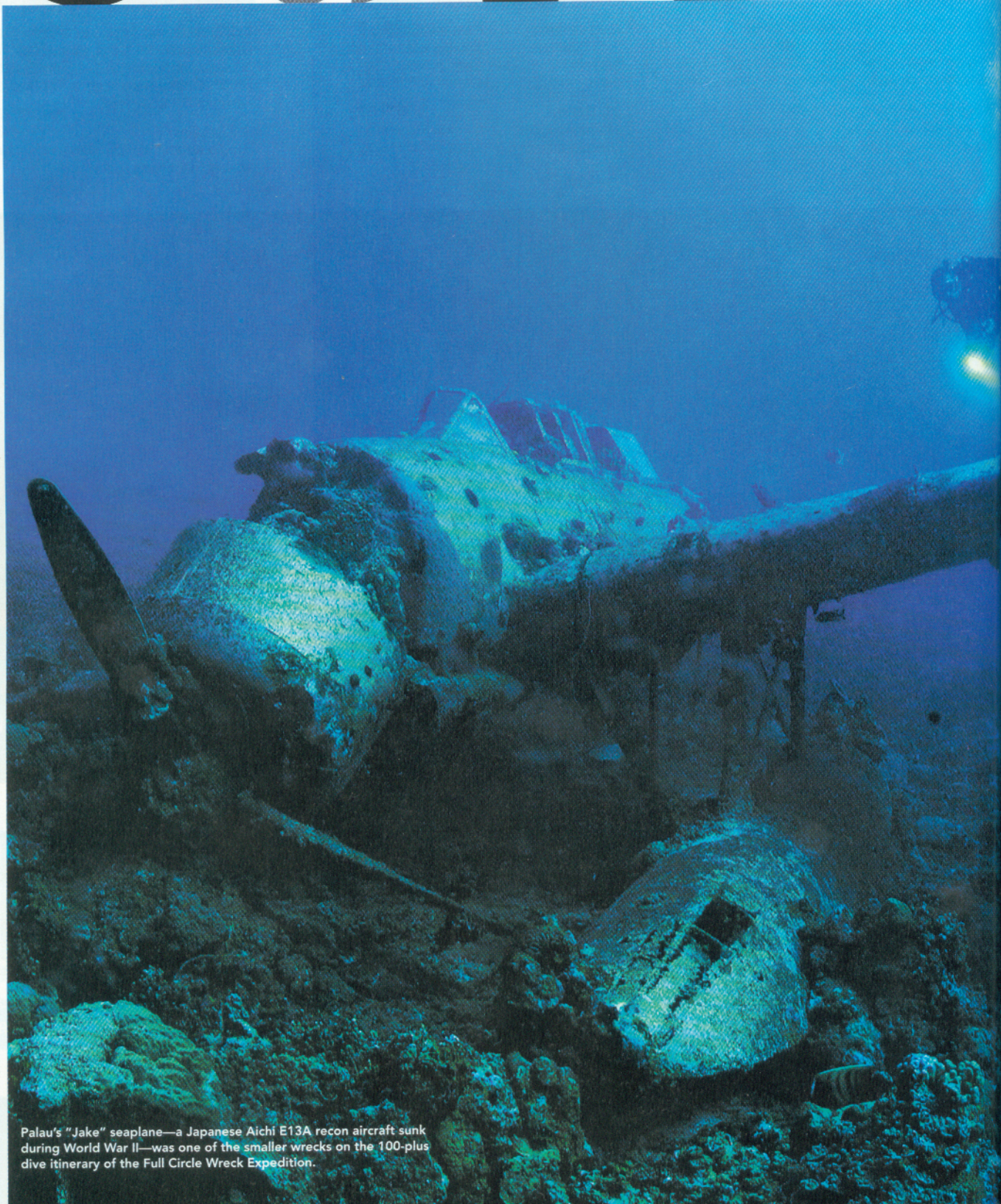
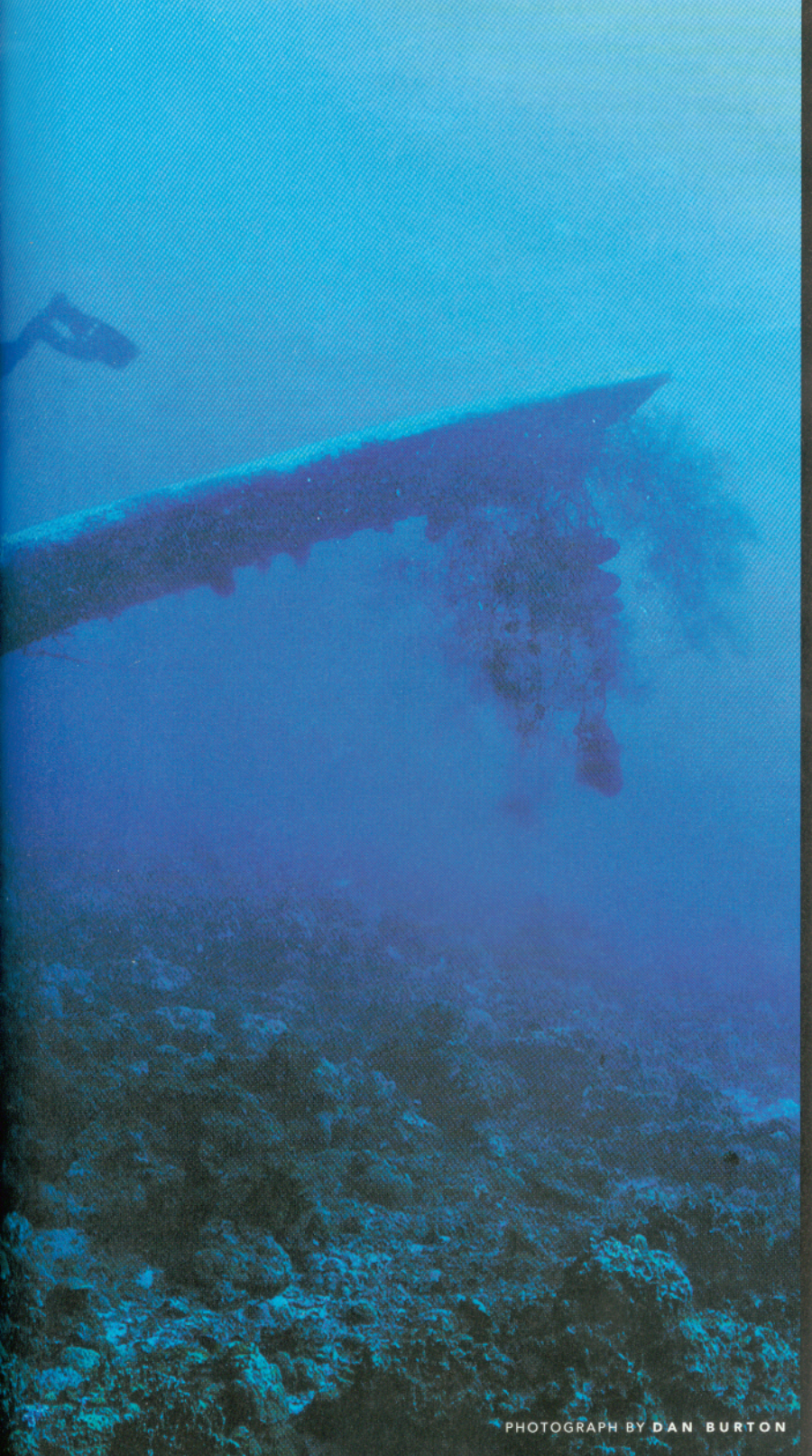


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Palau's "Jake" seaplane—a Japanese Aichi E13A recon aircraft sunk during World War II—was one of the smaller wrecks on the 100-plus dive itinerary of the Full Circle Wreck Expedition.

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(TRAVEL)

Around the World in 100 Dives

Depending on your perspective, it was either the ultimate wreck diving vacation, or the endless trip from hell. At times, it was probably both.

Last fall, eight intrepid divers ponied up \$23,000, then left their homes, jobs and families for two-and-a-half months in search of some of the world's greatest shipwrecks. The Full Circle Wreck Expedition left London in October and headed roughly east, passing through the North Sea, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the South Pacific and the Coral Sea before ending up in the Caribbean on the wreck of the *Bianca C* off Grenada.

In all, the divers made more than 100 dives on such storied wrecks as the 624-foot cruise liner *President Coolidge* in Vanuatu and the World War II freighter *Thistlegorm* in the Red Sea. On the wreck of the *Lementov* in New Zealand, the group shared the water with a pod of curious killer whales.

But it wasn't all action and adventure. Each diver was allowed just two bags for all their clothes, cameras and dive gear for the entire trip, which encompassed 38 international flights and all the usual travel hassles.

"There's kind of two elements to these trips," says expedition leader Monty Halls. "There's the fantastically exciting, once-in-a-lifetime experience of brushing the flank of a great white shark as it swims past you or seeing dolphins or experiencing the incredible wrecks. But there's also sitting on your suitcase in the Manila airport at three in the morning with a slightly dodgy tummy and someone else on the expedition getting on your nerves."

Sound like fun? Halls and his team are offering another round-the-world adventure this fall. To find out more, visit www.fullcircle-expeditions.com. —MICHAEL JORDAN