
Flotsam & Jetsam

Bumper Boats

The original *Palau Aggressor* has been replaced and moved to Truk, bumping the *Truk Aggressor* from there to the Bay Islands.

I've already heard reports of the new *Palau Aggressor II* and I have to admit they have me in a bit of a buzz to give it a try. The 100-foot catamaran is 30 feet wide, has three deck levels, and accommodates only 16 divers. It scoots at 26 knots (2½ times faster than the previous *Aggressor*) and draws only 4½ feet of water.

The salon has been described to me as a large room taking up most of the stern, surrounded on three sides by windows with a bar running underneath.

Huge hydraulics lift the jet-powered skiff up onto the deck. Divers step in and are lowered to the sea. No rough entries or exits here, but I wonder what would happen if the hydraulics broke down with the skiff aboard?

This cat is obviously a very big-bucks boat. Will the numbers work with only 16 divers? Will it ever pay for itself? I'm beginning to think it doesn't matter. Maybe these high-dollar luxury boats are just the result of Peter Hughes (*Sun Dancer*) and Wayne Hasson (*Aggressor Fleet*) trying to outdo each other. First, the *Palau Aggressor* added a \$50,000 skiff. Then Peter's *Sun Dancer* announced it had a new \$150,000 skiff coming. Now the ante is up to a multimillion-dollar boat. With a just-returned editor praising the *Sun Dancer*, it's time to take a

look at this *Aggressor's* new one-upmanship. (Aggressor Fleet: 800-348-2628)

The old *Truk Aggressor*, having moved to the Bay Islands, will become a Peter Hughes boat, the *Wind Dancer*. Confused yet? The interesting thing about this 120-foot boat is that it travels well in the open ocean. The *Wind Dancer* might take the opportunity to add some new sites, such as Swan Island. (Peter Hughes Diving: 800-9-DANCER)

Private Divers

Here's one we probably won't see in the slick mags for a while. SongLine Cruises is putting a number of traditionally designed Indonesian-style live-aboards around Indonesia (pictured). These small (50-foot) vessels, being marketed as "Private Divers," come equipped with a Bauer compressor, depth sounder, and GPS. Accommodating only four to six divers, each boat's 4-day package runs around \$350 total per person.

Four days on a live-aboard? Their market seems to be well-heeled travelers already trekking around Indonesia who want to get to the best diving for a few days. Four days would not normally fit into my dive schedule in a place as distant as Indonesia, but by chartering the whole boat, maybe one could make arrangements for longer or back-to-back trips. Their first three boats are in Bandaneira in the Banda Sea, Manado in Northern Sulawesi, and Bira Beach in Southern Sulawesi.

Bandaneira is a place I can speak of highly. My general take on Manado is that the diving is good but not outrageous. I know very little about Bira Beach except that Kal Muller, author of *Underwater Indonesia*, speaks highly of the diving at Taka Bone Rate, a large atoll that can be reached by boat from Bira Beach (10 hours).

If I could get in a week's diving at Bandaneira or Taka Bone Rate, I would consider it an excellent opportunity for exploration diving. I don't imagine "Private Divers" match the luxuries of the *Sun Dancer* or *Palau Aggressor II*, but the trip might make a great boys' (or girls') night out. The price is right, once you get there.



No, it's not the *Palau Aggressor II* . . .

Why They Call It the Red Sea

Two Egyptians and two German tourists were killed in the coastal town of Hurghada when Muslim militants opened fire with automatic rifles on a group of foreigners in the marketplace.

This attack marks the first time militants have ventured out of the valley to attack tourists at an Egyptian coastal resort. Still, in perspective, the two new deaths raise the total number of foreigners killed since 1992 by militant violence in Egypt to eight.

Local Hurghada officials, aware of the economic impact, denied at the time of the shooting that Muslim militants were involved and said the Germans had unknowingly stepped into the crossfire of an Egyptian family vendetta, but militants have claimed responsibility.

Dam Slides

For years my dive buddy has been wondering if it would work. Just how big could you get? If he took a slide projector on his houseboat and motored up to the base of the dam on Lake Travis, just how big an image could he project onto the dam?

Feeling Cheated?

Have you paid in advance for a trip to your favorite faraway dive destination, only to discover on arrival that you have to pay again or forget it? Resort owners or dive operators, have you been stiffed by wholesalers and ended up with disappointed, angry customers? If so, please write or fax us about your experience for an upcoming article about the dive travel industry.

Wonder no more. Late one night, after a few pieces of raw fish and a few swallows of Kirin, we loaded up a tray of slides from Bali and headed for the houseboat. The land-based shots faded, but the underwater shots shone. House-size crinoids and tube worms arose from a watery base to tower over us like monsters from a Japanese horror film. All you need is a boat, a projector, slides, a power supply, and a dam. Try it, you'll like it.

Evian, Watch Out

Japanese researchers have developed a type of water that both freshwater and saltwater fish can inhabit. Fish have survived for up to 6 weeks without researchers having to change the water — much longer than freshwater fish survive in natural seawater. The new water is free of several types of bacteria, making it easier to breed both types of fish in it.

The institute created the water, which contains $\frac{1}{3}$ the salt of normal seawater, by dissolving into fresh water calcium, magnesium, and other saltwater-derived minerals and increasing the number of silicon ions.

The water will be marketed as "Wonder Aqua."

Reefer Madness

One of the deadliest reefs in the northern Caribbean is off the southwest end of Anegada Island, in the British Virgin Islands. More than 500 ships have wrecked on its coral heads.

If you're diving one of the latest wrecks, keep your eyes open for the 50- to 60-pound bales of marijuana floating in the water. The Coast Guard has found 77 of them so far.

In Depth

In Depth is the consumer newsletter for sport divers that reviews scuba destinations and equipment. We accept no advertising.

In Depth (ISSN 0895-2302, USPS 001-198) is published monthly, with the December and January issues combined, by Elephant Socks Publishing, 125 Sir Francis Drake Blvd, Larkspur, CA 94939. Second-class postage paid at Larkspur, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *In Depth*, P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94966. Copyright ©1995 Elephant Socks Publishing.

Staff

Editor



East Coast Editor



West Coast Editor



Contributing Editors



Letters/Submissions

To contact our editorial office, write *In Depth*, P.O. Box 90215, Austin, TX, 78709. Call 512-891-9812. Fax 512-891-9813. Please send stamped, self-addressed envelope if submissions are to be returned. We are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts.

Subscriptions/Address Changes

To subscribe, renew, change address, order books or back issues, call 800-326-1896 or write *In Depth*, P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94966.



Printed on recycled paper