

INDIAN OCEAN AND RED SEA LIVEBOARDS

AUSTRALIA

Kimberley Escape, November 2005, Michael Joest (mijoe@arcor.de), Kehl, Germany. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 30 to 150 Feet. Water: 27 Celsius, calm. Three small atoll islands 170 sea miles off Broome, West Australia. These are Clerke, Imperieuse and Mermaid, the Rowley Shoals, which we cruised around on board of the Kimberley Escape. Healthy reefs, lots of fish life like on the Maldives many years ago. Untouched by El Niño or diver crowds. A good mixture of hard and soft coral, some walls pinkish or yellow with an abundance of them. Often drift dives in more or less strong current, mostly wall dives, some coral garden, bommies, crevices, gutters, swim throughs some caves. Vis can be everything between 30 to 150 feet, water temp. 27 degrees Celsius. Highlights : Fusiliers, hundreds dancing a ballet to a music you can't hear, changing directions all together to some unseen signal. A bunch of sailfish snapper, a beautiful painted fish, on a strong current channel drift dive. In 45 m a dark shadow turned out to be my first sunfish on cleaning station, got close, an exhilarating experience. On a blue water dive down to 30 m with plastic drinking bottles to attract sharks with by squeezing them, a noise which makes them curious. Sure enough a 3 m tiger shark came close circled us but something scared him away soon. The other group had 3 hammers. One dive site, Cod Hole, you find huge potato cods — groupers 1.5 – 2 m coming close to touch, must be used to divers feeding them. With the Rowleys, the

distance and the costs will keep it a seldom-visited place and surely will not turn it into a diver's nightmare with too many folk coming. The boat is good but still not up to liveboard standards. Only 3 share heads and showers, don't expect towels after each dive or made beds. Dive platform is great giving easy entry and exit. I would have liked to see a bit more space for everything. Meals are superb and certainly meet live aboard standards. Next year they hope to introduce a bigger boat and are thinking of longer trips to the Rowleys and some northern islands.

INDONESIA

Adventure Komodo, Roberta Simon-ton, Denver, CO. Experience: 500+ dives. I have 500+ dives, most on live-boards. We have been on the Adventure Komodo with Larry Smith twice. This trip was to dive the Banda Sea, which was calm and choppy at times. Though visibility varied every dive allowed us to see and photograph to our hearts content. The amazing creature and fish life increases with each dive. Larry Smith knows this area better than anyone. With his guidance I saw a bobbit worm, Pegasidae slender sea moth, the picturesque dragonet and Mandarinfish dragonet next to each other and while enjoying the dragonets along comes a wonderpus to entertain us. The list goes on, pipefish of every variety, flatheads, cuttlefish, squid, pigmy seahorses, frogfish, lionfish and scorpionfish. A large aggregation of filamented flasher wrasses entertained us a dusk one evening. Bumblebee shrimp, Randall shrimp, gorgonian shrimp, and beautiful anemone shrimp were abundant. There were flagtail blunquillo, red spotted blennies, flashlight fish,