

Palau

An amazing diving adventure



What? Says I, “We are going to Palau” screams Ofelia down the phone from Panama “No need to yell” says I pulling the phone a couple of inches from my ear “I’m not that deaf” Actually I am pretty hard of hearing but I certainly heard Ofelia second time round. “When?” I ask, “in 3 days” says she. “Bloomin Hell thats not much time to get ready” I thing to myself and immediately started to conger up excuses as to why I shouldn’t go.

Excuse #1 Who’s going to feed the dog? Well that wont work I don’t have a dog.

Excuse #2 Who’s going to look after my aquarium? Nope that wont work either. I gave the aquarium away months ago.

And that all deleted my excuses for why I shouldn’t go so I changed course and started to embrace the idea of actually flying to the other side of the world for a diving safari.

The next thing I had to do was pack my bags and that meant getting about 100 pounds of camera equipment into as small a package as possible. By the time I had everything I thought I needed Underwater camera housing, 2 camera bodies, 2 strobes, control arms, batteries, don’t forget the chargers, a selection of len’s with appropriate ports for the housing, etc, etc, I had a stack of gear that looked like a shipment for the 7th fleet and as yet I hadn’t even packed a tooth brush.



Three days later at some ungodly pre dawn hour I found myself with my Jeep loaded to the brim heading for Miami Airport which is about a 3 hour drive to the south of my home in Sebastian.

In no time I had parked my car in undercover parking, taken the bus to the terminal and checked into my flight to Dallas which is where I was meeting up with my dive buddy Ofelia coming in from Panama.

There she was coming out of customs a very perky little Panamanian princess with big smile on her face that made it obvious she was as excited as I about this journey.

Well we flew from Dallas to San Francisco. No time to enjoy this beautiful city as we quickly boarded another flight to Hawaii where we were to spend a night in a hotel. I can tell you I was not unhappy about breaking up this long trip a wee bit.

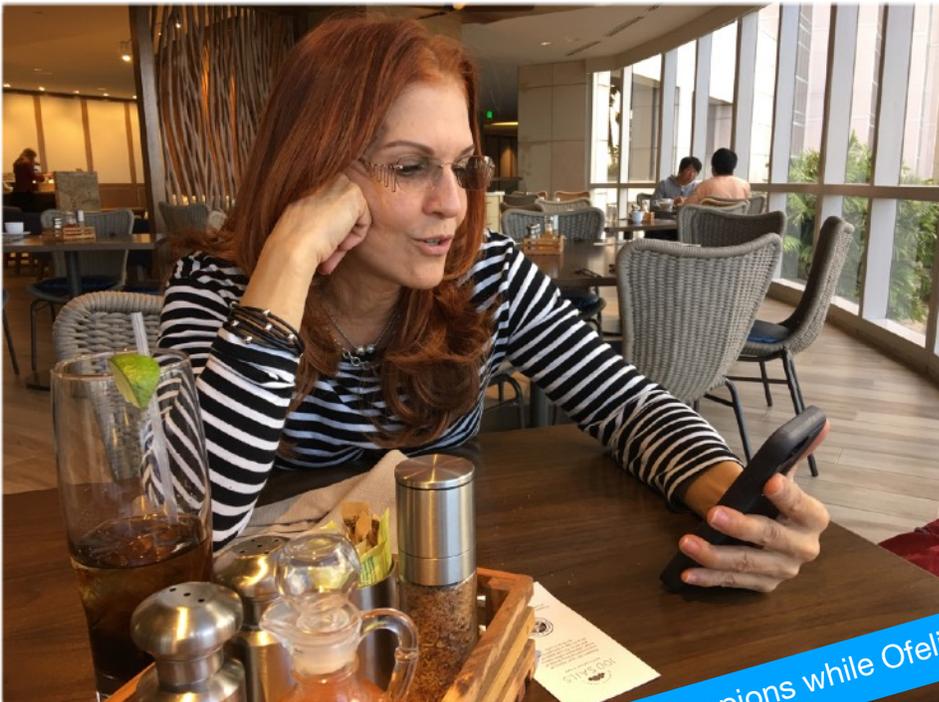
Unfortunately for us our driver in Hawaii was confused about our destination.

Have you ever been loaded onto a bus with a bunch of people and as they all get dropped off at their different locations you keep hoping that you're next? Well we weren't next, in fact an hour and a half later we finally found our hotel which was close to where we had started the bus journey to begin with. Oh well our enthusiasm could not be diminished and with spirits high we retired for the night.

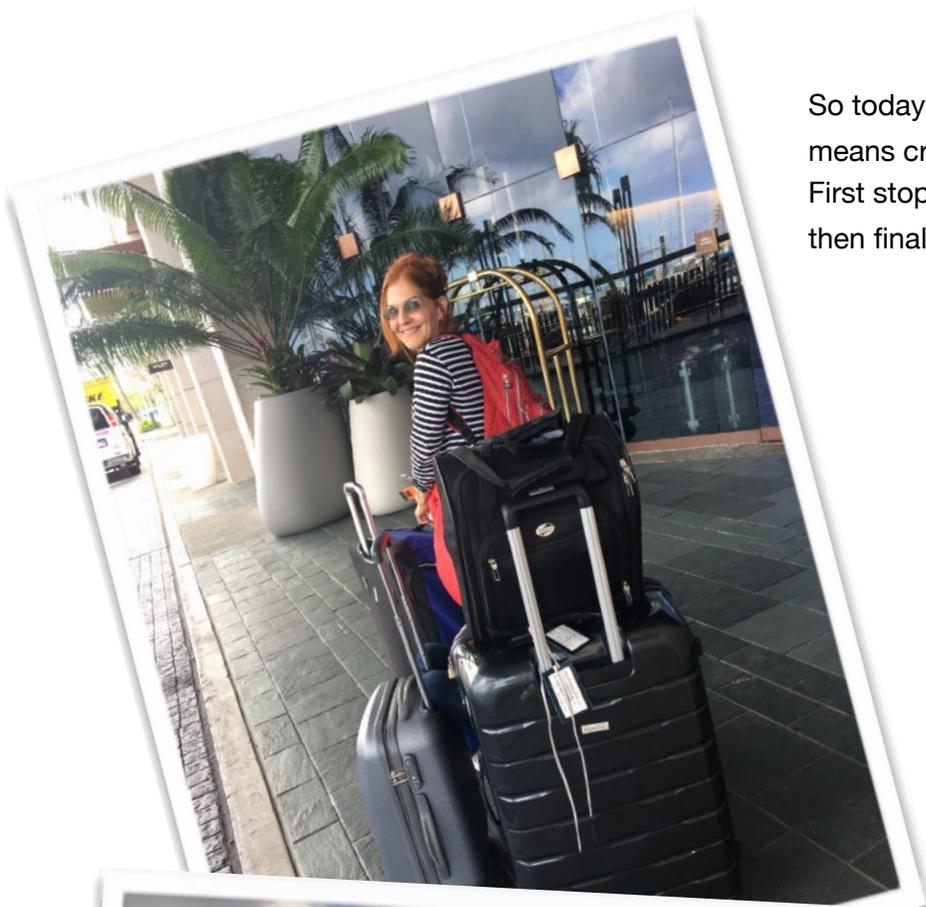


The view from our hotel in Hawaii

The next morning we bounced out of bed rested and refreshed. Another hot shower and down to breakfast. Now normally I don't eat big breakfasts but as it was included in the hotel room I filled my plate to its limit and returned to my table determined to put a severe dent in this monumental serving of food.



The breakfast of champions while Ofelia checks her messages



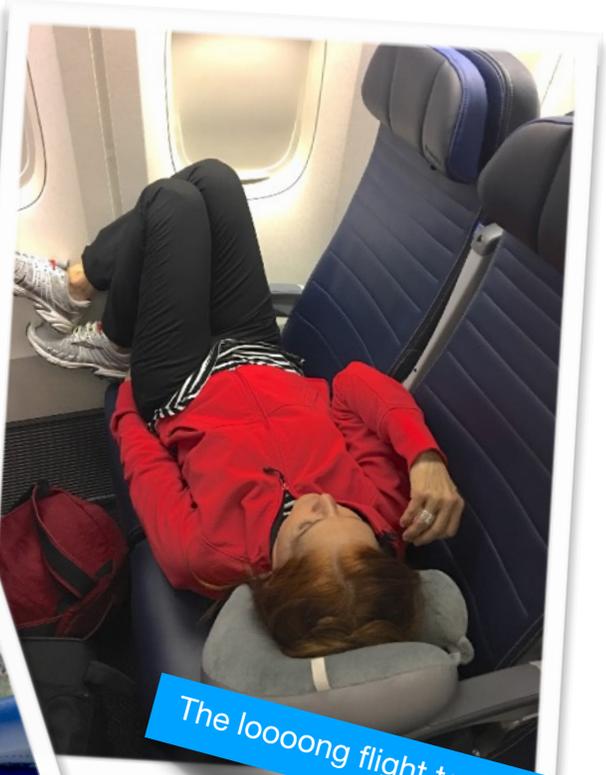
So today we set of on our final leg which means crossing to the far side of the Pacific. First stop Guam, change planes, next stop Yap then finally Palau. Enough of airplanes already.



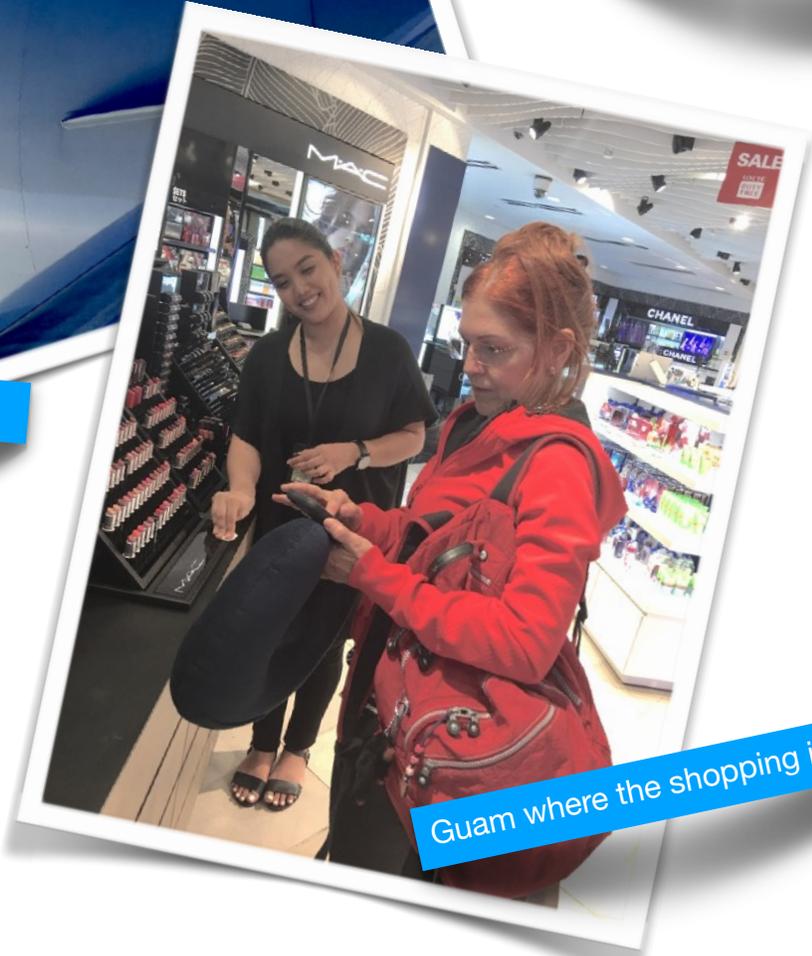
The big bird that was going to whisk us of to the other side of the world



Arriving Guam



The loooong flight to Guam



Guam where the shopping is good

Never one to turn down a bargain Ofelia finds that the prices in Guam are better than Panama for girly stuff so she had lots of fun on this layover. I on the other hand ate a very bad airport meal. Will I never learn?

What? Oh no, he's not with me. We only need one upgrade.



Checking in for Yap and Palau



On the flight from Yap we met a nice guy returning from his mothers funeral who adorned our sleepy heads with these beautiful flowers that unfortunately we had to surrender in Palau due to horticultural restrictions. Bummer.



Finally after my 3 hour drive to Miami, flight to Dallas, connect to San Francisco, connect to Hawaii, horrible hotel transfer in Waikiki, loooong flight to Guam then Yap we had made it to the island paradise of Palau.



As the clock struck midnight we pulled into the Palau Royal



Ofelia checking in, Hallelujah



Room with a view



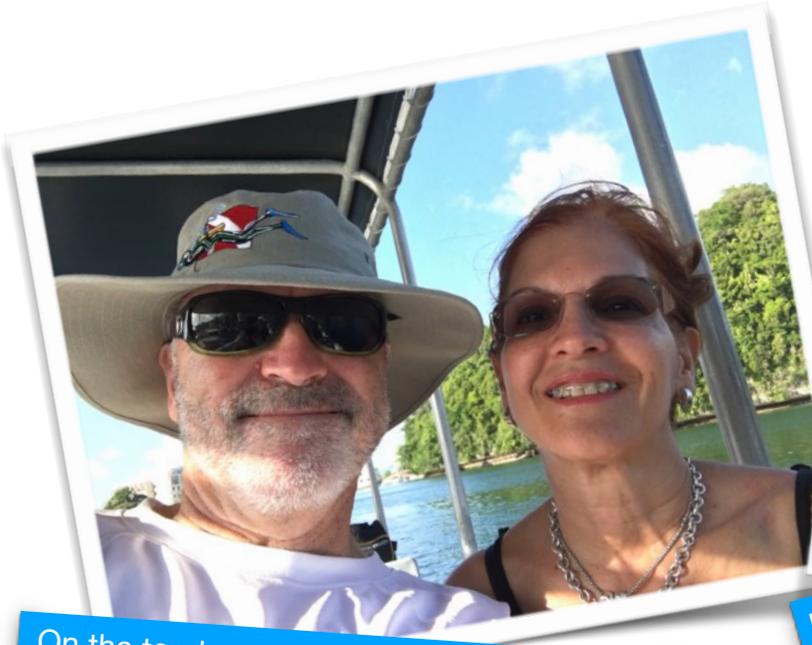
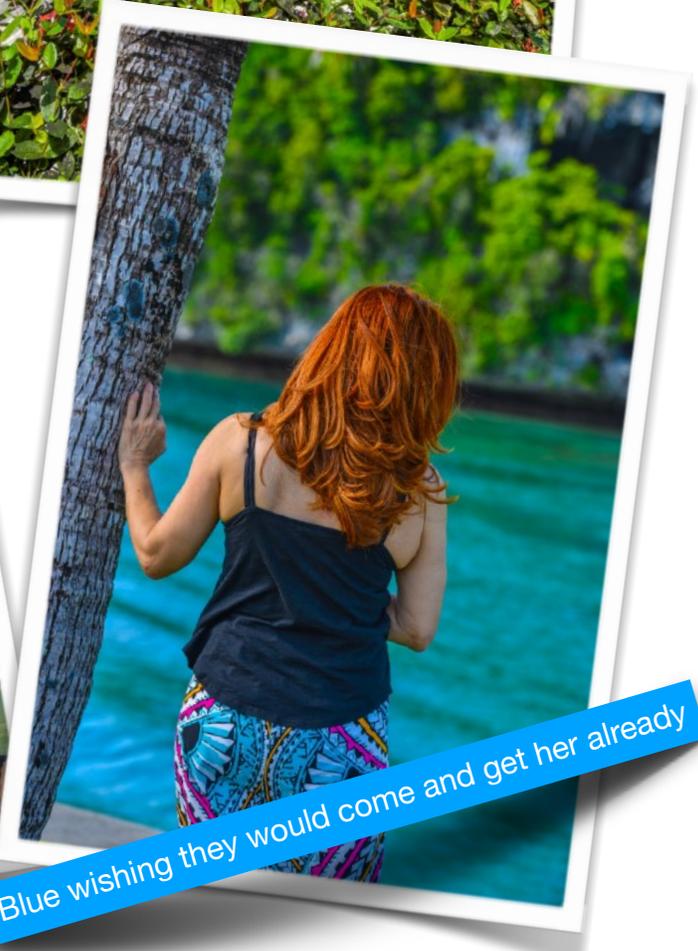
My mate Blue having breakfast.



At last a photo of me. Nobody takes photos of me so I have to do it myself

Rock Island Aggressor

It didn't take us long to see our future dive boat that was at anchor right in front of the hotel. Can you believe it? I was so excited I could hardly talk as is obvious in the photo of me above with my s*** eating grin.



On the tender to The Rock Island Agressor

Blue wishing they would come and get her already

Then all of a sudden we were onboard, shown to our cabin and setting up our dive gear on the back



Ofelia was always in the front row for the dive brief

Well with all good dive operations the rules must be dealt with first and the crew took us through the do's and don'ts of life aboard the ship. Ofelia was always in the front row for the briefings. Me I just worked on my gear, rules don't apply to me.

Finally, after all the travel and all the waiting it was time to dive and from here I'll let the photo's tell the story.



A Hawksbill turtle at Blue Corner



A beautiful little Tang comes close for a look



Ofelia (Blue) passes behind a beautiful anemone



A clown fish and Tomato anemone



Ofelia gets to dive with the rooster. A penalty for forgetting her dive mask on one of the dives obligating the tender to return to the boat and thus making all the other divers wait. A good hearted punishment that was shared by several of the divers over the course of the week.



A Fire Fish Goby

Approaching the hole in the top of the reef



Below Ofelia 3000 feet of water



Ascending into a huge cavern



German Channel



German Canal. In 1911 Germany blew a channel in the reef to allow for the exportation of Guano



Schooling Soldierfish



Emperor Angelfish



Tang



Hawk fish



School of jacks circle the divers



Cabbage Coral



Ofelia swims over beautiful reef in German Channel

To be continued