

# SEVENSEAS

MARINE CONSERVATION & TRAVEL

MAY 1, 2016 | ISSUE no 12

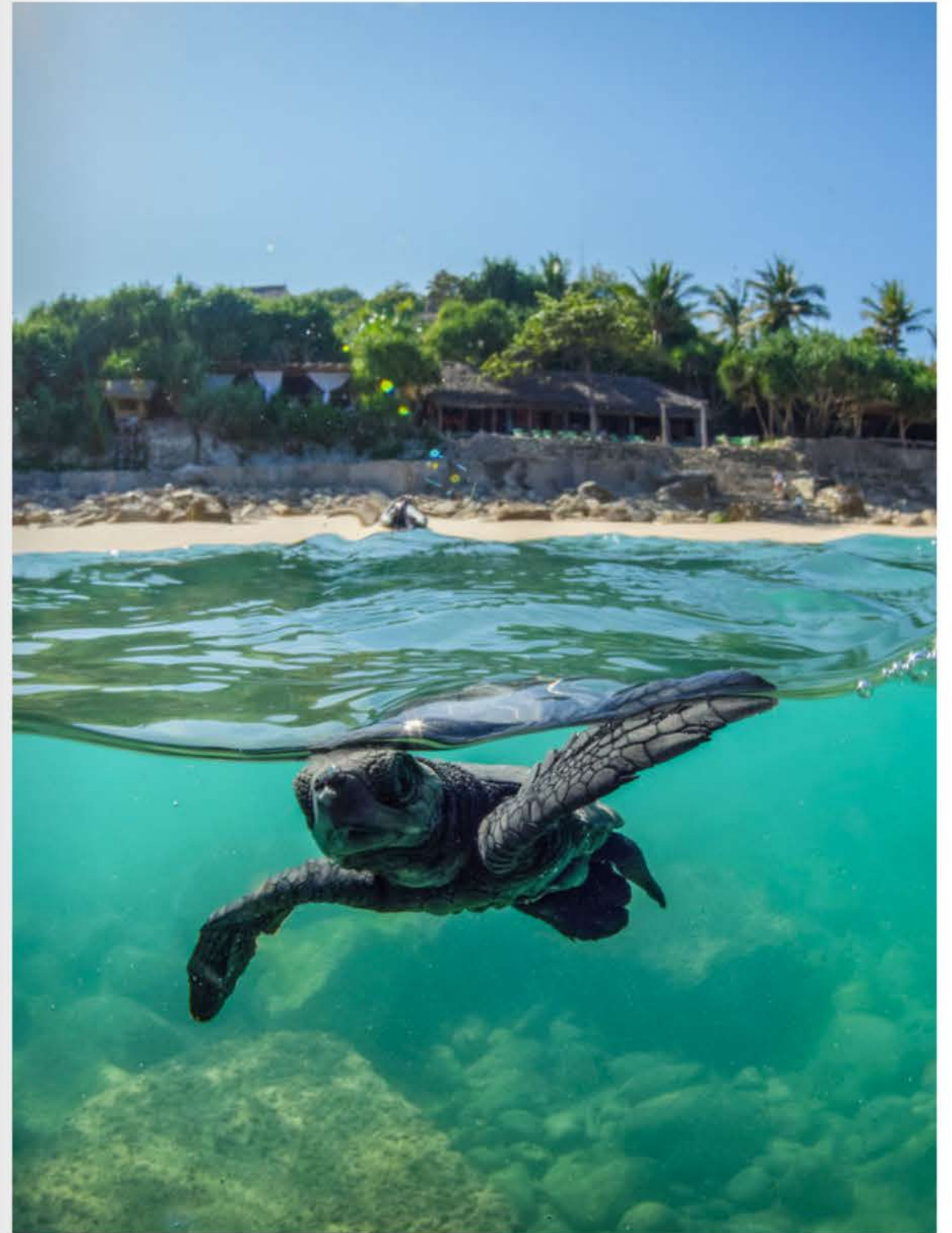
## Haiti

The Coral Triangle  
Oyster Farming in the Chesapeake  
Chumbe Island Coral Park  
Hammerhead Shark Conservation

# T U R T L E R E L E A S E

Creating an image for social media

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### THE CONCEPT

I had the mission to create a high impact image for Nihiwatu to use on social media and advertising print. It couldn't be just another guy surfing, or a beautiful lady having a sunset cocktail by the pool. It had to be something new. Everybody loves turtles, so I came up with the idea of a baby turtle shot, but swimming. Of course it had to be related to the resort, so it had to be on the frame, somehow.

Turtle releases happen roughly on a weekly basis (within season) - Nihiwatu, on an effort to deter turtle egg consumption, buys the eggs from locals, and hatches them, releasing the babies on favourable conditions. So my main goal was to get a turtle swimming into the sea, in one of those releases, like if it was saying goodbye to its temporary shelter.

### THE TECHNIQUE

The idea was near impossible to execute. The turtle must be in focus and so does the background - that required a huge depth of field. Turtle is underwater, and the resort is out, meaning different light intensities and temperatures. Nothing stands still: these fellows move fast, and I didn't want to block their way into freedom. Nihiwatu is a famous surf spot, and there are currents as well, so no way I could align the camera with the surface for a split. (Most guys use their BDC's half full for that purpose, but here I couldn't even swim!)

I had my Nikon D7200, a Tokina 10-17 fisheye lens, a Nauticam NA-D7100 housing, and a 9" Sea & Sea acrylic dome. I thought on using strobes, to freeze action and even light intensities, but it wasn't doable since: a) the strobes wouldn't stay where they should, no matter of how hard I'd tighten the the arms' clamps. b) As the surf stirs the sandy bottom, backscatter would be just too much. d) Flash sync is just 1/250, and water movement demanded a lot more shutter speed. On a split shot, there's a lot of sunlight. So, even if I could freeze the shady bottom areas with strobe light, the upper turtle shell would still be blurred. No strobes, therefore.

And what about the surf itself? You cannot just dip half of the dome underwater, and do the shot. You need to have it fully submerged, raise it

halfway, shoot (while the upper half of the dome is still covered with a thin layer of water), and dip it again. You avoid droplets by previously covering the whole dome with saliva and letting it dry in the sun. There are forums on people discussing what you should and should not eat to get the best quality saliva....

If you do it properly, maybe you can afford a good half an hour shooting session. The bigger the dome, the more saliva you need, but also the more easier it is to align with the surface. would't even bother to try this shot with dome smaller than 8".

Everything must be pre-set prior to shooting. Zoom is at 10mm, for D.O.F., so objects look near 8 times smaller than reality! Baby turtles are already small, so they needed to be really near - about 3 cm from the dome, and that's where I focused. Shutter speed is the highest possible, to freeze motion - 1/640 was barely enough. Aperture is the smallest (again, for D.O.F.), just before lens diffraction and ISO (needed for a correct exposure) degraded the image too much. This meant f/18 and 1800 ISO.

I slightly overexposed the upper part. Then, on post, I lowered the whites and highlights, and raised the shadows and blacks. I couldn't push the camera's ISO limits while shooting, in order to have a margin to deal with, later. The same with white balance. It's originally set to be too magenta and blue on surface, so it's "sort of" correct underwater. It's easier to remove the excessive reds on post than to add them. On an ideal world, we would have a neutral density graduate filter to reduce the excess light on surface, and a red filter to correct the water colour - but that's assuming I had a straight line dividing up and down, and quiet waters...

For shooting I stood on my feet, no fins, at 1 meter depth. As the baby turtles start-ed coming in, I picked one and followed its way into the ocean, dipping and taking the dome out while burst shooting. No way I could see through the viewfinder. Shot blind, and prayed for the best. After the current took it away, I picked another one and repeated... Only after finished, I looked at the rear screen, and realised I got one or two keepers.



## THE RESULT

It's not just getting a turtle focused and framed, with the resort on the background. The turtle also needs to look cool! So, after a pre selection, picked the best one, processed and uploaded on Instagram. 10 viewers liked it and reposted. Overall, it got over 5400 likes, and it was seen by more than 275.000 persons. I don't have statistics for Facebook, but it should add some more thousands. Also it's being regularly seen on Nihiwatu website, TripAdvisor, British Polo Day blog, and some online travel agents. I heard it's coming on a printed advert, soon... And it has been a source of inspiration for many photographers and Go Pro users, who've been willing to replicate the same setting, and posting

on the social media, as well.

As for the readers starting on underwater photography, I hope this is a source of inspiration. The first rule is: get to know your gear, so you can push its limits! Practice, do pool sessions, read and learn. Don't rush into buying a full-frame camera, just because others do. All cameras have pros and cons (being the wider depth of field a nice bonus, on APS-C sensors, like D7200's) Think about the image itself, not about pixels - most of my best images are not at all sharp - nobody's gonna see them at 100%, anyway! Think out of the box, do the undoable, but most of all: Have fun!

## Alexandre Ribeiro dos Santos, PhD.

Born in 1974 in Lisbon, Portugal. A former college teacher, organic farmer and novelist, left his country in 2014 to embrace a travelling and diving adventure in Southeast Asia. He has travelled Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, and chose Indonesia for the longest staying, working as a diver and freelance photographer. His cooperation with Nihiwatu resort, in Sumba, has given him international projection, with images published in many luxury magazines, including Architectural Digest (USA), Condé Nast (UK), Tatler and Baccarat (Hong Kong), DestinAsian (Indonesia) and Harper's Bazaar. Check his work at [alexcoolpics.com](http://alexcoolpics.com) or [facebook.com/alexcoolpics](https://facebook.com/alexcoolpics)



### Photographs by Alexandre:

**Page 17** Turtle is in decent focus and so is the resort, with some families on the beach. The sand and rocks in the bottom can also be seen. Water and turtle have some movement. This was my first choice.

**Page 18:** The beginning of a life time journey, for the baby turtles - straight out of the basket!

**Page 20** A second best. It would be the best for a turtle close-up. Maybe good enough for a sever crop, but there is nothing going on, at the resort, which is also blurred.

**Left:** Nihiwatu resort, and the beach where it all happened. Ain't no quiet waters down there.