

Halekai – 50' Alden – 5.5' draft – August - September 2010
Subject Area: Indonesian Update: Cruising Rumors Debunked

Dear SSCA,

1. “Pay the Sail Indonesia Rally fee to have them process your paperwork, even if you don't plan to participate with the Rally.”

Many cruisers like sailing in company, the convenience of prearranged tours ashore and special group events not available to individuals. But you don't need to join the rally to handle your paperwork or make the clearing in process easier. We met lots of boats like ourselves who were cruising Indonesia on their own. We also met several who used the Rally for the paperwork and cleared into Indonesia with the Rally at the first port, but then sailed independently. This artificially inflates the number of Rally boats expected by local organizers of Indonesian rally events, leading to their disappointment.

To apply for the 90-day CAIT and social visa sponsor letter yourself, you submit the same scanned documents and application form to an agent that you would submit to the rally folks. The process is handled by email, takes a few weeks at most and costs less than the rally fee. We used the services of Lytha of PT.KARTASA JAYA in Jakarta, cait@indo.net.id, and found her reliable, efficient and friendly. For maximum cruising flexibility, we had her include all major ports of Indonesia on the application. For an extra courier fee we had the original documents sent to us c/o the Darwin Sailing Club, but we heard that a print-out of the scanned copies would suffice. We then took our documents to the conveniently located Indonesian Consulate in Darwin to get our 60-day social visas, which was a simple process. We returned a couple of days later to pick them up. Note: you only need one sponsor letter per boat, not per person. The CAIT and social visa are both renewable for additional fees.

2. “By joining the rally you will avoid the Indonesian bond issue.”

The bond is no longer an issue, and in fact no one, whether cruising by rally or independently, has ever reported having actually had to pay a bond.

3. “It's a hassle to clear in at Kupang.”

This was evidently the case a couple of years, but it's no longer a problem. We motor-sailed three days from Darwin to Kupang, where we cleared in and refueled. We used the agent Napa Rachman, who charged 1 million Rupiah (IDP, approx. \$100 USD), and it was well worth it, saving us the nuisance of going to several different offices and dealing with officials who speak little English. Customs officials actually prefer you use an agent. We beached the dinghy ashore, paying one of the boat boys a small fee for “protection,” and asked someone at Teddy's Bar (an ex-pat hang-out on the waterfront, cheap food and beer) to call Napa for us. We got cash at a nearby ATM machine. Napa collected our passports and boat documents and returned them within 24 hours. He also delivered drums of clean fuel to our boat. Fuel is much less expensive in Indonesia than in Australia. We were pleased with his services.

4. “You need to clear in with Customs at every harbor you visit.”

We cleared in at Kupang and out at Batam and saw no other officials along the way. One can clear in with the harbormaster if you stop at large ports, which we didn't.

5. “The Indonesian courtesy flag should be larger than one's national flag.” Nonsense!
6. “There's little Internet access in Indonesia.”

As is true most everywhere else these days, wherever there are cell towers, there is usually Internet available via USB wireless data card (aka 3G modem). We bought a USB 3G modem that we plug into our laptop for about \$50 USD for Telkomsel service (since the one we bought for use with Telstra in Australia was locked) and had a mostly reliable signal everywhere along the coast of inhabited islands. It's best to buy the largest block of data offered (about \$20 USD), as you get more for your money, and the transmission speed is faster. It's been wonderful having so much Internet access in Indonesia wherever there are cell towers, which is pretty much anywhere there are people, even remote fishing villages.

Lombok and the Gili Islands

Due to a commitment in the States in October, we were not able to spend as much time as we would have liked cruising in Indonesia. We sailed from Kupang directly to Komodo, where we visited the National Park to see the Komodo dragons and enjoy the excellent snorkeling/diving among the group of islands there, which reminded us of the Galapagos. We then sailed along the northern coast of Lombok, stopping at Gili Laurant where we witnessed the spectacle of thousands of fruit bats flying from the island to the mainland at sunset.

Next day we motorsailed on past the Gunung Rinjani volcano, at 3,726 meters the second highest in Indonesia, but, unfortunately, it remained shrouded in clouds all day. We picked up a mooring in the protected small bay on the south end of Gili Air, one of three small resort islands just off the NW coast of Lombok. We beached the dinghy in front of the 7 Seas International Diving Center with its prominent red and white diving flag painted on the side of the building. In addition to offering diving and snorkeling trips and a range of PADI beginner and advanced dive courses, 7 Seas offers surfing lessons and surf trips. French owner Laurent Lovoye is planning to expand his services to visiting yachts, including fuel and water delivery and laundry service. Gili Air is an idyllic place to spend a few days with its many inexpensive beachside restaurants and lovely walks around the carless island. Pony-carts transport both tourists and locals.

There is an alternate anchorage across the channel on the mainland where shopping is also possible, and there's regular ferry service to the three Gili islands.

7. "The best place to go in Bali is to Benoa."

Benoa has a tricky harbor entrance, and Bali Marina is dilapidated.

There are two other options that we explored: we stayed a week in Sarangan Bay, which is adjacent to Benoa. The entrance is poorly charted but well described in the Indonesian cruising guide *101 Anchorages*: Enter at the break in the reef between the two markers (red pyramid to port). There are rental moorings and room to anchor. We recommend anchoring if possible. Our mooring line severed on the jagged edge of the mooring ball; another boat went adrift when half the mooring ball fell off. Fuel delivery and laundry service are easily arranged. We negotiated the same fuel price everywhere we went: 6,000 IDR (approx. 60 cents USD) per liter. Laundry is washed and ironed—what a treat!—for less than one is used to paying for DIY. We used Mande; ask for him ashore. There's a nice restaurant at the jetty, but the Royal Bali Yacht Club is no more. Supposedly the owner was recently deported! Ask someone at the restaurant to call for a taxi to go shopping. Taxis are metered and inexpensive. Carrefour is a very good supermarket with a great bakery; a large Ace Hardware is at the Galleria Mall; modern Discovery Mall is across from the Water Park. Lots and lots of small shops and eateries are in the bustling nearby towns of Kuta, Legian and Seminyak.

Both Benoa Harbour and Sarangan Bay are full of floating trash, unfortunately a way of life in Indonesia. When we brought up the anchor in Sarangan, it was covered with plastic bags.

We hired a driver in a clean a/c minivan (\$35/day USD) to sightsee around the island. In one day we visited a Batik factory and, the holy water Hindu temple, lunched overlooking the Batur volcano (spectacular restaurant view) and arrived in Ubud in the afternoon. We spent two nights in the very nice Pura Padi Hotel with pool in Ubud for \$60 USD including full breakfast and wished we'd stayed longer; haggle for hotel prices, low season begins Sept. 1. Ubud is full of shops and galleries, spas and restaurants, evening Balinese dance performances and some great hiking in the surroundings. We lunched at delightful Sari Organik on the rice paddy trail. We hired a second driver—just ask at any hotel for a recommendation—for the afternoon return trip to Sarangan, stopping at Ula Watu on the southern coast to see the Balinese fire dance at sunset. Ubud and Ula Watu are both only about an hour's drive from Sarangan, so they could also be visited by day-tripping.

From Sarangan we motorsailed up the east coast and anchored overnight off the coast of Amed, where there's good snorkeling and diving. Consult a tourist guide for details. From there it's another day-sail up to Lovina Beach on the north coast. The anchorage between two reefs extending out from shore is larger than the chart indicates. It's unprotected from the north, but the holding is good. The pleasant small tourist town is relatively clean and full of restaurants, shops and amenities such as fuel delivery, laundry service and ATM machines, and there's a good Dutch bakery. Taxis can be hired to shop and sightsee locally and around the island, as well as shuttle buses. Making Lovina Beach your base avoids the need to

sail south to Benai or Sarangan and north again if you're headed to Kumai in Kalimantan to see the orangutans and then on to Batam to clear out of Indonesia. One can day-trip the entire way from Bali to Batam, which is just across the channel from Singapore.

8. "The Kumai River in Kalimantan (Indonesian part of Borneo) is dirty and the air is full of smoke."

Maybe it was at one time, but not now. The river, as well as the town of Kumai, was much cleaner than what we experienced in Bali. We were told that Kumai is proud of its cleanliness, and, in fact, they won an award for four years in a row for it. They have yellow-dressed street cleaning women and organic and non-organic trash bins. The smoke from burning rainforest was so bad at times in the past that it reached all the way to Singapore! But Singapore complained to the UN, and as far as we know, it is no longer an issue.

There are three ranges for the dogleg course at the entrance to the Kumai River, but they're not shown on the chart. Sailing up the river was made even easier for us by following the AIS track of a small tanker that preceded us. Yachts anchor just north of the ships on the opposite shore to town in about 30-35 feet of mud.

Kumai is a small waterfront town about fifteen miles upriver. There's a daily local market. No ATM machines yet, though they are available in Pangkalan Bun, a small city worth a visit about 30 minutes' drive by *bemo* (small crowded minivan) for about \$1 USD pp, or there are inexpensive taxis. There's a very nice a/c Iduna Café just down the street from the *bemo* terminal: Indonesian and Western food, ice cream, etc. There's also an airport.

We were intrigued by the near-constant bird chirping we heard at anchor coming from town. Turns out it was "canned music" over loudspeaker to encourage swiftlets (small birds like starlings) to return to their nests in the many buildings with small holes for the birds. The buildings are painted gray to emulate the caves where they nest in the wild. The bird nests are collected, cleaned and processed for export to China and the U.S., where bird nest soup is a Chinese delicacy. The nests are made mostly of bird saliva and seaweed. We asked a Chinese taxi driver if he liked bird nest soup, and he laughed and said no, he didn't like to eat bird vomit!

Visiting the Orangutans

The reason that cruisers and other tourists go to Kumai is to visit the orangutans and other wildlife at Tanjung Puting National Park and Camp Leakey. We emailed Herry (pronounced Harry) Herman in advance at borneowilderness@hotmail.com (tel. 08 125 086 105) to arrange a river tour. Herry came aboard upon our arrival and scheduled our tour with us. He was friendly, professional and speaks good English. One can visit the park by day-trip in a speedboat or take a slower *klotok* for a two- or three-day trip, staying overnight aboard or at an eco-lodge. They put just one couple on each rather large boat, and you sit in two comfy chairs up front, enjoying the jungle view as you motor upriver. It's surely a more relaxing trip and a better way to see more wildlife than by speedboat, due to slow speed and less noise.

Beware of guys who approach as you anchor to offer you better rates; they speak poor English and are considered "illegal" guides. Other guides can be recommended through the National Park office, a small neat building with dinghy dock across from the anchorage. Or use Herry's dock just north of the main shipping dock, closer to town.

Herry's colleague Jeni was our tour guide, and he was excellent, going out of his way to give us a good time. Another recommended guide is named Yomie. Jeni and our driver picked us up at 7:30 a.m. Oops, we overlooked the hour time difference between Bali and Kumai and were waiting for him an hour early! We were glad we had our ponchos with us for the downpour on the return trip. Snacks, drinks and lunch were provided. It was an exhilarating fast ride, around 100 kilometers round trip; we were returned to our boat at dusk. Holding hands with an orangutan and watching their antics in the wild was perhaps the highlight of our Indonesian experience.

Herry was very helpful with other information, and arranged for 400 liters of fuel delivered by jerry jug to our boat at the same rate we paid in Kupang and Bali (6,000 IDR per liter). He also added Telkomsel data wireless data card.

Across the Java Sea to Batam: Complications of Getting Spare Parts Shipped

From Kumai it was a hot motor-sail across the equator to Nongsa Point Marina at the north end of Batam in order to clear out of Indonesia. There are plenty of anchoring opportunities en route but we chose to sail non-stop due to a failed anchor winch (stripped gear box), with the spare part to fix it awaiting us across the channel in Singapore. Since we'd visited Singapore before by plane, we decided to give it a pass and ferried over to pick up the part that had been FedExed from New Zealand to Raffles Marina in Singapore. Unfortunately, that meant paying \$25 USD each for a new 30-day Indonesian visa upon return to Batam since our social visas are single entry, but it was cheaper than clearing into Singapore. Had we not been anxious to get the part, we could have waited and gone to Danga Bay Marina in Malaysia, across the causeway from Raffles in Singapore. There are no charges clearing into Malaysia. We had emailed Raffles Marina in advance asking them to please hold the package for our arrival. Unfortunately, our message must not have been read because they refused it. So we contacted FedEx and picked it up at their facility, an expensive taxi ride across the island. We could have had the part sent to Nongsa Point or Danga Bay Marina, but we'd heard that shipping to Singapore was more reliable.

We had requested a berth in advance by email at Nongsa Point Marina, part of a small resort complex with lush tropical landscaping. Upon announcing our impending arrival on Channel 72, a speedboat came out and escorted us through the uncomplicated marked channel into the protected basin. The dockmaster welcomed us with a friendly handshake at the fuel dock while four other uniformed employees helped with our lines and fenders. We've never received such royal treatment! After filling our tanks with diesel, the speedboat then escorted us to our berth, where the same smiling dockhands awaited us.

Berthage at approx. \$25 USD per night was a bargain and included free use of the pool and wireless Internet. There's an inexpensive golf course, bar, restaurant and self-service laundry. We hired a taxi at approx \$20 USD for three hours to go to the small city of Nagoya, where we shopped at an air-conditioned mall with a large Ace Hardware and Hypermart supermarket. On the way we passed the construction site of a large Carrefour Supermarket. The marina arranges convenient outward clearance with Customs. Nongsa Point was a hard place to leave. Indeed, SSCA Lifetime Commodores Juergen and Karin Schulze-Roehr have been living aboard their *Krios* there for many years.

We used the *Southeast Asia Cruising Guide, Volume II*, the *101 Anchorages of Indonesia*, the *Lonely Planet to SE Asia* and the Indonesian cruising reports found in the *Bulletins*, in particular that of Commodores Kurt and Katie Braun, *Interlude*. Their detailed cruising reports, including GPS position and rating of every anchorage they visited, are an invaluable resource.

COMMODORES NANCY AND BURGER ZAPF