

to the incredible heat and evaporation. We descended the line right into the hole in the barge's hull. All around swarmed a huge school of snapper. We kept going down to the sand and headed for the stern. Most of the fish either were a totally different hue, or were altogether different species than one sees in the Caribbean. The water is rich in plankton, cutting visibility. We found several crab traps scattered around the wreck. We had to rehydrate on our surface interval. The temperature was 122 F. so several of us did our surface interval in the water, where it was 90 degrees. Second dive was to the stern, and swimming through the wreck, then we came up through the wreckage on her starboard quarter, and ascended to the bottom of the hull. We descended into the wreck, seeing daylight on the other side. There is a virtual tunnel through the center bulkhead area, an easy swim through. Down in the hold, we spotted a school of whitish goatfish, and more angels. Dive one: 74ft 25 min. Dive 2: 77ft 26 min. (Ph: 00-971-4-3317433)

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. . . .

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 were stopped for political reasons, but this area has been re-opened along with some other new areas. . . .

Big Blue, August 2001, Maureen Flood, Washington, DC. Vis: 20-45 ft. Logged dives: 15. Dive restrictions enforced: depth limits. The on-land operations of Big Blue are a mess, so I stay elsewhere if not taking a course. The instructors are amazing. The diving on KoTao is not so good, as much of the coral is dead. Due to the time of the year, visibility was low. But overall, we had a good time. (Ph: 66-77-456050; e-mail info@bigbluediving.com; website www.bigbluediving.com)

Dive Asia, Evason Phuket, April 2002, Kinson Tong (kinsontong@hotmail.com) Fanling, NT. Experience: 51-100 dives Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Calm. Diving at PP Island was extremely disappointing. Water was murky, many sea urchins but not many fishes. More than 30 divers on the boat, so overcrowded both above and under water. Saw some coral shrimps and ghost pipe fish. Two leopard sharks, one cruising and other resting at the bottom. (Ph: +66-0-76330598 or 76284117; e-mail info@diveasia.com; website www.diveasia.com)

Koh Nang Yuan, May 2001, Jerry Kaelin & Fran Laugdon (jkaeliu@lumc.edu) Chicago, IL.

Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 75-80 F. Dives accrued: 150. Beautiful, relaxing, small island. 90 minute large ferry ride from Koh Samui. Island is a stop-off for small and large cruise ships and snorkelers, but they only stay an afternoon. Diving from inflatable sometimes choppy. Mostly hard coral, not a lot of fish but beautiful as this was our first Pacific diving out of Caribbean. Resort staff friendly and generally helpful. Certainly not a dive destination unto itself, but a wonderful four day diving trip since we were already in Bangkok. Website is accurate. (e-mail info@3paradiseislands.com; website <http://www.koh-tao.biz/koh-nang-yuan-resort>)

Samui International Divers, Samui Nattien, September 2002, Carl Scott (cdscott@swbell.net) Spring, TX.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 15 to 60 Feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, choppy. Expectations not high because I knew that the best diving in Thailand is on the other side of the peninsula. Diving was good, but not spectacular. Vis was typically in the 40-60' range due to nutrient rich waters, though the marine park area is much worse (as little as 15' on one dive). Magnificent anemones literally blanketed the reefs, with many anemone fish and anthias schooling about. Saw Weaver's butterflyfish, blue ringed angels, and bannerfish on nearly every dive, plus some that weren't in any books. Numerous nudibranchs. The dive

operation left much to be desired.

While they generally ran a structured and safe operation, I was allowed to dive solo on nearly every dive (I lagged behind taking photos, and they never came looking for me or acted concerned when we passed later in the dive). This may be due to my certification and experience, but, if not, is negligent. Lunch was delicious Thai cuisine, and there was plenty. They provide breakfast on the big boat, but it's just toast and bananas, with tea and instant coffee. They pick up clients at their hotels and drove them to the dock. On my first day, I signed in but was not given any further information. When hearing the announcement that the boats were leaving, had to ask someone who looked like they knew their way around which boat I should get on. She turned out to be my divemaster. Things went more smoothly the next few days. On the last day, they failed to pick me up. I asked the hotel to drive me to the dock, arriving just in time to see the boat pulling away. The shop reluctantly offered to process a refund for one day's diving within the next couple of weeks, refusing to run the refund through their credit card POS terminal or refund in cash. I was supposed to have been given a schedule upon arrival, but it was still in the office. They forgot to schedule me for the last day's diving! Their apologies were nonexistent. The icing on the cake was the \$50 video CD that I bought, which, despite repeated assurances otherwise, wouldn't play in my DVD player. (Ph: 66-77-231-242 or 66-77-422-386 or 66-2-253 8043; e-mail info@planet-scuba.net)