

LIVE-ABOARDS

CANADA

Mike Lever Diving, *Nautilus Explorer*, August 2000, Nikki Mahan, Bellevue, WA. Vis: 20-60 ft. Water: 54-56 degrees. Dive restrictions: Dry suit, 50 minutes due to currents. This is the only way to travel to Browning Pass, the best dive sites for cold water. Mike has taken Northwest Diving to a superior level. The 110' boat cruises at night so we had the day to make three dives if we wanted to. The boat is top-notch! (604-657-7614; 888-434-8322; Fax-604-266-3285)

COLOMBIA

Malpelo

***Inzan Tiger*, July 2000, Kirk Fleischer (kirkfleischer@hotmail.com), Baltimore, MD.** Vis: 30 to 40 Feet. Water: 75 to 78 F., choppy currents. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: No, Heinz and Zan Buchbinder went to depths of up to 220' routinely. Minimal regard for diver safety. They treat the *Inzan Tiger* as their personal yacht and paying customers are often made to feel as if they are imposing on the Buchbinders. Both wander the boat wrapped only in a towel or in a skimpy T-shirt that ensures guests are inappropriately "flashed" on a routine basis. The Buchbinders make no effort to "lead" divers to the schools of sharks. Both

jump in the water and routinely disappear during dives. Zan lost 3 divers (one of which was a repeat customer who knew the area) on a drift dive in open ocean with 25 foot visibility and strong currents. We had to abort the dive due to lack of a dive guide. Heinz was able to evade 6 divers plus another divemaster on another drift dive he was "leading." The Buchbinders seem to feel the \$3500 fee for a week's trip only includes food and accommodations, not assistance in locating the often elusive schools of hammerheads. Dive briefings were contradictory: Heinz would say left, Zan would say right. Once, Heinz was warning us to stay away from mullets that would bite. When asked to describe what a mullet looked like, Zan couldn't do more than just say a mullet looks like a mullet. They had been "leading" dive trips to Malpelo for more than 9 years. The *Inzan Tiger* is clearly NOT a dive boat but a 60' pleasure craft. The boat rocks constantly in the waves due to little stabilization. Linens and room towels were not changed during a 10-day trip. Zan constantly seemed to act as if our cabins were her domain (i.e., no sense of privacy). With 6 passengers on board, the crew of 4 has no sleeping or bathroom accommodations which causes them to sleep outside and under the "dining room" table. Thus, guests were forced to return to their rooms early to give the crew some "privacy" for showering off the side of the boat, etc. Although guests were asked about food preferences, these were often disregarded and customers were scolded or made to

Eastern Pacific

feel again like they were imposing repeatedly. Otherwise, food was good and plentiful for the guests. Then at the end of the trip, we were appalled to find out that the crew did not have dinner in the guests had seconds. If you do decide to take this trip, buy your airline tickets from Sansa Airlines web site www.flysansa.com and save yourself the Buchbinder's "service fee." Tina (another dive-master) and Mario (crew) made the trip as enjoyable as possible. Unfortunately, this was Tina's last trip for obvious reasons. 5 of the 6 guests (from around the world with extensive dive experience, including a dive master of 25 years) on this dive trip thought this operation was a so unprofessional that we needed to warn future guests. Only one rinse tank for gear and camera equipment that caused non-photographers to resort to rinsing their gear in the only tank. (506-775-1076, 505-890-7007; Fax 506-775-1078; email SHARKS@RACSA.CO.CR; website www.theinzantiger.com)

COSTA RICA

***Okeanos Aggressor*, December 1999, Richard Lehach, Larchmont, NY.**

Vis: 20 to 50 feet. Water: 74 to 75 degrees, strong currents. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: depth in general, 500 psi, 60 minutes. The *Okeanos Aggressor* is due for a major overhaul or scrapping as a dive boat. Rooms are small and unevenly a/c. Food was ok at best. Same salad 6 or 8 days. Many divers reported mild stomach problems from food, not boat

sickness. Diving from Zodiacs without ladders and proper tank storage resulted in damaged equipment and lost pieces of equipment. Crew was pleasant and worked well together but could not overcome boat's shortcomings. La Niña caused poor visibility and cold water. Fish life was present but visibility limited viewing. Long boat rides; 36 hrs. to/from Cocos + air and wait in town wasted 5 of 11 day trip; a very high price. If conditions were good it might be worth the time. Saw and boarded *Undersea Hunter*, much better equipped boat than the *Okeanos*. A seaplane to move divers and a provisioning boat split between the *Hunter* and *Aggressor* boats could make this a much more desirable dive destination and save wear and tear on dive boats on 36 hr. crossings. (Aggressor Fleet 800-348-2628 or 504-385-2628 Fax: 504-384-0817; e-mail: info@aggressor.com; website www.aggressor.com)

***Okeanos Aggressor*, January 2000, Richard R. Gala, Royal Oak, MI.**

When we arrived the air-conditioning was not on because we were told it would suck up mud because of the low water at the dock. Getting settled in was a very sweaty and smelly experience for all. It took most of the night before the boat and cabins cooled down. Cabin #5 was quite comfortable but the air conditioning never quite made it to those cabins on the top deck and some people took to sleeping on deck. Those rooms that had a double bottom bunk were so narrow and close to the top bunk that any cohabitation was out of the question. Plenty of floor space