounges you can get into.

LOBSTER POACHERS CAUGHT

Fish & Wildlife has arrested another poacher, this time someone not only taking bugs out of season, but also over the limit, within an MPA, and using a speargun. Hopefully, they throw the book at this schmuck instead of the usual relatively low-dollar fine. At some point, an example needs to be made IMHO because previous fines and punishment certainly don't seem to be much of a deterrent.

The arrest was made a little over two weeks ago but was just announced the other day. Here's the official statement from F&W:

"During an early morning extreme low tide patrol on June 13, 2026, a CDFW wildlife officer contacted an individual illegally harvesting lobster in the South La Jolla State Marine Reserve, a designated no-take marine protected area where the take of all marine resources is prohibited. An inspection of the subject's belongings revealed he

was in possession of 24 lobsters, 21 of which were undersized.

"Beyond being out of season, all the lobsters had spear holes in them, confirming they were also illegally taken with a spear and many of the lobsters were females that were carrying eggs.

"The lobsters and the suspect's spearfishing equipment were seized as evidence and the suspect was arrested for multiple counts of several violations including taking lobster out of season, possessing undersized lobster, exceeding the daily bag limit of lobster, harvesting within a state marine reserve, using an unlawful method of take, fishing without a valid license, and failing to possess a measuring device. Penalties for these crimes are expensive, violators face a maximum of \$1,000 per violation and up to six months of jail time.

"CDFW wildlife officers remain committed to protecting California's coastal resources and will continue proactive patrols to deter poaching in sensitive marine protected areas. Lobster seasons, size limits, and other restrictions are in place to help keep the population sustainable for current and future fishing opportunities.

"To report a wildlife crime in progress, call CALTIP 24/7 at 888-334-CALTIP (888-334-2258)."

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED ACTIVITY	\$\$\$
Sat.	July 18	Veterans Park	Navigation Made Easy	25
Wed.	22	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox ---	75
Sat.	Aug. 1	Veterans Park	Surf Entries Made Easy	FREE!!!
Wed.	5	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Sat.	15	Veterans Park	Beach Diving Made Easy	FREE!!
Thu.	20	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	FREE!!!
Sat.	29	Veterans Park	Navigation Made Easy	FREE!!!
Wed.	Sep. 2	--- CLASS ---	--- FISH I.D. MADE EASY ---	25

SAVE-A-DIVE KIT

As I'm getting ready to prep for the Indonesia trip, I'm reminded that last time we were there, we broke two different fin straps (two different divers) on the very first dive. That underscores how handy it is to have some sort of a Save-A-Dive kit with you, especially when you travel. You can't anticipate everything that might break, but things like an extra mask strap, a couple of fin straps, maybe a DIN-Yoke converter, some o-rings, an adjustable wrench, and things like that seem like a good idea. Don't assume the resort where you'll be or the boat from which you'll be diving will have stuff. And with little stuff that's specific to your gear, it's always better – as the Scouts would say – to be prepared.



HAVE A HAPPY 4TH

I'm not sure if I've ever spent the 4th of July outside of the USA. So this will be a new experience for me and for most of us. As I said previously, the folks at Murex are planning on July 4 festivities so I don't know if that means hamburgers and hot dogs or what the food choices will be, but Danny told me there will be fireworks.

Hopefully all of you have a fun and safe 4th. I think a couple of the dive boats are planning on a day of

diving but then will pull into Long Beach Harbor to watch those fireworks – which are usually pretty spectacular – from the water. I'm pretty sure there are ones from the *Queen Mary* as well as within Long Beach Harbor. You'll need to check to see who's doing what.

And if you're a landlubber for all of this, it seems that most fireworks up and down the coast start around 9PM and if you've got a good vantage point – the top of my apartment building allows us to see a lot of them – you'll be in for a rousing good time. (And hopefully any dogs around you don't freak out from the boom-booms.)

So here's to 250 years of the experiment called democracy with hopes it will survive for another 250 years.

PICTURE PAGE - Previous Indo trips

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2026)



***Bloch's Bigeye
from 2005***



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***"Rambo" the turtle
from 2008***



***Disco clam (Flame scallop)
from 2011***



***One of many Clownfish
from 2015***



***Flamboyant Cuttlefish
from 2019***