

AIM MEMBERS DIVE TRUK LAGOON

By Carol Herrlie

On April 16th a band of 7 hardy AIM divers boarded the SS Thorfinn, a 170ft long ship with a history almost as interesting as the WWII wrecks resting in the depth of Truk Lagoon, for a wonderful week.



Our home for the week



Salon chats and relaxation time



The Bisbee's make eyes at each other... or, Honey? Got a little air to share?

She was the first ever liveaboard dive vessel serving recreational divers. In her early years she had a successful reputation as a whaling vessel and freighter. For a period of time she was known as “The Love Boat” sailing the high tropical seas. That is another story. Truk Lagoon was always said to be “one of those must see places”. I wasn’t particularly driven by diving wrecks however the idea of something underwater for over 60 years, full of the history of a less than gentle past, and now serving as a natural reef for lots of critters was appealing. How better to do this than on a vintage vessel, built in the 1940’s. My expectations were far exceeded. The history, the technical part of diving these 300+ foot long vessels with lots of up and down stairs, cargo holes full of bombs, planes, tanks and bottles and the fact that most were covered in part by beautiful marine life was awesome. At times it was challenging to focus on the structure of the ships, dive in and out of engine rooms, crew quarters, machine shops and kitchens plus see all the marine life all at once. Plus have the local guides show their own personal stash of artifacts.



Telegraph on deck



Colorful soft corals



Bow gun poised, ready and now deeply encrusted.

Diving depths that exceeded my prior diving profiles made me at first hesitant. Safety still No.1 !! I prefer diving depths of 40-60 feet because most of the time anything below that is not any better. Here the attractions were often at deeper depths: 120-150 feet common, yet many of the artifacts and structures to be explored could be found between 60-90 feet. Safety stops could be comfortably managed on a hang-line or on a “goal post” structures of some of the ships as if they were reaching for the surface of the lagoon. Yet, silent they rest serving as homes to many marine animals and a exploratory destination for divers. I think all of our apprehensions for the depths were quickly tempered by the safe deco guidelines.

Diving was easy from the new fast skiffs. Built for 8 divers, yet accommodated 11 pretty easy, these skiffs would take us to a site, provide a safe down line and a spare tank hanging for safety. After the dives a fresh water rinse was refreshing. A 5-10 min ride and we were back to the boat for a hot tub and snacks.



1 of 2 fast skiffs



Stairways topside lead divers now.



Pink and white jelly fish were plentiful



At Shark Reef we were encircled by over a dozen grey reef, white tips and black tip sharks.



Some ships ended side down and perfect for hard corals, small reef fish and octopus.



Props with their brass shining through the sponges and the hard and soft corals were amazing...



Chuck strikes a pose taking a photo of.....this pastel scorpion fish who calls the Gosei Maru home.

This is just a small sharing of this great trip. I hope the group will be able to show more later.. CarolBand of 7 AIM Members: Carol, Paul & Sandy Bisbee, Bill Windt & Barbara Bloom, Karen Manly, Pam Wade.....