

Guests Gary and Robin Wright discover the wonders of Wakatobi's reefs

Getting the Drift

By Gary and Robin Wright

PEERING over the side of the boat, we can clearly see what awaits just a few meters below. Five minutes after leaving the jetty at Wakatobi Resort, we are at the site known as Turkey Beach, ready to begin our second dive of the day. Anticipation is running high because the conditions are perfect for a dive plan we've wanted to do for quite some time. Today, we will ride a gentle current from our point of entry all the way back to the resort's jetty. This path will take in a huge swath of reef as we follow a multi-level dive plan that is expected to provide more than 70 minutes of bottom time.



When all is ready, we hit the water, creating a froth of whitewater as our fins make contact. The bubbles clear and our eyes grow wide as we reenter a dream world and leave the complexities of surface life far behind. Gliding weightless over the reef once again, we attempt to take it all in. As the current begins to push us gently along, the vast panoramas seem to roll on and on. We have the urge to kick ahead in hopes of seeing it all. Even with more than an hour in which to explore, we know there will always be more to see. Common sense takes over and we realize it's better to slow down and properly 'take in the trees from the forest.' So we relax and move with the water, reducing our swimming effort to almost zero, and conserving our gas supply in the process.

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Drifting along the face of this vibrant reef we are confronted with a constant parade of bizarre and fascinating critters. We pause for a moment to watch a giant moray eel wrapping itself like a contortionist around a coral head. It raises a toothy head and seems to beckon to us. We are captivated by this behavior and want to just linger and watch what happens next. But then, just a few feet away, we spy a crocodile fish trying to conceal itself, with its lace-hooded eyes beaming back at us.

Next, a cuttlefish elegantly dances into view. It closely watches our every move, and its eyes seem to convey a real sense of intelligence and curiosity. While we linger, our dive guide moves ahead, and soon signals "come here." He points to what looks like a pair of drifting leaves, then we recognize the



Sites such as Turkey Beach allow divers to follow a multi-level dive plan of 70 minutes or more. Photo by Richard Smith, oceanrealmimages.com

camouflaged form of not one but two robust ghost pipefish, drifting in formation with near perfect concealment.

Our guide continues to seek out cryptic treasures, and we are next rewarded with the intricate profiles of a pair of ornate ghost pipefish. As we round a corner on the reef, the slope turns to wall, and a huge school of jacks flows past.

We also spot an eagle ray, and then it's time to ascend to the upper reaches of the reef, where we find colonies of clownfish-adorned anemones. Our guide provides one more treat as he motions us to a sponge-like blob that reveals itself to be a frogfish.

Some say the streets of heaven are paved with gold. But after our visit to the underwater paradise that is Wakatobi, we now know they are paved with sand and lined with shells. Wakatobi is magic, and to have the opportunity to dive in these waters is truly life changing. The abundance and diversity of life on these reefs is astonishing, reinforcing the value of the region's rich marine ecosystems and underscoring the critical need to protect them.

The approach Wakatobi Resort has taken to build a partnership with the community through a revenue sharing lease program, gives hope that conservation truly is an achievable goal. And complementing this



Drifting along the wall reveals one colorful surprise after another. Photo by Walt Stearns



Ascending up the slope to the upper reaches of the reefs will often reveal colonies of clownfish-adorned anemones. Photo by Steve Miller

superb underwater realm are the shore side luxuries of the resort, and the welcoming warmth and attentive service of the staff. Add all these elements together and the result is a diving experience that we don't believe can be found anywhere else in the world.

Ready to discover Wakatobi for yourself?
Email office@wakatobi.com or complete a quick trip inquiry at <https://www.wakatobi.com/prices-booking/booking-trip-enquiry/>

A guest experience consultant will be in touch with you to answer any questions and provide information about your next dream dive vacation.

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Complementing it's underwater wonders are the oceanside luxuries of Wakatobi Resort, and the warmth and attentive service of the staff. Photo by Wakatobi Resort