

Sequoia owners Yessi Sari & Kevin Corcoran

FAMILY TIME

At 86ft, Sequoia refreshed the Indonesian charter market by offering a luxurious yet intimate platform for exploration. Then Covid took the wind out of the market. Now with travel reopening, the luxurious three-cabin wooden schooner celebrates her fifth birthday by again welcoming guests looking for “an experience of a lifetime in a private setting”.

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Sequoia has added a master cabin and a library on the top deck since the above photo was taken; she charts in Komodo in the summer before heading east for winter

Fresh from a refit ahead of her fifth birthday in September, the 26m *Sequoia* is enjoying a second wind as one of Indonesia's leading luxury charter yachts, having had a two-year lull due to the pandemic.

The wooden schooner is again plying her trade in and around Komodo National Park from May to October before heading east to Raja Ampat and surrounding regions for the winter season, from November to March.

Yessi Maya Sari, who owns *Sequoia* and Coral Triangle Safaris with her husband Kevin Corcoran, is relieved and delighted to see her beloved yacht and its 10-strong crew sailing again and doing what they do best – revealing Indonesia's most spectacular coastal scenery to families or small groups.

"The greatest reward of owning *Sequoia* has been seeing the joy brought to families as they explore and connect to these precious reefs. The lack of tourism for the past two years was a down side, but fortunately the world has now largely opened up again and we're almost where we were before Covid," says Yessi, who was born and raised in Sumatra, among the largest of Indonesia's 18,000 islands.

"We offer a product and service that's attractive to a specific niche, as *Sequoia* is one of only a few three-cabin wooden yachts for parties of six or less. We cater to ultra-high end clients looking for a connection to nature and their loved ones. In the end, it's life's experiences and not material things that bring joy. More than ever, we're aware that experiences with those we love are what really matter most in life."

LABOUR OF LOVE

A Certified Public Accountant, Yessi began her career at Johnson and Johnson, later working at L'Oreal, and Unilever, while also becoming increasingly interested in adventure travel, whether it was hiking Everest, skiing in the Rockies or scuba diving in Southeast Asia's Coral Triangle, the latter inspiring the name of their company.

"I enjoyed my work, but I came to realise that my true passion was exploration of remote parts of the globe. This led Kevin and I to found Coral Triangle Safaris and build *Sequoia*. We believe our product is unmatched and can provide a family with an experience of a lifetime in a private setting."

Kevin, who hails from Syracuse in New York state, worked in the implantable medical device market, bringing new technologies to market, and said his career helped the couple look ahead to the growing emphasis on experiences and exploration for discerning travellers.

"I was fortunate to be able work with some of the world's most innovative doctors and I learned to work towards understanding future demand," he says. "In the case of our business, it may be that families are bored of going to luxury hotels and staring at their computer or phone. They now appear to be favouring more adventurous and active experiences that connect them to nature and each other."



Sequoia offers luxury accommodation in the Sky Suite (left) on the top deck, and Island Suite (middle) and Ocean Suite (right) on the main deck



The Great Room (left) on the main deck is typically used for breakfast; the sky deck (right) is a favourite hangout during the day

Designed for eco-conscious cruising, the hardwood yacht was hand-crafted by the Konjo boatbuilders over four years, yet with an American emphasis on safety and sustainability.

Sequoia remains the only yacht in Indonesian waters built to US Coast Guard Safety Standards, and all components, including a low-consumption John Deere engine, generators and sanitation systems, were imported from the US. Completed in September 2017, the yacht conforms to EPA Tier 2 and Tier 3 emissions limits, while no single-use plastics are permitted.

"Our goal was to allow families to explore the world's most pristine and biodiverse reefs in comfort and safety. It took over four years to complete because we took our time to build a classic, heirloom wooden yacht for future generations to enjoy," Yessi says.

"*Sequoia* is like an ultra-luxury Swiss chalet on water. Although purposely modest in size at 86ft, it's one of the most sophisticated, luxurious wooden yachts in Southeast Asia. Many of our guests never imagined that a wooden boat could be so comfortable and luxurious."

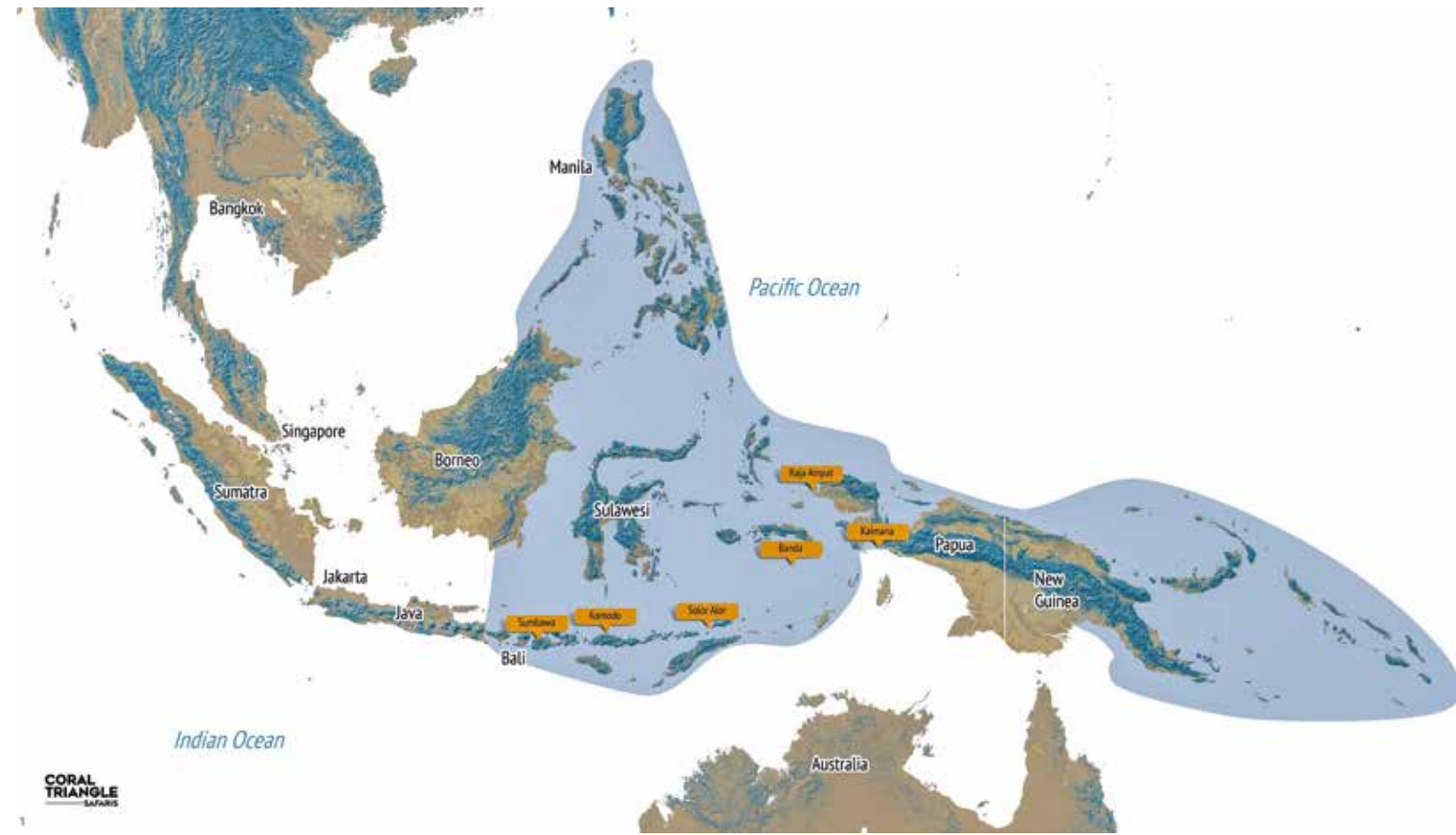
REACHING FOR THE SKY

In fact, *Sequoia*'s modest size also enables a shallow draft of just 2m, enabling the yacht to cruise closer to beaches and mangroves that may be out of reach for large phinisis with a draft of over 3m or even 4m.

Sequoia's experienced Indonesian crew include several who have been with the yacht all her life. Depending on the guests' desired activities and itinerary, the roster can include a cruise manager, butler, master therapist for spa treatments and a dive master.



Sequoia offers plenty of activities on and around the yacht, including cooking classes, children's activities, paddleboarding, water-skiing and tube riding



Produced by Coral Triangle Safaris, the map shows some key cruising destinations in the Lesser Sunda Islands for summer and eastern Indonesia in the winter

The yacht is equipped with a Bauer Dive Mate air compressor and 10 full sets of new scuba and snorkelling gear, including children's sizes, while PADI Scuba Diving courses are included in the weekly charter rate, which starts from about US\$59,000.

For many guests, chartering *Sequoia* is a once-in-a-lifetime occasion and ties in with a major family celebration such as an anniversary or birthday or even a child's graduation.

"Many of our guests have already been to the finest hotels and resorts, so are looking for a deeper, more meaningful holiday," Yessi says. "Our typical guest profile is an active family of four ready to travel to the other side of the planet to experience coastal waters and dive sites that look like *Finding Nemo*."

The all-wooden *Sequoia* provides a warm, welcoming home for a week or longer. Life for guests revolves around the main and upper decks, with the lower level dedicated to technical areas.

On the main deck, the central 'Great Room' is a cosy, covered alfresco dining area that sits beside the main galley and between two of the three en-suite guest cabins. Aft is the Island Suite, entered by an elegant, curved staircase, while forward is the Ocean Suite, which has an aft-facing bed.

The upper deck is also known as the sky deck and is home to the aft Sky Suite. Forward is *Sequoia's* iconic sky dining area featuring two large circular loungers with folding canopies along with tables that can be set up for snacks, cocktails or full meals.

In the evening, the sky deck can be set up as an outdoor cinema for movies under the stars, offering a stunning setting to watch *Finding Nemo* or *Finding Dori* if you haven't had enough of the underwater world.

Further forward are stairs down to the foredeck or 'middle deck', another great outdoor area that has space for sunbeds, while down a couple more steps are more seating areas in the bow.

"We were extremely thoughtful in how we utilise space. Although we're on the small side with only three large suites for up to six guests, there are no wasted spaces. Guests have multiple areas to dine, relax and connect, including a spa area and stunning outdoor dining areas," Yessi says.

"We're focused on a very specific market that places high value on comfort, luxury and unique experiences. For small families, we've created an intimate setting that can't be found even in the top-end resorts or other yachts. Also, *Sequoia* moves every day, creating entirely different landscapes, seascapes and experiences for guests."



The Coral Triangle offers the world's most colourful and diverse marine life, with whale sharks a common sight



Kayaking is a nice way to explore coastlines and reach beaches offering pure white sand and clear waters

FUN ON AND IN THE WATER

As proud as they are of *Sequoia*, the owners are most proud of the experiences she offers. Onboard activities can range from cooking classes to arts and crafts activities for kids, while there are a huge number of toys suitable for both adults and children.

The toy store includes inflatable kayaks and paddleboards, with waterskis and a two-person inflatable tube among high-adrenaline activities led by the 21ft Boston Whaler tender. Fishing is also available where permitted.

Underwater exploration is arguably the highlight of any holiday, with the dive instructor managing a full dive centre in one of the world's best regions for diversity of marine life, whether you're chartering in summer or winter. As Indonesia straddles the equator, yachts can sail pretty much sail and charter year-round, with April typically allocated for *Sequoia's* annual maintenance.

The popular summer hub is Komodo National Park, about 200nm east

of Bali. A UNESCO World Heritage Site and among the New 7 Wonders of Nature, it's well known for its namesake dragons and on-land attractions while also being ranked among the globe's best for coral and marine life, with over 60 dive sites.

To the west, also among the Lesser Sunda Islands, is Sumbawa, home to Mount Tambora crater, site of the largest eruption in modern history. East of Komodo is Solor Alor, a chain of 95 islands with over 70 dive sites in an area boasting 1,200 species of coral reef fish and 500 species of colourful coral.

Come winter, Raja Ampat in West Papua province is among the most popular destinations. The 'Amazon of the Sea' is widely recognised as one of the world's top dive locations, with the most biodiverse marine life.

Guests can also head southeast to Kaimana and Triton Bay for more exceptional diving, including with whale sharks, then west to Maluku province and the Banda Islands, where the renowned 'Spice Islands' offer great underwater life but also great insight into the country's history of trade



As well as beach time, land activities can include walks through rainforests and up mountains, as well as cultural visits to local villages



Dining can be arranged informally or formally on a beach or on the yacht, where the sky deck provides a spectacular venue in the evening

and its colonial era.

“Komodo National Park and Raja Ampat/West Papua are considered the most spectacular dive and snorkel locations on earth,” Yessi says. “In either of these world-renowned venues, the kaleidoscope of colours found in both the soft and hard coral and schools of fish is incomparable.”

Land activities are also diverse and can include paddling or kayaking around coastlines featuring macaque monkeys and flying foxes, exploring tropical rainforests, birdwatching and hikes up mountains and volcanoes.

Coral Triangle Safaris can also arrange cultural experiences with village communities, as well as picnics and romantic dinners on a beach. It all depends on what guests want to do.

“Guests can customise their daily schedule and there are multiple activities for all to enjoy both above and below the water line,” Yessi continues. “The coral reefs in these multi-million-hectare national parks are the main attraction but island cultural visits, exploring islands by speedboat, and sampling some of the world’s finest cuisine also rank highly.”

GOOD TASTE

The meals prepared by *Sequoia*’s chef are of the highest order and typically involve the sourcing of fresh, local ingredients, many of which are found in the surrounding seas.

The cuisine is matched by the settings. Just imagine dining alfresco on the sky deck and enjoying otak-otak (ground fish with spices in banana leaf)

as a starter and prawn sambal for mains. It’s as good as it sounds.

Like everything on the charter, the menu is designed around guests, with all diets catered for. Furthermore, *Sequoia*’s all-inclusive rate includes wine and spirits, with an additional wine cellar stocked with vintages from the Napa Valley and Burgundy.

“The culinary experience aboard *Sequoia* is unmatched and a critical aspect of our success. Our guests have dined in the best restaurants in the world, so the bar is high,” Yessi says.

“We’ve invested heavily in this aspect, with a state-of-the-art kitchen, employing five-star chefs and using the finest ingredients available. Our menu is crafted with some of the leading chefs in Indonesia. The availability of unique ingredients, particularly fish and spices, means *Sequoia* offers a perfect venue to create world-class dishes.”

All in all, *Sequoia* allows guests to do as little or as much as they want, with the emphasis on spending quality time together, whether it’s on the yacht, in a kayak, on a beach, in the water or up a mountain.

“As we offer highly customised ‘sea safaris’, we first understand what the guests hope to experience, then adjust our staff, itinerary and activities,” Yessi says. “Ultimately, our greatest achievement is bringing families together to enjoy brilliantly coloured reefs and fish, seascapes of unimaginable beauty, exotic dishes and a cinema under the stars.” ✈

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Enjoying a movie under the stars is one of *Sequoia*’s signature attractions and can provide an ideal end to a full day of activities