

## ANTARCTICA

**Oceanwide Expeditions, M/V Aleksey Maryshev, February 2007, Robert M. Jacon (rjacon@nycap.rr.com), Melrose, NY.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 25 to 50 Feet. Water: 32 to 33 F, calm. Inexperienced dry suit divers need as much experience with a dry suit as possible, especially with buoyancy in shallow water. The highlight of each day was finding leopard seals to snorkel with and penguins (gentoo, adelic and chinstrap). Minke whales were often in the area but remained out of sight while underwater. A giant jellyfish (3 meters) paid a visit while circumnavigating an iceberg with no overhang. The M/V Aleksey Maryshev is a former Russian research vessel, built in 1990 and operated by a Dutch Company. The crew was Russian. The ship is 66 meters long, with a draft of 3.5 meters. It has a top cruising speed of 12.5 knots. There were 47 passengers and 10 of us were divers. Nine dives were conducted and land tours several times a day. We dove below the Antarctic circle at approximately 66 deg./51 min. S at Detaille Island. The food was adequate, not gourmet. I was the lone Yank diver, with one diver from Holland and eight divers from Turkey. The dive leader was Mike Murphy from Great Britain, and he was assisted by Rupert Krapp from Germany/Norway. Mike was exceptional. Underwater was interesting, similar to the North Atlantic, without as much color and fish life. Topside, it was breathtaking. In addition to penguins, we saw albatross, petrels, skuas, gulls, terns and the Antarctic fulmar. Fin whales, minke whales and humpback whales visited our expedition. In addition to leopard seals, we saw Weddell, crabeater and Antarctic fur seals. Hourglass dolphins escorted us much

of the way. The Drake Passage and the Antarctic Circumpolar Current were kind to us during our cruise south and our return north to Ushuaia, Argentina. This was a great way to enjoy a toast of champagne while crossing the Antarctic Circle and a great way to enjoy Russian vodka on ice, standing on the Antarctic continent. Diving was from Zodiacs. Fresh water rinse was available on the main ship. Most divers had underwater digital systems and were helpful.

## CANADA

## Ontario

**Diver's Den, August 2006, Fiona Rat-tray, Elora, On.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 50 to 60 Feet. Water: 46 to 57 F, calm, currents, no currents. The waters in Georgian Bay are clear and blue, and cold. 7 mm or drysuit diving. Tobermory is on the tip of the Bruce Peninsula, and there are numerous accommodations. It's a speck of a town centered around the Little Tub Harbor. Fathom Five National Marine Park includes numerous real wrecks and some shore dives, and an interpretive center just south of town. You need to get a dive tag here (good for one year, \$20) or wristband (good for one day or one weekend) to dive in the park. Many local dive shops come up to Toby to do open water and AOW dives. Diver's Den website shows you the wreck sites in the park, plus the Niagara II, sunk on purpose for divers outside the park. DD has several boats: my favorite is the Deep Obsession, designed for divers. The ladder is Xmas tree style so you can just walk up it with your fins on. Captain Dave is worth his weight in gold. You can pick shallow wrecks or deeper ones depending on your skill level.

Huron Scuba, Diver's Den, Tobermory Princess Hotel, August 2006, Paul Selden, Portage, MI. Experience: 100-250 dives. Viz: 30 to 45 feet. Water: 78 to 45 F., light to no current, small waves. Great Lakes wreck diving doesn't get much better than this. Wrecks are located in Fathoms Five National Marine Park, home to more than 20 wrecks. Seven dives on wrecks in various states of preservation, over a sunny weekend. To shake down our gear, we dove the steam tugs Alice G., Robert K., John and Alex, and Bob Foote in a night dive, in Little Tub Harbor. Next day, dove the Forest City, Niagara II (steel), Philo Scoville, and Sweepstakes. On the last day, we took in the Arabia and James C. King. I consider the Forest City (hauntingly eerie — the wooden ribs rising upward toward shore in the sun beams reminded me of a scene a sci-fi movie), Niagara II (steel-hulled, 162 ft. long, deliberately sunk, well preserved), and the Arabia (wooden barque, v. intact, upright) to be "must-see" dives. Huron Scuba from Ann Arbor organized this well-run trip. Dave and Rachel Kaspar, owners of Huron Scuba, have a solid reputation for running things safely and on time. Dave is a veteran of many Tobermory trips, and oriented us to the history of each wreck we were going to dive on prior to the dives. He encouraged us to learn more, introducing us to wreck diving and exploration. We stayed at Tobermory Princess Hotel, which overlooks the busy harbor. They offer a drying room for diving gear. Dove with local boat and dive operator, Diver's Den. Boats were equipped with camera buckets and had helpful captain and crew. Non-divers will enjoy the beautiful scenery of the tip of the Bruce Peninsula, which sits between Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, walking on the

Bruce Trail, taking the glass-bottomed boat, and snorkeling. Tobermory is quaint, with a number of good eateries. This is dry suit territory, but a few dove in 7 mil wetsuits and didn't appear too cold. Many of the more interesting wrecks require a Deep certification, and an independent backup source of air. Waves can be high at times. This destination's popularity is focused on one small town, which means getting to restaurants before the crowd, and making dive plans and reservations early. Allow about ½ hour to register with the marine park and pay park entry fees prior to diving (while the park station in town is still open). The dive shops are small and in the rush to fill dozens of tanks between dives, may accidentally mix an unfilled tank into the batch of filled tanks, so check your fills before you leave shore. The weather here can change quickly. Don't miss the white-fish sandwiches!

## SPAIN

**Unisub, L'Estarit, July 2007/07, David Schwab (schwabd@bunt.com), APO, AE.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 10 to 15 Meters. Water: 19 to 21 C, calm. Unisub provided good service; they were dependable, safe, on time, responsive to our needs. Dive boat "Triton" includes a patented ladder that makes getting on board with fins easy. Plenty of secured storage space for your gear; lots of room. Fifteen-liter cylinders available for those who want them; always filled to 200 bar. The operator had dive trips scheduled at two-hour intervals; out at 0900, back by 1100, etc. Selection of dive sites affected by the two-hour window, so we couldn't go far. Dive sites were either just off shore, or at Les Iles Medes, a protected reserve