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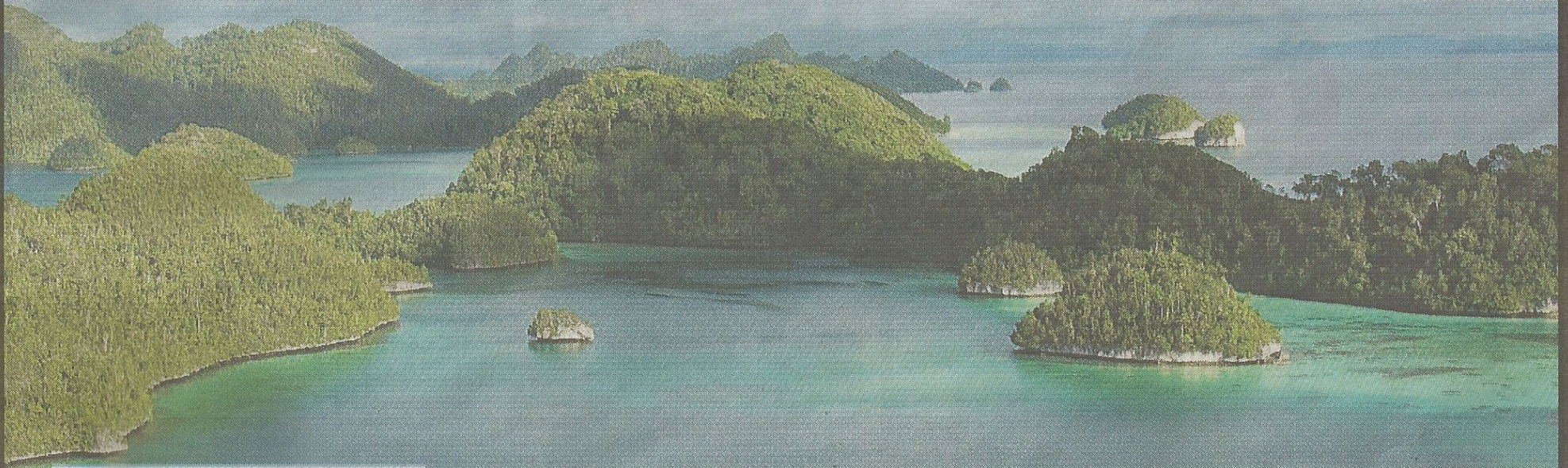
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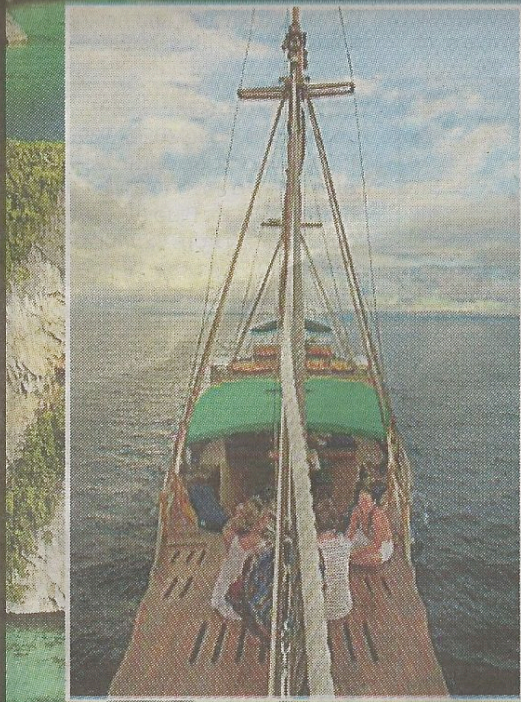
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Travel

Edited by Jane Memmler

Navigating Indonesia





CHRIS CALDICOTT sets sail on a traditional schooner for a voyage across tropical waters



ANCHORS AWAY: Tiger Blue in its paradise setting. Below, creatures of the deep

DRIFTING off to sleep on the deck of Tiger Blue is one of those perfect moments.

I love the soothing sensation of the boat swaying gently on the waves, the sound of the rigging quietly clinking on the masts in the breeze, and looking up at the canopy of stars glittering in the balmy tropical night.

Tiger Blue is a twin-masted, broad-hulled traditional schooner typical of the crafts that have plied the briny between Indonesia's archipelagos for centuries, except it has been fitted with luxury cabins and sun decks.

Cruising around the ports of Komodo, Sumba, the Banda Sea and Papua, I join her in Sorong (the Indonesian side of Papua New Guinea) to sail to the remote islands of Raja Ampat, one of the utmost places on Earth.

Our group gathered in

Jakarta for the four-hour flight to Sorong where we are met by our captain and dive master Wouter van den Houten, a suntanned Dutchman.

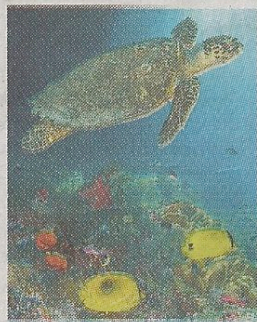
We meet the rest of the crew on board; Lucas, our charming Belgian cook, and seven smiling Indonesian sailors.

Below deck there's a large family cabin that sleeps four, two largish (for a boat) doubles, and a small double-bunk cabin. All have en-suite showers and air conditioning.

Up on deck is a large polished hardwood dining table and several day beds shaded by awning. The indoor

sitting room has a huge plasma screen DVD player and a coffee machine.

Once we set sail the reclining loungers on the upper deck soon become favourite spots.



Over a long lazy lunch of tuna sashimi, gado gado salad (marinated fried tofu, steamed vegetables and a spicy groundnut dressing) and a deliciously aromatic seafood curry, we discuss

with Wouter the options for our voyage ahead.

As there are only two divers among us we elect for a balance of underwater and land-based adventures.

First stop the next morning

is the village of Sawinggrai on Pulau Gam, an island north of Sorong and reputedly a good place to catch a glimpse of the rare Burung Cendrawasih or bird of paradise.

From here we plan to continue north although we can spend as long as we like in any one place or change course at a whim.

As night falls lazy lightning fills the horizon. Wouter tells me it's nothing to worry about as it happens every night; travelling at the speed of light with nothing in its way it could be as far away as Borneo.

Those of us who discover the joy of sleeping on deck that first night did so for the whole trip, waking before dawn to watch the sunrise as we wait for the others to join us for breakfast.

Despite the reputed 50 per

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Travel

celebrity traveller Sandi Toksvig

Comedian, author and broadcaster Sandi Toksvig, 54, divides her time between a houseboat on the River Thames and a house in Kent

Rosalind Miles which makes you rethink history. I also like to catch up on classics I've overlooked.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE HOLIDAY?

I spent my honeymoon in the Lofoten Islands in Norway five years ago. Situated within the Arctic Circle it is one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. If you want to get away from humanity, this is the place.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME ON HOLIDAY?

Reading guidebooks. I love getting out to discover the local culture and visiting obscure places.



WHERE WOULD YOU REVISIT?

The Lofoten Islands. Also Copenhagen where I was born: it has some fabulous museums and the Tivoli Gardens. I also go to Boston regularly to visit friends.

AND YOUR WORST?

I remember as a child being on the Isle of Wight and it pouring with rain. My dad was beside himself.

WHICH GADGET IS ESSENTIAL?

I have an iPad I take everywhere. I can do everything on it from writing or watching movies to playing games and downloading books.

BEST BOOK?

I love factual books such as *The Women's History Of The World* by

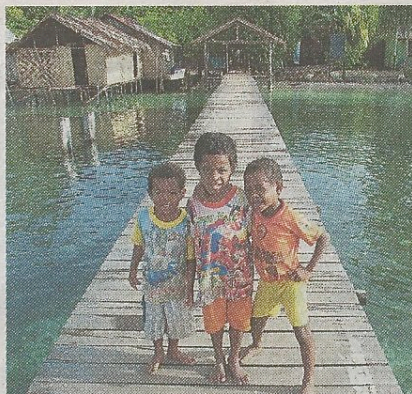
WHERE NEXT?

I've never been to Australia and would love to go there.

● *1001 Things You Should Know with Sandi Toksvig starts Monday, 3.30pm, Channel 4. Her new novel Valentine Grey is published by Virago, £16.99.*

ROZ LEWIS

Sail into a painting



A TASTE OF LOCAL LIFE: Children in the village of Sawinggrai and one of the amazing views seen from Tiger Blue

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

cent chance of sighting a bird of paradise on Pulau Gam we are unlucky, so we abandon our rainforest wilderness trek and return to the village.

Men sit mending nets along the beach while women gather in the yard of a tiny church. The children feed fish from huts on stilts. They are the last people we will see until returning to Sorong in four days' time.

At Arborek we snorkel among shoals of giant manta rays. Lunch is served as we head north and we anchor in a bay surrounded by tropical forest.

The divers head off into the world of the Wobbegong (an aboriginal word meaning shaggy beard) sharks and return with tales of strange bottom-feeding creatures with beards of tentacles around their mouths. They are just in time to see the spectacle of a sperm whale blowing a waterspout as it swims past Tiger Blue.

By dawn the next day everyone is up on deck to

experience one of the highlights of the trip; sailing into the limestone pinnacle mountains. Dotted like dragon's teeth among lagoons it's like sailing into a Chinese scroll painting.

We dock at Pulau Wayag and climb up the almost sheer slope of Mount Pindito, the highest pinnacle. The effort is worth it as we are rewarded with a 360-degree view of one of the most extraordinary, remote and beautiful places on Earth.

At sunset the crew build a fire on the beach and serve us cocktails. We decide it is such

a perfect combination of deserted white sand beaches, turquoise water and colourful marine life that we will use this as a base for the rest of our trip.

One day we sail to the nearby Pai islands and swim among rare Hawksbill turtles. On another we visit a ravine full of birdsong and dense tropical foliage. Inevitably our time is over too soon.

Although the trip was only five days I feel completely renewed by the experience of getting so far away from it all and having a brief brush with paradise.



THE KNOWLEDGE

Ampersand Travel (0207 289 6100/www.ampersandtravel.com) offers a seven-night charter on Tiger Blue (www.tigerblue.info) from £2,740pp (10 sharing), full board. Price includes return flights from Heathrow to Jakarta, internal flights to Sorong, excursions, diving and activities.

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