

THE REEF SEEKER



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BACK FROM INDONESIA

We're now back from another fabulous trip with our friends at Murex Dive Resort in Manado, Indonesia (NE Sulawesi). And other than the time it takes to get there (which isn't all THAT bad - two flights really), the area really offers a lot of diversity.

The main diving is around Bunaken Marine Park, comprised of five islands, each with multiple sites, but generally featuring pristine fairly vertical coral walls, lots of fish, tons of turtles, good-to-great visibility, and warm water. It's roughly a 30-45 minutes boat ride away.

Bangka Island (2 hours by boat - but you can also arrange to stay at the Murex resort there) has some of the most amazing soft coral reefs you'll find anywhere. Clusters of them in red, orange, yellow, pink, and purple are all over the place. Plus the fish life is pretty good too

and you've still got that warm water that we all love.

Manado Bay (the entire shoreline - anywhere from 2-60 minutes by boat depending on where you're going, and includes the Murex House Reef which is literally wade-into-the-water) has some scattered coral reefs and muck diving. If you're not familiar with that term, it generally refers to sandy areas where you wouldn't expect to find things, but in which amazing creatures make their home. On these dives, we found Snake Eels, Frogfish, Sea Snakes, Blue-Spotted Rays, Ghost Pipefish, Flamboyant Cuttlefish, nudis of all sizes and colors, Anemonefish, and plenty more to keep us occupied.

The Lembeh Straits (about a 90-minute overland drive from Murex but you can also stay at Lembeh Resort and dive through Critters @ Lembeh, which Murex owns/operates) is the Holy Grail of those who like macro and muck. In this body of water, only 10 miles long and 1 mile wide, live some of the most unusual creatures on Earth. You might see a Mimic Octopus, Devil Scorpionfish, Coconut Octopus, Pygmy Seahorse, Cuttlefish, Hairy Frogfish, Filefish, Robust Pipefish, Blue-Ringed Octopus, daytime Mandarinfish, and a whole lot more.

If you're tired of seeing the same

old thing over and over, then Indonesia might be for you. Read the trip report on our website ([www/reefseekers.com](http://www.reefseekers.com)) and that will also take you to the various links for the pictures and videos. And if all of this floats your boat, we should talk about you joining us next year, around the same timeframe. Give us a call at 310/652-4990 and we'll work out the details (plus you can stretch the trip payments out for almost a year).



SNORKEL CLEANING

It's easy for water to remain in the curve of your snorkel, which also then makes it a nice breeding ground for bacteria while the snorkel sits idle in your bag/closet/garage. Every now and then, take some anti-bacterial soap, squirt a little in through the mouthpiece, add some water, give it a good shake and flush, and then rinse the soap out with another good water rinse. That should flush out any bad stuff and prevent you from inhaling it into your lungs.

SECRETS OF THE A350

A number of us flew the Airbus A350 on Singapore Airlines last month for our Indonesia trip and we learned a wonderful little secret about this plane (which we liked a lot).

This was in Premium Economy on the non-stop from LAX to Singapore (there's also a non-stop out of SFO) which saves you about three hours overall, plus it cuts out the long layover in Singapore when you take flights that route you through Tokyo. The front 2/3 of the plane is Business and the back 1/3 is Premium Economy.

The seats are slightly wider (maybe an inch) than a regular Economy seat but you get an extra 6-8" of legroom and a bigger (13.5") TV screen in front of you. The seats also recline a few inches further back than regular Economy, which make sleeping easier. One downside, though, is that all the seats have the tray table in the armrest and the TV controls embedded in the opposite armrest. This means the armrest between seats doesn't go up, so if you score an empty row (or just an empty seat next to you), there's no way to take advantage of that extra space to lie down to sleep.

The other problem is if you get a window or middle seat. The configuration on both planes is 2/4/2. So anyone in a window seat on the 2 side or a middle seat in the 4 part will have to climb over the person on the aisle (or have them get up to let you out). But, since the armrest doesn't go up, that means you can't just slide out. If the person in the seat(s) in front of you has their seat reclined significantly, it can

be REALLY hard to squeeze out, even for someone skinny. So my personal recommendation is to book one of the aisle seats regardless of which side of the plane you're on.

But the A350 has another secret lurking. And it's a good one.

Because the tail of the plane tapers in slightly, rows 40, 41, and 42 have a 1/4/1 configuration. So not only do you have six seats that are solo seats (C on one side, H on the other) but where the second seat would normally be in those rows is a rather large storage box in which you can throw your backpack, blanket, pillow, etc., and leave the hinged top then closed as a little shelf off to your side. It's phenomenally useful for moving your laptop aside when they serve dinner, or just as extra living space for you. Except for the size of your seat – it's the same as all the others – you've got about the same amount of space and room as you would had you booked the much more expensive Business class seat. On the A350, these are the seats to get if you can.

The other thing you can do in Premium Economy on Singapore is

take advantage of "Book the Cook" which allows you to pre-select your meals a day or more before the flight leaves. You choose from a menu of roughly ten options which included beef, chicken, pork, pasta, and vegetarian. The other advantage of choosing this is that, like people who order special meals, you are served first before they start the general food service from the cart in the aisle. (You can also choose that if you like.)

So you might find that if you can book the non-stop both ways, the extra money is definitely worth it. Singapore is a major hub for other Asian dive spots - we'll go through there again in October on our way to the Maldives - and taking the overnight non-stop out of LA puts you in Singapore at 8AM, which makes connecting to other destinations really easy and quick. You even may find some deals depending on when you book your ticket. On the Indo trip, I got my Premium Economy ticket for about \$2,100 round-trip. For our Maldives trip in October, doing the same flights (but going SIN-MLE instead of SIN-MDC) my ticket price in Premium Economy is \$1,300. Go figure.

2019 DIVING VACATIONS

July 6-18 • Indo (We're back!)

October 12-24 • Maldives

December 4-10 • Cabo Pulmo

Where to in 2020 ????



DELTA'S CHANGING THEIR SEATS TOO

We all complain about legroom on flights nowadays and it's even worse when the person sitting in front of you decides they need to fully recline their seat and now their seatback is in your face or smashing the screen on your laptop. Delta's trying to change some of that.

On selected A320s, they are going to restrict the seat recline to only a couple of inches. When you realize that the general pitch - the distance between the same spot on two seats one in front of the other - on a plane can be as little as 30", when someone reclines their seat 5" it REALLY intrudes on your space if you're behind that person.

Personally, if I'm working on my laptop and the person in front of me reclines their seat, I cringe, because I'm afraid they may go back far enough to crush the lid of my computer. (And mine's a fairly small screen at 14". Bigger laptops can tolerate even less recline.)

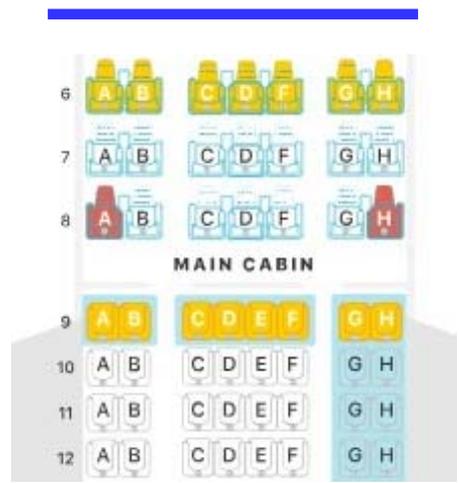
Or when I've got the tray table down and am eating and the person in front fully reclines and the seat back goes back so far as to essentially cover up my food. That's a problem.

So, personally, I think this is a great idea. In fact, I'd be in favor of seats - especially on shorter

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES				
DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Sat.	Aug. 10	Redondo	Navigation dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	14	- CLASS -	- NAUI NITROX -	\$75
Thu.	Sept. 5	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Sat.	14	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	21	Redondo	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	25	- CLASS -	- FISH ID -	\$25
Sat.	Oct. 6	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150

flights - that don't recline at all. Fix them in a slightly tipped-back position and that's it.

So I'll be keeping an eye on this Delta experiment closely. But my guess is that you'll see more of this with other airlines down the road.



SEAT GURU

As long as I'm on the topic of seats, just a quick reminder about Seat Guru, which can be found at www.seatguru.com. It's a fabulous resource to have when you're booking your next flight because it has the seating charts for just about every airline and every plane type flown by that airline. Just type in your flight number and travel dates, and Seat Guru will show you not only the seating configuration, but will also highlight good seats (green), bad seats (red), and seats to be cautious about (yellow). It's a really great resource and best of all . . . IT'S FREE!!!



UNDERWATER GPS

Sorry, it doesn't exist.

But until it gets invented, maybe a little navigation class would be just the thing you need to help you find your way back to wherever it was you started. We've got one for you on Saturday, August 10, at Vets Park in Redondo. We'll start by going over (on land) some simple ways to use a compass to make sure you've got yourself pointed in the right direction, as well as point out ways you can use natural clues to augment what the compass shows you. Then we'll take the plunge into Redondo Canyon to put it all together and should end up fairly close to where we started.

A lot of folks get a bit intimidated by navigation but these are the same folks who complain when they end up 100 yards from the boat or beach. It's not all that hard and if you'd care to commit three hours of your time and \$25 of your money, we'll show you the ins and outs. Call us at 310/652-4990 to get signed up.

PARK 'N FLY - NO MORE SHUTTLES

Park 'N Fly (formerly Park One - the surface lot located near the entry to LAX between the Airport Police building and Terminal 1) has just announced that, effective August 14, they will no longer be offering shuttle service to and from the various terminals and will become "a Walk Lot" which means if you park there, you're going to walk a lot. They will have limited golf cart service but only within the lot to take you to the corner by their valet drop-off to the walk-path/crosswalk over to T1.

If you're flying Southwest out of T1, this is no big deal. In fact, it's usually quicker to walk to T1 than use their shuttle. But if you're fly-

ing out of any of the other terminals, this will be a huge pain IMHO. Personally, I use that lot when I'm driving myself to LAX because I'm also a fan of their shuttle since I'm using flying out of TBIT, T4 (American), or T7 (United). No mas for me.

I called them and the woman on the phone said part of the reason this is happening is that LAX is taking away 900 of their spots in the lot (not sure what their overall capacity is), which will significantly reduce their footprint as well as their income. Given that they usually had three or four shuttles running, with others standing by, I'm guessing this is a cost-cutting move to offset reduced income. But it seems to me like they're shooting themselves in the foot.

BOAT DIVE??

We really do miss the days when we used to have a boat dive every weekend. And while our glory days may be behind us - and certainly the days of a \$30 trip to Catalina are long gone - that doesn't mean we can't still organize a boat dive every now and then. Oil rigs seem to likely be the easiest (and it's a GREAT dive) but Catalina or even Santa Barbara or San Clemente aren't out of the question. The key factor is getting enough people interested and willing to go. And remember, some of the boats we could use are 6-packs, so it's not like we have to have 20 people to make this happen. If you'd be interested in something like this, call or shoot us an e-mail and we're see where it goes from here.

PICTURE PAGE - Indonesia 2019

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2019)



**Leaf
Scorpionfish**



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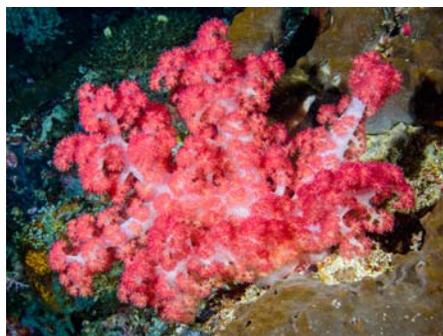
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**Thorny
Seahorse**



**Spotted
Porcelain Crab**



**Gorgeous
soft coral at Bangka**



**Nemo's
cousin**