

# BOAT

International



Benetti reinvents the beach club on board its 134ft Oasis

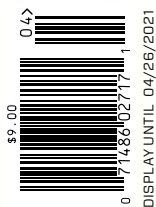
Cruising the paradise islands of Raja Ampat by phinisi

## SAILING SPECIAL

Mike Horn's adventure to the ends of the earth

On board *Morgana*, Southern Wind's new green machine

FORMERLY  
**ShowBoats**



# INTO THE BIG BLUE

Discover the tough explorer beneath these classic lines

## MY LIFE IN BOATS

## THIBAUD EPSTEIN

*Grace Trofa* learns about life in Bali and exploring Indonesia on board *Kudaniil*, a supply ship turned explorer yacht



**M**y father had a sailboat, so as a child I spent all my holidays on a boat. Originally I am from Paris, where I studied law, and then I did my MBA in Australia. When I would go back and forth from Paris to Sydney, I would stop and say hello to my uncle, a shipowner out of Singapore. I have always been attracted to the sea, so when I finished my MBA, I joined him in the business.

We had support ships in the oil industry from Thailand to Papua; business was very successful until the drop in oil prices. We decided to sell the ships, except for *Kudaniil*, which we converted into an exploration vessel. These ships were built to spend long periods of time at sea so there is a lot of redundancy, which is very reassuring when you are exploring places far from civilization.

Transforming a supply ship to a luxury expedition yacht took two years. We practically built a shipyard, transporting 10 containers of supplies to an American base in Subic Bay in the Philippines to build the superstructure. The interior work was done in a small factory by master craftsmen in Java, the capital of teak.

I have very rarely run into problems that I could not solve in Indonesia. You just have to be patient and respectful. We cruise in the part of Indonesia called the Ring of Fire, from the Spice Islands to Bali, in search of special experiences to share with charter guests. Once in search of a waterfall, we anchored the boat in a

region of Papua that is still very tribal. On this visit, we noticed a lot more activity on the beach.

Two crew members and I went ashore and were approached by an elderly tribal leader. He looked me in the eye and said, "We are 100 men, and we are willing to fight." Apparently, there was a civil war in his village. I speak Indonesian and I assured him we were only there to find the waterfall. We offered them provisions and tools and explained we were often in the area and willing to help. In exchange, they took us to this majestic waterfall. Villagers also helped us locate birds of paradise; there are more than 30 species that can only be found in this part of the world.

Sometimes when diving we've seen hammerhead sharks, migrating blue whales and these huge manta rays. They are curious and come close enough to touch and make eye contact. Every encounter feels intimate.

It's funny where life takes you. I now spend half of the year on the boat. My base is Bali and I have just finished building my villa in Pererenan, just west of the trendy Canggu. So while I have views of rice fields I'm only ten minutes from a great Italian restaurant where I can enjoy a caffè latte the way it should be. I have the best of both worlds. ■



## ISLAND LIFE

Thibaud Epstein's travels take him to beautiful locations, such as the volcanic Banda Islands

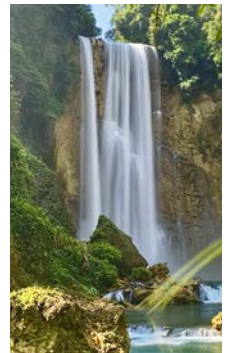


## HAPPY RETIREMENT

Former oil support ship *Kudaniil* was converted into an expedition yacht

## WATER WONDER

A random encounter with a tribesman led to the discovery of this waterfall deep in Papuan rainforest



## DEEP FOREST

*Kudaniil*'s charter guests get to explore far-flung and rarely visited areas of Indonesia