

through a separate business on shore. They allowed divers on my trip who were clearly advanced to dive their own profiles. They did not put a guide in the water. My only complaint was the relative lack of weights (and all in five-pound increments!). I suppose with most of the divers local and probably showing up with their own weights, that is usually not an issue. They also, oddly, really pressed me to put a ton of weight on, saying I'd need much more here than other places. I can dive with all the neoprene I listed above with only 12 pounds of weight in the local fresh water quarry and they insisted I put 25 pounds on — big mistake. I dropped to about 20 pounds on second dive, but it was still too much. I would have been fine with 15-16 pounds or so. Overall, the diving was interesting and worth it, but I was disappointed in the lack of larger fish and seals (which I really wanted to see!). I think Catalina Island off Los Angeles is better for diving on the Pacific Coast as the water is clearer, warmer, and contains more critters (including larger fish like bat rays, huge jewfish-size black sea bass, large sheep crabs, and small sharks). Monterey is truly one of the most beautiful areas I've seen in the U.S.

San Diego

OEX Scuba and Kayak, Marriott Courtyard Hotel, March 2007, John Crellin (john15237@yahoo.com), Wexford, PA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 10 to 30 Feet. Water: 52 to 60 F, calm, surge, no currents. This was 2 shore dives to the La Jolla Canyon. Jim Metzger, my instructor for the PADI underwater naturalist specialty, took the time to go through the course properly. I had decided not to bring my gear and rented gear from his shop. The gear was in excellent condition. I had not

dove in full 7 mm wetsuit in a long time so I asked for advice on how to weight myself. I was severely overweight and had a hard time maintaining buoyancy during both dives. I take part responsibility for this since I feel I should find a way to find the proper weight before the dives. Serious cold water and long surface swims. Jim and the folks at the shop were friendly and never rushed me. We took most of the day to do 2 shore dives. He is an excellent instructor. He made sure I understood each step of the class and helped me with gear. OEX is a short walk to the beach. Parking is easy if you get there early (before 9 am). And the folks who work at the shop are extra friendly and helpful. here was nowhere to work on your camera since both dives were shore dives. However, we walked back to the dive shop after each dive and Jim (instructor) took the time to set up a fresh water barrel for the camera and showed me to a clean, dry table to change film and make adjustments.

EASTERN PACIFIC LIVE-ABOARDS

CANADA

British Columbia

Nautilus Explorer, August 2007, Jerry Jensen (jensen_jerry@hotmail.com), Eagle Point, OR. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 2 to 100 Feet. Water: 50 F, calm. This boat is so popular that you must book at least a year in advance to get a spot. I went by myself and had the dorm room in the bow where we three passengers shared the area with the crew. quiet and well-ventilated. The

food was beyond 5-star. Plenty of fresh fruits and veggies. I flew into Vancouver airport. A \$25 taxi ride to the boat got me there about 2 hours before boarding so I just walked around the pretty fishing/tourist village and enjoyed the sights. At 50 degrees, a drysuit is the only way to go and still we got cold. All our gear stayed attached to the tanks at our station on the skiff, where we boarded and then were whisked the 10 minutes to the dive site. Solo diving OK. We did all famous dive sites at the northern tip of the island, Hussar Pt. Aquarium, Seven Tree, Browing, Dillon Rocks, Nakwakto Narrows, etc. The uw life was more colorful and plentiful than any of the warm-water destinations that I've been to. 6-night trip was \$1200. The only concern might be that the boat goes south to Mexico during the winter and the A/C isn't up to the task. UW Photography Comments: large camera table and charging station.

Thousand Islands Pleasure Divers, Headlands Motel, August 2007, Fiona Ratray, Elora, On. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 60 Feet. Water: 73 F, calm, currents. You dive the St Lawrence River Seaway for the wrecks and drift dives. At the end of the summer, temperatures get up to the mid-seventies F. I did the first day's dives in a wetsuit, then switched to dry for the next two days. There's no thermocline in the river; on this dive trip, 73 F right to the bottom. Other times, its cold water drysuit diving for sure. Wrecks stay relatively preserved in the fresh water, and all of these wrecks occurred for real. You can see the gashes in the hull where the Daryaw or Keystorm hit the reef. Some of these ships are wooden barques built in the 1800s, before Canada was a country. Others are steel freighters that went down in 1912 right up to recent ones in the 1980s. Some

are in recreational depths, others are technical dives only. You can fly down the river, keeping the wall close to your side. Zebra mussels have increased the viz considerably in the past decade. You might spot old bottles or china: grab them quickly if you want them or the current just moves you along. Artifacts on the shipwrecks, however, are protected, so no souvenirs. Take an SMB or safety sausage with you for end-of-dive locating if necessary; you can fly one or two islands down if you hit the right current level in the Brockville Narrows. The Seaway is an operational international shipping channel, and huge freighters power by while you dive — stay out of the channel! They make quite the noise underwater too. You'll be sitting during your surface interval and some container ship will pass on its way to or from China; check out the huge bow wave when a ship is loaded down. Thousand Islands Pleasure Divers out of Rockport and Brockville in Ontario is a real class act. Wayne Greene has safety and fun combined, and he's advertising trips for both recreational and technical divers now. If you want to dive the wrecks on the American side such as the Keystorm or Jodrey, you'll need to fill out a form on his website and take your passport with you. A stop is made in American customs and immigration on one of the Thousand Islands, and no dive in New York waters if coming from the Canadian side if no passport, no matter what your nationality. I got my gas fills from Dan at DiveTech in Mallorytown, just up the road from Rockport. That shop is every diver's dream: huge and just crammed full of all kinds of gear. If you're not careful, you'll wind up coveting a piece of gear that you just have to get. Happens every time.