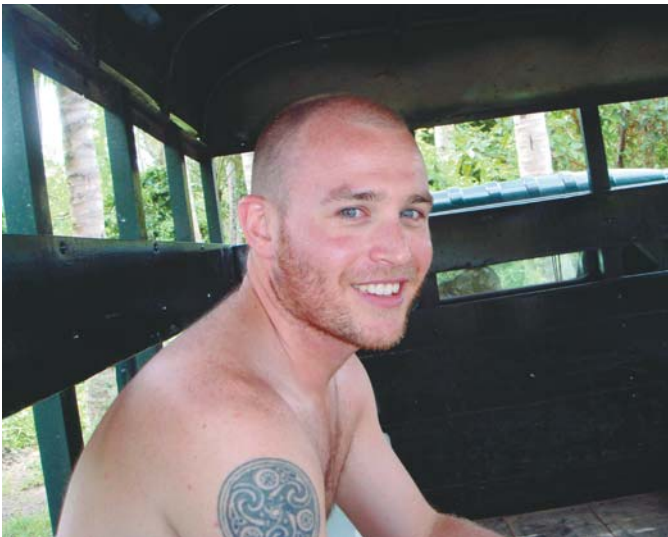


LOCAL MAN SAVES BACKPACKER IN BALI FERRY SINKING DRAMA

Tourists cling to life in rough seas

EXCLUSIVE



Daniel and Adele

When Daniel Ratliff from Pukekohe set out with his partner Adele De Robertis and a boatload of backpackers to return to Bali after a wonderful time on off shore islands, he could not have imagined that they would undergo a life changing experience when they were all left swimming for their lives in big seas - then struggling through pounding surf to reach safety. Daniel's rapid and courageous actions on the boat saved a young English woman from certain death.

Daniel's story: I was raised in Pukekohe and spent around 20 years of my life there. I have many friends and family living there still, hello to you all.

My partner and I were due to fly out in two days after having spent a month in Indonesia. We were returning to Bali after spending time on a small island named Gili Trawangan. The Gili islands are a chain of islands that run north of Lombok.

The ferry we boarded was a power boat around 40 ft and designed to carry around 35 people. On this day the ferry company decided to carry an extra 8 people. Adele and I were seated towards the front of the ferry. The sea was calm to begin with but as we reached open water we started to hit waves at speed, rise up and land with impact. This continued for around an hour and a half. Having been in rough sea before I wasn't really bothered by this, in fact I was asleep but other people were a bit worried, crying out with every large impact.

After one larger than normal bang the ferry lost power. At this stage we were about 2km from Bali's coastline. After about 15min of reasonably tense drifting and panicked crew members, the ferry rolled slightly to the left and water started to enter the cabin through a storage compartment door directly in front of where we

were seated. The hull had cracked. This was probably due to either the continued impact with extra weight, or we had hit floating debris. The water came in slowly at first then began to gush. This was when people started to panic a little. An older couple were trying to clamber out the window next to us, it very quickly became an obstacle course of floating bags, raised centre boards, yellow life jackets and scared tourists. Adele had made it out before me and was already on top of the ferry with everyone else.

I made it out the exit but noticed a woman behind me was being shut in by one of the crew who thought I was the last out. I shouted "no no! One more, one more!" By then the back half of the ferry was submerging quickly. We got the door open again and water rushed in, I grabbed her life jacket, she lurched forward hitting her head on the doorway beam. I slid over but managed to get my foot between myself and the door. The ferry rocked backwards enabling us to get to one side and out.

Some people had decided to swim for it. Others were clinging to either of the two large preservers. Several people couldn't swim and were very vocal about it, they were all helped. About one minute after I jumped from the ferry it went nose first straight down with everyone's gear.

It took about an hour of slow paddling through big seas, clinging to the preserver, to get ashore. The current had pulled us for some distance along the coast line. The other preserver with people was pulled out to sea and later picked up by local fishermen. We neared the beach to see there was a decent size shore break crashing onto a sloped shoreline. As the group Adele and I were with drifted in we missed a long rocky sea wall by about 50meters. That would have been a mess because the surf was pounding it. A couple of local men swam out and helped guide in our preserver. > page 22