

to 70 Feet. Water: 34 to 35 F, calm, no currents. I made two drysuit dives: One a morning dive with a local diver that Nautilus Divers was able to find for me, the other an organized dive shop evening dive with Torpedo Rays Scuba in Dartmouth. The morning dive was to Paddy's Head, St. Margaret's Bay north of Peggy's Cove. Great viz, lots of color in the kelp, a school of young pollock, crabs, moon snails. Lots of things to see, relaxed dive. Dive op was helpful in getting me into the water on my day off. The evening dive was to Terence Bay, south of Halifax. Saw my first wolf eel in nine years of diving. cool. Torpedo Rays was professional, a larger shop, tech-oriented as well as recreational. A fun group dive.

CHILE

Easter Island

Orca Diving Center, Iorana Hotel, January 2007, John Sommerer (john.sommerer@jhuapl.edu), Silver Spring, MD. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 100 to 200 Feet. Water: 73 F, choppy. Not a dive destination, but worth an afternoon if you're on Rapa Nui, especially if it's raining. Good, solid dive operation, with good staff, accommodating to visitors. Water is on the chilly side; good hot showers back at the dive shop. We had our computers with us, which was good, because they only had depth gauges and bottom timers to rent. Another diver was told by the guide, "don't go deeper than me, and you'll be OK." Otherwise, the gear was in good condition and was reasonably new ScubaPro stuff. The big question is, why would Henri Garcia, a former Calypso crew member, set up a dive operation here? Sure, the vis is unbelievable! But

hardly any fish, and like two species of coral. The scenery around Motu Nui is fantastic, but that's one dive. I find it hard to believe that sharks represented any risk to the competitors in the Birdman competition, since the largest fish I saw out there was an endemic butterfly. The reefs near Hanga Roa are pretty boring. Clearly, fish are being fed here, since some large jacks spent a whole dive with us. Small boats, but short runs to dive-sites. Good rinse tanks at dive shop.

Orca Diving Center, January 2007, Doris and Bob Schaffer (seamom@earthlink.net), Fallbrook, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 100 to 150 Feet. Water: 72 to 74 F, calm, no currents. Easter Island diving is good. Orca is an outstanding dive operation with lots of attention to safety, excellent equipment and reasonable prices. December through February is best time to dive these waters and visibility was 100+ feet. No soft corals and not a great variety of hard coral but its healthy and no evidence of coral bleaching. Interesting underwater topography and rock formations. Not a lot of fish. Easy and enjoyable diving. We dove each morning and saw the archaeological sites of the island in the afternoon.

ORCA Dive Center, Manutara Hotel, January 2007, Lamont Sage, San Diego, CA. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 40 to 50 Feet. Water: 74 to 75 F, choppy, no currents. We hauled our dive gear from the US knowing we would only be diving for 2 days. Boats were basic pangas. Orca dive shop is well equipped, with brand new equipment and a clean operation. Warm showers provided after diving and rinse tanks also. \$45 dive includes all your equipment, from BCD to wetsuit, regulator, etc. Free lockers provided for your valuables. All equip-

ment was top of the line. It is a shame they use beat-up old pangas instead of investing in a nice dive boat with tank racks. All of the gear is thrown into the center of the panga and the divemaster/boatsman help you gear up. This is not the easiest for those of us who have been diving for a long time and are no longer in our 20s! The operator is set up for inexperienced divers wanting to do 1 or 2 dives. Their regimented operation and limited selection of dive sites appears to be set up to accommodate the general low level of experience diver that they encounter. I was using a cane, having recovered from leg surgery. I had just been diving since the surgery and knew I had no problem once in the water. I overheard the divemaster tell the boatsman in Spanish that he did not think I would be able to swim or complete the dive. Once in the water, I found the air had been put into my BCD without my knowledge; which delayed my descent. While attempting to descend I had an ear-block and was at 20 feet trying to clear. The rest of the group was waiting for me at 60 feet on the bottom. Carlo, the divemaster, got in my face and started hassling me — are you immediately descending or what?? I signaled an ear problem and that I wanted to swim above the group at 25 ft. and work my way down as my ears cleared — he would not allow this and I had to abort the dive and return to the surface. The water was calm, we were right off shore, viz was good, there were only 4 divers. On the second dive I descended on the anchor line (after taking some Sudafed) and had no problem clearing. We were kept in a tight group. I understand that there is no chamber on the island and nobody wants an accident. But considering the conditions around the island (pretty rough, no protected coves to speak of, 74-degree

water in the summer) and the poor quality of the boats used, you will not find a great dive experience here.

COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is famous among experienced divers for the big animal action off uninhabited Cocos Island, 300 miles offshore. Here are challenging, high-tension dives among hammerheads, mantas, occasional whale sharks, and other awe-inspiring creatures. Land-based dive operations find a few big animals. However, they're unpredictable and the visibility is often so low you'll miss them, yet many divers like the diving. Costa Rica has great tourist destinations, is exceptionally safe.

Almaco Diving, Villa Vista Azul, January 2007, Gregg Gaylord (gregg1954@aol.com), Sheboygan, WI. Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 20 to 50 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F, choppy. Villa Vista Azul is a short walk to the beach and dive operation. The Villa is beautiful, with a phenomenal view. Diving was interesting but there were strong winds that prevented us from going to Bat Island. The winds change, though, and selecting the right time of year for certain destinations is important. The dive operation is excellent, with a stable 24-foot dive boat. The captain is superb! The dive masters are excellent and patient. Small snacks and water were provided. One of the most interesting parts of the trip was the interval periods spent on the innumerable beaches spread out along the peninsulas — each with its own unique characteristics. Turtle nests were apparent on some of them. Had an unforgettable encounter with a couple of humpbacks as we rode back to the launch site at the end of the