

Petra and the desert of Wadi Rum are extremely beautiful and make great 'surface intervals'. Jordan is Egypt like it used to be 25 years ago, but facilities for modern tourist. **(962 331-4131; Fax 962 331-4133)**

SEYCHELLES

Billed as 3000 miles from anywhere, this group of islands has been trying to promote itself to divers as THE place to see whale sharks, but this is unproved. From time to time live-aboards run to the out-island of Aldabra, which is reported to have excellent diving. . . . Island prices are high. . . .

Seychelles Underwater Centre, Coral Strand Hotel, Beau Vallon, Mahe, September, 2000, Nick Valentine (nickvalentine@beeb.net), Leighton Buzzard, Beds, U.K. Vis: 5 to 15 Meters. Water: 26 to 28 degrees Celsius, choppy. Dive your own profile: yes; Any dive restrictions: Max 30M / 50 mins. bottom time. Magic sunny islands, with great beaches. The weather was mostly excellent and the odd day with cloud / rain did not affect the diving. I took my own equipment (I always like to!) but the kit at the centre looked OK and reasonably maintained. The dive boat was fast and had shelter from the sun so getting to the dive sites was not a problem. I am reasonably experienced and it was a pity that the dive sites visited tended to be selected for trainees and could become repetitive. However, even some of the novice sites - Conception & L'Illot in

particular - got more interesting when the current was running! The sharks that we saw were mostly white tips and the odd nurse shark, but we did get a clear site of a 6-7 M whale shark from the surface following the return to the dive centre and even got a brief swim with a snorkel with it before it headed off. The stars of this trip for me were the huge bump head parrotfish, as big as a Napoleon wrasse, bump head as well and a large, powerful "beak." The biggest disappointment of all was the state of the coral - what a tragedy! Global warming has destroyed enormous areas and what is left is uninspiring. However, there were signs that a recovery is in progress, but it will be 5 years before there is much to write, or to get excited about. Overall a good holiday and enjoyable diving even if not particularly challenging.

THAILAND

Thailand is a bargain. . . . Whale shark season is usually from March through May, with Richelieu Rock providing an excellent chance of encounters. . . . Trips to the Burma Banks have been put off limits from time to time for political reasons; check before booking. . . .

H₂O, Phuket, February 2000, W.J. Carroll, London, England. Vis: 30 to 70 ft. Water: 76 to 78 degrees, calm and flat, choppy. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: 100 ft. and computer. Surprisingly good diving at Shath Point, Anemone Reef, etc. off Phuket. Provided you take a

private charter and get to the sites before the crowds. Excellent local divemaster; many varieties of tropical fish. Visibility low and at similar islands dependent upon tide and current; can be great diving or hopeless.

Koh Nangyan Island Resort, July 2000, Isaac Aharon, New York, NY.

Vis: 35-50 ft. In the Gulf of Thailand comprising 3 islands joined by a 3-way stretch of pure white sand beaches. The charm is its exotic breathtaking scenery that never fails to capture the viewer's fascination. The island group also offer a colorful underwater world abundant with a wide range of coral formations and large variety of marine fauna. It's comfortable water temperature with its clear water, makes this resort an ideal place for scuba diving and snorkeling. The dive operation, run by Ference Fulmer, a great guy who will do anything for the guests even fix your scuba gear free. PADI dive center. My third year in this resort. They have TV, the bungalows are clean and very nice. The restaurant not as good as last year. You must show dive cert. They have 4-5 dives a day, night dives are great. Best dive champion pinnacles, Green Rock. Over all diving accommodations were not costly. They have packages that include dive and bungalow for three nights and 7 dives with food around \$250. They have great divemaster Sacha Stark from Toledo, OH. But Belle Dedeir from France will take you on a dive till your last drop of air, the longest dives, but with small group max. 8 divers. I saw lots of fish like peacock rockcod, spotted coral cod, harlequin sweetlips, many kinds of butterflyfish,

clown trigger fish, white eyed moray eels, cleaner shrimp. Night dive I saw big fin reef squid, reef cuttlefish, saddled puffer.

Scuba Quest, Faah Yai, May 2000, Toshi Tsunoda (T823oshi@aol.com), Tokyo, Japan.

Vis: 50 to 80 ft. Water: 80 to 83 degrees, calm and flat. Dive your own profile: yes. Dive restrictions: time of 30 min. Fishermen killed 15 whole sharks for shark fin. No chance to encounter them for the time being. No sharks except leopard shark. Soft coral is pristine and excellent. Enjoyed topography incl. swim through rocky reef and sandy area. Specific creature in Similan and Kechilian Rock is uncountable sea anemone and lion fish. Must go before all fished out. (66 6676-27-1113)

Weekender, Scuba Tec, Pattaya, October 1999, R. Moore, Vista CA.

Vis: 50 ft. Water: 85-86 degrees. Dive restrictions enforced: time limit one hour. Diving so so. Nice wreck but strong current. Not a lot of fish like Fiji, but nice warm water. Dive shop very friendly but not a lot of service. Divers took own gear and helped load and unload boat. Overall a good trip but diving not exceptional.

LIVE-ABOARDS

INDONESIA

Adelaar, Island Explorers, September 1999, Julia P. Demartini,