

TRADESHOW-BACK TO SCHOOL- FLETCH AND BEN- TRACY AND TONY- MARK, LISA AND STEVE-HOMESTRETCH- HEADSTART-WINTER FLU-PLAYDAYS-DIVERMASTER STUDENTS' VIEWS!

Hi, Everyone,

And what a week it was! As we were packing and loading the umpteenth piece of luggage, Viso suggested we just get a crane and take the whole house. It took 3 trips to get us and all our luggage to Mbunikalo, where, all in new blue Solomon Dive Adventure shirts, a very excited and professional looking group boarded Express Pelican for the 6 hour trip to Honiara and the Solomon Islands 30 Year Independence celebration and National Trade Show. Protectively loaded with meclizine, I was, nonetheless grateful for a lull in our stormy winter seas and a reasonably smooth trip.

Geoff Allen (Coastwatchers Dive Shop in Honiara) and his divemaster, Peter Tedi, who immediately became a part of our team, and our savior and sponsor, Barney Sivoro (Director of Tourism) met us at the ship, and loaded us into various vehicles for the brief trip to Mia Rimon's perfect haven for aspiring divemasters. We were up and at 'em at the crack of dawn, and off to the Trade show Grounds. I have never seen Honiara so clean nor so festive. An incredible effort went into cleanup and decoration, and the blue, green, yellow and white Solomon Island colors waved cheerfully all along our route. In a couple of hours, our booth was up and ready to go, and the guys were greeting the first of hundreds, answering questions, and demonstrating use of the gear.

The Trade show was HUGE- I never did get to see it all. It was tastefully divided into "villages" of bamboo "huts". We were, of course, in the Tourism village. Each village, or group of villages, had it's own center stage; the main stage was set in a huge field. Entertainment was constant, as groups of dancers from all over the country rotated the various stages, and the country's musical groups provided a festive beat.

Thursday was Dive Operator's Day on our stage- and I had tears of pride as my group took the stage, with Nate' at the mike doing a fantastic explanation (in pidgin) of SCUBA equipment and how it works, while the others demonstrated to Nate's narration. A huge audience was glued to his every word. On Friday a.m., the streets were lined to watch a colorful and vocal parade with some very creative floats. I almost missed our gang showing off on the Tourism float, as it was actually on time!!

We arranged our schedules so everyone got one day and one half day off- I spent mine racing around getting what business done that I could, including the paperwork for renewal of my residence and labor permits. I was privileged to meet permanent secretary for the Ministry of Tourism, Luke Eta, who approved the appropriation for our trip, and to thank him heartily. He assured us of their full support for our project. We even snuck in an afternoon dive on Boneghi One- one of the many wrecks that lie off the coast of Guadalcanal, courtesy of Geoff and Peter. We had great fun photographing ourselves on the wreck and all the new species we discovered. Paul Martin hosted the guys at a farewell barbecue and night dive on Sat. night, while I spent a lovely evening catching up with friends Val Stanley and Allan Menep (captain on Spirit of Solomons).

All too soon we were loading our increased luggage back onto Pelican for the trip home. It

was a tearful farewell, as we had all made new, close friends and shared a growing, bonding experience. Our unending thanks to Barney Sivoro and Luke Eta for making our trip possible, to Mia Rimon for the generous use of her home, and to Geoff Allen, Peter Tedi, and Paul Martin for their cheerful help and all the transportation, the diving, and the barbecue. You all made our week, and we look forward to returning the hospitality.

Two days of "re-grouping" and we were back to school and running charters. Intros Ben Fletcher and Tracy Provest successfully tested my class's teaching skills, and proceeded to enjoy not one, but 2 cuttlefish and a tiny signal goby on their first dive; Ben and brother Michael squeezed in a Toana dive between surfing and fishing. Tracy and snorkeler husband Tony spent a lovely afternoon at Toana Tables, with beginner Tracy doing an 80 minute dive- WOW! A radio call from Ropiko across the bay, and off we went to enjoy a day of diving at Toana and Male Male magic with Medical students Lisa Squires, Mark Trembeth and Steve Foster, finishing up a short Solomon Island internship with a bit of play. Lisa was ecstatic to fulfill a life-list dream with a cooperative cuttlefish.

And there was dancing and singing and cheering as we finally finished the 9 exams for the divemaster course. I think I was cheering the loudest. Somewhere between 10 and 15 dives, mostly teaching, remain to be completed, and we will have the first 5 Divemaster graduates of Solomon Dive Adventures Scuba School. We have been, believe it or not, almost 2 years in training and learning. I don't think my guys realize how far they have come since that first day, and the huge changes in them, but I do. There will be one huge party when they are officially Divemasters.

And school holidays are over, and our 3rd term of our Headstart Program is well underway; our classes over here at the house are accompanied by children's songs, building blocks clacking, and the occasional wail of an unhappy youngster. Enrollment has been hampered by the yearly invasion of the latest flu bug. July in Peava reminds me of February in Kona. It seems that everyone is either coming down with, suffering from, or getting over of this particularly nasty strain, characterized by repeated high fevers and coughs. . I've had lines for medicines, and had to rush a case over to the clinic yesterday, as Violet was running out. Beka Beka HS is shut down, so many students are sick. And very sadly, a 6 yr. old boy from Biche died last night. All is quiet here today, with many attending the funeral.

A brilliant sunny morning on Friday lured us to load Kicha with gear and food and head out for a "Kicha fix". The surf was up, the vis was down, and the dive was magnificent. Finning towards the point, things were ominously quiet, and I was thinking-"oh, no, we're going to get skunked"! Then we hit the point- and it was ALL there- endless walls of swirling jacks,snappers, runners, barracuda, tuna, mackeral, packs of zooming sharks and set off by hundreds of golden damsels for color.

We all hung until our computers' last possible seconds, and ascended the wall amid more and more schools of blue and gold fusiliers dashing dizzily up and down the drop. the shallows provided even more jacks and cudas, the bat fish school in the cleaning station, and an endless parade of brightly colored butterflies, angels and anthias. A lazy lunch, a second dive at Toana Ledges, where Bryan found a new white leaf fish, while the boat crew caught a huge bonito for dinner, and it was a replete, recharged and happy crew that headed home for clean-up and rehashing of the new memories.

Yesterday morning, the first mirror flat water day in months proved too much temptation, and

another picnic was hastily packed and off we went to Ukala Via for the first time in 4 months to immerse ourselves in endless walls of the blue and yellow fusiliers, snappers, surgeons, maori wrasses, humphead parrots. It was good to be back. Male Male Sandfall is proving a fascinating 2nd dive, busy with flasher wrasses, juveniles of all sorts on the rubble sandfalls. The shallows boast endless hard coral beds of dizzying varieties, each sheltering its own "specialties" of fish and critters.

And I want to share with you the words of 2 of my divers in answer to Vanessa Smith's (was here in June doing research on the effects of SCUBA businesses on villagers) posed questions. I wish you could see them struggling to express their feelings in English. I hope you enjoy as much as I do.

How do you feel about U/W environment?

How has diving changed how you feel about W/W reefs and animals?

How do you feel about diving as your new career?

Smoke was coming out of their brains-----! These are unedited!!

by Dellington Bare'.

1. I feel about the U/W environment as a new world, like going to UK, USA, or somewhere new. Using SCUBA diving equipment is a privilege cos its an introduce thing to our culture (native).

2. For almost 20 yrs ago we watched people all over the world come diving and don't know what they were for and thank God, somewhere 2006 we're introduced to the underwater by Lisa Choquette and we know that we're the fewiest, very rich, unpolluted, untouched underwater environment in the world. We

know that we're the fewiest to have things that are existing in other places/part of the world and rich of endemic species.

For many year we just don't care about our marine resources and don't know to protect and harvest the environment and its marine life. Since then, we now understand that deep down in our underwater environment we still have the untouched/undisturb underwater world since the creation.

3. I'm very happy about my new career, coz its earns me:

a. job income

b. privilege to see my underwater world (notice the MY!!)

c. to see 80% of unseen fish in my life

d. learn new/introduce things to our culture.

Bryan Palmer (Broom)

1. Underwater environment world is a new world to me and as I know this environment to myself, I want to protect this environment for not damaging the coral, fish and many more things to be protect becous out of this

environment we earn money to support us. So That's why we need to protect our underwater environment and lastly our environment is very beautiful, not like some other palaces.

2. All our reefs and underwaters animals a change. You can touch some of the staff and saw some big fish likely come close to you. and you can see lots of different colourfull corols and many interested things there, not like before. But now they are really change. We need carefully keep this underwater animals and reefs.

3. When I join Solomon Dive Adventure, they teach us how to SCUBA dive and than we go through course then we finish our course. I feel very happy beco diving is my new carreer and I'm very lucky to have this job beco I learn more thinks out of my carreer.

As we prepare for a busy August of charters and finishing ourclass, I leave you all - tempted again by a flat, dazzling sea just outside my window. Have a great month.

Love and hugs,
Lisa

Lisa Choquette
Solomon Dive Adventures
Peava Village-Marovo Lagoon
Solomon Islands
www.solomondiveadventures.com
lisa@solomondiveadventures.com





setting up our stall!



one of many traditional dance groups



a night out at the new Mendana



***Dellington downloading...
Bryan and Ronald "helping"***



fish fall at Kavachi Korner



spadefish (bat fish) being cleaned!