
Is This the Best Boat?

Captain Stewart is a placid, independent chap. He's young, like most of the crew, and loves to talk about the workings of the boat, engines, plumbing, compressor, you name it. Bring a cold beer and a chair if you plan on engaging him on any of these subjects. The obvious hard work, diligence, and research that have gone into his excursions are paying off in a big way. A good crew is trying hard to eliminate any obstacles to good diving

Between the Japanese wrecks, glorious walls, phenomenal reefs, and wild pelagic action, there's something here for everyone. The visibility was a clear 60 to 70 feet, the water a warm 81° to 84°F, the boat comfortable, and the islands idyllic. I'd head back to Palau anytime. The new *Palau Aggressor II* is going to have to shine to keep me off the *Sun Dancer*.

M. S.

With Continental losing money like a rube on a Las Vegas weekend, it may be a good time to cash in those frequent-flier miles, and Micronesia is an excellent place to use them.

Caribbean Coral Crunch

The Caribbean Explorer on the rocks in St. Kitts

The *Caribbean Explorer*, a 97-foot live-aboard operating out of St. Maarten, slipped off its mooring in the middle of the night on December 29 and ran aground in Frigate Bay, St. Kitts. Although it flooded below decks, no one was injured. Passengers were evacuated by inflatables. According to one of the divers aboard, it was definitely dark, wet, and a bit scary at times in the overloaded dinghy.

The *Explorer* sat on the rocks for 5 days until crews arrived from Tortola, BVI. She is now sitting in St. Croix. Owner Clay McCardell says he hopes to find a temporary replacement for the boat so that the cruise operation can be resumed, even though the *Caribbean Explorer* may be in drydock until early spring. [*Catch me if I'm wrong, but drydock work always seems*

to take at least twice as long as predicted.]

How the *Explorer* got loose is still a mystery. According to Clay, since the boat was moored over a wreck, depth alarms were not set

Are You Covered?

A live-aboard on the rocks brings up another issue we had to deal with when a boat went down in Fiji several years ago: insurance. If the boat goes down with all your dive gear, it could set you back several thousand dollars. It seems to be the rule of thumb that the boat's insurance doesn't or won't cover it. Check with your homeowner's policy to see if your coverage extends to dive equipment sinking in a foreign ocean, and if not, what you can do to get it covered.

because swinging back and forth over the wreck would have set off the alarm repeatedly. Nor was the GPS alarm on; its limited accuracy would not have been helpful due to the proximity to shore. A night watch was not posted because the weather was calm and the mooring had been checked.

The *Explorer's* owners can be commended for their straight-up business dealings with their customers. Several tour wholesalers have told *In Depth* that within a few days of the mishap they received full refunds for all deposits on future bookings. The divers aboard the vessel when it went aground missed 3 days of diving; their money was refunded in full within a week, according to the passenger we spoke with. ■