

and skins between dives. Better camera etiquette needs to be stressed on future trips; a large camera table in the center of the rear deck was crowded with fins, masks, and clothes, leaving very little space for cameras. Up top, the sun deck was just that — sunny. A partial shade would add a little protection for those wanting to be on deck but not on the dive deck. Apparently sport fishermen (fisherpeople) don't care to be topside unless they have a line in the water.

The food was good, my only criticism being that lighter fare would have been more appropriate for this group. Most of us (typical Californians all) would have preferred more fish and chicken and less beef. There was always plenty of beer (no charge), but our group drank the boat dry of wine in 4 days.

The water supply was as advertised — unlimited. If you're still not sure what a Navy shower is, this boat is for you.

Diving is coordinated and supervised by personnel from Amigos del Mar, one of the oldest dive shops in Cabo. During our week, the dive shop provided three divemasters, one being the owner, Jose-Luis.

The rule for diving was to take a buddy with you and have as much fun as possible — no depth restrictions or time limits in the water. The three divemasters gave a good briefing at each new site and were always at hand in case one of the few inexperienced divers wanted a private escort. Two chase boats picked up and dropped off divers; a third boat stood ready for emergencies.

Shoulda Been Here Last Month

Water temperature averaged 80°F during the first week of

August, but below 50 feet it sometimes dropped to the low 70s. Visibility was a big disappointment, never better than 50–60 feet for the entire week, sometimes as low as 15 feet. On a variation of the of the theme “You should have been here last week,” visibility was said to have been 90–100 feet in July.

Cabo Pulmo reef, which provided the best vis on our first day out of port, was wall-to-wall sting rays, tuna, jacks, and small pelagics; a night dive here was even more amazing. However, the seamount, El Bajo, did not provide the wild action of hammerheads and mantas that I had seen here a few years ago. Visibility was no better than 20–30 feet, but people did see “a” manta and “a” hammerhead. I wondered if there weren't more out there in the murk. I was able to get within 8 feet of a 7- to 8-foot manta for a photo.

Gordo Banks, known for its strong currents and its depths starting at 100 feet, was, we were told, where divers had been spotting whale sharks,

mantas, and hammerheads. Not us; again, only a hammerhead here and a manta there, maybe others just out of sight beyond 30 feet. I found a nice rock to hang onto and watched school after school of tuna, jacks, and other 20- to 40-pound fish ride the current in pursuit of dinner.

It was not uncommon to see porpoises on the surface. One group of divers was dropped off in the path of these beautiful animals to watch them pass under water.

Obviously there are no guarantees in diving, and everyone understood that. We could have had better visibility, but we saw enough big stuff to convince us that we should book the boat for Socorro Island in December 1995. Judging from Stan Waterman's film footage, Socorro may be where the wild things are.

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Flotsam & Jetsam

Scratch Sangalakki, Chalk Up Derawan Island

Dear Editor:

The note about Borneo Divers being closed down on Sangalakki is unfortunately true. However, divers can still go to Sangalakki and barely explored Kakaban Island (not to mention Maratua, Derawan, and other islands in the area).

Derawan Island Resort is nearing completion and in the soft opening stage (that is, don't expect great food yet). The formal opening is set for January 1995.

I went in July 1994 and found brand new Scubapro gear, fast boats (though not too great in rough seas), comfortable bungalow accommodations, and helpful, friendly staff. They

still have a ways to go, but I suspect it will be a big success once they get more sites identified and the catering straightened out.

Derawan Island is about 45 minutes from Sangalakki. Biggest problem at present is reliability of flights to and from Tarakan or Tanjung Redeb, East Kalimantan, but I understand the resort is working on solutions to this. — Peter Jennings, Jakarta

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It's Our Money They're Fighting Over

Until divers began spending money to get into the waters around Sipadan, no one really cared who owned this tiny island off the coast of Malaysian Borneo. As we have reported in the past, Indonesia and Malaysia now dispute which country has ownership. This month they resumed talks. Indonesia's claim is based on a convention signed in 1891 between Great Britain, which then administered Sabah in northern Borneo, and the Netherlands, which administered Indonesia. Malaysia bases its claim on a British map of unknown origin that shows the Dutch had already transferred their rights to Britain.

No Such Thing as a Free Launch

What does it take for a large live-aboard to be able to dive Palau in all kinds of weather? First the *Palau Aggressor* announced shortly after opening up in Palau, Micronesia, that

they would be adding a \$50,000 covered launch to improve the diving. Now, only a few months after arriving in Palau, Peter Hughes is announcing that the *Sun Dancer* will be adding a \$150,000 launch. Powered by a 400-hp jet drive (no prop to chop), the aluminum-and-ridge-foam launch is said to be unsinkable, and capable of carrying a heavy load to and from the dive site at 25 knots.

Love That Dirty Water

Volunteers for the Center for Marine Conservation catalogued the junk collected during their sixth annual beach and waterway cleanup in 32 states and 2 territories.

More than 158,000 highly motivated workers, including divers, picked up 1.7 million cigarette butts, 344,502 pieces of glass, 203,330 straws, 333,996 bottles, 210,553 cans, 134,547 cups, 40,508 balloons, 30,326 light bulbs and fluorescent tubes, 10,166 plastic syringes, 55,470 plastic trash bags, 6,636 condoms, and a 5-pound bag of cocaine labeled "radioactive."

The good news is that they collected fewer plastic items than in previous years, and less garbage from boats.

The bad news is that they collected nearly 3.2 million pounds of debris and garbage, 15 percent more than the previous year.

Sad News

For those of you who have dived with Dive Paradise on Cozumel and knew the owner, Tom Hartdegen, I pass on the sad news that Tom died of a heart attack in Mexico City. Dive Paradise will continue with the same staff.

In Depth

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