

new areas; check before departure. . . .

Phuket

Fantasea Divers, January 2001, Joe Gallagher, Fort Wayne, IN. Phuket is an hour's flight from Bangkok or Singapore, a flight that is very inexpensive when added on to an international ticket. Towels and a meal is provided along with local transportation to the boats from your hotel. There are many other dive operators in Phuket but they tend to be very crowded and not selective about dive sites nor too concerned with the safety of the divers. Fantasea's Dive Masters are well trained, confident and not too controlling. If they see that you are experienced they keep a watchful eye but let you enjoy the dive. Dive sites are varied but have much to offer. Beginner Divers normally go on one boat to a sheltered dive site off of Rachai Yai, an island an hours boat ride from Phuket. Rachai Yai has mild currents, elkhorn coral and abundant fish and if you are lucky an octopus or reef shark. More advanced divers go on a separate boat to Shark Point to dive with leopard sharks and to an Island, Koh Dok Mai to do a wall dive and swim with barracuda. At Rachai Noi I saw large mantas swimming in crystal clear water just below the surface above large rocks which are covered by giant sea fans. The coral life is abundant a 30-90 feet varying strong currents near the surface. I recommend a wet suit, the water is in the 80's but plankton is abundant and at times stings. The plankton attracts the fish life. I have dived with Whale

Sharks off of Shark Point. (Ph: (+66) 7628 1387; fax (+66) 7628 1389; e-mail info@fantasea.net; website www.fantasea.net)

H20 Sports, Laguna, November 2000, Steven Schwankert, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong. Vis: 30-50 ft. Water: 82 F. Dive restrictions: Relaxed, guided diving. Made two dives during the long weekend. Good service: pick-up/drop-off; two tanks; all equipment, fruit and unlimited soft drinks for US \$90. Viz wasn't great, but saw some octopus, two big puffers, lots of beautiful, soft corals. Not bad for land-based vacation w/ diving. (Ph: 76-270562; fax: 76-270563)

TURKEY

Aegean Pro Dive Centre, Bodrum August 2001, Charlotte and Bob Rubin (clrubin@aol.com) Brooklyn, NY. Vis: 20-30 ft. Water: 78 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 100+. Dive restrictions: time, depth, air pressure. I would not go out of my way to go to Bodrum to dive. Bodrum, a beautiful, up-scale, resort on the Aegean, professional Aegean Pro Dive Center. (Ph: +90 (252) 316-0737; fax +90 (252) 313-1296; e-mail info@aegeanprodiver.com; website www.aegeanprodiver.com)

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Maku Diving, Holiday Beach Motel, January 2001. Peter Louwerse, Gibelhof, Switzerland. Dibbah is located in the Emirate of Fujairah, on the Gulf of Oman, at the border of the

Northern enclave of Oman called Musandam, which goes up to the Strait of Hormuz. There are few dive operations in this part of the Emirates — three to our knowledge. Maku Diving in Dibbah is operated by two Swiss, who started up recently and who don't have many guests yet. Their equipment is excellent. They are affiliated with the Holiday Beach Motel, a rather ramshackle affair. It is 10 miles South of Dibbah and therefore one is forced to eat in their restaurant, which we cannot recommend. The rooms are large, but in poor repair. Thursday, Friday, Saturday the motel is filled with Emiratis who are attracted by the beach and the fact that the motel is licensed to sell alcohol. These nights are very noisy indeed! A new hotel is to be constructed next to the motel and the dive shop will move there. The Fujairah coast is sandy, with some rocks sticking out. Maximum depth about 50 ft. Visibility was 15 to 25 ft. Currents were feeble, water temperature mid-sixties. Dibbah Rock is an area that one can circumnavigate in about two dives. Its about one-half mile in front of the beach and one is taken out there in a small dinghy that hardly holds four divers and requires a backwards roll on the count of three, because otherwise it would tip over. Hard corals only in the very shallowest parts, a remarkable thing because we hear that in summer the water temperature goes up to the mid-eighties. All around the Rock there are large schools of bannerfish, fusiliers, mackerel, etc. A local specialty is the muscat jawfish, much larger than its

Caribbean relative. There was one seahorse and many, many large green turtles. When there are six to eight guests, the dive operation charters a speedboat on the Oman side to dive Musandam. Musandam is spectacular: bare mountains plunge from some 5000 ft into the sea, where the sandy bottom starts at about 60 ft. Several large fjords cut into the interior, with only some small fishing villages here and there. The speedboat is equipped with two 250 hp outboards and covers the 40 miles to the Northern part of Musandam in a little over an hour. The best dives were around Lima Rock, offshore from Musandam. We had currents varying from fierce to none I guess depending on the tide. Again, no hard corals, but forests of beautiful soft corals. Large schools of fish, such as spadefish and barracudas. The visibility varied, again probably with the tide, between 20 and 60 ft. one shouldn't make the trip just for diving. But combined with Musandam, with its traditional fishing villages and a trip through the Emirates - which is a fascinating country — it is more than worth the while! (Ph: 00971-9-2445747; e-mail maku@emirates.net.ae; website http://www.geocities.com/Maku_divecenter)

LIVE-ABOARDS

INDONESIA

Arlena, Murex, May 2001, Matt & Ellen Tate (matate@netusa1.net)
Kokomo, IN. Vis: 50-150 ft. Water: