

ple I've ever dealt with. They do trips such as the wreck of the *Diamond Knot*, in the Strait of Juan De Fuca, also the Narrows Bridge and Delco Wall, in Commencement Bay. These dives start at 130 feet. I thought Delco Wall was far more interesting than the back wall of Molikini, on Maui. They will also cater to groups interested in dives that are shallower. Lots of octopus and wolf eels for the shutter bugs.

The Eastern Pacific Live-Aboards

CANADA

British Columbia

Clavella Adventures, Browning Pass
Hydeway, August 2002, Peter

Belden, Palo Alto, CA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 80 feet. Water: 43 F, currents. We saw several orcas from the skiff one day, as well as a humpback whale, fantastic! John explained that getting in the water with orcas up in B.C. would require us to focus on jumping in after orcas 10 to 20 times a day and would eat away all our time, leaving none for diving. It's a low probability activity, and with low viz it's hard to get close enough to see orcas under water. So this was a dive trip not an orca trip. We had hoped to get in the water with pacific white-sided dolphins, which is a more common occurrence, but there were none to be seen. We did find one large Pacific octopus, which was fun, and several seals but saw no wolf eels. We

got a special treat in finding a rat fish. John deBoeck (owner/captain) knows everything about the area and tracked down the orcas on one of our five days. We saw bald eagles topside on almost every dive. This is a wonderful, remote, quiet, cold, and roughing it kind of trip. The accommodations are a rustic floating lodge heated by a wood burning stove in a protected cove in the middle of nowhere. We saw no other people the whole time and had the whole place to ourselves, plus John, his friend, and a cook. The food was fantastic, three to four meals a day home cooked for the five of us by a full time cook!!! Drysuit is essential and currents are present, so this is a trip for advanced divers. There was no underwater guide or divemaster. John waited topside in the skiff. Invertebrate life was large, metridiums, diversity of starfish and sea urchins, plus many lingcod, rockfish, and scorpionfish. Huge 2- to 3-foot crabs. We had hoped to do a side trip with another operator to seek out the seven gill sharks, but most were not departing on week days. The boat *Clavella* itself is a bit old and beat up, and so we were glad to have the lodge option. Diving was from a skiff, and all sites were within five minutes. Some kelp, some walls, some big rocks covered with anemones.

(www.clavella.com)

Nautilus Explorer, March 2003,
Henry C. Campbell, Tacoma, WA.

Dives logged: 1,200+. Vis: 40 to 60+ feet. Water: 45 to 48 F. Dive restrictions enforced: no deco diving unless planned. Limit on dive times due to current. I make one or two Caribbean trips a year. Mike Lever has the safest

dive operation I have ever dove with. Yet you can still dive your own profile. You should be a self-sufficient and responsible diver. On this dive trip there were anemones, sponges, coral, Puget Sound king crab, rockfish, swimming scallops, cabezon, and octopus. Mike took us to a new site he had never dove before. I saw some of the biggest ling cod I have ever seen. It was a great trip.
(www.nautilusexplorer.com)

***Nautilus Explorer*, April 2003, Kim Brungraber, Green Bay, WI.**

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 25 to 70 feet. Water: 45 to 50 F, calm, currents. The captain and crew were excellent. Food, rooms, service, and diving for the experienced diver were top notch. We were told that we could dive with some sea-lions and have a good chance to see the Pacific giant octopus. We never dove with the sea-lions and were told about several octopuses. But only two people saw one. Some of the most beautiful sea life around. The walls were just covered with life. I have never taken so many macros. We dove with dry suits. You could dive with 7 mm wetsuits, but you will limit yourself to how many dives a day you could handle in the cold water. My husband and I did 11 dives and really enjoyed ourselves. You could have done 18 to 19 dives. Some did. Captain Tom did a good job giving us information before getting on his boat. Plenty of room on camera tables for setup and film changing. No rinse tank on smaller dive skiff for cameras. Had to wait until you got back to the *Nautilus Explorer* to rinse

cameras, but it was always a short ride back to the boat.

***Nautilus Explorer*, May 2003, John Kontnik, Lakewood, CO.**

Vis: 15 to 30 feet. Experience: 500-1,000 dives. This was my second trip to B.C. to dive. The *Nautilus Explorer* was built with the diver in mind; from the separate areas for dinning and lounging to the way the dive skiff is launched, this is a divers' boat. The *Explorer* is very comfortable. The food was not terribly fancy but great and plenty of it; Kim and Steve were wonderful. We were able to do three to four dives a day and always with good dive briefings. Your dives are not escorted, so you have to pay attention and wildlife spotting is up to you. Keep your eyes open, and you will see wolf eels, lots of nudis, and some of the famous octopus. For warm water divers this is a change but a change well worth while. There is lots of space for both equipment and camera gear; the *Explorer* was built as a dive boat, and Mike Lever, owner operator, did a fine job. We stayed in the lower staterooms and found them to be nice with good storage. A friend was in the dorm and found it to be fine. As far as other wildlife we saw bears, seals, sea lions, eagles, whales, typical NW fish, as well as the octos and wolf eels. B.C. should be in any serious diver's plan.

***Nautilus Explorer*, May 2003, Nikki Mahan, Bellevue, WA.**

Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 20 to 50 feet. Water: 47 to 50 F, choppy, currents. The diving was spectacular as always. We had an amazing stellar sea lion

experience in the Queen Charlotte Islands; at least 15 females checked us out for over 20 minutes, up close and personal. The Port Hardy area is beautiful! We were fortunate to be able to dive with four knowledgeable people from the Vancouver Aquarium. Mike Lever has updated the staterooms and common areas to make them even more comfortable. He and Mary Anne continue to make this a premier live-aboard in the world in an area that above and below the water is one of the most beautiful in the world. Most of the 23 divers had a camera, so the camera area was crowded.

COSTA RICA

***Okeanos Aggressor*, May 2003, Steve Wenc, Laporte, IN.** Vis 50 to 100. Temp 73-83 F. Dives: 251-500. Depth limits determined by your nitrox mix and risk level. Nitrox is a must at Cocos and the course can be taken during the 36 hr. passage. I dived with an air computer as a backup and it went into deco several times. Five dives a day with the first four about 100 ft. Dive your computer, no assigned buddies, come up whenever and wherever you want and they pick you up. Safety sausage required and provided. Currents were challenging at times, and the thermoclines down deep were invigorating. The amount of marine life is just incredible. Dozens of whitetips on every dive, scattered hammerheads, abundant marble rays, several eagle rays, a couple mantas and a few turtles. There were massive schools of fish to support all these predators and plankton for the rest, to the detriment of visibility. You

would have to do a night dive at “shark rodeo” to believe it. Hundreds of whitetips prowling all around you. The bottom was mostly volcanic rock with little coral. Bring your gloves. The *Okeanos* was old but seaworthy, no small consideration given the distance traveled. The food was OK. The dive staff left a lot to be desired. After handing me my camera and allowing me to descend to 100 ft. my divemaster fired up the Zodiac and zipped out of sight. I took a compass bearing, beat feet, and was lucky enough to rejoin the group. No explanation but I suspect he blew the location and didn’t catch his error until I was already down. The next day I came within arms reach of the propellers when the driver squared up the boat in 6 ft. swells without checking my position. Our divemaster sat out a night dive without telling us (regulator problems). He also missed the next morning’s dive when he forgot his gear and didn’t want to go back and get it. The kitchen plumbing leaked through the ceiling and onto our bunks and they refused to fix it until we got back to port. We didn’t have a last night party, as is the custom, and we never once set foot on the island as promised. We did see the park rangers when they came on board to collect the \$35 per diver per day park fee (\$210). Those that didn’t read the fine print were surprised. Cocos Island is worth the time, money, and inconvenience of getting there. I’m not sure this was the best way to experience it. (www.aggressor.com)

***Sea Hunter*, March/April 2003, Harry A. Kreigh, Sacramento, CA.** 15-day trip (11 diving days) to Malpelo