

Flotsam & Jetsam

Travel Warning

Dive wholesalers are putting on hold booking for the live-aboard *Cehili* in Indonesia. The vessel is evidently leased by its owner in Norway to a company in Singapore, which in turn leases it to a company in Indonesia, which in turn leases it to Undersea Discovery in Australia, which has been marketing the boat. Details are sketchy, but rumor is that the boat is on its way to Singapore and may or may not continue service in the diving arena. I hope they will manage to keep the boat in the Banda Sea; it's a sea worth diving. I've heard that the diving on the boat's northern run (out of its Manado base) is not as good as the Banda Sea trip because of damage from dynamite fishing.

I've also heard that the *Spirit of Borneo* might be moving into the Banda Sea (See & Sea, 800-348-9778). Another boat, the 120-foot *Pendito*, now cruises the Bandas but caters mainly to a European market. That means two dives a day — go deep, pop up, do it again, and the day's diving is over. However, it's possible to book the whole boat if you can get 15 or 16 divers together. I've never

been diving on the *Pendito*, but I have been aboard. Built by the present captain, she has a rustic, Indonesian flavor. You can get information on the *Pendito* from Maluku Adventures (800-5-66-2585).

Coral Cornucopia

All divers know what coral is good for — to dive on. It does have a few other, more obscure uses. Because coral reefs are exposed to higher doses of solar ultraviolet than most other living creatures, marine scientists have isolated, synthesized, and patented the chemical that protects the coral — its sun block. It will be used in sunscreens and cosmetics.

Coral is also used as a bone substitute in reconstructive surgery. Its porosity allows adjacent living bone to interweave new blood vessels and bone tissue into the coral maze, creating a strong bond. One coral head weighing 150 to 200 pounds will provide for hundreds of transplants. Still, I hope they are selective about where they harvest the coral.

A Six-Pack of Hurricanes

The Caribbean's hurricane season begins this month. Last season gave us eight named storms and four hurricanes. This year, hurricane experts are predicting a close-to-average season with 10 named storms, six of them hurricanes, and two of those intense. Predictions are based on such factors as rainfall in Africa and El Niño's ocean-warming effect in the eastern Pacific.

Letters to the Editor

We always appreciate your opinions, suggestions, alerts, recommendations, reports, and even criticisms.

In Depth
P.O. Box 90215

In Depth

In Depth is the consumer newsletter for sport divers that reviews scuba destinations and equipment. We accept no advertising.

In Depth (ISSN 0895-2302, USPS 001-198) is published monthly, with the December and January issues combined, by Insightful Newsletters Corp., 175 Great Neck Road, Suite 307, Great Neck, NY 11021. Second-class postage paid at Great Neck, NY, and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *In Depth*, P.O. Box 831806, Richardson, TX 75083. Copyright ©1994 Insightful Newsletters Corp.

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