The Nongsa Point Marina was a hive of activity on the Friday of 5 June 2015, as eager participants and nearly a dozen yachts gathered for a sea cruise to the Anambas Archipelago (150 nautical miles northeast of Batam island, Indonesia). A preparatory meeting was held in the evening where everyone was briefed by Raffles Marina’s Marina Manager Ong Shean Boon, and Nongsa Point’s Marina Manager, Prakash Reddy. While float plans were distributed, the duo also answered questions from the participants as passports and papers were handed to the Immigration and Customs.

With all paperwork and preparatory work done, everyone relaxed and enjoyed the evening in the Marina. The following afternoon saw all travel documents returned complete with Visa on Arrival and Landing Permission: We were free to go cruising!

We departed into the very busy eastern half of the Singapore Strait with probably the greatest concentration of shipping in the world. We kept to starboard of the shipping lanes until close abeam to the northwest of Horsburgh Lighthouse, where we set a course of 054 degrees for Pulau Bawah, 145 miles distant.

Initially, traffic was heavy but by the time we had passed the many ships at anchor (some very large) on the extensive area with soundings of less than 50 metres, we were on our own, apart from the occasional fishing vessels and the distant ships. The sea was calm, the night was fine, visibility good and it was a pleasure to be at sea.
Dawn on 7 June saw us near Pulau Tokong Malang Biru to port, steering to pass Pulau Repong close to starboard. Soon after, the twin 134-metre-peaks of Pulau Bawah were seen. At 1030hrs we entered the narrow dredged channel in the reef keeping the plastic marker buoy close to port, then into the accessible lagoon on the southwestern side of the island and picked up a vacant mooring. We were the third yacht to arrive. During the day the rest of the fleet came in, some guided into the narrow entrance by Ong Shean Boon, the cruise manager.

Two pleasant nights were spent in beautiful Bawah. It has two main lagoons surrounded by reefs of rock and coral, the main island plus a slightly smaller one to the south, several islets and white beaches, comprising 100 hectares in total. On the eastern side there are extensive reefs and the ocean swells are breaking. We were on the western side.

A resort is under construction on the southern side of the main island. We responded to the request not to go ashore, as there were 230 men working on the island. The construction is on a narrow strip of flat land at the rear of the beach, adjacent to where we were moored. Although far from completion, the quality of the intended resort was evident, with native style buildings set amongst trees backing the beach, and five larger chalets against the rocky foreshore to the southwest. Up on a hill a short distance away were two sizeable buildings with attractive thatched roofs, apparently intended for reception and dining. There was still a lot to be done before the resort opens. We were told they plan to fly guests in by floatplane.

On the 9th we left Bawah and sailed north for Pulau Siantan, skirting by a number of islands on the way. It was wet and windy soon after departure, but then cleared to a beautiful tropical day. By the time we approached Siantan at 1500hrs it was flat calm. We cruised past the bay in which Tarempa, the administrative centre of Anambas, is located and headed for Tanjong Tebu where we anchored for port clearance. Formalities were soon completed and a quiet night at anchor and alongside was enjoyed by all.
Next morning, after swimming in the clear waters and having breakfast, we headed for Tarempa. With the deep steep sided bays where we had been anchored in Tanjong Tebu and at Tarempa, the buildings are on the narrow bit of flat land, on the steep land and on stilts out over the water. We again anchored Lady Jo and went in the dinghy in search of a landing, which we soon found using the many small ferry boats as a guide. We went ashore, leaving the dinghy tied up amongst other small craft lying adjacent to the ferry steps.

Off the ferry landing, the main street forms a T-junction with another street and both are narrow and crowded with motorcycles. The occasional four-wheeled vehicle would pass but they were mainly service vehicles. By far the main means of transport was two-wheeled, some carrying an adult and three children. Footpaths at the side of the crowded streets were covered in goods, so we walked along the narrow strip at the edge of many parked motorcycles. After getting skipper David Haines’ hair cut and purchasing a few items, we enjoyed a low cost lunch in a restaurant next to the ferry landing.

Although we were not able to communicate in Bahasa Indonesia, we were impressed by the smiling friendliness of the people. Upon coming ashore I was approached by a man who spoke good English, said he worked in the oil industry – with Conoco Philips for 30 years – and was living on a neighbouring island. He had come to Tarempa to shop and was waiting for a boat to take him home.

The morning of the 11th was spent taking the yacht up through the reefs to the east for about 10 kilometres where we anchored. We used the dinghy to go in to see the waterfall. From that perspective we caught glimpses of water running down from a height by the side of the hill, but there was none on the lower part. It appeared that the nearby village takes their water supply from about halfway up and none was left to overflow from a small lake onto the lower part. There was no point in going ashore so we returned to Lady Jo.

After lunch we headed west, back through the reefs, past the anchorage at Tanjong Tebu and on to Pulau Durai, about 12 nautical miles to the northwest of Pulau Siantan. The plan was to rendezvous with
the lead yacht *Lady Olivia*. When we arrived at 1600 hours, we found the latter anchored on the north side of the island with three other yachts in a calm anchorage. However, the nearby foreshore is steep and rocky, so we went around to the southeastern side and anchored off a beach where we could see the tracks of turtles in the sand. There were a few buildings among the coconut palms, for the people protecting the turtle eggs. We rolled in the gentle swell and were comfortable. There was one other yacht anchored.

Next morning I transferred to *Lady Olivia*, as *Lady Jo* was to remain in the Anambas longer, and I needed to be back in Singapore for a meeting. We set off for Nongsa Point Marina on a clear, hot morning, but during the afternoon the weather deteriorated and rough weather – for us – was encountered throughout the night and until arrival at Nongsa. There, our passports were handed in, to be returned the next day, when we went across the Singapore Strait to Raffles Marina.

It was a very enjoyable cruise and my heartfelt thanks to Raffles Marina and staff for organising it.

The next ABA Anambas Cruise will take place during the June holidays from 3 to 12 June 2016. Please refer to page 24 for more details.