

with 20' and improve before the end of the dive to 80'. Reef sharks every dive from a couple to over twenty, 4 frog fish on three different dives. One Goliath grouper weighing several hundred pounds followed us for 10 minutes. Rachel did a great job leading all dives and her crew were entertaining.

## UNITED STATES

### Alaska

#### **The Dive Shop, Moby Dick Hostel, June 2006, Yvonne Lanelli, NM.**

Experience: 350 dives. Bring a drysuit, expedition weight undergarment, dry gloves and a regulator set for no less than 45 degrees F. sea water in Resurrection Bay at Seward, AK. Ed Lindquist, owner of The Dive Shop in Sterling, AK takes four divers on a clean 22' Seasport with radio, cell phone, DAN O2, head and dry space to a variety of shallow wrecks and sea-mounts in the Bay. I saw sea lions, plumose anemones, and lingcod as large as a small human, sea pens, whips, lion mane jellies, sunflower stars, saucer-sized nudibranchs, rockfish, sculpins and greenlings in approx. 1.5 knot current. Two humpback whales surfaced within 15 yards of the boat. Ed's seen orcas, wolf eels, salmon, crab, lobster and sea otters. Ed is generous and helpful, lending equipment and advice. For cheap digs, try Moby Dick Hostel. At \$55-\$65 per night, two people can sleep dry and comfortable if they don't mind sharing a large, clean bathroom and kitchen.

### California

#### Monterey

**Aquarius 2, December 2005, Arik Olson (arikolson@yahoo.com), New**

**York, NY.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 5 to 10 Feet. Water: 50 to 55 F, surge. The diving is good in Northern California in December. The water temp doesn't really change much, it's always cold. I made a reservation to dive in Point Lobos state Park (\$10 for two people) via the state park website and booked a guide and rental equipment through Aquarius 2 dive shop. The guide was great, real mellow and perceptive as to my goals (a nice safe low stress long dive) and needs (help with kelp). The equipment was in good condition. We did two dives at Whalers cove and I was impressed. Despite a good deal of surge I saw a lot of sponges, corals, rock formations, many nudibranchs, and many more fish than dives I had made the year before in Monterey bay. Point Lobos has been protected for many years (from fishing) and it shows in the fish population. Don't worry about diving the same site twice, Whalers cove is large and has several different dives available. Bring a beach mat in the car for equipment set up as the parking lot is sandy.

#### Catalina Island

#### **Catalina Divers Supply, September 2005, Ron Kloberdanz (infinite-entropy@engineer.com), Fairfield, CA.**

Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 20 to 40 Feet. Water: 68 to 77 F, surge, currents. We went on a 2-tank boat dive to two locations. Good: Lots of different, interesting fish. Friendly Garibaldi, beautiful kelp forests. Shop crew friendly and helpful. Were able to make our own dive plan. Saw our first shark (leopard). Little pre-information for those of us who had only tropical diving experience. We were expected to set up our own rental gear, had to tank up and walk to aft of rocking boat in full 12mm suit +25-30lb. weight, and

then try to put on fins. Divemaster did not dive with divers. Rental masks fit poorly (we will never forget our masks again!). Limited dive briefing with little information. 12mm suits were so cumbersome, but did keep us warm. Water at depth became quite cold. Had a single 50gal. can onboard for rinsing gear. This was used for cameras as well.

**Catalina Divers, Scuba Luv, February 2006, Jerry Jensen, Eagle Point, OR. (jensen\_jerry@hotmail.com)** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 80 Feet. Water: 60 to 63 F, choppy. Main dive shop on the town pier with another tank fill and rental at the casino area. We went out on their 46 ft Newton for a 3-tank trip. This is a fast boat, easy to use exit ladders and they supplied a good lunch. The crew knew where to drop anchor, these were 3 excellent dive locations. Everyone from the people at the shop to the boat crew were friendly and helpful. We also dove with Scuba Luv on their boat the King Neptune. I don't think this boat was designed for divers. It is an old sport fishing boat with little room to move around while suiting up. The boat is slow compared with Catalina Divers Scuba Cat resulting in getting back late. Also the exit was onto a custom built swim platform about 6 inches in the water. Difficult with a drysuit. I was worried that the jagged edges would rip the suit. The crew were friendly and tried but they just didn't know where to take us. The dive locations were in the sand or mud with directions pointing to some kelp a long swim away. Catalina Divers was by far the superior.

**Scuba Luv, King Neptune, August 2005, Jeff Presley (jeffreypaulpresley@hotmail.com), Winters, CA.** Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 60 to 72 F, calm. Warmer than

expected — could have used a 3mm and much less lead. Spectacular visibility for west coast. Bird rock A+, Eagle Reef A+++ (many lobster and morays – in the same holes!), Italian Gardens 200-300 lb. 5.5 ft. black sea bass. Garibaldi Reef 80 ft. vis. Captain Kennedy knew what we would find. Great service from deck hands and (non diving) divemasters. 65 ft. boat a little crowded for 30+ divers. Warm shower. Tanks filled to 3000+. Casino Point underwater park — like a bath tub. Kelp much more spread-out and navigable than in NorCal. Giant black sea bass and leopard sharks — loads (Italian Gardens only), sheepshead, Garibaldi, cow nose rays, lobsters, morays, senioritas, opal eye, perch, rock fish (all kinds), kelp fish, calico bass, inverts everywhere!

**Scuba Luv, August 2006, Mort Rolleston, Washington, DC.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 62 to 70 F. We dove for two days around Santa Catalina Island. On the first day, we did three dives at Italian Gardens, Gibraltar Pinnacle, and Sea Fan Grotto. Each was different from the other. Italian Gardens had little in the way of interesting scenery, but had 4-5 large jewfish size giant black sea bass, which were not shy of swinging by to check you out. Gibraltar Pinnacle is a rock formation that has small morays, lobster, small octopi, and many small fish. Sea Fan Grotto has stunning scenery with dramatic large walls and fairly thick kelp forests, but the fewest fish. All sites have the bright orange Garibaldi, a large damselfish, inch-long fluorescent-looking gobies over all surfaces. Other than the Garibaldi, fishlife primarily seemed to be mostly small blue blacksmiths with occasional sheepshead and small horn sharks. While there were some kelp at each site,

individual or small groups of strands in an otherwise clear ocean. The second day was the dive shop's monthly trip out to Farnsworth Bank. Little current and surge, sunny day, and 40-50 feet of visibility. The Bank is a large pinnacle a mile or so off the ocean side of the island that comes to about 50-60 feet of the surface. Most of the sea life and the light was on top of the pinnacle. The many cracks and crevices were full of lobsters, octopi, colorful Spanish shawls (purple nudibranchs with bright orange frills coming out the length of their backs), keyhole limpets, blue halfmoons, sea urchins, starfish, green anemones, rockfish, Garibaldi, moray eels (including one out in the open), and sheepshead. Lots of small baitfish (perhaps sardines) and blacksmiths clouded over the pinnacle. And purple hydrocoral. Third dive of the day at Garibaldi Reef; saw a couple of large black sea bass, a couple of large bat rays, and some large sheep crabs. We didn't see any seals or sea lions underwater. We didn't have time to do the shore dive off the Casino in Avalon, but it apparently has immense kelp forests and the sea life protected within the ropes that keep boats and fishermen out. Scuba Luv goes out for the entire day. They served basic sandwiches with various toppings at lunch as well as fruit, cookies, and various drinks. They were pleasant and relaxed. They basically allowed the divers to do their own thing, but were readily available to help if anyone wanted or needed it. A local marine biologist apparently often dives with this shop, so he would film fish life during the dives and would participate in the dive briefs and talk about the marine life you were seeing. The communication of the shop was a bit odd. Not all divers on the boat to Farnsworth Bank, an advanced site,

knew boat was even going to the Bank. Any beginner divers would have been hosed and probably uncomfortable. No buoys to tie up to. While there isn't much in the way of coral to destroy and lots of sand to put down the anchor at most sites, the anchor at Farnsworth Bank did so some damage on the top of the pinnacle.

## San Diego

**Dive Connections, November 2005, Rich Orman (richorman@comcast.net), Aurora, CO.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 15 to 50 Feet. Water: 63 to 54 F, calm, choppy. Did a Saturday afternoon two tank dive and a Sunday morning two tank dive. Both were wreck dives about three miles (and 20 or so minutes) offshore. The wrecks were in good shape and there were plenty of fish and other life. Viz varied with time of day and currents, but was pretty good (I recommend a good dive light). Their only restriction was to have 500 psi at the top. I wore a drysuit, so I was comfortable. However, the wetsuit people seemed cold, and gratefully accepted the hot soup offered before the dive. They had decent snack food and beverages. The boat usually had 10 or 11 divers, and was not cramped, but could probably get cramped if full. The boat has a head. The dock is in Mission Bay near Sea World. A nice operation with good people. Price for a two-tank dive was \$75, which included tanks and weights. Nitrox extra. UW Photography  
Comments: I had to set up my housing on the dock. They have a rinse container on the boat, which was sufficient (I have a video housing). They handled my equipment carefully when I got in and out of the water. I kept it in the rinse area (a large cooler filled with

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](mailto: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.

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## EASTERN PACIFIC LIVEBOARDS

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### CANADA

**Nautilus Explorer, August 2006, Walter Brenner ([waltbrenner@hotmail.com](mailto: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