



St. Some Times



Male, Maldives

Fly in, fly out.

20 Divers

Three small groups led by excellent DMs.

11 Days 10 Nights

Take off your shoes when your board, put them again in 11 days

Trailing Dive Boat

The Dhori followed for diving.

Carpe Diem Itinerary August 2018

Divers

Serge - Lux
 Monique-Deu
 Cinzia - IT
 Daniele - IT
 Luca - IT
 Adamo - IT
 Martina - Deu
 Uwe - Deu
 Barry - UK
 Amy - UK
 Claire - UK
 Jeffrey - USA
 Wiardi - Indo
 Kuniawan - Indo
 Thomas - Neth/USA
 Yulia - Rus/USA
 Etienne - Fr
 Greg - USA

Crew

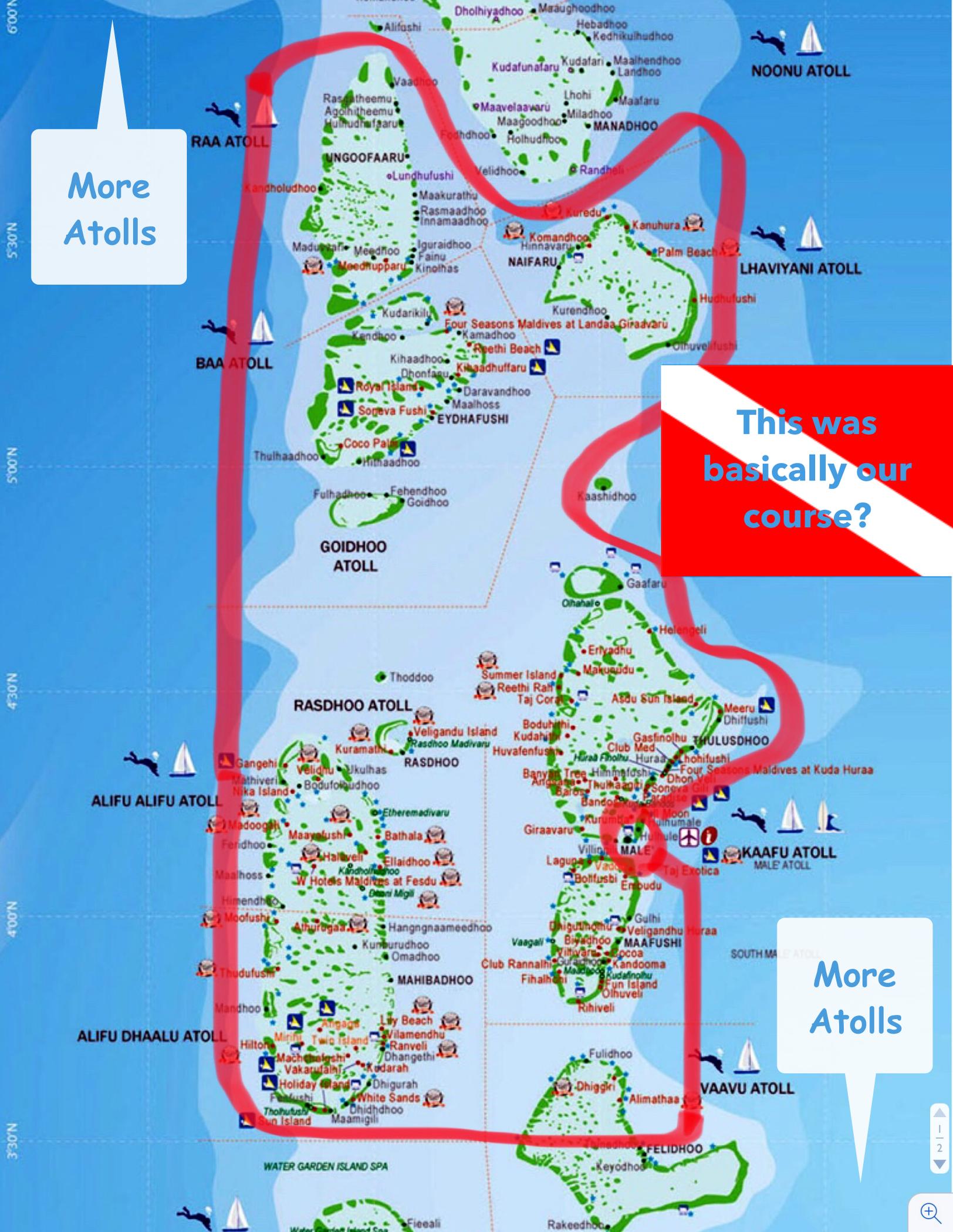
Captain - Ali
 Engineer - Mohammed
 Chef - Iresh
 Asst Chef - Raja
 Barman - Sanjet
 Room Boy - Sabuj
 Deck Hand - Salaam
 Dhoni Captain - Hassanbe
 Compressor - ThuThu
 Crewman - Shafeeq
 Dive team - Aatho
 - Chill
 - Munko

| Date | Dive Site Name | Atoll Name |
|------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 8.15 | Karumba Faru | North Malé |
| 8.16 | Lankan Faru | North Malé |
| 8.16 | Feyrd Faru | North Malé |
| 8.16 | Villivaru Giri (night) | South Malé |
| 8.17 | Kandooma This | South Malé |
| 8.17 | LhosFushi Corner | South Malé |
| 8.17 | Miyaru Kondu | Vaavu Atoll |
| 8.17 | Alimathaa Jetty | Vaavu Atoll |
| 8.18 | Kuda Rah Thila | Ari Atoll |
| 8.18 | Lux Beru | S. Ari Atoll |
| 8.18 | Dhigurah Beru | S. Ari Atoll |
| 8.19 | Ari Beach Beer | S. Ari Atoll |
| 8.19 | MahiBadhoo Rock | S. Ari Atoll |
| 8.19 | Kah Thila | N. Ari Atoll |
| 8.20 | Rashdhoo Madivarau | Rasdhoo Atoll |
| 8.20 | Kakaa Thila | Baa Atoll |
| 8.21 | Dhonfanu Thila | Baa Atoll |
| 8.21 | Yellow Wall | Baa Atoll |
| 8.21 | KotterFaru Beru | Raa Atoll |
| 8.22 | Anemon Thila | Raa Atoll |
| 8.22 | Orimas Thia | Noonu Atoll |
| 8.22 | Xmas Rock | Noonu Atoll |
| 8.23 | Kudedu Kandu | Lhaviyani Atoll |
| 8.23 | Fushifaru Thila | Lhaviyani Atoll |
| 8.23 | Lhohi Corner | Lhaviyani Atoll |
| 8.24 | Don'tKnowa Thila | Notshurawhere Atoll |

More Atolls

This was basically our course?

More Atolls



20 Year Wait

I've been waiting for 20 years to do this! Let me walk you through my experience of eleven days and ten nights on the live-a-board ship called the *Carpe Diem*.

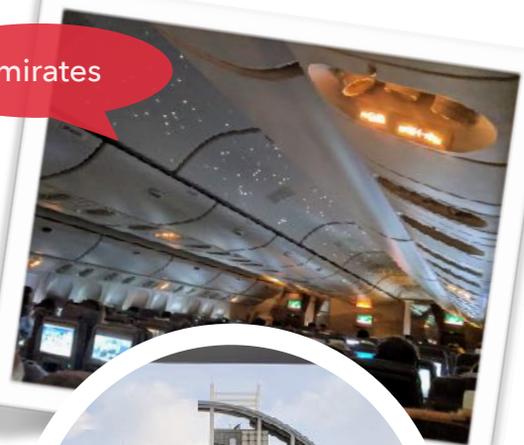
ARRIVAL

The Malé airport is super small, but about 30 jumbo jets arrive daily. That makes for a busy mess. The company had previously arranged for me to be met upon

coffee shop, and little shops, saying "we leave at 12:30." So be it. I stepped into the handy pharmacy to spend \$75 US on three bottles of sun tan lotion, tooth paste, and deodorant. I didn't pack any liquids with me because I only had a carry-on bag and a computer bag.

10 cups of coffee later, I sat in the tropical heat scoping out the travelers, trying to pick out my future dive partners. That passed the time, but I failed. Everyone

Emirates



Malé

Ship Introduction by Agnes



arrival. I figured they might take me directly to the ship for early boarding. Nope. I hadn't read the fine print. Two Maldivian DMs met me at 7:20am right on time. They simply pointed to the waiting area, air conditioned

was coming and going with dive gear, surf boards, and fishing poles.

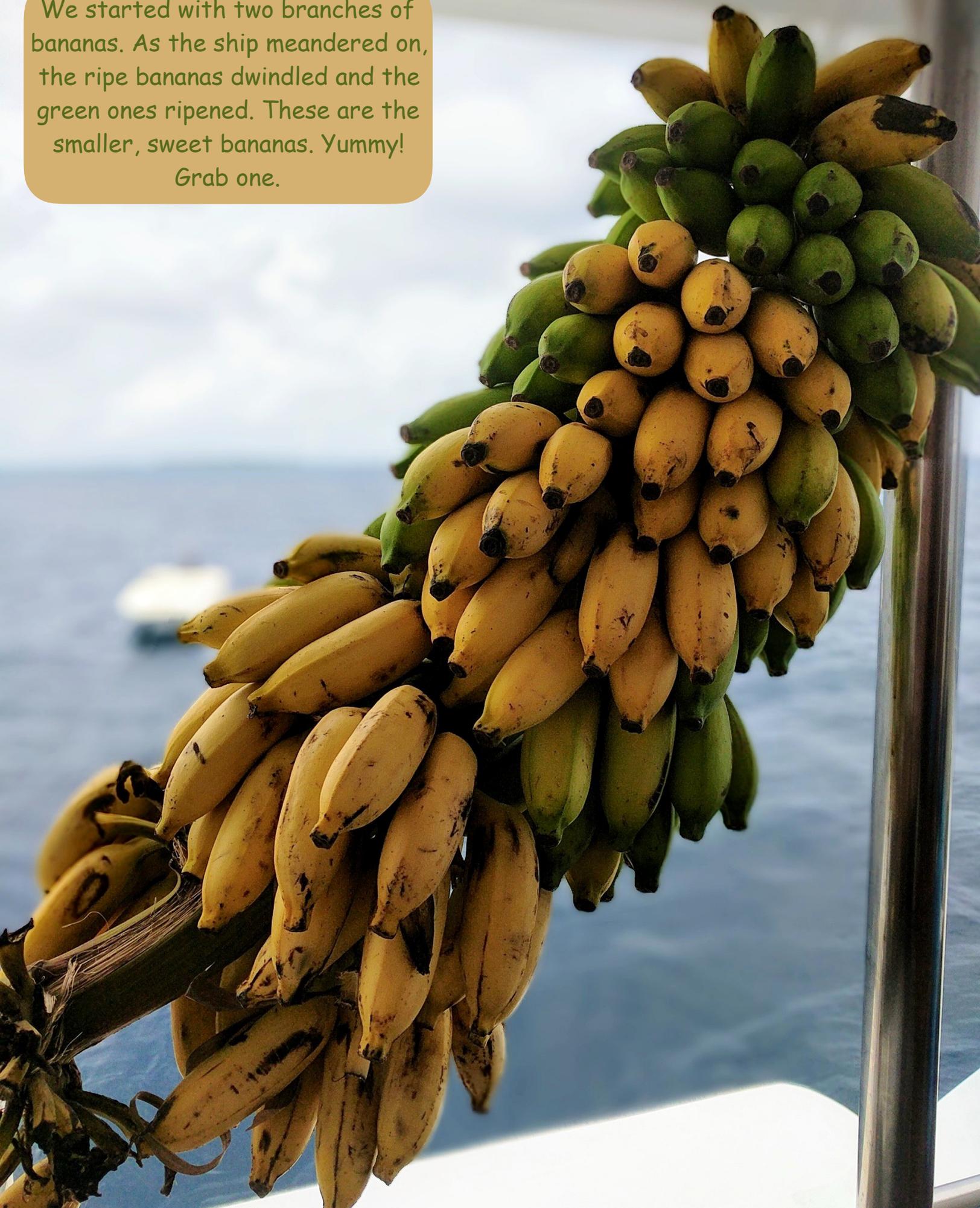
NO SHOES, SERVICE

Right at 12:30, a small group of people following a white woman

and my two DM greeters rescued me from coffee cup number fifteen. We crossed the street and boarded the *Dhoni* (the *Carpe Diem* Dive tender Boat). I took off my shoes, boarded the ship, and took a seat in the main galley for

We started with two branches of bananas. As the ship meandered on, the ripe bananas dwindled and the green ones ripened. These are the smaller, sweet bananas. Yummy!

Grab one.





The Routine

EARLY WAKE UP

Usually, we would have our first dive briefing between 6:00 and 6:15am. The cabin boy, Sabuj, would knock on your door and say “good morning”. If you chose to sleep in, you had the option to write your name on the little whiteboard, but this was rare.

The dive briefing, led by the DMs, would include a small whiteboard drawing (excellent drawings actually) and inevitably include instructions about entry options depending on the “incoming” our “outgoing” currents. There was very little talk. Most of us were deep into our coffee or tea cups.

MY GEAR

It seemed like everyone else had their own gear. I had to rent a BC, fins, and reg set. Remember, I gifted my kit to my Venezuelan friend Ruben when I moved to Switzerland and gave my brand new reg to Jeff until I start diving more often. I truly believe in using something I own rather than let it sit and gather dust. Someone

worthwhile should be using what I own or I shouldn't own it.

My relatively new mask, with 6 dives, was important on a live aboard trip. The worked fine after the two of us by dive twelve. A mask that fits well, allows you to see, and doesn't leak is a deal breaker on a dive.



Of course, I don't ever dive without a wrist dive computer. It took me an evening of study and practice before I could engage the nitrox and turn off the audible alerts on my June birthday present

FIST DIVES

After our morning briefing, we would board the Dhori with a fresh blue towel for the day (if we wanted one) and kit up. What most divers didn't know was that the Dhori crew had already refilled our tanks from the

onboard compressor. The humble giant (I think his name is The Thu) came around with the O₂ meter and get our signature. We would end up diving all dives on 32% O₂.

If you were not certified, you could certify with Nitrox during the first dives, like Amy, or dive completely on regular air like Cinzia and Danielle did.

Time to kit up and dive. We broke into three separate small groups with the DMs to descend on the site.

BREAKFAST WITH VIEWS

The Dhori never went far from the mother ship, so after an hour submersed, we'd be back on the CarpeDiem for breakfast. Breakfast featured most of the basics you would find at any hotel buffet. The only thing missing was REAL BACON. NO PIG. Is there a live-a-board going around the Maldives that serves real bacon? More importantly, every breakfast was on the stern second level, overlooking either a small island or open water! It doesn't get much better than that.

While we were eating, the Dhori crew were filling our tanks.





This small white tip swam below me before I snapped the photo.

DAILY DIVE 2

With a few exceptions, we dove three times a day. The second dive would follow breakfast. The same routine: briefing, board, kit up, sign off on nitrox, small group entry, dive with your DM or go off with your buddy and a dive sausage for 55 minutes, safety stop for 3 minutes, get picked up, dekit, record your time and depth with a DM list, return to the mother ship. Efficient and safe. I love this dive operation! I really do.

NIGHT DIVES

You will see some pics from the night dives in here. We only did two, but those are two more than I have done in six years! I'm not complaining in hindsight. I was under the impression that we

would have done a lot more night dives, but this was my introduction to live-a-board diving.

ALIMATHAA JETTY NIGHT DIVE EXPERIENCE

Nights two and three were night dives. I think the first was a fluke because, for some reason, the captain couldn't get us to the scheduled night dive on night two. Since they had promised us a night dive, the DMs chose an alternate sight and we experienced a "normal" night dive.

I describe it as "normal" because there was nothing "normal" about the second night dive.

Alimathaa Jetty in Vavvuu Atoll is famous for its night dives because (according to some

research) it used to be a sight where local fishermen would discard fish carcasses from their daily haul. Anyway, it's not seeing nurse sharks, rays, barracuda, or 40 torches that was amazing. No. The amazing draw for me was the nurse shark dance.

I was kneeling in 10m of darkness on the sand, watching the rest of the group surround 4 nurse sharks. I don't get excited about nurse sharks so I just sat out of the circle on my own. I spotted a beautiful ray swimming over the corals to the sand behind the divers. It was a huge cow tailed ray. All of a sudden, another diver, maybe from another dive group, bumped my tank from behind. I was PISSED. Whipping around in anger, I flashed my torch on a nurse

shark that had bumped me out of interest. I couldn't believe it. This whole dive was a calculated surprise. The DMs are bored with it. Routine for them. For me, I saw the most bizarre shark behavior.

DANCE OF THE NURSES

Nurse sharks sometimes have a small, golden trevallie swimming alongside it near the nurse's gills. The trevallie uses the shark as protection, like pilot fish or remoras do. I mean, what fish is going to go after a small trevallie if it's hanging out with a shark? Duh. But the shark gets nothing out of this parasitic friendship.

During this dive, with hopes of food, there were schools of trevallies. The school of little yellow finned fish would choose one of the ten or so nurse sharks and start schooling around the shark's head. It's like mosquitoes swarming around your head. You start swatting at the swarm. But sharks can't swat. They have no arms. What do they do? The target shark would go vertical from resting on the sand and start snapping its jaws at the school of trevallies. Sometimes the trevallies would move on to another nurse. Sometimes, they'd just relentlessly stick to that shark while it went vertical.

At one point, we would see three or four nurse sharks go vertical and start a madness of snapping.

I really didn't know what was going on, but once these sharks start snapping, game over. Nurse sharks have a lot of teeth and

their bodies are just cartilage. What if one accidentally bit you in the swarm?

What a sight to behold. We spent the entire hour dive there in 10m depth and just watched the little yellow trevallies bother the nurse shark meeting. The lights only made it worse. The trevallies didn't even bother the nurse sharks until Chill started shining his torch on a specific nurse shark in the later darkness. Bad chill. Bad chill. But thank you. It is truly amazing to watch this behavior.

DINNER, BEER, SLEEP

At the end of the day, whether we dove two, three, or four dives, most of us just wanted to go to sleep after dinner.

Dinner was plentiful. Sometimes, we'd be offered a freshly caught fish that the dive crew got while we were all asleep. But every night, our Sri Lankan chef would

prepare mostly Western fare for dinner. My favorite part was the ice cream and diced fruit for dessert!

CARPE NOCTEM

There is nothing like falling asleep under the stars and moon on the top deck of a 35m ship. The first two nights it stormed by midnight and I had to go below. The rest of the nights were amazing. I'd fall asleep reading my iPad or just listening to Buffett and watching the night sky. Below, on the back deck, a floodlight attracted rays and plenty of fish. The boat crew would spend a little time fishing but they'd be asleep by the time I woke at midnight to trek down two decks to empty my ballast tanks.

I'm surprised that everyone else was surprised I chose to sleep on the top deck. The top deck was mine at night. Carpe Noctem.



Photo by Serge

Nope. That bump wasn't another diver. SHE bumped you!



Manta rays? Are you serious? Yes. I am serious. We spent an entire dive watching several mantas going back and forth over a "cleaning station". A "cleaning station" is basically a sea mound where hundreds of cleaner wrasse are waiting for passing pelagics, like mantas, to hover for a while and allow the wrasse to eat the parasites away from the spots they cannot reach. It's symbiosis.

Sea Life

EAGLE RAYS

Eagle Rays remain one of my favorites to see underwater. It is proof that birds and fish come from the same history. We were lucky enough to see several eagle rays on our dives.

CLOWN VARIETIES

There are over 30 varieties of clownfish (anemone fish) in the Maldives. The Orange clownfish with the white strip behind its eyes is only found in Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Did you know...all clownfish are born male. They have the ability to switch their sex, but will do so only to become the

dominant female of a group. The change is irreversible. Source: [National Geographic](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)

NIGHT BEAUTY

At night, all of the corals that have been dormant during the daylight open up to filter the waters.

SHARKS

If you like sharks, this is the place for you. We saw sharks on every dive. Sometimes, we were at 30 meters, sometimes we were at a minimal 10 m.

Once in a while, the sharks were with us for the entire dive. Other times, we had to go find them and only briefly see them in the blue.

Sharks! Awesome.



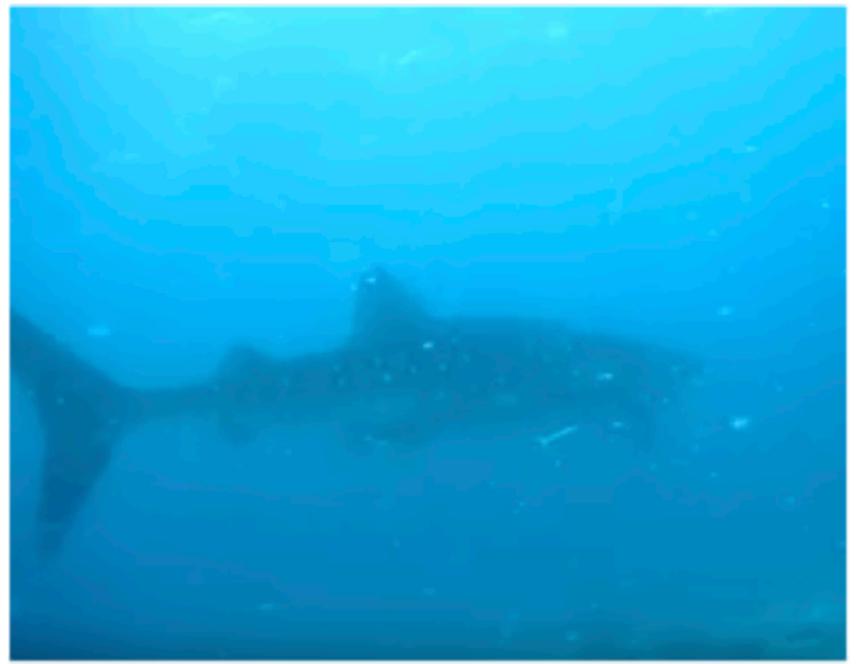




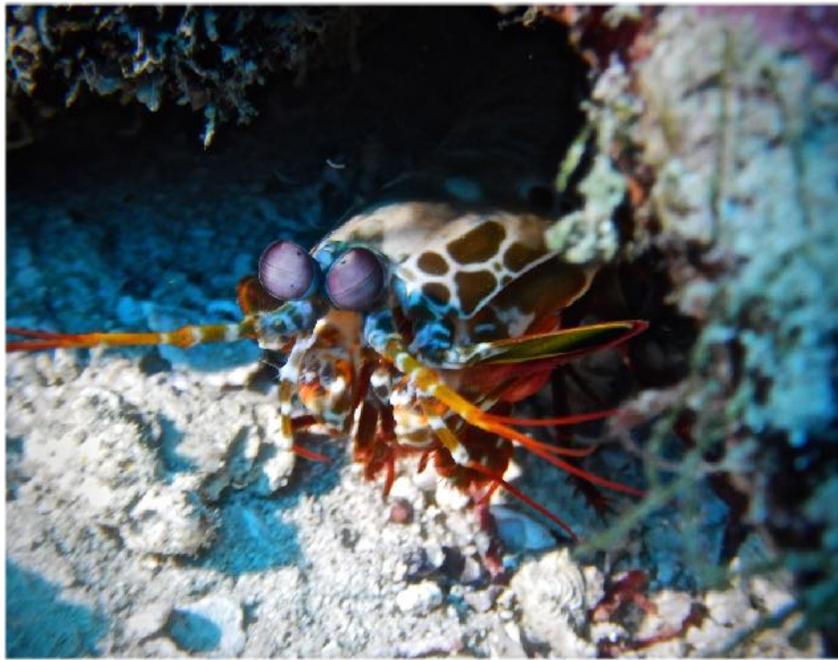
W

haleshark?
Yes. We
went
looking for
them. No,
we didn't
see any

from the boat. I was taking a photo of a clownfish during a safety stop at 5m. I looked up and the biggest fish on the planet is swimming right by me. I frantically tried to get the attention of the others, but the only one around was my DM, Aatho. So, I shared my video with the others. At



Whale sharks grow from 6meters to almost 11meters in length.



M

antis shrimp
are usually in
their nests. But
not in the
Maldives.

Mantis shrimp
have the fastest death strike
in the animal kingdom. We
saw these beautiful creatures
on a lot of our dives, outside
and hunting! According to
most scientists, these shrimps
have the broadest visual
spectrum on the planet.
It's always a good dive when I
see a Mantis shrimp, let alone
two.

Meet Our Dive Team

Munko

Quite possibly the funniest DM whom I've ever dove with.



Aatho

He's got more hair under that ski cap than most women have in a lifetime.



"Chill"

He's so chilled out under water, it's scary!

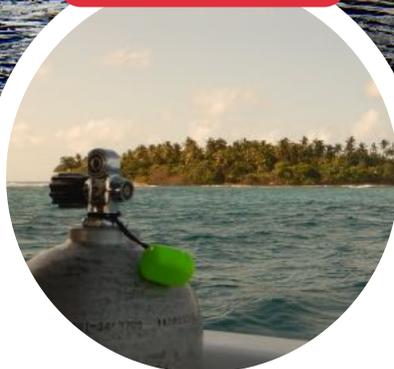


Hassanbe



Our Safe Captain. Thanks for watching our bubbles.

ThuThu



Kept our Tanks always at 32 Nitrox! Sorry I don't have your pic!

Shafeeq



Always there to get our fins and help us board with our kit on.

Meet the Divers



 **Cinzia & Daniele** 

Both from the Como area! Can you believe it? Daniele usually helped me get into my BC.

 **Monique & Serge** 

Awesome Pics and Vids Serge! These two had the greatest info on diving Indonesia. Also beer drinkers.



 **Etienne**

A world traveler from France, Etienne was my cabin mate that had the cabin to himself each night.

 **Amy & Barry** 

Barry was the entertainment. He and daughter, Amy, kept me acute on my British vocabulary.



 **Wiardi**

Wi, my dive partner. Wi almost got eaten by the nurse sharks on our second night dive. His buddy, Kurniaswan didn't dive.

 **Greg** 

Referred to as the whale shark, green napoleon wrasse, or the guy drinking beer at dinner.

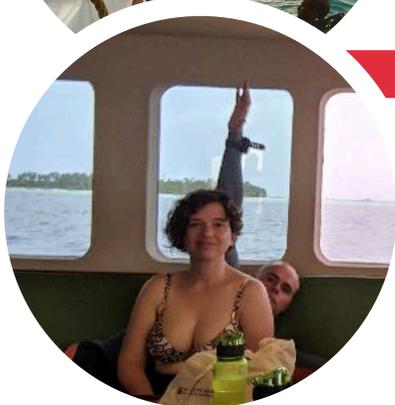


 **Martina & Uwe** 

Sorry Uwe, no pic of you together. It was a pleasure to hear your German conversations! Bis nächste Mal.

 **Adamo & Luca** 

Very funny and friendly Italians prepped for cold water diving. Thanks Adamo, for being such a good sport!

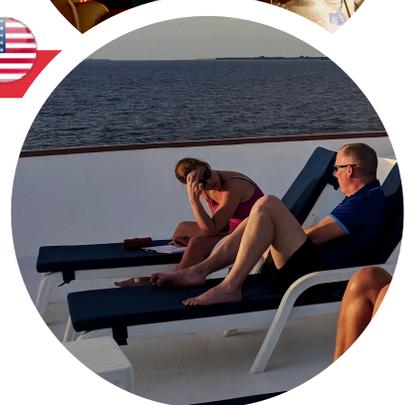


 **Yulia & Thomas** 

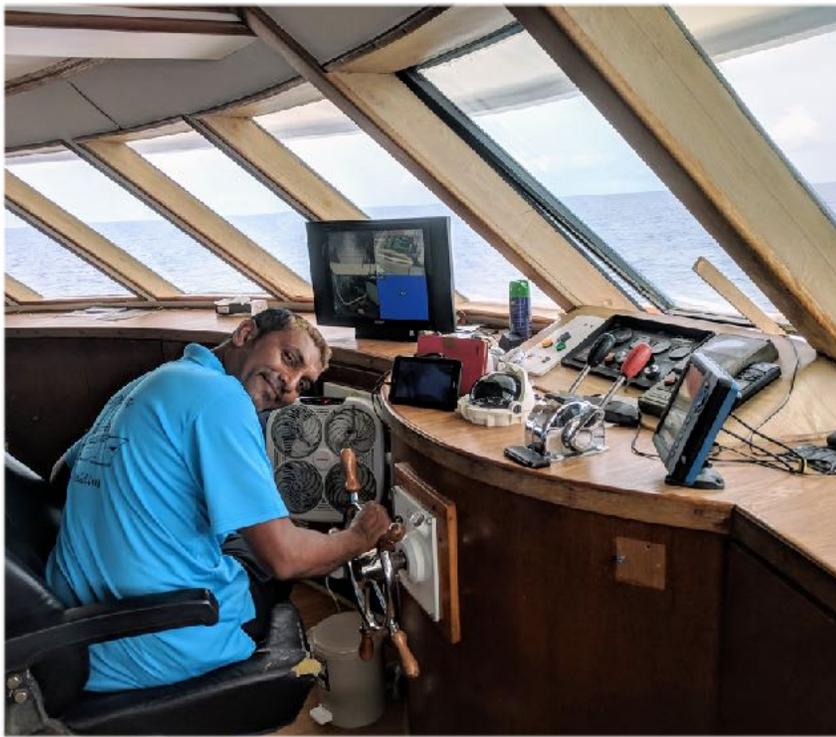
An entertaining couple from the USA, but originally from Russia and Netherlands

 **Clare & Jeff** 

Winners of most romantic couple on board. I'll certainly come visit you both in Dubai soon.







The Carpe Diem crew is a mix of nationalities. They took excellent care of us and made sure all of our needs were taken care of. Living on the Carpe Diem is very similar to being at an all inclusive resort. In charge of it all is Captain Ali. He would steer us through the atolls at night and find a safe harbor for us to sleep in.



Wahoo! Dinner time Chef Sanjet.

All Aboard!

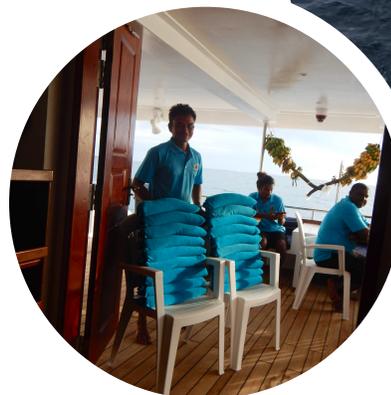
I've been told that not all live-a-boards are created equal. If you are looking for an excellent service oriented ship and company, this is it. The Carpe Diem is just one of three ships in the fleet. The owner/operators are currently building an island resort too. The website for Carpe is below. I just happened upon them through a quick internet search. Several websites and companies are metasites for live-a-boards all over the world. You don't need to go looking at one of those sites. Just go to the site linked below.

There is no reason for me to dive with dive shops anymore. Can I really afford to dive for

11 days at a time? Well, it costs an average of \$2600 for that amount of time. Three dives a day. That's usually about 26 dives. The nitrox, beer, liquor, soda, rental gear, dive insurance (if you don't have it already), and the cool T-shirts are all extras.

Plan for paradise. It's a dive safari so weather can be an issue. You may not see all the cool things we did on my trip, but that's not up to anyone but nature!

Thank you to all of my new dive buddies. Thank you to the Carpe Diem. I'll be back soon.



The crew is there to serve the divers. Need something? Ask.

