

out with adequate space. Dive gear is stored underneath your seat where you slide into your BC. They refill the tanks using a whip system. Nitrox is produced by a membrane system. It was usually just under 32%. Tanks are aluminum 80s filled to 3000 psi. Hangers for wet suits, one 50 gallon can for rinsing gear (refilled daily) and another one strictly for camera equipment. There is 1 camera table with 4 carpeted shelves. At the rear of the dive deck there is 1 fresh water and 1 saltwater hose. Giant stride entries from the sides. They'll carry your gear down to the rear platform if you need to slide in. They keep a small inflatable with motor in the water to pick you up if you need it. Although they advertise drift diving I sometimes had to push them to do this on my Grand Bahamas trip. (I was tired of finning against current for 30 minutes and drifting back to the boat in about 5.) They accommodated me on one dive but it took some ear bending. Staff is pretty good, polite and nice. Communicate diving expectations on the first day. No nurse maids on the Sea Fever. They asked you to observe 130 feet max depth. No time limits, no buddy rules, etc. You are on your own to dive your own profile. Food was top notch. Red has been with the Sea Fever for 1-1/2 years. Not real fancy but always tasty and good portions. 2nds were available. Soft drinks are provided. You can take your own beer or booze on board. They have coolers and a good ice maker. On my Grand Bahamas trip we saw several reef sharks, most big, a few nurse sharks, and one great

hammerhead. We snorkeled with several bottle nose and spotted Atlantic dolphins. Reefs were OK, a few had considerable algae growth above the 50' level. Visibility varied from 40 feet to 90 feet. On my Cay Sal Banks trip we dived on 3 blue holes and no more (probably because some of the adventurers were exceeding the 130 foot limit by 2 fold). Several black tip sharks at the holes along with several sting rays, and an eagle ray. The holes are a few hours journey from the North where the walls are. The wall diving was beautiful. Moderate currents allowing all of these as drift dives. In the evenings we would tie off to a mooring line next to a rock island and do our evening dive and then our night dive. One day we went ashore to see an light house abandoned many years ago. Some of the Cuban boat people use this island as safe place, which explains the daily low flying inspections from the US Coast Guard. Great deal for the price! Pack light, bring some rum, your motion sickness medication, and communicate groups expectations at the beginning of the trip.

BELIZE

Belize Aggressor III, October 2000,
Terry Wilenksy (lov2div@hotmail.com)
Phillips Ranch, CA. Vis: 70-100 ft.
Water: 81-85 F. Dives logged: 400+.
Dive restrictions: 130' max. I have been on 4 live-aboards. This was the best captain and dive crew. Boat in excellent shape, diving very good. Could dive up to 5 dives almost every day. (Ph: 800-348-2628 or 985-385-2628; fax 985-384-0817; e-mail

**info@aggressor.com; website
www.aggressor.com)**

Belize Aggressor III, October 2000,
Wayne Cogdill, Amarillo, TX. Vis: 40-100 ft. Dives logged: 300+.
Captain Jerry kept us on Turneffe Island for 3 days out of fear of the hurricane (Keith) which didn't come until 4 days later. We only got 1-1/2 days of diving on Lighthouse (good conditions) and the diving on Turneffe was bad viz and strong currents. Crew nearly mutinied when he began leaving Lighthouse in calm seas and still winds. After writing to Wayne Hasson about rotten service — we got a coupon worth less than 10% off another trip on the same boat. Would not dive Aggressor again if Capt. Jerry is around. Food good, dive crew great, but they fired the crew member who was most helpful to us.

Belize Aggressor III, November 2000,
Wesley L. Barnett
(wesb@yourinter.net) Clymer, PA. Vis: 80-100 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Logged dives: 130. Dive restrictions enforced: 130' limit. The highlight of the trip was snorkeling on Half Moon Caye with the nurse sharks. My wife spotted a juvenile cow fish and the weather couldn't be beaten. My wife snorkeled the Blue Hole and said it was outstanding. We would have enjoyed more local cuisine on the boat. The food was plentiful and good but fairly boring.

Nekton Pilot, November 2000,
Doug and Laura Young
(OceanLakeScuba@aol.com) Waco, TX. Vis: 30-80 Ft. Water: 80-82 F, choppy surge. Bring Dramamine and

patches. Had a rough crossing one night that popped you up and off the bed. The second time on Nekton and the first time I got sick. TACA canceled flight to Belize City from Houston. Nekton left without 9 of us. We had to charter our own fast boat to meet up with the Nekton and lost a day of diving (and \$600). TACA supposed to reimburse — we will see. Nekton main office was extremely helpful in making these arrangements for us. TACA did not bring any of our friends luggage from Los Angeles. He went all week with no clothes or gear. 5 new crew members. Trying to get everything running smoothly still. Not quite there. They had recarpeted and painted. Cook Pam is fantastic but she and her husband Mike —engineer — are retiring. There was a DCS case and we spent 8 hours taking him back to Belize City (he was bent before he came on board is what he said later). We paid \$600 for a fast boat to catch up to the Nekton, thought that would have been more expeditious for him as well. Lost a couple additional dives because of this. After we dropped him off, went to the closest reef that is frequently dove by day-trippers. Never made it to the pristine reefs (weather, trip back to Belize City, etc) that you should be able to on a live-aboard. Saw a couple Eagle Rays and Southern Rays. A couple turtles. Lots of reef fish. Some larger grouper. A human skeleton was seen by two divers and videoed. Wonder what that was all about. Had poorer vis due to weather (rain and overcast). One day had strong surge even at 100 feet.
(Ph: (800) 899-6753 or (954) 463-

9324; fax (954) 463-8938; e-mail info@nektoncruises.com; website www.nektoncruises.com)

Nekton Pilot, December 2000, Darren Dawson (ddawson@ces.clemson.edu) Clemson, SC. Experience: 0-25 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, calm. No restrictions. We dove on Lighthouse Reef almost the entire week. I think the diving is much better at Little Cayman. Unfortunately, a storm had blown some sand on top of the reef so this may have colored my opinion.

Nekton Pilot, January 2001, Stewart Kaslow, Maplewood, NJ. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 78-80 F. Dive restrictions: 130 ft, 500 lb in boat. My second trip to Belize and the diving was even better than the first trip. Saw eagle ray and tarpon. Great value, clean and roomy boat. Super crew, especially Capt. Steve, Todd, and Stacy, with an accommodating staff, and compatible divers. Missed Capt. Effey and Mike who were on vacation. Food was good, plentiful, and varied. Special accommodations for vegans or diabetics. No one went hungry with snack between meals. Cameras for rent as well as photo courses for the newbees. Cabins were more than adequate with a bathroom, shower and sink in every room. Two camera tables were carpeted, with fresh water rinse tanks and compressed air those that use it. Fresh towels for the dive deck and fresh water showers on the dive platform. Although the crew depends on tips to augment their salary, they were not pushy, just deserving. Each and every member of the crew worked their butts off to ensure the divers had

a great time. Dive briefings were accurate and timely. Night dives were always done at the same location as an afternoon dive. Saw nurse sharks, reef sharks, barracuda, turtles, dolphins, lobsters, crab, shrimp, banded, cleaning, peterson. The queen, French, and grey angel fish. There were puffer fish and balloon fish, trunk fish and cow fish. There was a library of fish id books. E6 slide processing on board. They bring you from the airport to the Ft. George Hotel, where you are on your own for dinner, and transfer you to the shop at 7:30 PM for the week. On the following Saturday morning they provided a free trip to the Mayan Ruins or the Belize Zoo before bringing you to the airport or hotel. Great group of divers, mixed in age and experience. The only Turkey on board was served for dinner. If you want wine or beer, they stop at a liquor store on the way to the ship for you to pick up your needs.

Nekton Pilot, February 2001, Bill Dausses (wfdauss@ppco.com) Bartlesville, OK. Vis: 40-80 ft. Water: 76-78 F, choppy. Logged dives: 280. Dive restrictions: 130 Ft., no deco. Good value, diving and comfort of the live-aboard. The reefs were generally in great shape with good fish populations and coral diversity. The steel 90's greatly increased bottom times. I was able to do 27 dives with a total time of 24 hours Various eels, squid, sharks, octopi, crabs, turtles and lobsters but no big pelagics. The jacuzzi on the sun deck great, and the design of the boat meant no seasickness. The food was very good but a little sparse and

occasionally there was a slight odor from our room, but they tried to fix it repeatedly without success (otherwise nice quarters). They take complete care of you from the airport to the boat and back again. Buy snacks and spirits, when they take you to the store before boarding as serious diving deserves some serious snacking beyond normal dinner times. Blue Hole: we ended up not going for a variety of legitimate reasons, but don't plan on it at all even though the pictures and advertising get you thinking they always routinely go there. They don't! Still, this is a great trip for serious divers.

Nekton Pilot/Belize, March, 2001, Juli Tracy or Dick Gamble (jwtracy@scubadiving.com, San Diego, CA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 80 to 82 F, choppy. Rooms were small to medium size, but the quality of everything boat was poor. (Kind of like Motel 6 compared to Marriott or Hilton.) The crew was unresponsive to the passengers — they didn't even know our names by the end of the week. Food was mediocre, buffet style, and often cold. And don't be at the end of the buffet line — the crew started to put dishes away before you even get to serve yourself! The dining room was awkwardly set out, and, again, of kind of "plastic" quality. Diving was okay — we were at the same places as Peter Hughes often, usually only moving only a few feet one way or another, for the next dives. We signed up for the Southern tour, so that we could see Glover's Reef, but due to the weather weren't able to get

there, BUT ... the captain never told us why we couldn't go there — communication between the crew and the passengers was lousy. Stairs are skinny; one person at a time on the staircases, and the boat is designed so that it takes many, many flights of stairs to go on a dive. wetsuits and Lycras could not be in the lounge or in the rooms, even when they were dry — they all had to be on the top deck. So, to do a dive, we needed to go to the top deck to hear the dive briefing, then go back to the rooms to get cameras, etc. for the dive, then back up to the top deck to get the lycras and wetsuits, then down three flights to the dive deck, etc., etc. (The dive deck is down two decks from the cabin deck; the lounge/dining room deck is one above, the sun deck where the wetsuits were is two decks above.) The warm showers after a dive are nice, but again they require walking up and down several flights of stairs, especially for photographers, who have to get their cameras from the bottom deck, then take them up to the camera tables, then come back down to the shower deck. In all, very awkward. The price is definitely good, and discounts are offered for almost everything — older and returning passengers, for example — and the special anti-roll design would be good for seasick passengers.

Nekton Pilot, April 2001, Ray Pettigrew, Napa, CA. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 79-80 F. Dive restrictions: 130 ft. The boxy body rides on two pontoons, out of the water. While not attractive, it is very stable. The boat

has a large living/dining area and a large sundeck with a hot tub, rooms had beds (not berths) a wall of windows, storage and a head. Not roomy, but big enough. There are two camera rinse tanks on the dive deck and two camera tables and a very large tank on the photo deck. Dive tanks are steel 95's and there is a deco bar at 15 ft. with an emergency tank. The crew was excellent. Briefings were good. If you wanted a guide one would be available. Five dives a day — two at one site in the morning, two at a second site in the afternoon and a night dive at the afternoon site. Conditions restricted diving to Lighthouse reef. The Wave Dancer and Belize Aggressor were frequently in sight. The diving quickly became monotonous. The food was adequate and plentiful, with hot snacks at 10 am and 4 pm. After dinner there would be a slide show or lecture which was worth attending.

CAYMAN ISLANDS **Grand Cayman**

Cayman Aggressor IV, October 2000,
John Slattery (jamslats@aol.com)
Palm Coast, FL. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, choppy no currents. Comfortable cabins, nice salon, great dive deck and nice upper deck. Due to weather we were unable to cross to Little Cayman or Cayman Brac which was great since we finally got to dive Grand Cayman. Large camera table with charging station. Separate rinse tank for cameras. (Ph: 800-348-2628 or 985-385-2628; fax 985-384-0817;

e-mail info@aggressor.com; website www.aggressor.com)

Cayman Aggressor IV, November 2000, J. Boulware, Co. Springs, CO.
Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Logged dives: 42. Dive restrictions: 130' max., buddy dive only. Service and food were outstanding! Plenty of hot towels after the dive and lots of snacks. Tanks always full and staff knowledgeable and helpful. Rooms adequate and air conditioned. Diving excellent! Lots to see and do!

Cayman Aggressor IV, February 2001, R.S. Preissig, San Antonio, TX. Vis: 60-150 ft. Water: 76-80 F. Dives logged: 675. Restrictions: 130' on air, 110' on Nitrox 32. We were able to go to Little Cayman. Diving in the Caribbean in the winter is a crap shoot. Second, the crew would prefer NOT to go to Little Cayman, since it entails two all-nighters for them — going and coming. However, we told we'd all brave the waves and they quickly accommodated us. Undercurrent tip: Get your group together and insist on going to Little Cayman if possible on the first day. The crew was outstanding. They even accommodated one diver who make 40 dives in 5-1/2 days! Photo processing twice a day, regardless of the number of rolls of film! Guided tours for those so desiring. Boat not crowded with 17 divers (18 capacity. One hammerhead, several sharks, many stingrays and turtles, anemones with diamond headed blenny, octopus for 20 minutes, fire bristle worms, Russian Destroyer at Cayman Brac, nudi-branches, yellow headed jewfish with