



EXPEDITION DIARY Musandam 2011

By Rossella Meloni

7 October

Welcome to the first diary entry for the 2011 Musandam expedition. My name is Rossella Meloni and I will be your expedition leader for this project.

I am writing to you from Muscat, the capital of Oman, where I am getting the last things ready before flying to Dubai to meet you there in a few days (see also short video on www.facebook.com/biosphere.expeditions1; remember you do not need to have a Facebook account yourself to see this; just click on the link and go to the "Wall").

One of the pre-expeditions jobs is to prepare an itinerary (attached). As you can see, it's a packed schedule, especially on the first three days with lots of training and some tests before we let you loose on the reef, collecting data and experiencing conservation in action. No doubt you'll need a holiday after the expedition ;) but please try to come rested and fresh, ready for the challenges ahead.

No doubt you must be really excited by now and if you are anything like me ahead of an adventure you are probably all packed and ready to go (and maybe have been for a week).

In all the anticipation please make sure you do your last checks: ensure your PADI medical statements are in order (or no jumping off the deck with a reg. in your mouth for you!), that your dive gear is working and you have all your travel documents ready.

Finally my mobile number during the expedition will be +968 97005916. Remember that this is for emergency purposes only (such as being late for assembly, for example). Safe travels and see you all at the Holiday Inn Express Jumeira on 9 October at 09:00 (please be on time!).

Best wishes,

Rossella

P.S. This diary is now also on www.biosphere-expeditions.org/diaries and excerpts of it are also on www.facebook.com/biosphere.expeditions1, so please feel free to pass this on to your families & friends for updates on what we are up to.

11 October

Greetings from the MS Sindbad. All is good in the world of Poseidon.

We have had an eventful beginning with the weather trying some tricks on us and some rain on the menu (can you believe we are in the Gulf?) but we kept the ball rolling, managed to fit practice dives in and have now reached the end of our training days. Everybody's been learning like a sponge and the results have shown in the tests - we have a team with lots of Reef Check stars! Everyone is looking forward to the first transect dives tomorrow. We are now stationed in the bay of Khumzar a tiny coastal village where we have been very pleased to see the locals doing some creative re-using and recycling of polystyrene boxes.

16 October

As the saying goes, "all good things must come to an end", so too has our Musandam expedition for 2011.

We disembarked the MS Sindbad on Saturday, said goodbye to some of the volunteers who were leaving us in Khasab, then made our way back to Dubai and on separate ways.

It's been a memorable week and it was great to see such a diverse group of individuals increasingly bonding together while working as a team. During the week and up until the end there was no shortage of funny moments. Just to mention a couple here, such as Elliott, our bursary student sponsored by the Anglo-Omani Society, who one night started to mumble "Reef Check, Reef Check" in his sleep; or Dana, our bubbly Italian volunteer, who on the last day, after a shoeless week, forgot to keep some foot-wear handy before having the bag loaded onto the bus and ended up wandering bare foot through border posts and gas station shops all the way to Dubai (and all this on top of leaving her passport behind on the dhow. What an adventure!).

As you can imagine it was sad to say our goodbyes, but it is great to know that everybody has had a great time, has learnt lots of new skills and has taken away lots of great memories, while contributing to an important and worthwhile cause. As I am writing, some will have already reached home, some are still journeying homeward-bound, while others will have moved on to their next journey.

I would like to take this occasion to once again thank all our volunteers, our scientist Rita and the crew from MS Sindbad for being such a fantastic group. I hope to see you all again on one of our expeditions soon.

All the best.

Rossella