



ST.SOMETIMES NEWSLETTER V250

CARPE DIEM X-MAS

Two Back to Back trips aboard the dive Live-a-board called the Carpe Diem in the sea world country Maldives. This volume is about the first trip only.

#1

Manta Rays zooming just inches from your face on a night dive.

#2

Frogfish like the cover. Dive after dive experiencing the wonderful angler fishes.



#3

Meeting up with old friends from past trips. Missing my brother. New friends.



CARPE DIEM TRIP NUMBER 3

Another spectacular trip to the Maldives. One year ago, on a Covid December 17, 2020, I was on this same ship. Go back into the historical St. SomeTimes volumes and find the issue. This trip was just as spectacular. Jeff was missing of course. So were Willem and



BEAUTIFUL SUNSETS AND SUNRISES

We usually get up at 6am for the first dive briefing. Dive for an hour. Have a big breakfast of eggs, toast, sausages, beef bacon, juice and coffee. Eating and looking out on a new water scene every morning is an intoxicating way to bring in a new day.

There are any number of places for guests to hang out on this 30meter (100ft) ship. Go almost anywhere you want to. Talk to the captain on the deck. Sleep on top deck.



THE DIVE DHONI IS OUR TENDER BOAT

Once you dive on this live-a-board, it will be difficult to dive from shore or with some dive shop again. Why? Everything stays on the Dhoni. Anything to do with diving is done on the Dhoni. Everything is basically done for you. Need help with your fins? How about getting your other arm into that BCD? Nitrox checked and recorded? This is diving with five stars. Maximum stars!



THE STERN, NO SOCIAL DISTANCING HAPPENS

What do fresh bananas, coffee, dive pictures, whale sharks, mantas, ninja fishermen, and a dingy have in common? The stern of the Carpe Diem. It's where all the fun happens. Some of us gather in the back outdoor office for most of the trip. It's also where you find the diver guides on their phones. This year, I had the chance to witness ninja fishing styles. Five fish. Five seconds.

HOW DO THE TRIPS **DIFFER** IF YOU **ALWAYS** GO ON THE SAME SHIP?

The People (guests) Vary

With very few exciting instances, the people are always different. This time, for example, I had the pleasure to dive (especially) with Marcus and Tina. A diving couple from Frankfurt, they are nothing but laughter 24/7. This was the first time I knew ahead of time, that someone I had made friends with were going to be on the trip. Marcus, Tina, Willem and Anna, and Dirk were all on the 2020 Xmas trip. All five had committed to this trip in 2021. Dirk, Tina, and Marcus all made it. Ana and Willem got stuck in UK for some reason.

My older brother, Jeff, was also committed to this trip and the next one, but he was gifted with a case of Covid just before his departure. I can only imagine what a perfect trip it would have been if those three had been with me, especially Jeff. Maybe next year. We still have Jeff's trip "banked" with the Carpe ship fleet.

The Itinerary Changes (mostly)

The plan for each trip varies slightly with the Carpe Diem and the other two ships in the fleet. Carpe Diem goes all over the Maldives. This year, this 10 day trip ended at the northern Dharavandhoo airport so we were basically in the North Atolls - meaning north of Malé, their capital city.

Conditions Change - Depends on Mother Nature, of Course

I was amazed at the clear visibility on this trip. The "viz" really depends on the moon, the currents, the rains, and your timing. It seems to be a natural crap shoot. Our trip landed on a winning week. The entire trip was clear blue skies and clear dives. I considered this my best trip, for conditions, so far.

The currents were in our favor for most of the trip. Currents can be ripping, evil, even dangerous. These weren't. The channel dives can be especially strong when the current is coming from the east or

west along the reef and incoming from the ocean either from the north or south. That kind of trip is basically negative entry, drop quickly with a drift to the reef, hook in at 25-30 meters (75-99ft), watch any sharks for 25 minutes, unhook and drift through the channel to the waiting Dhoni.

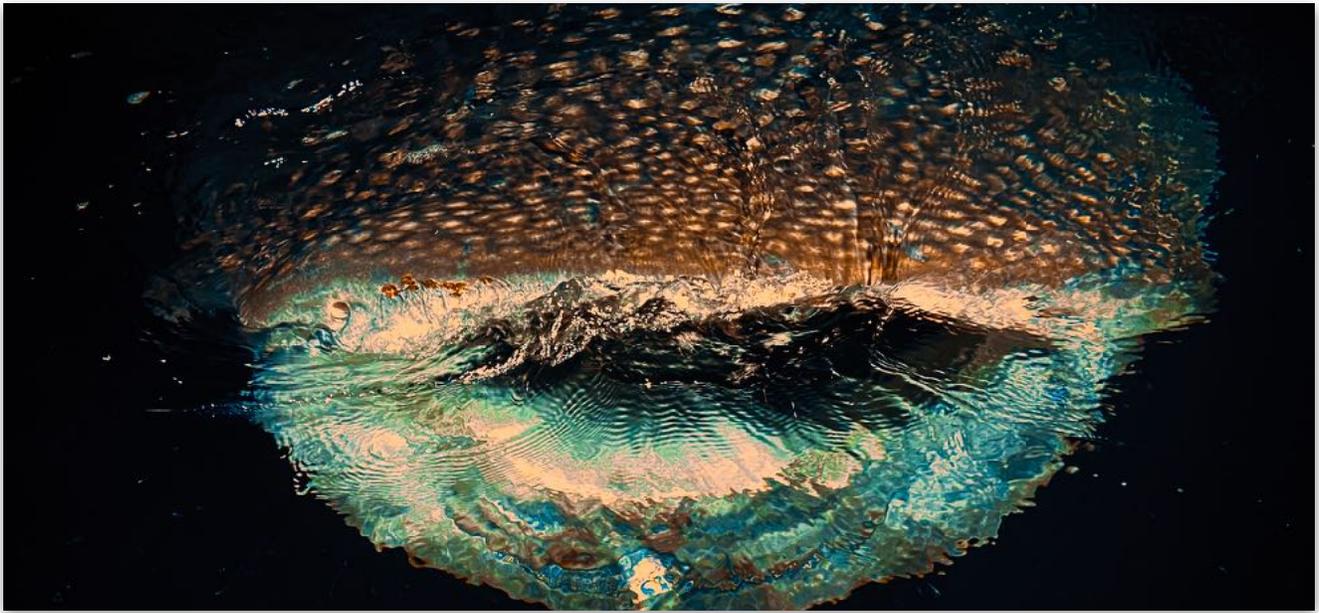
This trip was different. We even had a few channel dives without a need for hooking to the reef. Sit there and hover with a light finning, while watching the 20-30 white tips schooling in front of us. This was bizarre and rare! Usually, Marcus is hooked on a rock riding the current like a dirt bike.

Dive Sites

There are some definite dive sites favored by all of the live aboard ships. I'd have to look back at my dive lists. I neither keep track, ask, nor care. You could dive the same site two hundred times and never have the same dive. Mother nature takes care of that. Munkko and his guide team make sure each dive is the best possible. There are some key animals the guides keep track of to make their divers happy. Sharks, whale sharks, manta ray cleaning stations, frog fish, ghost pipe fish, and a few other life forms tend to stick to specific territories. The guides target them and know where to find them for divers to enjoy.

I'll give you a specific example. Ali Mahta is a dive almost every ship offers. Years ago, the jetty was known as THE place for local fishermen to clean their catches. All of the discarded fish parts attracted hundreds and hundreds of nurse sharks, rays, and other reef creatures. Four years ago, I took a picture of myself with three nurse sharks. It was an amazing dive! Yes, I literally saw two hundred or more nurse sharks in a 45 minute night dive with zero current, lots of divers, and great viz. Look back at the St.SomeTimes volumes. This time, we saw just a few sharks as we finned in a medium current. It was rather boring for this site. But, I'm not complaining. I was a night dive. My favorite kind.





(top) Witnessing the vertical filtering method of a massive Whale shark is completely awesome. Marcus took this picture from the stern. Whale sharks feed on plankton. Carpe, like a lot of the other live-a-board ships, puts out a floodlight on the stern when she anchors in specific lagoons. The flood light attracts the plankton. The plankton attracts the Whale sharks.

In some areas, manta rays (bottom left) come to the floodlights instead of the Whale sharks. The Carpe fleet offers chances to see each. Sometimes, guests will jump in and snorkel with the pelagic, but I think the view from the stern is fantastic without ever getting wet.

To sum up the idea of pelagic ocean life, there tends to be sharks on almost every dive. It is absolutely weird for me to make such a statement, but it's true. Small reef, black tip, and white tip sharks (bottom right) are plentiful in most parts of the Maldives.

This trip was one of the most amazing trips for sharks. Except for the Alimahta (nurse shark

experience), this trip was full of sharks in schools. Imagine diving down to thirty meters (100 feet) and sitting on the edge of a sandy shelf. The school of sharks goes from left to right and back, on and on again as you watch from a safe distance. Safe meaning you are not disturbing the sharks. Safe meaning you can safely sit there, hooked onto a rocky ledge, not finning, barely moving, just watching the sharks. Pretty cool.

Sometimes there is a lot, a whole lot of current pushing into the reef. The powerful currents attract the fish, which then attract the sharks. It takes some experience and several tries with help from the dive guides before you get good at the channel shark dives.

Once in a while, like this dive trip, we hit some mild current shark schools. Rather than fight a current, we could relax and take terrible videos or blurry photos of the sharks. It's a game of how far you can creep up to the sharks before they start disappearing. If you are the one that scares them off, bad on you. Shame





THE WATHE FISH

1

ANIMAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS CARPE TRIP

Wathe is a friend and dive safari guide on the Carpe Diem. He is known for his ability to find the macros - the small stuff. When he knows his group is looking for macro, he rarely fins. He has an uncanny talent for finding nudies. Wathe even dragged me away from the night Manta dive because he found a huge, black flatworm. He knew I'd appreciate it. After every dive, I simply hand over my phone to Wathe for Airdrop.



SCORPION LEAF FISH DOUBLE FEATURE

2

Just imagine your attention dragged away from no less than eight, huge reef manta rays! What could possibly one-up mantas? How about two scorpion leaf fish, exactly the same, yet two different sizes.

Leaf scorpions are related to frog fish. See their little hands? They walk. I think I even saw the larger one put his little finger to his mouth and say "Mini me! Mini me. We don't eat the kitty!"

Of course, Wathe is the one that found these two while thirty fun divers were oohing and aahing at the Manta Rays.

This trip just set the diving creature bucket list at an ultimate high. From the larger pelagic to the smallest macros, I am totally spoiled.

I was witness to the largest fish in the world displaying a vertical plankton feed right in front of my eyes. In contrast, I captured cleaner shrimp

feeling their way across a diver's fingers. Those shrimp, and the sexy anemone shrimp measure in at millimeters in length. Imagine that.

Sometimes, as I write about these experiences, I am at a loss of words. Words simply cannot diligently describe such experiences.

SPOILED FOR LIFE. WHAT'S NEXT? WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?



THE MANTA RAY LIGHTED RUNWAY

3

Night time. In a lagoon known for manta ray sightings. The ship crew set up a flood light on the stern dive platform of the 30m Carpe Diem. Once a manta arrives to feast on the gathering plankton, the guides descend to 12m (36ft) and place flashlights in the sand. It creates a kind of lighted landing strip. No less than five mantas took turns gliding over the lights. I sat at the end of the runway to capture them on film. Look at the five rows of filters in this massive manta's jaws. As the last manta came within inches of my camera (and hair on my head), it did a barrel roll and reversed direction to feed on the gathering plankton again. Amazing.

Have you ever seen a hunting octopus? They usually come out at night because they are nocturnal hunters. It's not easy to see them during the day because they are hiding from larger predators.

Octopus are one of the most intelligent and camouflaged life forms in the ocean. This trip was special for me because the octopi we saw provided me with a show of how octopi transform their skin in both color and texture - instantly. I've seen them change colors many times. This time, I paid more attention to their skin texture morphing.



MARVEL MOVIES - STARRING DOCTOR OCTOPUS

4

Sharks in the Maldives tend to be small in comparison to other sharks I've come into contact with around the world. However, it's been fifteen years since I have seen schools of over 15 sharks. In Honduras, my family witnessed a shark feed of seventeen sharks. That was amazing! This trip brought sightings of between 30 and 40 sharks in very light currents. Sometimes we would sit in the middle of the channel, hooked to the reef surrounded by a couple hundred small barracuda while we watched sharks schooling in the blue ocean currents. Every once in a while a 1-4 ft shark would wander directly above or between divers.

SCHOOLS OF FISH ARE COMMON IN THE MALDIVES. WHERE ELSE? I TRULY DON'T KNOW.

Translated into German - naked snails. Behold, the life form I am always in search of underwater, the nudie branch. The last word has a hard "k" sound, as in bake, instead of a soft "ch", as in ranch. "Nudies" are plentiful yet difficult to find. Christmas day was a bountiful day of nudies. Every couple of minutes on our second dive, Maate would point to another nudie of a different color or kind. This was one of the most decorated Christmas dives I have ever witnessed. Google them. Once you start finding nudies, it is very easy to fall in love with them and become addicted to finding more, finding new varieties you haven't seen before.



REEF, WHITE TIP, & BLACK TIP SHARKS

5

Matt and Stacy, when you read this, do you remember diving in Panama? We saw maybe four fish! I distinctly remember that. Why? Because even if I just see parrot fish or squirrel fish in schools, I am delighted by the numbers.

For me, it's not always about the fish kind. Nope. I am

perfectly happy seeing any kind of fish in a large school.

Snappers, fusiliers, reef fish, tangs, banner fish, barracuda, and many more fish are seen in plentiful schools here.

The Maldives is truly a special place on earth, where schools can be seen thriving.



NAKT SCHNECKEN



CARPE DIEM

18th December 2021 to 28th December 2021

Mr. Greg Lemoine

	DIVE SITE	DATE	DEPTH meters/ft	TIME minutes	ATOLL
	1	Kurumba faru	19-12-21	21.5	52
2	Kuda giri wreck	19-12-21	30	52	South Male'
3	Alimatha faru	19-12-21	20	49	Vaavu Atoll
4	Dhevana kandu	20-12-21	27	55	Vaavu Atoll
5	Miyaru kandu	20-12-21	30	47	Vaavu Atoll
6	Five rock	20-12-21	25.7	48	South Ari Atoll
7	Kudarah thila	21-12-21	24	55	South Ari Atoll
8	Hukuelhi beyru	21-12-21	19	56	South Ari Atoll
9	Rangali madivaru	21-12-21	25	60	South Ari Atoll
10	Dhihga thila	22-12-21	23	65	South Ari Atoll
11	Maavar rock	22-12-21	20	60	South Ari Atoll
12	Maavaru rock	22-12-21	24	60	South Ari Atoll
13	Fesdhoo night	22-12-21	11	50	North Ari Atoll
14	Maayaa Thila	23-12-21	26	65	North Ari Atoll
15	Bathala Thila	23-12-21	19	62	North Ari Atoll
16	Kuramathi Kandu	23-12-21	30	40	North Ari Atoll
17	Rasdhoo Madivaru	24-12-21	20	68	North Ari Atoll
18	Muthaafushi Thila	24-12-21	26	56	Baa Atoll
19	Kaka Thila	24-12-21	22	48	Baa Atoll
20	Dharavandhoo Thila	25-12-21	27.9	57	Baa Atoll
21	Yellow Wall	25-12-21	23	59	Baa Atoll
22	Kottafaru Wall	25-12-21	23	57	Raa Atoll
23	Nemo City	26-12-21	22	58	Raa Atoll
24	Seven Block	26-12-21	23	58	Raa Atoll
25	Fenfushi Giri	26-12-21	21	62	Raa Atoll
26	Undhoodhoo Faru	26-12-21	20	45	Baa Atoll
27	Dhonfanu Thila	27-12-21	27	55	Baa Atoll

Dive Guide: MUNKO, WATHEY , SPADA , ALLATEY



ALLATEY
29 F 125

359 037
SPADA



MUMBAI (BOMBAY)
PUNE

NAGPUR
HYDERABAD

BANGALORE

Coimbatore

CHENNAI (MA)
Salem

Cochin

Madurai

Trivandrum
C. Comorin

KOLAMBA

Kandy

Galle
Dondra Head

Male

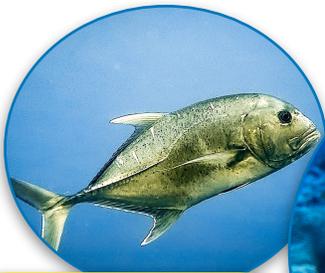
MALDIVES

ONLY 16 GUESTS THIS TRIP

INSTEAD OF THE MAX OF 20

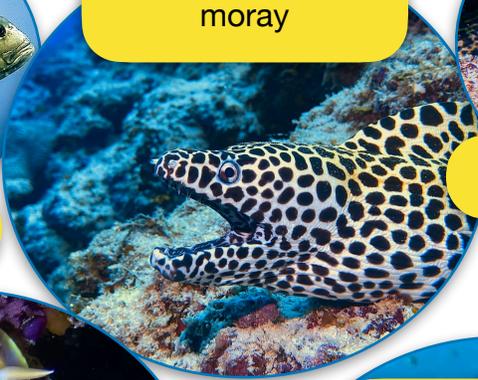
	Tina	Germany	
	Marcus		Germany
		Australia	Jennifer
	John		
	USA	Chiara	
	USA		Marie ("Mother")
		USA	Edward
	Netherlands		Dirk
	Jeff	USA	
	Thomas		UK - Scotland
		UK - Scotland	Joyce
	Victoria		UK
	UK	Damon	
	Ladonna		USA
		Lily	Germany
	Me		USA/the Island

Marine Life and Fishes of the Maldives



TUNA

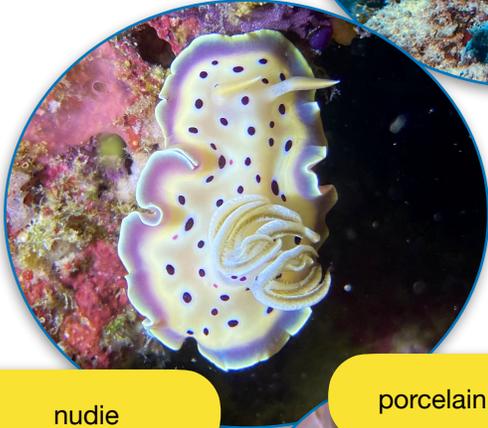
Honeycombe moray



moray



sole



nudie

starfish



anemone fish



cuttle fish



porcelain crab



Manta ray

starfish



nudie



scorpion leaf fish



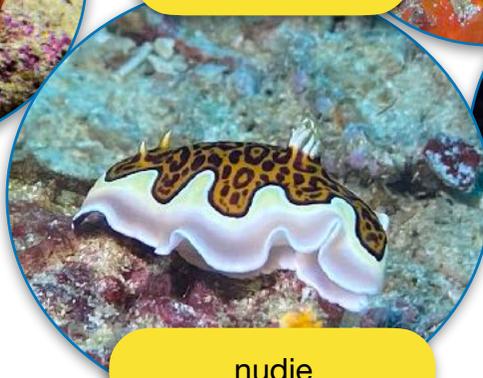
fire gobies



Manta ray



Manta ray



nudie



nudie



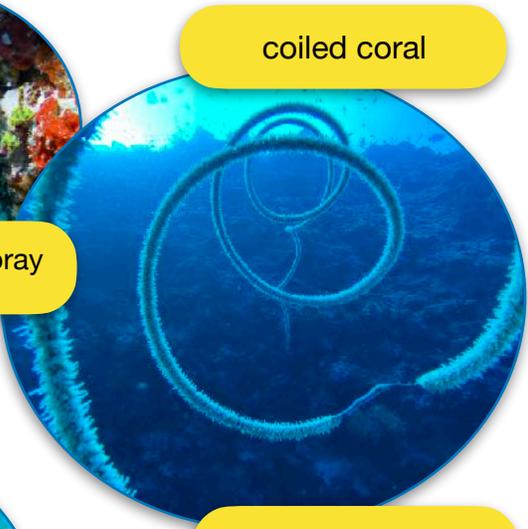
Hermit Crab



Tina Sponge



Yellowmargin moray



coiled coral



grouper



starfish



random shrimp



Marcus blennie



Tiger Mantis Shrimp



nudie



anemie



nudie



fire gobies



Manta ray



Spotted Butterflyfish



Yellow Mask Angelfish



White Tip Reef Shark



teenaged oriental sweetlips



ST.SOMETIMES SINCE 2001

**YOU WANT
MORE?**

Website:

www.stsomewhere.online

If you are that bored...go ahead.
You can see videos, read more
issues, join me on my journeys.