

of us were called stingy, other were accused of undermining his authority. We were all happy, when we were able to leave the boat safe and unharmed. Once there was another dive boat (Sea Hunter) in the area and he tried to scare them away by telling them, that we had lost a diver to a shark. This was just one of his macabre jokes he would spread around. After we got home we learned that captain Heinz and his wife barely survived a fire on board the ship. It later on sunk and now lies where nobody can reach it. (Ph: ++505-890-7007 + or Costa Rica ++506-775-1076; fax Costa Rica ++506-775-1078; e-mail SHARKS@RACSA.CO.CR; website www.theinzantiger.com)

COSTA RICA

Cocos Island

Aggressor, November 2000, R. Moore, Ph.D. (Padidm@earthlink.net) Vista, CA. Vis: 20-100 ft. Water: choppy, strong currents, 81-84 F. Dives logged: 760. Dive restrictions: none. Boat very run-down. Food ok but not great, nitrox fills I felt were unsafe with 40 O₂ bottles standing on the dive deck. Two of us shared a cabin for four so we had lots of room. I have had friendlier crews but they did their jobs. (Ph: 800-348-2628 or 985-385-2628; fax 985-384-0817; e-mail info@aggressor.com; website www.aggressor.com)

Sea Hunter, Undersea Hunter, June 2000, Lisa Neilsen (wizardcpa@aol.com) Omaha, NE. Vis: good. Water: 75-80 F. Dive restrictions: 100' max depth or Nitrox

limit, 1 hour max bottom time. Every dive with hammerheads galore. Also many, many marble rays and black tip reef sharks. Snorkeled with a manta ray one day and dolphins the next. Divemasters Hugo and Mario top notch and lots of fun. Took the Nitrox course during the 36 hour crossing. Very professionally taught by Mario. Nitrox is a must for Cocos diving. Most divers loved the food. The taste just not to my personal liking. The only dessert seemed to be various combinations of flan. I was dying for chocolate by the end of the 10 day trip. I satisfied my sweet tooth just fine by the continuous supply of packaged cookies the cabin staff kept well supplied. All of the mid morning and afternoon snacks were sandwiches, chips and dip, fresh fruit. Diving is physically demanding and tough. Wimpy divers need not apply. Staff will do small amounts of personal laundry if you ask. Tips are split equally between all crew members and are preferred in cash. This is a first-class operation through and through. The entire team, from first contact with the office staff through the cook's helper, act very professionally at all times. They made this an effortless vacation for me. (Ph: 011-506-289-7334 or 011-506-228-6535; e-mail booking@underseahunter.com; website www.underseahunter.com)

Sea Hunter, January 2001, Jim Beyster, La Jolla, CA. Vis: 50-150 ft. Water: 75-80 F. Dives logged: 798. Dive restrictions: Do not exceed Nitrox MOD. One hour max dive time. I made 20 dives in 3 days. Four

were memorable. On one dive at Bajo Manuelita I had an encounter with a big female green turtle. One dive submerged rock had a lot of blue striped snappers in a large archway. On a dive at Shark Fin I had a great encounter with a mobula ray. The ray enjoyed swimming through my bubbles. One dive at Alcyone produced a lot of white tips and a few skittish hammerheads. A dive at Dirty Rock produced lots of big eye jacks. Three of the 20 dives were disappointing; lots of time swimming and not much in the way of animal life. January is the dry season. For some reason, the hammerheads are more active at the cleaning stations during the rainy season. Rainy season is June, July, August and September. Great crew, food and accommodations.

Sea Hunter, May 2001, Michael Fox, Shinkawa, Tokyo. Vis 40-100 Feet, Water, 80-82 F. Good time of the year for those who, like me, suffer from seasickness and want to avoid the rough summer crossings. The trip out was pretty calm and the trip back was like glass. At Cocos, the Sea Hunter moored in a calm bay. Three dives a day (8am, 11am and 3pm) with an option for a night dive. Lots of hammerheads on nearly all dives. At Alcyone, there were continually 10-50 hammerheads within visibility down the seamount. Occasional larger schools deeper. No whalesharks but mantas on many dives. Some mobula rays, tons of marble rays and whitetips. Silverado had several large circling silvertips and the reef was full of fish life; a small school of eagle

rays, hunting whitetips, free swimming eels. Dirty Rock had hammerheads and immense school of resident jacks. On many safety stops we were accompanied by a large wahoo. At the end of one of the dives from the panga we saw a large tight bait ball being attacked by the birds from the surface and from silkies, blacktips and tuna below. Sharks jumped from the water attacking the bait ball. It went on for 45 minutes. I tried to get into the water to snorkel but two silkies made a bee line for me and I stayed in the boat the rest of the time. A few divers were a little more daring but never moved further than an arms distance from the boat. Eventually, Mario, the divemaster, asked us to stay in the panga. During one dive, he saw a tiger shark. The crew was unbelievable. The food was great and special requests were greeted with a smile. The boat was immaculate and stable. I had a room up front. Some guests with rooms towards the rear said the tied-up pangas bumping up against the boat at night disturbed their sleep. Great trip.

Sea Hunter, May 2001, Bill L. Meredith, Austin, Texas. While the surface temperatures were normal — 81 F down to the thermocline at 50 to 70 feet — below the thermocline it was bone-chilling. The temp dropped from 75 F to 68 F, with the southern sites being the coldest. A 5 mm was just about right, and a hood helped. The whitetips were in large numbers and active, hunting in packs during daylight. I saw blacktips, silvertips, silkies. Galapagos sharks, and hammerheads. By staying in one spot,

away from other divers, and letting them rise to me, as many as 200 appeared. Also Pacific manta rays, mobula rays, Chilean devil rays, marbled stingrays, eagle rays and lots of turtles. A small pod of 7 dolphins came up while we were on scuba hanging in the blue. Then there was the bait ball of thousands of bait fish schooling. Several our divers got in the water on snorkel to film the frenzied activity, but were chased out by the shark action. Sea Hunter is 115 feet x 26 feet, twin GM 700 hp engines, 12 ton hydraulic deck-mounted crane with 55-foot reach. Maximum 18 guests in 8 cabins (2 triple share cabins with three single bunks each and 6 double share cabins, some with one double bed, some with two single bunks, and some with a double lower and single upper) all with head, shower and storage in suite, beds made every diving day and towels changed every other day, soap provided but not wash cloths; 44-foot x 24-foot sun deck; one large lounge with communal head, 20 personal camera lockers, 20 personal gear lockers, and wet suit hanger area; nitrox fills and semi-closed circuit rebreathers available to those certified or classes onboard available; diving done from two 24-foot fiberglass Privateers with tanks racks for 10 and a sun cover, each powered by twin Honda 90s. Certification cards checked, releases required, no decompression diving, no dives deeper than 130 feet, no dives longer than 60 minutes, no blue water diving, dive with a buddy but not enforced. A deco dive lands you out of the pool for

24 hours. Food and drink: plentiful and varied, good. Crew of 8 was helpful, professional.

Sea Hunter, June 2001, Jeffery (jeff@jjmetal.com) Gilroy, CA.

Experience: 0-5 dives. Vis: 35 to 65 Feet. Water: 81 to 65 F, choppy surge. Rear cabins were very noisy and small but were more stable than the front cabins, so pick your poison. You do have a long crossing to make. The viz wasn't as good as I hoped it would be. I have stayed at 5 star hotels that didn't serve as good as food. I have never seen such a polished crew — clean boat or professional operation from the Capt. to the divemasters to the galley crew. I wish I had brought a 50' reel to put on my sausage & changed my camera batteries after every day. 4 dives a day aren't enough, the dive schedule is 8am, 11 am, 2pm, 6pm move 6pm to 4 then offer another dive after dinner at 8 pm. Lots of camera stations with ample electrical outlets. Good rinse tanks for cameras only. Camera savvy crew.

Sea Hunter, June 2001, Lauren Henderson, San Antonio, TX. Vis.

40-100. Water temp. 72-81 F. Nitrox 32% or 36%. Hammerheads on nearly every dive, particularly at Alcyone. Silkies, blacktips, swarms of whitetips and marble rays. On the checkout dive at Manuelita I swam for almost 10 min. with my first whale shark. Several close encounters with mantas from 10-15ft. One afternoon the two pangas rallied with a pod of bottlenose dolphins and we were able to snorkel with these beautiful creatures. Other diving highlights were eagle rays, lots

of turtles, a variety of eels, and huge schools of jacks that looked like under water tornadoes. The Sea Hunter is a spacious, well-laid out boat. The salon is large enough for all 18 passengers to lounge about and watch the days videos and also a large collection of movies. The dining area consists of roomy 4 person booths and the food (which is excellent and abundant) is served buffet style. BCs and Regs stay on the pangas during the day and are loaded back on the main boat at night. All dives were made from 2 well equipped, comfortable pangas. The panga drivers are experts at negotiating to the dive spots even in choppy conditions and also at finding divers who surface whenever/wherever they finish their dive. I recommend a Dive-Alert and safety sausage as many of us used one or the other at times. The "hardworking" Captain Hugo also served as divemaster along with Mario Arroyo who had an eye for interesting events. The divemasters video the week's dives and edit it for a trip video offered for \$65. With whale sharks, mantas, hammerheads etc., Nitrox (or rebreathers) was used by all the divers. Those not certified took the \$175 TDI course offered during the crossing. The fills for the first 21 dives(3 dives a day) were \$130 and then \$6 for each additional dive if you did night diving. Rainy weather and rolling seas, take seasickness meds for the 32-36 hr crossing. Once at Cocos the boat sat in calm water and most people were able to stop the meds. The weather was warm but overcast with on and off drizzle and showers. The sun did break through occasion-

ally. One day guests were given the opportunity to go onto the island for a short visit. A rugged hike was also available (3 sporty guys did this) but they had to forfeit the afternoon dive that day as the hike took a couple of hours. The last dive day the sun came out and the return trip was smooth as glass and only took 30 hrs. It was nice for drying gear and relaxing in the sun. Special thanks to my panga driver Luis, who found me every time. Also the galley crew; Luis, Pedro, and Javier who went out of their way. Luis Alberto worked nonstop and still had the sweetest personality.

ECUADOR

Galapagos

Aggressor I, August 2000, John Stubbings, (jstubbings@peoplepc.com) Northbrook, IL. Vis: 30-75 ft. Water: 55-70 F. Dive restrictions: 100 ft. max. Excellent service by dive crew. Boring meals. Good nature walks on the islands. Boat in good shape. Luggage 24 hours late for 3 of us but captain changed itinerary too get ours on board before we left for Wolf and Darwin. Jaime excellent divemaster and super service provided. This trip was last minute replacement by Aggressor fleet due to turmoil in Fiji. (Ph: 800-348-2628 or 985-385-2628; fax 985-384-0817; e-mail info@aggressor.com; website www.aggressor.com)

Aggressor, May 2001, Nikki Mahan, Bellevue, WA. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 30 to 50 Feet. Water: 75 to 81 F, surge, currents. Heavy surge and currents. We were quite banged up