

the "Palapa Club" rooms for just a few extra dollars, and enjoy. Oh my gosh... to be young again!

**Solmar V, August 2005, Steve Maguire (smaguire8587@yahoo.com), Columbus, OH.** Experience: 251-500 dives.

Vis: 30 to 70 Feet. Water: 85 to 75 F, calm. We encountered sea lions at three locations, the biggest colony was at Los Islotes. The young sea lions were eager to cavort with divers. They would chew playfully on fingers, fins, and cameras if given the chance, and encouraging them with your own acrobatics made them even more entertaining. One day we skipped two afternoon dives to look for reported whale sharks in La Paz Bay and spent several hours snorkeling with them from the boat's pangas. There were no hammerheads at El Bajo, but the site is good without them. There were hundreds of green morays with up to five in crevices. Most sites featured clouds of schooling fish that range from small to medium sized, getting progressively larger as you get away from the structure. It was a profusion of life.

Most things were in larger numbers and sizes than their Caribbean counterparts, with quite a few. The boat was comfortable, though the air conditioning was pushed to its limits. My cabin was usually warmer than I would like it until the middle of the night when the cabin ac finally caught up. The crew and the food were up to luxury live-aboard standards. The dive deck was well laid out, except the last four spots on each side. I was assigned one of these stations, where the main cabin started and we were on the outside walkway, and on the other side of us was the wetsuit

storage. Each time I leaned down to reach my gear, I would have to stop to let somebody through to their wetsuit. But the divemasters were good, and the diving was great. We hit some distinct thermoclines on many dives, usually below 60 feet, but surface temps were in the mid-80s. With storage in the cabins scarce, pack lighter than usual for a live-aboard. The camera table was crowded, and there were only four working outlets, but only two were never used. Most overcrowding came from strobe arms not being folded down. Two big camera rinse tanks, although at least once one dunked their wetsuit in the camera bucket as my housing was soaking. Most people had photo gear there was no damage reported on the crowded surface of the table.

## UNITED STATES

### Alaska

**Nautilus Explorer, July 2005, Rich Orman (richorman@comcast.net),**

**Aurora, CO.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 20 to 70 Feet. Water: 45 to 52 F, calm, choppy, surge, currents, no currents. We did a 7-day Juneau Alaska-Prince Rupert, British Columbia trip. All the diving took place in Alaska, a wonderful experience. The boat is perfectly designed. Most diving is done from a skiff, which also has a wonderful design, complete with four entry-exit points, and a recessed handrail running down the outside of both gunwales so you can hang on while waiting for a ladder or having a divemaster pull off

your fins. Incredible amount of life and beauty in the waters of Alaska. The dives consisted of a variety of wrecks and reefs. We had five days of diving, and I logged 13 dives. One day was devoted to Tracy Arms, a beautiful fjord with a tidewater glacier at the end. We put on our dry suits and snorkeled with the icebergs that had calved off the glacier. How many liveboards can boast that kind of activity? There was plenty for my nondiving spouse to do, including kayaking and bear-watching trips. The accommodations were great, and the food was tasty and plentiful. They don't hold your hand on this boat, they let you dive. You don't get saddled with a buddy that you don't want. They don't tell you how deep to go. If you want to dive rebreathers, they have the stuff you need. If you want to do deco-dives, that's okay, although they generally have a one-hour dive time limit because the slack tide only lasts that long. They have Nitrox, steel tanks, and even tri-mix. The boat and crew really cater to all levels of experienced divers. The diving in Alaska was the most striking that I have ever seen, and the "macro" stuff was everywhere. Very large area devoted to UW cameras and video equipment. Two freshwater tanks, separate area next to the camera tables for battery chargers, with a plethora of plugs available.

## California

**Truth Aquatics, June 2005, Szilora Gogh (szgogh@hotmail.com), Burbank, CA.** Experience: 5,000 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 feet. Water: 55 to 60 F, calm

and flat. We have chartered the Truth Aquatics vessels over 20 years for our multi-day trips. The diving is great in the Channel Islands. Don't see too many big fish anymore, but amazing other things: octopus, moray eel, scallops, lobster. The crew is helpful and professional. You don't have your own room, but a bunk that is separated with a curtain from the common area. They offer food all day long. Plenty. Hardly healthy, though. Big room on the deck for dive photo or hunting gear. The dive store is open till 12 midnight just in case you need anything in the last minute. They do not offer Nitrox.

**Truth Aquatics, September 2005, Byran (Bud) Worsham (h2obud@onemain.com), Vacaville, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 60 to 62 F, choppy, surge. Good operation. Middle boat, Conception, stolen in March returned to fleet in September. Refit to new condition, max divers 36. Vision is largest in fleet, good crew, 38 divers max. Truth is oldest and smallest, 34 divers max. Bunk room style sleeping, pillow and one blanket supplied, bring sleeping bag or own sheets & blankets. All have compressors to 3000 PSI. Normally go to Northern Channel Islands. Book at [www.truthaquatics.com](http://www.truthaquatics.com) or check calendar for charter info. Rental gear available at dock store, Sea Landings. Charger outlets available in main cabin. TV available for viewing of videos. Rinse tank available.