

Bigfin reef squid are frequent night time visitors at Beangabang Bay, Pantar Island
莱氏拟乌贼是 Pantar 岛 Beangabang Bay 夜间的常客

THE UNFORGETTABLE ISLANDS

难忘群岛



In 1785, English poet William Cowper penned the phrase “Variety’s the very spice of life, That gives it all its flavour.” Spices, quite literally, put many Indonesian islands on the map when European spice traders reached them in the 16th century. Now, savvy scuba divers are the modern day explorers who know there’s no better spice than the variety of marine life and adventures found along Indonesia’s Forgotten Islands.

1785年，英国诗人William Cowper写下诗句“变化是生活的香料，为它增添了无限风味”。16世纪，由于欧洲香料商的造访，印尼许多岛屿以（字面意义的）香料闻名于世。如今，聪慧的潜水员们成为现代探索者，他们明白，没有哪种香料能比印尼遗忘群岛（Forgotten Islands）沿线的生物多样性与冒险活动“更有风味”。

Text & Photo | Scott Johnson and Lauren Johnson





A friendly villager diving for fish at Pura Island's, Clown Fish Valley
一名友善的村民正在屏气捕鱼，摄于 Pura 岛的小丑鱼谷

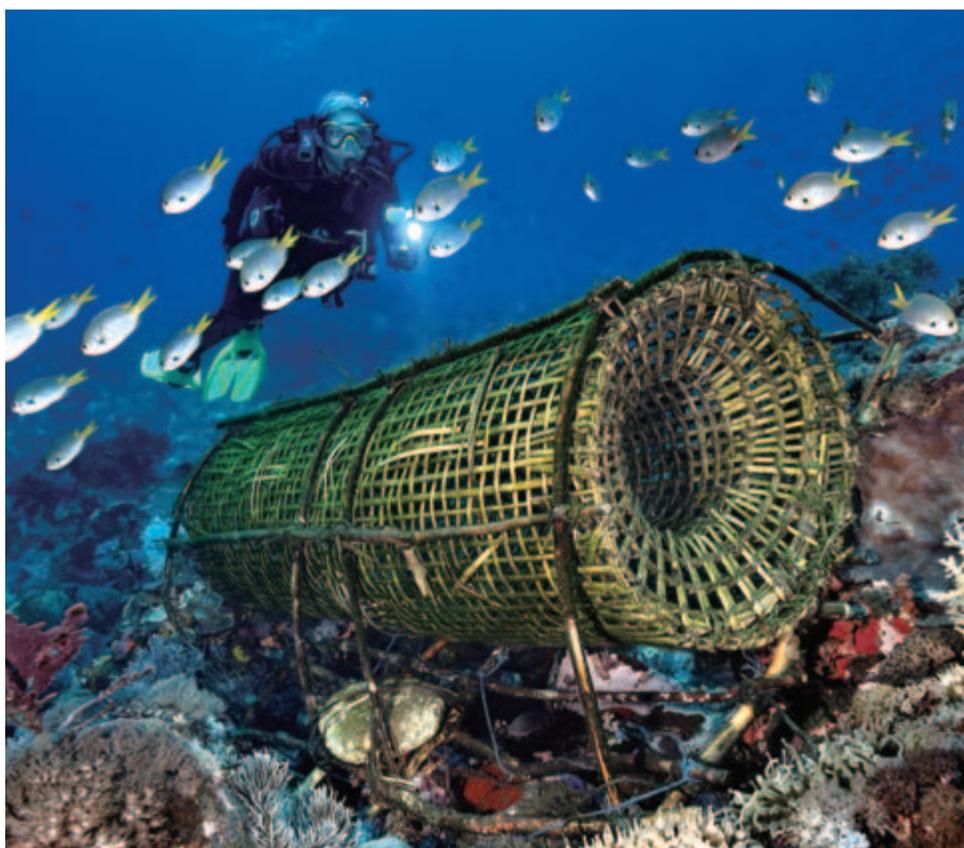
The Republic of Indonesia, the fourth largest country in the world, comprises more than 17,500 islands in Southeast Asia. A lonely and loosely defined collection of 1,000+ islands and islets that arc 1,000 kilometers between the Indonesian provinces of East Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Timur) in the Lesser Sunda Islands to southern Maluku (Moluccas) in the Barat Daya, Leti, Sermata, Babar, Tanimbar, Aru and Kai Islands are called the Forgotten Islands. Since less than 1% of all Indonesians live among these archipelagos and only a handful of tourists arrive in any given year, relatively few people have known, much less had the chance to forget, about the Forgotten Islands. Perhaps a collective name change might be in order.

This entire area is encircled by the Indonesian Throughflow (ITF), which is a current that moves prodigious volumes of warmer, less saline Pacific Ocean water in the northeast to the Indian Ocean in the southwest. The ITF is so massive that it impacts global weather patterns and bathes the Forgotten Islands with nutrients and larvae from distant spawning grounds. This continuous infusion of food and species has created one of the most biodiverse and dynamic marine habitats in the world. More than 2,000 species of fish, 260 species of coral and 16 species of mammals, including whales, dolphin and dugongs, are found here.

One of many local fish traps at Clown Fish Valley, Pura Island
当地许多捕鱼装置之一，摄于 Pura 岛的小丑鱼谷

印度尼西亚共和国为世界上第四大国，囊括东南亚17500多座岛屿。在印尼小巽他群岛东努沙登加拉省和西南群岛的南马鲁古群岛（摩鹿加群岛）之间，Leti、Sermata、Babar、Tanimbar、Aru 和卡伊群岛围成的弧形区，共有一千多座大大小小的岛屿星罗棋布，绵延1000公里，这便是遗忘群岛。居住在此的印尼人口还不到1%，而且除了特定年份的些许散客，游客也十分罕见，所以几乎没有人知道这里，也就谈不上忘记。或许遗忘群岛整体更名会比较恰当。

遗忘群岛外围是印尼贯通流（ITF）。它将大片温度较高、盐分较低的太平洋海水从东北向西南注入印度洋。由于规模极大，它甚至可以影响全球气候模式，同时它还从遥远的产卵地为遗忘群岛带来大量营养物质和生物幼体。连续不断的食物和物种输送，让该群岛成为世界上生物种类最多、栖息环境最有活力的地区之一。已探明的生物种类有：2000多种鱼类，260种珊瑚和16种哺乳动物，包括鲸鱼、海豚和儒艮。





Exquisite strands of soft coral adorn Komba Island's Komba Korner
精致的软珊瑚装饰着 Komba 岛的 Komba Korner



*A yawning weedy Rhinopias at Mucky Mosque, Alor Island
张嘴的前鳍吻鲈，摄于阿洛岛 Mucky Mosque*

Off the Beaten Path

The Forgotten Islands are, by any reasonable standard, remote. Getting to one island can be challenging. Forget about trying to hop across the disparate province locations unless you have an endless amount of time, money and patience. Liveboards are really the only game in town when it comes to sampling the diving over such distances. And, even then, a 10 to 12 night itinerary merely provides a taste of the diving delights awaiting eager guests.

Lauren Johnson (my wife and colleague) and I first learned about the Forgotten Islands during a Komodo National Park charter. The Komodo voyage was such pleasure

that I asked Michel Hendrix, the Indo Aggressor's cruise director, about other Indo Aggressor destinations. Hendrix said, "Have you heard about the Forgotten Islands?" And, that was that. We were sold.

Hendrix did share his two biggest challenges with a typical Forgotten Islands charter were: 1. A guest asking when he or she will get to see a Komodo dragon (you need to go to Komodo or a zoo to see one). 2. The site preferences between photographers and non-photographers (shooters often prefer fewer sites in order to spend more time with specific subjects). Lauren and I decided to bring a group of photographers with us for the added site flexibility.



远离尘嚣

无论从哪种标准看，遗忘群岛都无疑是偏僻的。去其中任何一座岛都是极大的挑战，更别妄图横贯不同的区域，除非你有花不完的时间、金钱和耐心。如此长距离的潜水，也唯有船宿可行。即便10到12晚的行程只能够领略其一二，也已经足以让翘首期盼的乘客们兴高采烈了。

我和Lauren Johnson（我妻子兼同事）是某次在科莫多国家公园航行时第一次听说遗忘群岛的。那次旅程非常愉快，于是我便问Michel Hendrix——Indo Aggressor的巡游总监，这艘船是否还有别的目的地。他回答：“你听说过遗忘群岛吗？”这就是我第一次听说，然后打定主意要来。

Hendrix还讲到遗忘群岛航程中的两大误区：1，有位乘客问什么时候能看到科莫多龙（你应该去科莫多或动物园看）；2，这片区域更适合摄影师还是非摄影师。（摄影师通常偏爱潜点较少的地方，这样可以花更多时间在特定的拍摄对象上。）我和Lauren决定带一组摄影师同往，潜点多的时候便于灵活调配。

An orangutan crab perched atop bubble coral at Babylon in the Alor/Pantar Strait
红毛猩猩蟹呆在气泡珊瑚上，摄于 Alor/Pantar 海峡的 Babylon



An ornate ghost pipefish sheltering near the Wai_Terang_Wreck off Flores Island
弗洛勒斯岛 Wai_Terang_Wreck 附近一只躲藏的幻影鬼龙



Appearances Can Be Deceiving

Fast forward a year and we are reunited with Hendrix at our departure city of Maumere, Flores. The three of us catch-up a bit and then discuss the prevailing conditions at the various potential sites. A quick huddle with the other guests and our initial itinerary is set.

Smoking volcanoes are the theme for two of the “not been there and not done that before” days. The Gunung Lewotolo (Ile Api) volcano on Lembata (Kawula and

Komba'a Batu Tara volcano create surreal backdrops between dives. The visibility over black sand, water-hardened lava and radiant soft corals at Komba Korner is spectacular. Even better, Batu Tara provides a truly breathtaking dinner setting as red molten lava oozes from the crater and flows down to the sea while Indo Aggressor guests enjoy an outdoor, candlelight dinner under twinkling stars. I bank about 10 years worth of romantic dinners in a single night!



When we arrive at Hot Property in Beangabang Bay, which is located on the southeast coast of Pantar, the second largest island in the Alor Archipelago, Hendrix pulls me aside and says, “You’re going to love this place”. And, he is right. At first glance, the nondescript slope of black sand and rubble appears unappealing and potentially very boring. In reality, Beangabang Bay is the epitome of the “appearances can be deceiving” proverb. What is usually described as a critter or muck dive, this site is rife with unusual creatures essentially hiding in plain sight.

Mating mandarinfish with eggs at Alor's Mini Wall
正在交配的麒麟鱼，摄于阿洛岛的 Mini Wall

Over 7 dives, I spot a wild menagerie of animals that includes thorny seahorses, robust ghost pipefish, a coconut octopus dragging a modular home of shells, zebra crabs with eggs riding on fire urchins, juvenile schooling bannerfish hiding among an aggregation of long-spined urchins, painted frogfish, Ambon scorpionfish and Berry’s bobtail squid. The highlight occurs as I photograph a seemingly fearless tiger mantis shrimp. I carefully put my left index finger in the sand to steady myself and notice movement out of the corner of my eye. Looking down, I find a flaring blue-ringed octopus a few inches from my hand. The tiny, poison cephalopod’s rings alternate from bright to pale blue and the texture of its skin morphs from smooth to a mixture of bumps and spikes as it warily watches me.

外表往往具有欺骗性

一年后，我们与Hendrix重聚在出发地——弗洛勒斯岛的毛梅雷。三个人简单叙了旧之后，便讨论起众多岛屿的整体状况。然后，我们和其他乘客迅速拥抱，行程初步确定。

在起初“新鲜又陌生”的两天里，冒烟的火山是我们的主题。拉姆巴塔岛上的勒沃托洛火山、Kawula和Komba的Batu Tara火山为潜水创造了种种超现实的背景。Komba Korner有黑沙、水淬硬化的岩浆和辐射状的软珊瑚，海水能见度非常高。更让人感叹的是，Batu Tara火山口不断有红色的岩浆涌出，流入海中，而我们在闪烁的星光下享受着船上的露天烛光晚餐，此情此景实在蔚为惊艳。这一夜晚宴胜过十年庸常的浪漫！

我们到达Beangabang Bay（位于阿洛群岛第二大岛Pantar岛的东南岸）的Hot Property后，Hendrix将我拉到一旁说，“你会爱上这里

的”。他说的没错。第一眼望去，铺满黑沙和碎石的斜坡毫无吸引人之处，恐怕十分无聊。但实际上，Beangabang Bay精确阐释了“外表往往具有欺骗性”这句谚语。这里可是寻找小生物的漫潜胜地，各种罕见的小生物一览无遗。

七次潜水中，我看到多种不同的海洋生物，包括刺海马、枯叶鬼龙、一只驮着壳居的椰子章鱼、携带卵并骑着火海胆的斑马蟹、长刺海胆群中躲着的马夫鱼幼鱼群、绒冠躄鱼、安汶狭蓑鲉和柏氏四盘耳乌贼。最精彩的是拍摄一只似乎大无畏的虎纹螳螂虾。我小心地用左手食指支着沙地，平衡身体，一边用眼余光观察它的活动。低头又发现一只引人注目的蓝环章鱼，距手只有几英寸。这只有毒的头足类小生物警惕地望着我，身上的圈从亮蓝变成浅蓝，皮肤质地也从光滑变得凹凸不平。

Holy Grails

Alor is yet another rugged volcanic island. Friendly locals wearing hand-carved goggles and no fins buzz us on shallow reefs as they tend to picturesque fish traps or wield rudimentary spear guns for fishing. Visits to other Alor sites yield two hard-to-find Holy Grails of the underwater imaging community: mandarinfish and Rhinopias.

A dusk dive at Mini Wall gives us the chance to document mating mandarinfish. These gorgeous, but shy dragonets are ornately marked, vividly colored, scaleless and relatively small at six centimeters or less in length. Mandarinfish generally remain hidden under coral rubble or within coral heads during the day, but an all-consuming desire to mate washes away their apprehension as the sun begins to set.

Once a female acquiesces to a male's passionate pleas, these normally reclusive creatures rise, side by side, shimmy against one another, the gal releases her eggs, the guy sprays his semen and then they flip their respective tails to scatter the combined offering before returning to the protection of the coral. Mandarinfish may repeat this unique, frenetic dance multiple times. Each new tango boosts the likelihood of offspring, but it also increases the couple's vulnerability to predators. After many frustrating, failed attempts to catch a couple gettin' busy with it, Lauren and I are rewarded with a shot of two ecstatic lovers above a newly-released clutch of eggs.

Mucky Mosque is one of many muckish sites along the northern coast of Alor's Kalabahi (Pearl) Bay and aptly named. We back roll off the tender in front of a mosque and descend to a slope of coral heads, rocks, sand and discarded human items, such as shoes. Natural treasures are bountiful as we are treated to a frenetic school of striped catfish, hunting broadclub cuttlefish, egg-laying bigfin reef squid and two weedy Rhinopias, one red and the other tan, out for an afternoon stroll together. I track the regal specimens through my viewfinder and depress the shutter button as one of them dramatically yawns.

Our time aboard the twin-masted Indo Aggressor passes all too quickly. The Forgotten Islands offered us a tremendous dose of the "spice of life" in the assorted wonders we experienced. It's clear the name of this unique hidden gem of destinations should be changed to the Unforgettable Islands as we will never be able to forget our time here. **EZ**



Getting There 交通

The Indo Aggressor's Forgotten Island charters typically embark from either Maumere, Flores or Saumlaki, Jamdena. The international airport in Denpasar, Bali is the preferred gateway to Flores and the Makassar airport in Southern Sulawesi to Jamdena. Bali and Makassar can be accessed via a number of international hubs, such as Singapore and Jakarta. Garuda, Lion Air and Wings Air are regional carriers.

Indo Aggressor 的遗忘群岛航程通常从弗洛勒斯岛的毛梅雷或央德纳岛的苏姆拉基出发。建议通过巴厘岛的登巴萨国际机场去往弗洛勒斯岛, 或从苏拉威西岛南部的孟加锡机场去往央德纳岛。许多国际枢纽, 比如新加坡和雅加达, 都有航班到达巴厘岛和孟加锡。可选的地方性航空公司有嘉鲁达航空、狮航和翼航。



Departure Tax 离境税

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Visas 签证

Visas are usually valid for only 30 days from date of issue and cost \$25 U.S. per person
从签发之日起, 有效期通常只有 30 天。签证费用每人 25 美元



Language 语言

Bahasa Indonesia is the official language.
官方语言为印度尼西亚语。



Currency 货币

The Indonesian Rupiah.
印度尼西亚盾。



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Liveaboard 船宿

Indo Aggressor - www.aggressor.com

圣杯级生物

阿洛岛是另一座崎岖的火山岛。友好的当地人带着手刻的护目镜，用别致的渔网或挥舞着原始的鱼叉捕鱼，因此浅礁处没有忙碌的渔民干扰。造访阿洛岛的其他潜点则让我收获了两项极其难求的圣杯级水下生物：麒麟鱼和吻鲈。

在Mini Wall的一次夜潜让我们有机会目睹交配中的麒麟鱼。这些外表绚丽但羞怯的鼠科生物表皮装饰华美，色彩鲜艳，无鳞，而且体型相对较小，仅有不足六厘米。麒麟鱼白天通常藏在珊瑚碎片下或珊瑚岬中，但太阳一落山，强烈的交配欲望便冲淡了它们内心的恐惧。

雌性一旦默许了雄性热烈的求爱，这对平时隐蔽的生物就会一起向上游，摇摆摩擦，雌性排出卵子，雄性分泌出精子，然后各自弹尾，在回到珊瑚庇护所之前将爱情的结晶洒落水中。麒麟鱼可能会多次重复这种独特而热

情的舞蹈。每段新的探戈舞都有可能伴随着新生命的降生，但同时增加了交配夫妇被掠食的风险。多次沮丧失败的尝试之后，我和Lauren终于被上天眷顾，拍到一对刚产下一簇卵且情意缱绻的麒麟鱼。

Mucky Mosque是阿洛岛北岸Kalabahi（珍珠）湾沿线众多淤泥区中的一个，名字十分贴切。我们将小船倒划到一座清真寺前，然后下水至一条斜坡，坡上到处是珊瑚岬、岩石、沙子和人类的废弃物，比如鞋子。自然珍宝无比丰富，我们遇到一群横冲乱撞的条纹鳃鱼和两只前鳍吻鲈，分别为红色和褐色，正在午后结伴漫步。我通过取景器追踪着这两只颇具“帝王风采”的家伙，待到其中一只张大嘴打哈欠时迅速按下了快门。

双桅Indo Aggressor上的船宿旅程匆匆而过。我们所经历的各种奇景，是遗忘群岛赠予的大剂量“生活的香料”。但这颗隐匿的明珠显然应该更名为“难忘”群岛，因为我们永远都不会忘记这里的时光。！

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