

15 meters. Water: 18 to 22 C, choppy. Just outside of Rovinj, Croatia (it's on the Adriatic, on the peninsula south of Trieste, Italy). The boss was not onsite due to a personal emergency. On the day of our arrival wind swept in from the SW and remained until the day we left. The boat captain did not want to take us out because of the wind he claimed, but more likely because we were too few to make it worthwhile. We did go on one dive — 24 divers on a small boat. Dive personnel did not seem eager to serve the divers. Divemaster on boat had no idea who was in the water and how much air they had. Boat captain was "short" with some divers. Photos of the wrecks in the area (including the *Baron Gautsch*) were impressive and made us want to dive. Too bad we came towards the end of the summer season. Food onsite was reasonably priced, but nothing special; good meals in town. Accommodation was substandard. Locals were friendly; English and German widely spoken. Limited public transportation; long drive from Germany; accessible from Venice by boat. The leader of our group has dived here 5 or 6 times — he says it is good — certainly has to be better than this experience. (+385 52-816-648, diver@pro.hr)

SPAIN

Scorpio, January 2003, Marilyn Koukol (koukolm@hotmail.com), FPO, AE. Vis: 30-90 ft. Water: high 60s-low 70s. I now live in Southern Spain. The best shore/boat diving that I've found around here is in Tarifa.

There are usually currents and wind, but we see octopus, mullet, wrasse, conger eels, and rays. There are also little cuttlefish. We saw 15 on one dive. A 5 mm with a hood is definitely a must. I've gone on boat dives with Scorpio out of Tarifa, and they are quite competent. One dive was on a wreck. There is also supposed to be good diving around Gibraltar too — just haven't gotten there yet! Thanks for all your great information.

UNITED STATES

Massachusetts

Cape Ann Divers, June 2003, Joseph Gallagher (joegallagher@aol.com), Fort Wayne, IN. Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 10 to 15 ft. Water: 45 to 50 F, choppy. Cape Ann Diving offers challenging boat diving for the hardy. Most divers from New England dove with drysuits. One diver after fighting the surge in the cold for 20 minutes was found in the Cape Ann Dive shop after the dive buying a dry suit claiming he wasn't going to dive cold again. Boat dives go to a variety of sites including one which features diving with seals. We dove a wreck, *Chester Poling*, in 80-90 feet of water (depending on tides) at the mouth of Gloucester Bay. Dive is for the experienced, as limited visibility, surges, and thermal climes tend to challenge beginners. The wreck is covered with anemones and normally crawling with crabs as well as a lobster or two. Locals can obtain a license to catch lobsters. Bring everything you need to be self sufficient on the boat; it acts

mainly as a taxi to get you to a site. There is abundant shore diving in Gloucester — check with Cape Ann Divers on tides and wind conditions to decide which is the best shore dive site to choose. You are on your own, come with whatever you need and figure out the best way to prepare everything for two dives before getting on the boat. (www.capeanndivers.com)

Michigan

North Star Charters, September 2003, Eric Frick, Elmhurst, IL.

Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 35 to 45 feet. Water: 61 to 63 F, calm. Capt. Linda Lindquist runs a good operation aboard the 28-ft *Linda K*. Charters are to the wrecks in the Alger Underwater Preserve off of Munising on Lake Superior. Weather conditions can be dicey, but our dives were in calm water that was warm for Lake Superior. North Star has some equipment available for rental, but most divers bring all their own gear, including tanks and weights. (www.exploringthenorth.com/shiptour/dive.html)

North Carolina

Dive Hatteras, June 2003, Karren & Tom Darone (KDleChat@aol.com), Fairfax, VA. Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 20 to 120 feet. Water: 74 to 78 F, calm, choppy. Typical North Carolina diving — changeable. The first day, the water en route to the wrecks was choppy as heck; got down to the British *Splendour* at 104 ft. and found ourselves in 100-ft. viz. Saw 5-6

sand tiger sharks, big sting ray, lots of variegated sea cucumbers, eels, cobia, barracuda, three scorpionfish. Definite thermocline at 69 ft. Accidentally brought up a tiny octopus, 1-1/2" at most, along with some marvelous seashells. Carefully sloshed him back into the sea. Dave and Ann Sommers (owner-operators) dove during our SI of 2:47, and then we were back in the water at the *F.W. Abrams*. It was murky and green at 85 ft. and viz was down to 20-25 ft. Found a shark tooth and I swore a splendid toadfish, only they don't live off North Carolina. Lots and lots of jellyfish in the top 40 feet of water. Our dive guide, Cliff, caught a cobia that we shared for dinner back at the "motel" that evening. Next day, skies looked threatening but the waters were calm. We dove the *Dixie Arrow* at 90 ft. twice and thoroughly enjoyed it. There was light current in the mid-water but quiet on the wreck. Saw more sand tiger sharks and loads of toadfish! (Maybe not "splendid" but certainly toadfish!) Saw more scorpionfish, barracuda, greater amberjack, sting ray, grunts by the millions, and a friendly turtle with more curious barracuda at the safety stop. Today the thermocline was at 55 ft. The second dive, after a surface interval of 1:35, was incredible. Seven sand tiger sharks at one time really pushed my comfort level, but the octopus we saw first under the stern and later on top of the wreck was outstanding. We even started to recognize the barracuda that hung out at the safety stop with us, particularly the six-foot one with the hook stuck in the side of his head. (www.divehatteras.com)

Diver Down, Red, Wet, and Blue Diving, Fishermen's Inn, May 2003, Don Henderson, Lockney, TX.

Dives logged 98-103. Surface 76 F, 100 ft. 68 F, choppy surface with little current, good vis to thermocline and then murky. The dive centers all sounded similar over the phone, so I turned to researching motel possibilities and when I called Fishermen's Inn, Billy told me that one group had the entire place booked, but I could call Kamula in Dallas, my home state. She's picky about who goes out with her groups. She requires an advanced card, and she wanted to feel good about me joining in. Fortunately, I passed inspection. Kamula generally provides van service from Raleigh-Durham airport to the coast as well as to dinner and shopping each evening, but she also got me a great deal on my own car for the day-early arrival. Billy and Barbara at the motel are just like family. I told them I didn't care if my room was cleaned or bed changed for the weekend (I don't at home), but they did it anyway, had coffee ready on the dock every morning at 5:30, helped us when we got back in from a day's trip, and even served us super picnic dinner on the dock Saturday night. The coast was being hit with spring thunderstorms, and while I tried to go out with Olympus Dive Center, we made it out about 15 minutes before the skipper heard reports that seemed unfavorable for diving. I was game for whatever it'd take, but some of the others on the boat weren't as adventurous, so we scrubbed the trip. Instead, I got to tour Morehead City and Atlantic Beach, including a

really nice public aquarium and their renowned maritime museum. We loaded early the next morning onto Bobby's boat with a sundeck above and a forward dry lounging room for napping. Most were using 30% EAN, with 80, 100, and 120 foot steel tanks; one day we opted for 28% for deeper possibilities on the *Naeco*. Trips out each day were an hour or more and the rides were comfortable. Kamula brought breakfast snacks and sandwich fixins' every day. The recent rains had the depth below the thermocline a bit poor for photography. We did two long dives a day, with a minimum one hour interval between, and over the three days did WW-II wrecks, even a WW-I wreck and the U-352 German sub! Able-bodied divers loaded their own tanks and gear each morning for 6:30 departures. With a diving captain, two dive masters, and Kamula, we actually had four professionals taking care of 17 other divers. Great service and safety, to be sure. Even the exiting and reboarding was the safest approach I've used — with a divemaster to put your fins on at the stride gate, a fin friendly ladder, and a dive master to remove your fins only after making it on board. Roll call was carefully run before and after every move. Kamalu is cute, funny, smart for a blonde, and so much more — even though a health nut.

(www.diverdownscubadiving.com,
www.redwetandbluediving.com)

Red, Wet, and Blue, July 2003, Dave Morris (dave@davemorris.com), Bedford, TX. Experience: 101-250

dives. Vis: 30 to 70 feet. Water: 74 to 78 F, choppy, currents. Headquartered in Texas, Red, Wet, and Blue makes trips to North Carolina. I rate some of the accommodations at 3 stars instead of 5, not because I didn't like them, but as a warning to those who demand to be pampered in 5-star hotels and need someone to carry their tanks for them. This trip is for people who don't mind a little dirt, a little sweat, some rain on a choppy 2 hour boat ride where many will get seasick. But after you've seen a WWII German U-boat up close and personal, you'll keep coming back. The price is low. The captain, Bobby Cox, will try to get to a wreck, even when other boats have chickened out before leaving the dock. As a result, you'll get more diving on his boat than on others. 8 dives in 4 days. Not bad for the start of hurricane season, and a week after a hurricane ripped through the Gulf. You are allowed to pick apart the wreck, so many divers bring crowbars, hammers, and other tools and are able to bring back bullets, artillery shells, portholes, and other interesting stuff. I use a digital camcorder in an U/W housing, so I don't need photo processing facilities. Just a dry place on the boat to change batteries. The camera bucket is a bit small for big housings, but it works out. And the shots of sand tiger sharks swimming past you several feet away makes it worth the effort.

South Carolina

Off the Wall Charters, August 2003, Barbara Petrecca (seagoddess@comcast.net), Perry Hall, MD.

Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 2 feet. Water: 84 to 86 F, calm, currents. This is not a trip for the light hearted or inexperienced. Expect little viz and a strong current, possible alligator sighting (on the surface) or worse — fast bass boats. It can be a bit spooky. However, for those interested in a little history and the hunt for treasure, this is a place for you. Discover all sorts of prehistoric shark teeth (all sizes, some partial, some full), fossilized bones, bottles, pottery, arrowheads, and more. This was my second black (and they ain't kidding) water diving trip I got "talked into." But I am glad I went as this trip was better than the first — mostly due to the difference in diving practices and dive sites of this boat from the first. (Further upriver, no drift diving, easier current, good site condition descriptions.) Off the Wall Charters' owner and captain Bill Routh is excellent. He strives to make sure all are comfortable, safe, and enjoying themselves while finding treasures. His 32-foot pontoon boat is spacious for our group of 6. We did 4 dives each of the two days on the river. We all brought home lots of treasures for our collections.
(www.offthewalldiving.com)

Utah

Homestead Crater, Homestead Resort, June 2003, Paul Farago (farago54@msn.com), Monte Vista, CO. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 10 to 15 feet. Water: 92 to 96 F, calm, no currents. Homestead Crater is a hot spring. The water stays in the mid 90s year round. Because of the high water

temperature there are no fish in the water. It is like diving in a large hot tub. It is an excellent place to dive for beginners and divers who have not been in the water for a while. It is great for practicing buoyancy control and to test your equipment before going into open water. The dive site is inside an actual crater, which is a cave like area; however, during the dive overhead cover is not a concern. There is a dive shop in the crater near the water which rents tanks and other equipment you may need. Reservations are needed. You can reserve one hour time periods to dive. On the weekends and weekday evenings it gets busy with dive classes. There is a great resort to stay on the premises, with good restaurants and other fun ways to spend your nondiving time.
(www.utahdiving.com/crater.htm,
www.homesteadresort.com)

Wisconsin

Dinosaur Divers, Shore Line Inn, August 2003, Guy Johnson
(siberia@netexpress.net), **Coal Valley, IL.** Experience: 501-1,000 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. Door County, Wisconsin (Lake Michigan), is an hour north of Green Bay, full of craft shops and not a McDonald's or Pizza Hut in sight! The motel was neat and clean and diver friendly. My only complaint is the TVs only had about three channels and no HBO! I missed the Sopranos!! The dive operation is small but nice; Jim, one of the owners, is Padi instructor #44. He made you feel as if you'd known him for years, nice guy!

The dive boat is a former navy pbr (patrol boat, river, for you non Viet Nam types). It holds 6-9 divers with ease. The stern ladder was a bit tricky, but the staff were fast to assist. All entries were made via giant strides or backward rolls from the sides. The staff were always quick to help with gear, or granny lines to the moorings. We dove two wrecks, the *E.R. Williams*, sunk in 1892, a 250-ft, intact, upright wooden schooner in 102 ft of water — masts intact, anchors, etc. The second was the *Roan* barge sunk in 1956, a huge crane on a barge that sunk in about 112 ft of water. It's upside down but can be penetrated if trained. Saw lots of burbot in the 2-4 ft range. Many other wrecks to dive but never enough time. The motel also has a huge multi-bedroom (4) suite for groups. Also a restaurant with decent sit-down meals from the menu. Only wine and beer available. Nice maritime museum within walking distance. Water was near 80 degrees and calm. We dove drysuits but others were in 7mm wetsuits. We dove nitrous but air would have been fine. Two dives was \$75, and for an additional five bucks they had a huge, tasty sandwich (that you ordered with signing up) in the cooler for you. Bottled water was free, as was use of the large iced down cooler. Ample area below decks to change clothes, etc — head and O2 on board also! You bring all your own gear including tanks (filled) and weights. The dive area in general is known as "death's door" because of all the shipwrecks over the years!! Very scenic!
(<http://theshorelineresort.com>)