

fresh water) always when not in use.

WASHINGTON

San Juan Islands

Island Dive and Watersports, October 2005, Jerry Jensen, Eagle Point, OR. (jensen_jerry@hotmail.com) Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 50 to 53 F, choppy. Two days of three tank dives. A drysuit is highly recommended. They supply steel 120 tanks and weights. Nitrox, trimix and argon available. I used argon for the first time and it's worth it. Saw 3 giant pacific octopuses the first day. This is a professional run charter company but also extremely friendly and are concerned that the customer has a good time. Island Dive is on San Juan Island, Friday Harbor. Take the ferry from the mainland.

Island Dive and Water Sports, Discovery Inn, April 2006, Larry Deweese, Tomball, TX. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 60 Feet. Water: 44 to 46 F, choppy. Getting to Friday Harbor on San Juan Island is a two-hour drive north of Seattle to Anacortes and a one hour ferry ride. Be sure to check the ferry schedule and get there about two hours before departure to get your vehicle in line. You can walk up the hill and have a beer at Charlie's while you wait. I booked my hotel through Island Dive and Water Sports is at Friday Harbor within walking distance of the ferry landing. There are many places to stay but none within walking distance of the ferry landing. However, most of the hotels and bed and breakfasts will pick you up. I stayed at the Discovery Inn that is a basic but quiet place. It's too far to walk with dive gear from the Discovery Inn to the dive shop but I had a rental car. The

Discovery Inn does not have a restaurant but there are plenty of places to eat in Friday Harbor. Mike and Dawn run the dive operation. Nitrox is available but the mixes vary from day to day due to the partial pressure blending. The operation is tech friendly. There is about a 12' difference between low and high tide so all diving is dictated by selecting sites at slack tide. Strong currents can occur however if the tide changes while you're under water. I saw my first pair of wolf eels and a giant pacific octopus. My favorite dive sites were on the walls. Island Dive allows you to dive your own profile if you demonstrate that you can. I would recommend a dry suit and good thermal protection. Typically we did two dives in the morning and then one and sometimes two in the afternoon. Water and hot and cold snacks are provided on the boat. Hot water is also available for warming up gloves, hood, etc. Friday Harbor is a beautiful place to dive.

EASTERN PACIFIC LIVEBOARDS

CANADA

Nautilus Explorer, August 2006, Walter Brenner (waltbrenner@hotmail.com), Wayne, PA. Experience: 1100 dives. Vis: 5 to 15 feet. Water: 46 to 53 F, calm and flat. Of over 25 live-aboards I have been on, this was one of the best run and most comfortable. There was plenty of space for 24 divers. Excellent dive operation, with no effort spared catering to divers' wants and needs. Many nudibranchs. Huge sun stars, strange sea cucumbers, wolf eels, and

lots of other critters only found in these frigid waters. Several large orca pods.

Rendezvous, September 2006, Pat Cisar (doccisar@hotmail.com), St. Albert, Alberta. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 48 to 51 F, calm. The diving, while remote, is tremendous. It is dry suit country. The top 20-30 feet is limited visibility but once below that there is good visibility. The dives are typically pinnacle dives, though a couple of walls, reefs and wrecks exist. The wolf-eels are great and the rockfish are relatively numerous and varied. The nudibranchs are diverse and large. We were able to dive new sites and found these exciting. The number one reason to dive is the vast amount of life that exists. UW Photography: There is a room to work on your equipment as well as a charging bar.

COSTA RICA

Okeanos Aggressor, October 2005, Jason Pellegatto, Worcester, MA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 75 to 80 F, currents. You must stay 1 night prior to trip in Costa Rica. The recommended hotel in San Jose is clean and has a good open air restaurant. It's also convenient for the pick up, so you might as well stay where Aggressor recommends. 2 hours from the hotel to the dock, and then 40 hour sail to Cocos in rough water with large swells. Bring something for sea sickness. You will need it. The Okeanos Aggressor is in average condition. I was in the quad stateroom that had plenty of room and comfortable bunks. The bathroom is cramped and the toilet is in the shower so everything is always wet. There was no air circulation in the cabin and we usually left the door open to the hallway to try to get some fresh

air. The food is buffet style. There is always plenty, and it's hot, but not gourmet. More like chow time. There are no after dive snacks. Between meals, the only things served are bags of cheese doodles and chips. However, there is plenty of cold beer on tap and it's included, as long as you're done diving for the day. The diving did not live up to the hype. The visibility was rather low, and the sharks kept a good distance so they were usually difficult to see. We did see hammerheads, but only in small numbers, not the huge schools. Silverado is a great dive and we did see 4-5 silvertips close. The night dives are held in the bay where the boat docks. Dozens of feeding white tips. Millions of fish everywhere. Much better than your standard Caribbean type diving, but not what I had hoped for. Perhaps a bad week? They provide a CD with pictures at the end of the week. This means that the divemasters are busier taking pictures than pointing things out to the divers. I missed many things that ended up on the picture disk. I'd rather have seen these things in the water. The pangas have tank holders on them. Set your gear up once, and it stays on the panga all week that makes it easy. The pangas also have ladders that make getting out of the water easy. UW Photography Comments: Camera tables with plenty of space and compressed air. On the pangas, there was a nice protected area to hold the cameras. Not enough AC outlets for everyone on the boat who needed to charge batteries.

Okeanos Aggressor, November 2005, Jean Miller, Fair Oaks, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 60 Feet. Water: 76 to 79 F, surge. The worst Aggressor I've been on. Other than great meals, the overall quality of service was sadly lacking. The cushions in the lounge were unkempt. There