

have a 56-foot LCM support boat to bring fuel to the mother ship. Most dive trips were on the 34-foot Delta. I used a 1.5mm wet suit with a vest. We tried a site that had not been explored. Unfortunately, visibility was bad, but there was still the excitement of exploring new sites besides the tried and true sites that don't see divers more than 10 times a year. This is a great trip for experienced divers due to the huge tidal changes creating strong currents.

UNITED STATES

California

Truth Aquatics, July 2006, Jerry Jensen (jensen_jerry@hotmail.com), Eagle Point, OR. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 25 to 75 Feet. Water: 65 to 68 F, calm. Overall, conditions were great, though water temp too warm for my drysuit unless I went deep and found the thermocline. We were on the Conception with only 25 divers — nice and uncrowded. The food was great! The bunk area was ok, but I wish the A/C worked; it was hot down there. We were able to dive Farnsworth banks on the west side of Catalina, but only one dive as half the divers were beginners and couldn't go deep (120'). My third time with Truth and each time we motored all night to San Clemente and each time the Navy seals throw us out — a waste of time. We ended the fourth day around the northern islands after motoring all night from Catalina in the worst sea conditions ever; many were sick that night. The next day, our last, it was almost too rough to dive. The captain must get paid by how many hours he puts on the engines — we spent way too much time just driving around in circles and moving from dive

site to dive site. Overall, Truth Aquatics is a great deal.

Truth Aquatics, August 2006, Abe Glazer (aglazer@yahoo.com), Lisle, IL. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 40 Feet. Water: 58 to 72 F, calm. Truth Aquatics owns three live-aboards that operate out of Santa Barbara. Most of their trips are booked through third party operations (dive shops and travel agents) but you can always find out who is running the trip through their web site. We went on a trip organized by Bill and Kristy Finstad. These boats were designed to be diving boats so the layout is effective though the boat can hold up to 35 divers. Sleeping accommodations are in bunks and can be noisy when the boat is running since you are sleeping next to the engine room. I brought earplugs. There is not a lot of room in the bunks so if you are claustrophobic, you might have some problems. The rest of the boat has plenty of room. We left Santa Barbara about 10 PM and headed down to San Clemente Island, a 100 miles due south. We were there by 6 AM the next day. San Clemente is owned by the US Government and is occasionally off limits to divers and boaters due to live fire exercises. We got a day of diving on the east side of the island (5 dives). Most of the dive sites were near the shore and usually had plenty of relief to them. There was a decent amount of marine life on the kelp and a lot of critters hiding and growing on the rocks. We would see 10-20 lobsters on every dive. We spent two days and nights around Catalina, again on the east side to weather conditions. Diving on the west (ocean side) of these islands is dependent upon how bad the swells are and they were pretty harsh, so the captain avoided taking us to the other side. The giant sea bass are large, docile

creatures that were almost fished to extinction but are making a moderate comeback around Catalina now that they are protected. We saw a school of about 10 in 70 feet of water. By moving quite slow and being patient, we were able to get within a foot or two. The largest one probably was about 300 lbs. and five feet long. We ended up doing two dives at this site, Goat Harbor. Most other dives around Catalina ended up being on pinnacles near the shore. There was plenty of kelp and marine life. At Farnsworth Bank we got one dive in. We did a short dive in about 120 ft along a reef that had a nasty current (2+knots) and was not for the novice diver. We ended up on Santa Rosa, part of the Channel Islands. We got two dives in on Santa Rosa at a spot called Cueva Valdez. This location had two caverns that the ocean had cut out of the rocks. There was a family of harbor seals and they had a done a decent job of eating most of the small fish. After lunch, we headed back to Santa Barbara and arrived about 6 PM. For a three and half day trip, we got in a total of 16 dives. We figured the water would be colder so we brought our drysuits. The water ended being warmer than we thought (typically mid-60s at depth), so to keep from overheating we did not wear hoods and gloves. Most of the other people on the boats were wearing 7 mm. There was always plenty of food and liquor is BYOB. There is a liquor store about two blocks from the dock. Tanks can be rented at the dive shop next to the dock. Nitrox is not available. We were not pushing deco limits even at 5 dives per day. The cost was about \$700.

Truth Aquatics, August 2006, Randy Linscheid (smokinlizard@sbcglobal.net), Bay Point, CA. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 30 to 60 Feet. Water: 67 to 71

F, calm. The crew was accommodating. The showers were hot. The other divers were great to hang out with. Everyone was extremely helpful. It was the first dive for my girlfriend since her certification. She had a great time as well. The boat was nice and spacious. The Truth Aquatics website gave a great list of what to bring on the dive and what not to bring. There was a great area to clean our catch and they had a freezer on board. Our gear usually dried overnight in the hanger area below deck (next to the engine room). Our tanks were filled quickly and ample. There was plenty to eat and the food was great! They made accommodations for those divers who were vegetarians. Another diver accidentally took my wetsuit and turned it in as a rental to the shop. One of the folks from the shop found me in the parking lot and returned my suit. I accidentally lost my camera on a night dive. It floated to the top and one of the crew members dove in the water to retrieve it for me! She gave it to me when I surfaced.

Truth Aquatics, Conception, August 2006, Byran (Bud) Worsham (h2obud@onemain.com), Vacaville, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 80 Feet. Water: 55 to 75 F, calm. Dive own profile, suggest moderation in diving. Double head count prior to "up anchor." UW Photography Comments: Plenty of room in salon, lots of outlets for chargers.

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