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Kenya 1991

We (my wife Daphne and me) first went to Kenya in November 1991. This was our first long haul holiday, up to this point we had not ventured beyond the Mediterranean. Daph did most of the planning as she was desperate to go on Safari and see the animals in their native habitat. At this time I was relatively unconcerned about animals. I just saw it as a chance to get 2 weeks in the sun with the chance of some diving. In the event we both got full value from the holiday as I found the 5 days we spent on Safari totally entrancing. Having started out to add a diving section to the web site, getting to the Kenya page has made me realise that I shall have to add a Safari section at some point. Anyway, for the moment, we will concentrate on the diving aspects on Kenya. We flew into Mombasa and drove South to Diani Beach to the Leopard Beach hotel. It was everything we had hoped for, right on the beach with lush gardens full of exotic (to us) animals and birds, even a small family of monitor lizards and weaver birds (sadly no Leopards). The staff could not have been more friendly and we went back again for a weeks short break in 1995.

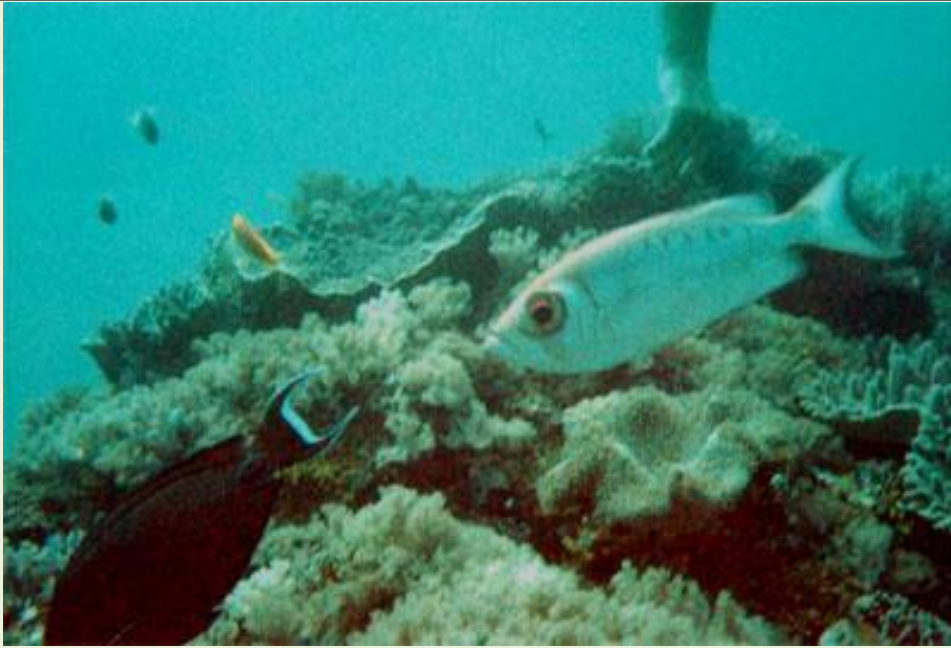
Anyway, as we were away on Safari for quite a period, I only did 5 dives though we did some snorkelling - more later. Arrangements were fairly typical for Kenya, there was a dive shop on site where you could do basic PADI training, book dives and hire kit. For the actual diving you were driven to another hotel and which had the marina and boats. So once on the boat, you had small groups from a number of local hotels. Along most of the length of Diani Beach there is a fringing reef extending for 1/4 to 1/2 mile out to sea which is covered to a depth of 1-2 metres at full tide and almost fully exposed at low water. At the edge of the reef there is a pronounced wall which drops quite steeply to probably 8-10 metres then slopes out to maybe 30M. No diving is done close inshore, though local fishermen would provide snorkelling trips at low water, the strong surf made it quite dangerous to snorkel once the tide was over the reef edge. Diving could only be done around mid-high water to allow the boats to be launched. This effectively meant it was rare to get more than one dive a day, which was probably no bad thing considering it was primarily a family holiday.

The actual dive sites were mostly fairly deep reefs with no walls or surface breaking reefs to allow long fizzing of times. From my log book, I seem to have done all 5 dives on only 2 sites, Kinondo to the South and Galu to the North of the hotel. Visibility was not especially good and the corals seemed in the main not as good as I had experienced in the Red Sea. Fish life also was less prolific though you could see most of the same species though colours and sizes did vary a little.

As the pictures show, we did take a snorkelling trip with one of the local beach boys who are a feature (plague even) of Kenyan beachside holidays. The outrigger canoe trip was fun, I do not remember much about the actual snorkelling though Daph enjoyed it. Not sure I even took the camera, if so I cannot identify after a lapse of 16 years which were taken on the snorkelling trip. I concluded that Kenya was a superb place for a holiday but the diving was a bonus, not the primary reason for going there. The photographs are pretty dire

Kinondo 25M 48mins	Galuu 17M 58 mins	Galuu 16M 51 mins
Galuu 18M 49 mins	Kinondo 25M 46 mins	

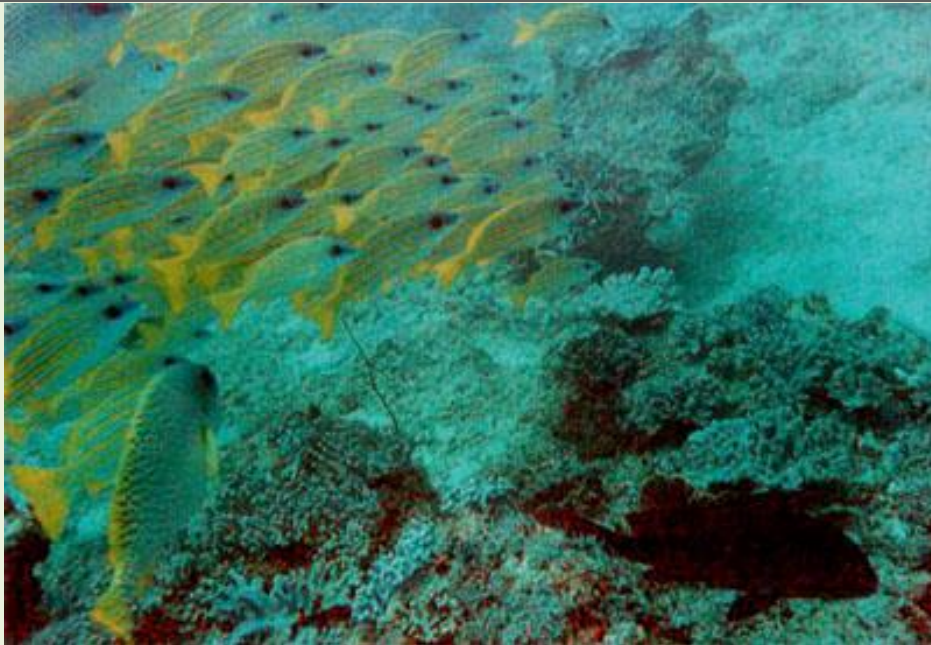
Pictures from Kenya 1991



Fishes on top of a reef, not sure what type other than the balck surgeon fish



A turtle doing a runner



Shoal of sweetlips



A pufferfish



The hotel seen from the boat



Sponges and soft corals very similar to the Red Sea



Boats loaded direct from the beach, When the tide went out, they were beached



Happy group of divers



Our dive guide Saleem stroking a very large Moray. The skin is like velvet.



This was Saleem coaxing the Moray out of his hole. the other fish were hoping for a free feed



Our snorkelling trip transport, canoe was carved out of a solid log.



One happy lady having the holiday of a lifetime.

Kenya 1995

We went back to the Leopard Beach hotel in October 1995, it was just as good as the first time. This was only for a week so we worked hard to cram everything in. I managed 4 dives (you can only do one dive a day as explained above). The first 3 were done before our 3 day 2 night Safari. Kinondo I had done before though my logbook records that it was Spring Tides and viz was only 10M. Tiwi and Turtle Ledge were new. So far I have found no pictures of this holiday so there is little to jog my memory. The last dive was more interesting for a variety of reasons. We had booked a day trip on a Dhow from a small marina opposite Pemba Island well to the South of our hotel. Before lunch we opted to snorkel but this was a bit of a disaster. The Dhow dropped the snorkellers and then took the divers of to another site. Daph found herself in 2M of water and unable to touch bottom and freaked out. The shallower water was a longish swim away, fortunately, I managed to get her aboard one of the other boats and we waited until ours returned. I was not impressed and told the owner so. Lunch did however go along way to restore our spirits, we went to an Island (not Pemba but close) where we pigged out on crab. and then had a tour of the island (at least Daph did , I seem to remember that I had a long nap to prepare myself for the afternoon dive. This was in the Wasini Maritime Reserve with a local guide and a chap called Dave who had only 4 dives to his name (PADI training) and was a bit nervous. The guide was a bit inexperienced and just shot off leaving us to follow so I kept an eye on Dave who actually did very well. When I noted that Dave was down to 50 bar I signalled the guide that we should ascend. the guide then showed me his contents gauge, he had well under 20bar. Fortunately we were almost under the boat so all was well. Second black mark to the organisers. For me all was forgiven as the Dhow was put under sail for the homeward trip and I got to steer it most of the way back. Overall it could have been disastrous but I guess the gods were smiling on us that day.

Kinando 29M 49mins	Tiwi 19M 55mins	Turtle Ledge 25M 55mins
Wasini 13M 54 mins		

Regrettably no underwater pictures from this trip, just these Wasini trip pictures



The harbour at Wasini



On board the Dhow



Other Dhows, very similar to the one we were aboard



waiting to transfer to the Dhow after lunch

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Kenya - 2001

Our third trip to Kenya was in February 2001. We had flown out to Nairobi to start a full weeks Safari including Treetops and finishing in the Masai Mara. We then flew down to Mombasa for a weeks recovery at the Travellers Lodge hotel on Bamburi Beach which is North of Mombasa. Comfortable enough and being All Inclusive helped the budget somewhat but it was not in the same league as the Leopard Beach. Our hotel actually had the dive shop and the boats this time so we departed from our own bit of beach. The beach topology was the same as Diani Beach with a wide shallow reef which was uncovered at low water meaning the boats could only depart at mid-high water. For this holiday I had taken my newly acquired Sea&Sea underwater camera, the Nikonos having been totally trashed in Grenada the previous June. I did 6 dives. The first 5 were at different points on what is really the same reef system. Quite often we would do our next dive at virtually the point we had ascended from the previous days dive. The topology was very similar to Diani Beach sites with the reef fairly deep with no wall or suchlike where you could gently fizz off. Viz was a bit cloudy but not too bad and we did see smallish grey reef sharks (2-2.5M) on several of the dives. Mostly they seemed to be sleeping on the bottom. As the photos show, there was a range of other fish life. Quite enjoyable, but 5 dives probably exhausted the variety of these sites. There were other sites farther North in the Marine Park but we did not venture that far. The 6th dive was a very shallow one (under 6M) as we were flying the next day and I was pushing the limits on no fly time. Unlike Diani, it was possible to dive and snorkel at the reef edge in a deeper water channel which ran between inner and outer reefs - see picture taken in 2003 below. This gave a good opportunity to do some photography in better light and try out the new camera. I did see a stone fish but to be honest, I do not think my camera work was very impressive on this holiday and the results are a bit disappointing.

Shark Reef 19M 59 mins	Brain Coral Reef 21M 64mins	Sand Bay Reef 23M 43 mins
Shark Point 22M 68mins	Shark Point 20M 69 mins	Coral Garden 6M 64mins

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Pictures from Kenya 2001



Big anemone and clown fish



Angel fish of some type



Couple of Blue Spot Rays digging in the sand



Chris, the dive shop manager and a couple of fellow divers



Crocodile Fisg



Mixture of fish species



Potato grouper hiding under a rock overhang



Moray coming out of his hole. He's obviously a regular as I photographed him next year



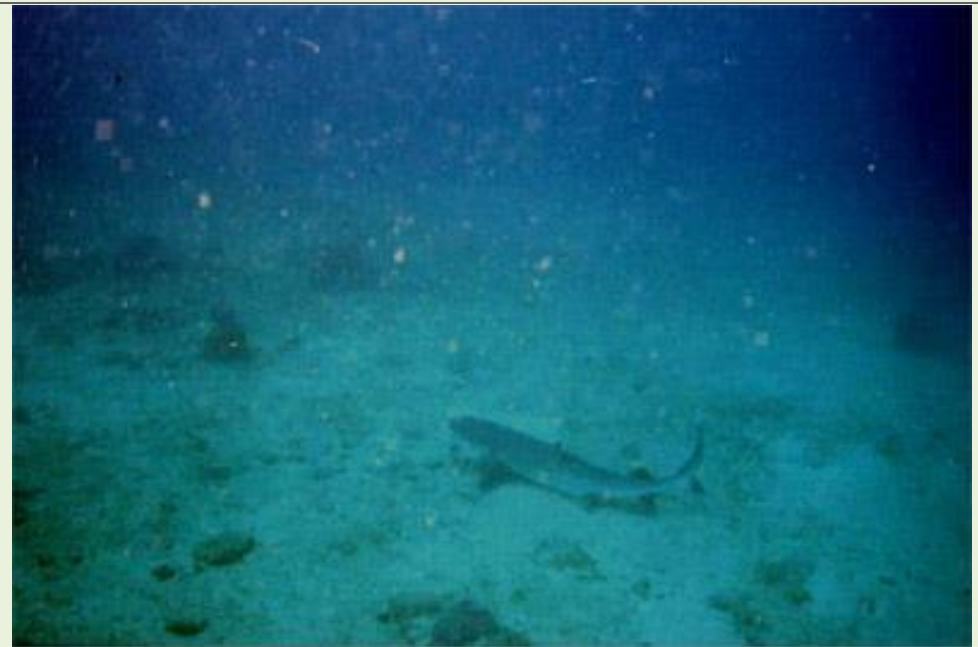
John and Karisa, two of the dive guides



Karisa showing of underwater



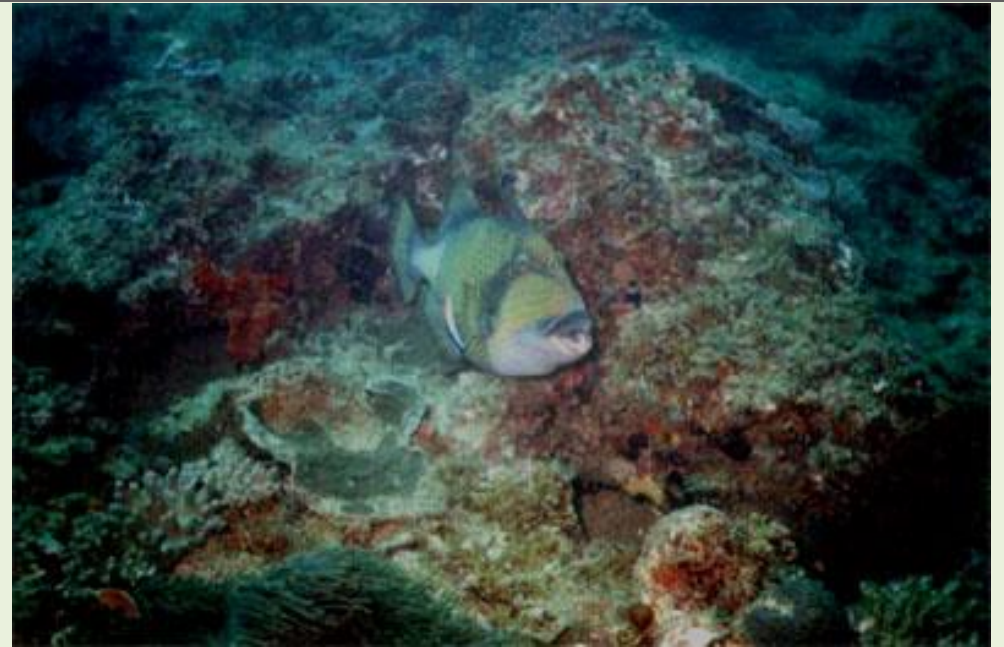
Puffer fish



Grey Reef Shark sleeping on the bottom before we disturbed him



Stone Fish - spotted initially by the dive guide, not me



Titan Trigger Fish



Turtle snacking on soft coral



Unicorn Fish with a Sweetlips below

Kenya 2003

Our most recent trip to Kenya was in February 2003. In fact we had spent the first week of our holiday on safari in Tanzania but spent the recovery week back in Kenya because the Tanzanian beach side hotels were so expensive. We stayed at the Severin Sea Lodge hotel which was a mile or so up the coast from the Travellers Beach and shared the same dive operator - Barrcuda. I did only two dives, both on Shark Reef. The first was nothing special according to my log book with poor viz. The second was one of those dives which you remember forever. AS we dropped into the water, a large grey shape was swimming by - a 7M whale shark! It was so big it was impossible in the slightly murky water to get the whole thing in focus but I did get a couple of shots to prove that I had truly seen a whale shark at last. The encounter lasted only a few minutes and then he was gone so we carried on the dive on a real high. By the time we surfaced nearly an hour later, I had seen 2 turtles, 2 white tip reef sharks a load of blue spot rays and stroked the moray which I had photographed back in 2001. I did no more diving that holiday, anything else would have been an anticlimax. Sadly, though we have plenty of landside pictures (everything was digital by then) I can only find one very poor quality u/w picture, but at least its the whale shark!

Shark Reef 26M 59 mins

Shark Reef 20M 58mins



The beach at Severin with the tide out



Another shot with the tide out. You can see a deeper water channel between the inner and outer reef where the dhow is sailing.



Same view with the tide in. dive boat on left



Terrible photo but undoubtedly a Whale Shark

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