
Trouble in Transition

You can't always get what you want, but you might just get . . .

Two *In Depth* readers, Mr. Joe Montgomery of Birmingham, Alabama, and Dr. Lesia Ciz of Etobicoke, Ontario, sent us letters about problems they encountered aboard the *Truk Aggressor* the first week of January 1995.

These readers believe that, although they entered into a contractual relationship with the Aggressor Fleet by paying their money, they did not get what they contracted for as specified in advertising and brochures. Both complained of non-air-conditioned staterooms and minimal icemaking capabilities, and a water maker that was not working to capacity. Dr. Ciz also complained that she and her husband had not been given the stateroom they had reserved.

Both readers contacted Aggressor Fleet headquarters in Grand Cayman. Mr. Montgomery was offered, and accepted, a coupon for \$200 off his next trip on an Aggressor boat. Dr. Ciz was offered the coupon, but rejected it.

On Dr. Ciz's behalf, I called Wayne Hassen of the Aggressor Fleet. Hassen told me, "When the air conditioner failed, it was because of a part which was not available anywhere else but in the States. So the captain offered to take everyone back to shore, to the hotel, and the boat would pay for the rooms. No one took him up on the offer.

"Furthermore, the air conditioning was off only in the staterooms and the lounge was not affected since it was on another system."

Travelers in Third World countries are often disappointed when they don't get what they think they paid for. If they reserve a particular suite of rooms and arrive to find them already taken, if the schedule is changed without notice, if machinery breaks down and some dives are sacrificed, there's usually no legal recourse.

Back when an inn was the only place travelers could stay, English common law established certain assurances of safe housing for travelers, actions that were designed to protect both travelers and innkeepers. American travelers are accustomed to these protections, which may be hard to come by in the non-English-speaking world. One factor has also changed in a big way: when these laws were established, no one prepaid their lodging, as we usually do today on dive boats.

Both letter writers booked space on a trip that occurred during a time of transition for the vessel. The *Truk Aggressor* was scheduled to be replaced soon by a different boat. Travelers should be aware that when any property, be it boat or hotel or airplane, is scheduled to be sold, the seller may neglect maintenance to squeeze out as much profit as possible. So if you see an announcement that your dream boat is being sold, wait until after the sale to book passage on it. You'd be especially wise to allow a few months for the new owner to bring it up to snuff.

However, even the best-run and best-maintained vessels can have mechanical problems, and

these problems are worse in Third World or remote areas where spare parts are nonexistent and replacements must come from thousands of miles away. Thus, brochures and advertisements are not guarantees that you will have such amenities at any given time.

The divers who wrote *In Depth* lost no diving days, missed no meals, and turned down all offers to return to the hotel at night. The owners of the Aggressor Fleet believe that they had already made sufficient offers of compensation to the guests. They also insist that they maintained the boat properly during the transition. Nevertheless, they have offered both couples a fully paid trip on any of their other vessels.

C. C.

Deadline Time

We want to be sure to include your travel evaluations in our all-new 1996 edition of *Resorts Rated*, to be mailed to you at the end of this year. Please fill out the enclosed form and let us know the good, the bad, and the ugly about any dive trips you have made in the last 10 months.

Just as we've expanded *In Depth*, the new version of *Resorts Rated* will also be bigger to include not only your candid comments, but other useful information as well. To make sure every subscriber gets a copy of this valuable tool, it will be mailed to you as the December issue.