

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

as was our gear. Few people did all the dives. The sharks are wonderful as was the manta we saw on our last dive. We saw lots of eels and octopus. great experience.

Aggressor I, July 2001, Linda Natho and Elizabeth Russell, West Mifflin, PA.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 20 to 40 Feet. Water: 65 to 75 F, choppy currents. Saw three whale sharks, several manta and marble rays, more than a dozen eagle rays, numerous Galapagos and hammerhead sharks, and at least one turtle on every dive. In places the rocks were covered with finespotted morays. Schools of Creole fish, yellowtail surgeon fish, and even king angelfish. Sea lions played with us on several dives and one even barked right into my video camera. At North Seymour, we ran into six 8' whitetip sharks resting in a sand channel. I was able to approach as near as five feet. At one site, we were holding on to the barnacles and a Streamer Hogfish swam right up and looked in our masks. Guineafowl pufferfish in both the spotted and yellow phases were abundant. At Gordon's Rocks we saw a school of Golden Cow Rays. On many surface intervals, we saw dolphins and pilot whales in large pods near our boat. We saw sailfish, flying fish, and mantas breaching near Darwin and Wolf. Most dives were between 60 and 90 feet /20-30 meters. Diving from the dinghies is a skill that takes some practice. The waves varied from nearly calm to some significant chop (3-6 foot/1-2 meter seas) especially around Darwin. The ride on the

Aggressor was smooth, but the dinghies were pretty rough over the waves. On two dives, although I had taken some Dramamine and was wearing a Scopolamine patch, I got sick on the ride back to the boat. The Galapagos sharks come within an arm's length before veering off and since we know they eat the sea lions that were swimming around us, we were a little unnerved. Land tours were outstanding. Use a macro lens to get a picture of an iguana or have to step over a booby nest. The Galapagos Aggressor I is a wonderful boat. Sixth live-aboard vacation. Hands down it has the nicest cabins in both appearance and roominess. There was a large closet, five drawers, several shelves, and ample space for our stuff and us. No upper bunks so there was no claustrophobia in the beds. There were three portholes and the bathroom was large and comfortable. We were thrilled to discover an abundance of bioluminescence in the toilet. We had a blast flushing and watching the swirls of glowing plankton. Near Wolf Island two illegal fishing vessels from Costa Rica were apprehended. The food was really good, especially if you like fresh fish. They offered outstanding vegetarian entrees and always had a nice assortment of courses. The soups were some of the best. There would be this nice tray of goodies when we returned from a dive and by the time we were done taking off our gear the tray would vanish. Often we would walk by the galley and see crew members sitting around the half-full tray enjoying it. We got the impression that some crew members only got to

eat only what was left. Never snacks at other times. I tend to experience seasickness on rough days and sometimes something bland like crackers is about all I can stand. We had to practically beg for a plate of crackers one day. The crew was very helpful getting us on and off the dinghies and when we surfaced, they were remarkably fast about getting to us and helping us out of the water. The steward was a saint. He took great care of us and was an all-around wonderful guy. The guys on deck were also helpful and always available when you were looking for something. No female crew members. The captain and the divemasters were aloof, arrogant and unhelpful. I speak fluent Spanish and conversed with them in Spanish more than in English overall. The divemasters were admittedly in great physical shape and quite knowledgeable, but they never understood that not all of us dive all day every day in our real jobs. Had a hard time keeping up with the divemasters. If we stopped to observe or photograph something, we would look up and find ourselves alone. After several frustrating experiences, lost in the very low visibility (barely 20 feet on some dives), I even asked them during a dive briefing to slow down and try not to lose us. Both swam out in front away from the group (rather than having one stay behind) on every dive. At Cousins Rock, we were supposed to do the first dive on the deep side to see the seahorses and the second dive in the shallows to see more of the sea lions. However, only one dinghy did the

planned dive. The divemaster decided to go back to the deep side. When we said we wanted to see sea lions, he shrugged and said we could swim around the island. We did, but when we got there, there was very little time (or air) left to see anything. While they often seemed annoyed with any little request or suggestion from the passengers, when we got to the end of the week they had the nerve to ask us to leave our tips a day early because a few of the crew would need to leave before we did. Although our requests for them to slow down or drop us where they had promised fell on deaf ears, we were reminded that they expected a gratuity, a big gratuity, on at least five occasions. Dive briefings were a complete joke. They consisted of a map drawn on the whiteboard with little or no explanation and the four words "rocks on the right" alternating with "rocks on the left." That was it. Although a smoking policy of "only on the top deck at the stern" was announced on the first day, it was never enforced. The one smoking guest was constantly puffing away on the dive deck while we geared up, even checking his Nitrox while smoking. Safety briefings were never done. We never even got the "life jackets are here, life boats are there" briefing. Never offered slide shows or programs in the evenings after dinner. It would have been great to get a presentation on the animals we had seen or would see or something about the natural history of the islands. All things considered, it was a very good trip.

Aggressor II, December 2000, Helen Malnar, (helenpm1@aol.com)

Tampa, FL. Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 65-75 F. Dives: 575. Hardly any restrictions. Wonderful trip — so many fish — 4 whale sharks, great pelagic activity! A great diving adventure — only 10 divers on the boat so had lots of room — lots of freedom underwater. The panga drivers were right there when we came up every time! Nitrox mix was reliable thanks to a great guide, Nelson.

Aggressor II, January 2001, Alan Rubenstein, New York, NY. Vis: 30-70 ft. Water: 60-78 F. Dives logged: 175. No restrictions except common sense. Spectacular close-ups with Galapagos and hammerhead sharks, eagle rays, sea lions, turtles, and large schools of fish. The head in my room was infested with termites. In some cabins there was no A/C. One cabin had a leak. American Airlines caused me to be separated from my luggage. Fortunately, the Aggressor rep in Guayaquil, TAME airlines, and the boat crew retrieved by bag within 28 hours of boarding the boat. They were great. If I return, I will go on the Lammer Law instead of the Aggressor boat.

Aggressor, March 2001, Ruth Ann Hubbard (scubadive@starbard.net)

Soda Springs, ID. Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 62-78 F. Dives logged: 280. You were okay with a 2 piece 3mm and thin gloves. We didn't use our hoods. The most important piece of equipment could be a good reef hook as the currents and surge can be very strong. Wolf Island was awesome, saw

hundreds of sharks, some as close as 3 feet from us. Loved the seals.

Aggressor II, March 2001, Steven Kovacs (NGFL2@hotmail.com)

Campbell River, BC. Experience: 101-250 dives. Typical first rate Aggressor boat. The staff spoke little English but was fabulous. Had 18 dives during the week due to the land tours (well worth it) and long travel times to Darwin and Wolf. The food was sub par but we came for the diving not the cuisine. Jamie did an amazing job helping us avoid overweight baggage charges when we flew out of Baltra by pooling everyone's luggage. No sign of the oil spill that almost destroyed this incredible ecosystem. Plenty of white tips, turtles and playful sea lions. Hundreds of schooling hammerheads and Galapagos sharks at Wolf. Also had a school of hammerheads and 3 mantas at Gordon's Rock. One 12 foot manta stuck around and played with divers practically the entire dive. The currents and surge can be very strong and there's no hand holding. Can stick with the divemasters or do your own thing. Overall poor viz usually averaging around 40 feet but that didn't detract from the amazing underwater life. Water temps unusually high around 80 degrees but still needed a wet suit to protect us from being bashed against the rocks due to the strong surge. My dive buddy and I were the second dive pair to book a spot on the boat months before and we specifically requested a cabin on the upper level. Our request was totally ignored and we were given a room on

the lower level. Initially we were even placed in different rooms even though we booked together! The boat is great in every respect but the head office is a joke, especially considering the prices. Hopefully they smarten up.

Aggressor II, May 2001, Ricky Camp (thehappycamper2@msn.com)

Euless, TX. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 70 to 50 Feet. Water: 70 to 78 F, choppy surge currents. First live-aboard. The crew went out of their way to take care of everyone. Walter and Paula our divemasters were very good. On our trip to Darwin and Wolf we saw many large schools of hammerheads, Galapagos sharks, and bottlenose dolphins. Several turtles almost every dive. The eels were in the open everywhere. The surge at Wolf Island were strong. We were in 80 ft of water and the surge would pull and push you every where. 3 ft. difference when the surge would go in and out. Whale shark at Wolf Island. The land tours in the Galapagos are a plus. The Bluefooted Boobies were great. At Cousin's Rock we saw seahorses and schools of eagle and cow rays. At Gordon's Rock we saw 3 different manta rays. We dove Roca Redonda and the current going around the island was like a huge over flowing river. Saw schools of barracuda, sea lions chase the fish. The next dive at Roca Redonda the sea lions stayed with our group the whole dive. Hot springs bubbling up from the ocean floor at the south end of the dive site. Many Galapagos sharks. The water temp here was the coldest at 70 F. At Bartolome we went snorkeling

with the dolphins. We did not get to do any night dives on this trip.

Aggressor II, July 2001, Dave Reubush, Hampton, VA. Besides huge schools of fish, lots of big morays, pods of dolphins, and sea lions that came to play, we saw white tipped reef sharks, Galapagos sharks, hammerheads and at Darwin, whale sharks on all 4 dives. At Wolf there was a female Minke whale and her calf that we were able to snorkel with. The crew was the hardest working of any live-aboard crew. Both divemasters were in the water for every dive, the two inflatable drivers were great at getting us where we needed to be in sometimes less than wonderful sea conditions and were very alert at the end of the dive to finding us and then hauling our gear and us back into the boats. The cook was amazing. We had turkey with all the trimmings one evening. Cold water (mid-60's at the southern islands and mid-70's at Darwin and Wolf), lots of current, and visibility much less than the Caribbean. There were times that all we could do was drop to the bottom, hold on for dear life, and watch the sharks swim by. The trip to Darwin and Wolf was a 16 hour boat ride up and 18 hours coming back. Trips of a lifetime.

Aggressor II, July 2001, Kendall Botellio, Phoenix, AZ. Vis: 30 to 80 feet. Water: 60 to 72 F, choppy, strong currents. Restrictions: computer, 90 feet. Wow! 22 whale sharks, hundreds of dolphin, schools of fish everywhere, 30 turtles on one dive and the icing on the cake -- snorkeling with

humpback whales! Land tours very interesting. Strong currents and dinghy diving make this a destination for experienced divers. Sea lions, seahorses, iguanas, penguins, tortoise are very photogenic and unafraid of humans. Boat and crew are very nice. Paula is our Galapagoddess, she can find anything!

Lammer Law, February 2001, Linda and Homer Hickam, Huntsville, AL.

A trip of a lifetime! The huge trimaran was perfect for our group of 16 (max capacity) with spacious salon and decks and roomy bedrooms, each with a private bath with nice top hatch for ventilation. Air conditioning in each cabin. Very pleased with the space and the service. www.lammerlaw.com is a must see for consideration and planning. Annie helped arrange the hotel and pickups, and all her suggestions and plans worked out well. Our stay in Quito's Cafe Cultura Hotel was a funky delight and good and cheap food was there in their cafe too. We were a mixed group of 6 divers and 10 snorkelers so we had to keep that in mind. We asked for a lot of activity and it was provided — usually 2 dives, 2 long hikes, 1-3 snorkels and more a day. We decided to concentrate our stay in the areas that had better hiking too and not spend time going too far north for the best diving. The 9 dives made were awesome, lots of sharks, turtles, eels and teeming sea life. The sea lions played with us every dive, down to 80 feet! Snorkeled with penguins and marine iguanas! Divers were comfortable in 1/8 full wetsuits with hoods and we had a range of

water temperatures from 82 deg to 65 deg! Visibility was limited at times. Saw it ALL, including an orca. No whale shark though. Island hikes with the birds, mammals and reptiles were outstanding — it was hard to not step on the sea lions and the different lizards and birds on the paths. Two naturalists onboard MADE the trip and were personable and knowledgeable. One dived with us at all times too. 5 am wake up bell for divers. Others opted for a nap or a quiet morn. The cook and captain were great too, as were all the other 7 hardworking crew. Food was good and very healthy with lots of salads and vegetables and fish and very light desserts. Bar was honor system, settled at end. Bring twice as much film as you think you will need. **(Ph: (Virgin Islands) 284-494-2490; fax 284-494-5774; e-mail cuanlaw@surfbvi.com; website www.lammerlaw.com)**

Mistral, March 2001, Bill Journey, Roseville, MN. Vis: 20-40 ft. Water: 70-74 F. Dives logged: 650. Exciting diving. Booked with Reef and Rainforest and every aspect of this trip was smoothly organized. Ecuadorian guide took care of baggage — no problem with the excess weight to and from Galapagos. Mistral was a great boat for our group of twelve (6 divers and 6 snorkelers). Snorkelers saw almost as much as the divers (sea lions, sharks, schools of fish, turtles, and even close encounters with a manta ray for 30 min.) Crew and food were wonderful, AC worked, weather was great, and Jimmie the English speaking guide helped make the whole

experience a pleasure. Galapagos is not for beginners but a must for experienced divers. (Ph: 800-247-2925 or (305) 599-9008; fax (305) 592-7060; e-mail info@quasarnauticausa.com website www.quasarnautica.com)

Reina Silva, Aquatic Encounters, December 2000, Luis Munoz, Chicago, IL. Vis: 50-60 ft. Water: 68-77 F. Dives logged: 300. Our luggage was lost for 3 days, so we missed the 1st 2 dives. The boat had no rental or extra gear. The diving was real good especially at Wolf and Darwin. Strong currents. Lots of big guys. Land tours were excellent. The guide, Mauricio, was super although he had a problem with one guy on the boat so he pouted for a day. Marc Bernardi told us 6-10 people max on the boat. 14 people. The snorkelers on the boat were ripped off. A video was given to us at the end of the trip. Nice but half of it was not from our trip. Crew excellent, beautiful island and great diving. (Ph: (+593-5) 526-210; fax (+593-5) 526-198; e-mail yrsilvia@reinasilvia.com; website www.reinasilvia.com)

Reina Silvia, January 2001, Warren & Gilda Sprung, Houston, TX. Vis: 40-70 ft. probably average 60'. Water: 72-77 F. Logged dives: 250. Weather was warm & sunny, mid 80's. One day there was a 68 F thermocline. well traveled, experienced divers on board. Most awesome diving we've ever done. All the Quito flights the evening of December 27th, ended up in Guayaquil due to fog. Marc Bernardi has his stuff together, because we had two days of sightseeing scheduled

before going out to the islands. We ended up back in Quito the next morning and Marc's staff, led by David Himle, a fantastic group leader! We did our scheduled half-morning tour in the afternoon. Otavalo Indian Market outside Quito is fantastic day. Marc wisely has this scheduled on Friday, instead of after the diving on Saturday (as the Aggressor does). Pickpockets abound. On Friday we had the market to ourselves with maybe a small handful of other tourists. Marc's man Mauricio got all our bags loaded first on the flight to the islands and without any extra charges. On the Reina Silvia, we settled into the large cabin upstairs. The additional cabins are downstairs, and while well maintained are rather small. The upstairs cabin is maybe 25x25 with a king bed, storage galore (we used no more than 1/2 half of the cabinets), windows on two walls, TV/VCR combo, refrigerator, dry bar with complimentary booze. Meals were first class, with awesome soups. Abundance of food. Mauricio provided us with a plethora of knowledge about the islands, above and under water. He was a little short with the group at first, but as time wore on he warmed up considerably. It was comical to watch him give one of his talks and almost start to dance with excitement over what he was talking about. The diving was a little strange at first when we were told to over-weight, head for the bottom, and pull ourselves along with our hands rather than kick or try to swim. The purpose is to keep the hammerheads from spooking. Kevlar gloves are worth

their weight in gold! The kinds and sheer numbers of fish we have never seen anything like it. Currents were mild to moderate. We've encountered stronger currents in Cozumel. The land excursions were as fascinating as the underwater ones. From the blue-footed boobies that walked up to check us out to the giant tortoises grazing peacefully like so many cattle in a lush green English-countryside setting, it too is giant part of the enchantment of these islands. Our free video of the trip (above and below water) was awesome, as was the entire trip.

Reina Silvia, May 2001, Dr. Theodore C. & Lisa K. Ritota, Ocean Ridge, FL. Hosted by owner Marc Bernardi and his wife Karen, we experienced 2 days of touring Quito, and Otavalo. Everything was well organized and a first rate operation. The diving was awesome, unique. Being very experienced divers we were captivated by the undersea wildlife. The diving at Wolf and Darwin Islands is an experience any enthusiastically environmentally minded thrill seeker should pursue. Accommodations and service aboard the Reina Silvia was also top notch. Our local guide spoke fluent English and added to the fun with his endless enthusiasm. He has been doing this for 15 years. Our last day on the island of Santa Cruz proved to be exhilarating and enlightening and a great way to cap off extremely fond memories of these "Enchanted Islands" as they are known locally.

Reina Silvia, June 2001, Dr. Rudy and Patti Churner, Dallas, TX.

Adrienne Abbott, our trip coordinator leader and her husband Steve met our group in Miami for the flight to Ecuador. We enjoyed two days of guided site seeing in Quito and the surrounding area with expert local guide Patricio before flying TAME to Galapagos. All transitions, luggage and transportation were handled expertly. The Reina Silvia staff provided excellent food and impeccable service. Briefings for land and underwater tours were expertly delivered by dive master/naturalist Mauricio, who showed a tremendous respect for his native Galapagos. On our third day of diving, our second dive at Darwin, my husband experienced difficulty at 50 ft. and by the time we reached the surface, he had lost consciousness. The three crewmen in their dinghies quickly responded to my distress call, pulled him into a dingy and began reviving him. Their quick, responsible and professional response probably saved his life. Back on board the Reina Silvia, the captain, Mauricio and Adrienne quickly reached DAN medical representative, and after reviewing the situation, we determined it would be best for my husband to get to the hospital at Guayaquil as soon as possible. Mauricio explained the situation and developed an alternate diving plan for the other trip members who were wonderfully understanding. The captain turned the ship around and we met a speedboat at the island of Marchena that took us to the airport on Baltra where an air ambulance was waiting to fly us to the hospital in Guayaquil. I can't thank the captain and crew of the Reina Silvia

enough for their wonderful care — they knew exactly what to do in a crisis. I also encourage every diver to join DAN. The quality of care and level of insurance coverage we received was remarkable. Also thanks to Marc Bernardi who worked with us stateside to assure our safe return.

Reina Silvia, Aquatic Encounters, June 2001, Harley Piltingsrud, Cincinnati, OH. Vis: 25-40 ft.

Aquatic Encounters asks travelers to arrive two days early to allow time for missed connections and lost baggage. They supplied lodgings at a fine Quitohotel, the Alameda Real. They also supply a Quito city-tour and could arrange other tours. We opted for a two-person trip to the semi-dormant volcano Guagua Pichincha. Two guides gave us an exciting Land Rover trip through beautiful valleys and up the 14,000-ft volcano. The last 1000-ft. was by foot, and a bit of a challenge for the non-acclimated. The next day we flew to Baltra. The boat is in good condition, but not as immune to wave motion as some. Several travelers were motion sick for several days. I took preventive meds the first two days, and was fine throughout the trip. None of the crew spoke English, and the Ecuadorian divemaster-guide, Mauricio Garcia, had to translate to the crew. The dive deck was very crowded for equipment set-up; however, a large upper-deck lounge area was used for getting into wet suits. All diving is done off two small and one larger inflatable runabouts. Aquatic Encounters liaison and videographer, Steve Fish, was a very

congenial fellow and a very experienced diver and dive instructor. He videotaped underwater activities, served as divemaster, and had some oversight of the trip. Most guest complained about the lack of courtesy and helpfulness from the divemaster-guide. As he controlled all activities, that tended to put a gray cloud over things. Many comments he made gave me the impression he was bitter over past “wrongs” of the United States during WWII. He was very experienced and knowledgeable, and after a few drinks he could be a nice guy. Endless varieties and quantities of sea life, but visibility was a limiting factor. The hammerhead sharks and sea lions were great. Water temps were 69-72oF at both northern and middle islands. I had a full 7mm suit, and I think I was the only one warm throughout many of the dives. The land tours were also very interesting and offered a nice balance with diving activities. Took a 4-day trip to the old Inca capital, Cuzco, and to the lost Inca city, Machu Picchu, Peru.

Reina Silvia, June 2001, Marilyn Koukol (marilyn.koukol@netc.pt)

APO, AE. Vis: 30-80 ft. Water: 70-75 F, choppy. Logged dives: 1,100+. Dive restrictions: no deco. The captain and the crew were excellent, caring and concerned. We saw hammerheads (not as many as in the Cocos), whale sharks, dolphins, sea horses, turtles, red lipped bat fish, and sea lions. The land excursions were filled with blue footed boobies, marine iguanas, sea lions, and the huge Galapagos turtles. The animal life and crew were great, our guide Maurice and trip captain were the

opposite. Sometimes the guide was just plain rude. We would wait and wait for the last boat with the guide to arrive at the dive site. Then, we'd all enter the water, go down to the rocks, and that was the last we'd see of Maurice. He did not check on individual divers or point out animals. The captain of the boat did one dive and was a much better guide. The trip captain did not seem responsive to the needs or suggestions of the guests. He took great video but was not personable. My best dives were at Darwin and Cousins. The Reina Silvia worked but was not convenient like other dive boats.

Samba, July 2001, Bruce L. Smith, Kensington, CA. Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: >5 to 70 Feet. Water: 63 to 70 F, calm choppy currents. One of 3 boats owned by the Angermeyer family — residents of the Galapagos for several generations — only holds 12 passengers (we were a group of 7). Trip was combination dive-shore excursion trip, so no run north to Darwin and Wolf for the whale sharks and schools of hammerheads. Some really breathtaking diving. Some dives were disappointing — one was aborted because of vis less than 5 feet (due to runoff) — others unbelievable. Not a place for the timid or novice — strong (> 1 knot) currents, many upwellings and downdrafts, surge, cold, etc. First dive on Gordon Rocks was fantastic—hammerhead, several white tips, schools of large eagle rays, huge schools of Creoles and surgeonfish — so large, you couldn't see through them — at least a half dozen turtles, one that was so close it

actually bumped me in the head. Other dives saw spotted snake eels, more turtles, cruising mantas (one large fellow with three remoras in tow), and huge schools of fish everywhere. The crew was outstanding, the accommodations certainly adequate, and the naturalist, Edgar Verges, was very knowledgeable (several of us outdived him in terms of air consumption). Note: the naturalist is freelance, so not necessarily on every trip on this boat. The food was really incredible — fish, lobster, steak, fresh vegetables with every meal, etc. Our final meal included two whole steamed grouper, a filet roast, and two roasted chickens, along with salad, rice and potatoes and vegetables (all fresh)! Lunches always included homemade soups as well as salads and main courses. Overall, a fabulous trip. (Ph: (593-2) 550 952 or 566 010 / 525 727; fax (593-2) 228 519; e-mail andando@ecuadorexplorer.com or andando2@ecnet.ec; website www.ecuadorexplorer.com/andando)

MEXICO

Sea of Cortez

Don Jose, October 2000, Vick Thomas & Elisabeth Sykes, Farmington, NM. Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 82-85 F. Dives logged: 225/250. Circa 1975 cramped wooden boat with antiquated marine toilets and mediocre air conditioning that runs only at night. Being 6 ft. 3 inches tall, I felt cramped in the bunks and slept poorly. However, the shortcomings of the boat are more than compensated for by the helpful crew and Roberto's delicious meals. Felix and Louis, the