

UNITED STATES - CALIFORNIA

Open Water Dive Shop & Sand Dollar (boat), June 2002, Don Henderson, Lockney, TX. Dives Logged: 58. Vis: Clear. Water Temp: 66 F. I shopped the Internet for a long desired Catalina Diving Adventure! I selected this boat and the shop which had it chartered for the day, as it was the only one with Nitrox, but I hadn't realized how useless Nitrox would be for this trip?! I had to board in the dark for an early departure and a 2.5-hour boat ride across on an overcrowded vessel. They'd promised plenty of room for everyone to have a bunk for a nap, but all were taken by the time I boarded. We were too crowded between dives, but we were fed good, hot meals — during both crossings and between dives. Still, it'd certainly helped if one of the three galley tables hadn't been devoted to the TV and VCR. I knew the water would be about as cold as in the Santa Rosa NM Blue Hole, so I packed my Poly Skin, a 3 mm long neoprene, and a slightly larger 3 mm short neoprene — expecting a 7 mm layered benefit, along with my neoprene beanie, gloves, and booties. And I was fine until I hit the 45-foot thermocline; couldn't stay below it long enough for my thermometer to register the change. The diving was a super change from warm water dives of the Caribbean and the Florida Keys, i.e., different fish, some endemic to the Channel Islands, totally different invertebrates, and majestic kelp forest! Crawled through the bottoms of 40-foot thickets with the lead of

locally experienced divers. A great one day adventure.
(www.divingcharters.com)

UNITED STATES - WASHINGTON

Seattle

Soundwave Scuba, October 2002, Dr. Kathleen T. Brown (k.brown62@comeast.net), Martinez, GA. Vis: 20 to 40 feet. Water: 49 F. Dives logged: 35. Dive restrictions enforced: depth limits advised, divers able to dive own profile. Only experienced divers aboard. First class operation. Owner — Jeff Rogers — knows the waters of Puget Sound like the back of his hand. Very competent, helpful, and not trying to rip people off. Has deck hand (Diane) carefully monitor everyone's air use. Very helpful aiding divers with equipment, etc. Provides plenty of food, shelter, hot water, books to ID specimens. Very enjoyable dives — had a memorable close encounter with the Pacific octopus.
(www.soundwavescuba.com)

Tacoma

Port Hole Divers, September 2002, Dan Guill, Graham, WA. Dives logged: 800. PADI Instructor. For advanced divers. Port Hole Charters is out of Tacoma, WA, mainly operates in Commencement Bay. It is owned and operated by Captain Michael Ferguson. He and his divemasters have been diving these waters since the late '70s. They are mostly firefighters and paramedics and are some of the nicest peo-

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
Hydewaway, 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