

## The Depths

Navigation : [Main](#) > [The Depths](#) > [ [Tioman and the Wavebreaker](#) ]



by Eric

### Tioman and the Wavebreaker

Tioman has always been an island that I said that I would visit all these years, but never did. I guess its something to do with familiarity, as I was better acquainted to the northern most east coast islands as oppose to the Tioman, and its surrounding islands. Then there were all those stories about unpredictable water visibility, too many visitors and dive traffic, and the general coral degradation due to use.

However, there are also those who stood by the beauty of Tioman, and although they concede that the human factor have had its toll on the islands, Tioman has still plenty of hidden jewels left. Tioman is the largest of the east coast coral islands, and lies due east of Malaysia's southern most state of Johor. Due to its general size and the availability of fresh water, it has attracted a lot of fishing activity and settlements. Even today, the settlements remain, although there is a 'no fish' zone around Tioman due to its status as a marine park, the fishing activity still takes place outside its boundaries. Unfortunately, conservation is not the top priority on the mind of a fisherman, and incursions into the marine park often take place.

#### The Marine Park Center

So, in 2005, I made it my plan to visit Tioman, and to at least give the island a chance to work its magic on me. The way to Tioman is relatively simple, and there are plenty of resources on the internet that will show you the right direction. There are relatively two easy ways to get to Tioman, by air and by road. Berjaya Air flies to the island everyday, but please check their site for the flight schedule. I have posted a simple road map from Kuala Lumpur to Tanjung Gemok via Bandar Muadzam Shah. This route is a joy to drive as it takes you through the heart of Malaysia but if it's the highway you prefer, then you best take the route to Kuantan, and then head south following the direction of Mersing.

The first visit was a stay over at the Tioman Marine Park Center, and to hang out with my cousin who worked with the park service. The center functions as an information center for visitors to Tioman Island, as well as a base and administrative HQ for the marine park service. Besides housing for the staff, the center also plays host to visiting researchers from international centers of learning as well as our local institutions of higher learning. The jetty of the park is frequented by many snorkelers throughout the calmer months, mostly their first encounter with coral fish.

The area around the jetty, called Tanjung Mesoh is used mainly for the study of coral formation on a variety of materials. The results from the research are used for designing better artificial reef balls. You can see the research units lying in relatively shallow water from the jetty itself. This area is largely a sand bank, and hence, relatively few coral live here. But just a quick swim from the jetty and lying in about 15 meters of water are a group of wrecks. They are largely medium sized local fishing boats, which were decommissioned and then sunk in a single file. As the hull and galley area disintegrate, the skeleton of the ships are becoming excellent shelters for fish life. So expect some surprises, I had managed to find several species of moray eels, and even caught some photos of nudibranchs.

The sand banks in the area also can yield some interesting finds. If you are a macro photography fan, searching the sand banks for large sea cucumbers (Bohadschia and Stichopus), you might chance upon some lovely Imperial Partner Shrimps as I have. The small coral patches also support many species of shrimps and crabs, and what seems common in this area among the spines of the sea urchins, the Long-snout Clingfish (Diademichthys Lineatus).

#### The Wavebreaker

MV Wavebreaker is a 65 feet long by 20 feet wide liveaboard vessel that navigates the Malaysia east coast waters during dive season. Its rooms are all air-conditioned, has electricity all day long and a maximum capacity of 20 divers. And this craft is what I chose to see more of Tioman Island's surrounding waters the second time round.

Although the trip was relatively pleasant, I would not term the Wavebreaker as a floating room of comforts. If I had to describe the Wavebreaker's amenities, one needs to have stayed in one of those cheap, no-frill chalets and A-Frame huts dotted across Long Beach in Perhentian Island. Take the room, the detached shared toilets, the kitchen and the general dining area and squeeze them all into 65 by 20 feet that floats, then you have the Wavebreaker. All you have going for you is the air-conditioning and the electricity that runs all day via a generator. If it is moderate luxury, or even some cleanliness you are looking for, this is not the place to be. But one thing this boat had going for her, the crew was attentive, and the food was yummy. There was not one moment did they not feed us well, and they did this constantly!

The pick-up point for the Wavebreaker is in Tanjung Gemok at a private jetty just across the road from the Tioman ferry terminal. Most people drive, where there are ample parking at the boat yards right next to the private jetty. The ship sails at midnight, and by the time you open your eyes after a good sleep (if that is possible), it's a beautiful dawn over your fist dive spot.

We spent most of the morning east of Teluk Teluran, Aur Island, in a shallow reef shoal that tops at 27 meters. But the wonderful surprise for the morning was not the fact that one woke over a beautiful reef, but the fact that there was a 6 meter Whale Shark circling below. It was a joy to everyone to have such an experience. The shark fed and stayed within ear shot of the boat for almost 3 hours.

For mid-afternoon, we shifted our diving over to Batu Ronchek (Rayner's Rock), with a swim out towards the deep revealing schools of Trevallys, Snappers and Fusiliers. The shallows were not short of sea-life as well, and gems revealed for the one with observant eye.

Next we cruised into the channel separating Dayang Island and Aur Island called Dayang Channel, anchoring just outside the main fishing village of Aur. Not much corals here, but the sandy bottom and sea grass fields harbor sea life different from that of a coral reef. Large Bluefin Trevallys patrol here, looking for an easy meal, but look around the concrete blocks that are used to anchor buoys. Very large Morays inhabit those hiding places.

For the dusk and night dives, we moved to Lang Island, due west just outside the Dayang Channel. There were schools of Arrowhead Squid there, attracted to lights of the boat. As with night dives, keep your eye out for a varied number of shrimps and crabs, and not to mention the sleeping Parrotfish and Triggers.

Over the night, the Wavebreaker set sail for Tioman waters toward Tokong Bahara (Bahara Rocks). Diving here was extremely rewarding, with health soft and hard corals. Being a pinnacle, fish of all sorts gather here in schools looking for feeding opportunities and shelter. The rock faces of the pinnacle also feature a wide variety of Nudibranchs and cleaner shrimps. Diving here was through the morning into late noon, before we moved further north to Chebeh Island. Chebeh Island is the northern most dive site of Tioman and features swim-throughs and caves.

For the final morning, we moved to Bird Rock (Tokong Burung). Look out for the terns nesting on the island though, they might swoop at you if you come too close but it's the bombs that they release at high altitude that one should worry. So, stay under a roof and out of the open. Visibility in this area is only moderate, but there are interesting coral formations on the rock wall. This area also attracts a lot of schooling fish, and hence the whole day is punctuated with feeding balls and squawking sea birds. There were even a large school of fish hiding underneath the boat!

Overall, Tioman still harbors a large variety of coral when compared to the islands of Perhentian and Redang. Along with the rich coral variety, comes the macro-life that accompany it. However, although the fish life are healthy and in large schools, they lack the size compared to the ones spotted in Perhentian and Redang. Diving will interest the young novice as well as the seasoned hobbyist, but the visibility seem to be a lot more unpredictable, but as with the first dive, when Tioman seeks to impress you, the visibility can be as good as 20 meters.

If you would like to share some experiences and even photos, please feel free to send them to us at [adventure-x-change](mailto:xcew@adventure-x-change.com). Mail us at [xcew@adventure-x-change.com](mailto:xcew@adventure-x-change.com)

### Photo View



Berjaya Air on landing approach over Tekek Beach.



The front of the information complex at Tioman Marine Park Center.



Tanjung Mesoh, where many can swim and feed the coral fish there.



Coral growth research structures under the Marine Park Jetty area.



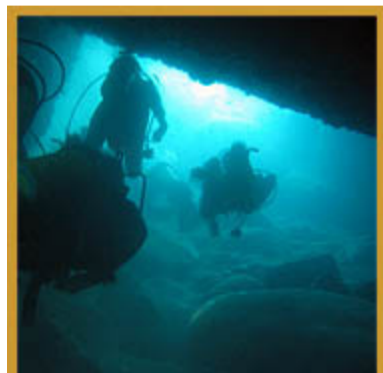
Imperial Partner Shrimp found on a Leopard Sea Cucumber.



MV Wavebreaker near Aur Island.



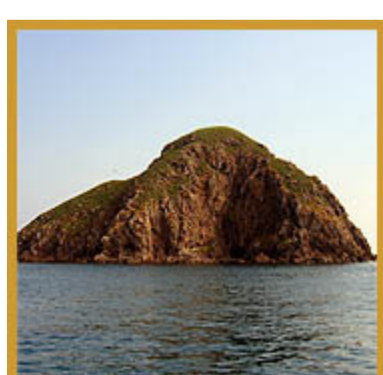
Whale Shark sighting.



One of the many swim-throughs divers can experience at Chebeh Island.



Sunsets that ever captivate.



Tokong Burung, which mean 'Bird Rock'.

### Photo Album

For more **photos** from this trip at the photo album, Click this [link](#) here.

### Resources

- PDF Route from KL to Tanjung Gemok**  
Directions to the Tioman Island Jetty.pdf (8.9 KB)
- PDF version of this page**  
pdf Wavebreaker05\_page.pdf 556 KB)
- Map of Dive Sites**  
Here and for Tioman [Here](#) and for Island click [here](#).

### Additional Links

- Canon Digital Camera Page**  
A very basic guide to underwater photography with your Canon digital camera
- Redang Island Rendezvous**  
One of the better non-aligned informational sites available on Redang Island by Alex and Joyce Kang.
- Sabah Tourism Board**  
Information about attractions in Sabah, and on the islands of Mabul, Kapalai, Sipadan and Matakang.
- Tioman Island Complete Guide**  
Very complete informational site about Tioman Island and its attractions.

