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EXOTIC MADAGASCAR

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SAVING BALI'S MARINE-LIFE



Cruising the Aseanarean Seas on board *SV Infinity*, Indonesia's mystic isle of Bali proves there's more to offer than just a holiday resort.

By Orla Doherty, Managing Director PCRF

BALI

MARINE LIFE

Our **Anambas** Island voyage was a celebration of sunrises, sunsets, water spouts, storm clouds, starry constellations, whales and dolphins. It's been five years since our last visit to Indonesia and now we are returning to these islands because of our commitment with Raffles Marina to further our marine conservation initiatives in Indonesia.

Mystical **Bali** was cloaked in clouds upon approach with Gunung Agung's peak revealed just before sunset. Bali was to be the launch point for the next few months of exploration of the islands, reefs and cultures lying to its east—a gateway to the heart of Indonesia.

Soon we found ourselves at Uluwatu, Bali's temple to the sea. We looked down from the cliffs to the flat calm ocean below and watched sperm whales pass beneath us. Later that night, as the three-day festivities drew to a close, we were held in the magic of Bali's culture with a kaleidoscope of ancient sacrificial traditions, mountains and rice paddies, celebrations on the land and amongst ourselves.

We revisited **Komodo** Island to see its dragons and conducted exploratory dives in the waters. We were instantly lured back into the colourful world of Indonesia's reefs—areas of diverse dense soft and coral coverage, a healthy fish population plus a fabulous cuttlefish display.



Infinity at sea.



Fruits and offerings galore.

Flores Island provided majestic vistas at Kilimotu where three lakes nestle in the craters of its volcanic peaks. They have changed colours over the years and today are jade green, midnight blue and chocolate brown. We heard ancient songs from a troupe of ikat-clad dancers and sat in 300-year-old houses of village chiefs.

After years of planning, we finally arrived in the waters surrounding **Alor** Island, encountering cetaceans that plough the deep channels. This mecca astounded us and we were constantly on *Infinity's* deck to watch the almost endless stream of sperm whales, killer whales, false killer whales, pilot whales, spinner dolphins, Fraser dolphins and bottlenose dolphins.

Our last stop on this incredible Indonesian journey was to the islands of **Banda**, heart of the deep Banda Sea and birthplace of the nutmeg tree. We will spend a month here, studying a fringing reef beneath the slopes of Gunung Api (fire mountain) which was devastated by a violent eruption in 1988. Des Alwi, the King of Banda, has watched its rebirth and growth and will share with us the history of both the reefs and the Bandanese.

"Join the Voyage" of the *SV Infinity*, Raffles Marina's "club at sea" in Nautique and PCRF's homepage, at www.pcrf.org. Together on our mission to conserve and protect the coral reefs and oceans, we can make a difference!



All hands on deck.