

DIVING IN BALI. By Steve Cottrell

I was lucky enough to have a mid winter holiday in the tropical oasis of Bali for the first two weeks of June and grabbed the chance to do some diving while we were there.

There are a large number of dive shops all over the main tourist drags ranging from very professional looking to back street abortionist type set ups. I checked a couple online before leaving and lo and behold one of the shops I had short-listed was right on the street outside our resort. You can check out their web site at www.baliscubamasters.com

It was set up by a couple of Europeans but is fronted by very easy going locals led by Made.

They do all the usual PADI courses and run trips to all the dive honey-pots around the island.

Trips are number dependent so it might mean organising yourself around them putting a foursome together so you might not be able to go on the precise day you want. Be a bit flexible therefore.

The two things I had heard about in Bali before leaving were the Liberty wreck and the Giant Ocean Sunfish or Mola Mola. Well, I was too early in the year for the Sunfish. They appear around the end of September through to mid January and divers descend from all over the world to dive with them. The Liberty ship is always there though so that was my first choice for an outing. The wreck is a shore dive as the ship is on its side only 50 metres from the tide line. It is butted up against a small reef so the side is at around 5 metres and the deck is like a wall dive dropping off sheer to around 28 metres. And, of course, with about 50 metres viz you can see the whole thing. Everybody raves about this dive, but being a bit critical I think it is mainly the visibility that makes it. Imagine if you had 50 metres viz on the Lermontov – how spectacular would that be?? It is teeming with fish life and has some good swim throughs of the hold. And you change and chill out between dives in a beach front bar, which is nice.



Fishies

A couple of days later and it was off across the channel separating the bigger island of Bali from the small island Nusa Penida. We were diving the site where the Sunfish congregate in their season, but otherwise it is a coral reef dive. This particular morning it was beset with the most swirling currents that I have experienced constantly changing direction and speed. We were rapidly scattered over a fairly wide area the only plus point being that we could all see one another. Anyway, with some fierce finning we all got together in a hollow and compared air, which was of course well depleted due to the exertions of fighting the current. Called that one off early and moved off to one of their classic dives, a drift dive along the reef. This time the current was consistently in the same direction and all you had to do was hop in, sink and go with the flow. It was quite fast too, and I reckon we covered two or three k's in 40 minutes. That was when the novice divers air ran out (in fact one finished the dive on the guides octo) even I still had 80 bar left after 40 min's. It was a very enjoyable dive with a lot of fish. The coral was knocked about quite bit though, by storms and the dynamiting activities of fish pirates.



Drifting along

For my final trip I chose the 'Manta Point' trip. This is a bit further afield and a bit more expensive at \$110 US Dollars (plus \$15US gear hire). It can only be dived at certain tides as it is an exposed headland. We were the first boat there and within seconds of being in the water we were surrounded by manta rays. The swell breaks on this headland and stirs up the sediment and other stuff so the mantas have food to eat and like it there. It is quite swirly to dive in and also you are at about 7 or 8 metres most of the time as the mantas don't go much deeper to feed. It was brilliant, particularly as there were just four of us there for 30 mins. A load of other boats arrived then and suddenly there were more humans than mantas and it all got a bit silly so we packed it in and by popular vote elected to repeat the drift dive of a couple of days before. It was equally fun the second time around.



Manta!

It is a pure joy diving in warm water where you can see for miles but I still think that if conditions here were similar then the diving here would beat anything I have experienced anywhere else.

At the July Meeting Steve Cottrell will expand on his Bali experience and as this article indicates it should make it a meeting worth attending.