
quite as crisp as the 15-mm Nikonos lens, which was designed from the start for underwater use. But you may need a microscope to see the difference.

Price is a big consideration. Aqualens lists for \$675, plus \$180 for aperture and focusing gears,

plus \$125 for a shade; in all, \$980, or about half the cost of the Nikonos 15-mm lens. True, if you don't already own one for your land camera you'll still have to buy a lens, but Vivitar and others sell 19-mm lenses for as little as \$100. At those prices you can even afford to carry a backup lens.

Aqualens is distributed in the U.S. by Bogen Photo Corporation and is available at Helix (800-621-6471), AB Sea Photo, and other places. Daymen Photo Marketing (416-298-9644) is the distributor in Canada.

W. D.

Farewell to Sipadan?

Many ways to screw up one good thing

In July 1991 when *In Depth* first visited Borneo Divers, one of only two resorts on a very small island off the coast of Malaysian Borneo, we called it the best shore diving and best night diving in the world. Since then, favorable reports have continued, but lately with a bit of grumbling: "It's getting too crowded."

Borneo Divers, one of two original operations, expanded its Sipadan Diving Lodge to accommodate 50 divers. A third resort sprang up, and another, built on a neighboring island, sends its boats over to dive Sipadan. Helicopters whisk still more divers out from the mainland.

Too crowded? *In Depth* readers diving Sipadan in 1994 and 1995 still rated the diving 4½ stars. However, two more unauthorized resorts are now trying to start up on the island. An East Malaysian newspaper reports that the Sabah government took chain saws to the guest houses built by the new operator, Sipadan Lodge. An *In Depth* correspondent at the Asian dive show was told that island rangers have torn down new construction several times, but it keeps getting rebuilt.

The number of turtles in the waters around Sipadan is one its

greatest attractions. Some observers say, however, that overpopulation of the island has reduced the number of nesting green sea turtles from 100 per night to only 20.

There have been changes recently in the government in Sabah. The new Interior Minister is said to be more concerned about the oil riches of Spratly Island than the turtles of tiny

Every year or so I build up enough frequent-flyer miles to earn a trip. It feels good to fly free. Here's a couple of easy ways to increase your mileage: telephone and credit card companies.

MCI is offering a deal: If you average \$25 a month on basic long-distance service in one year, you'll earn 11,500 miles toward a frequent-flyer program — American, Continental, Northwest, or Southwest Airlines. You also get, for the first 12 months, 1,000 more bonus miles for each month your bill tops \$25. On top of that, MCI gives you an additional five frequent-flyer miles for every dollar you spend on long distance. You could rack up 25,000 frequent-flyer miles in a year if you made your \$25 worth of long distance calls each month. Call 800-FLY-FREE.

AT&T has a True Rewards Program that gives you five miles for every dollar when your monthly bill is over \$25. Miles can be used on British Airways, Delta, United, and USAir. Call 800-773-9273.

American Express also has a frequent-flyer program. Membership Miles costs \$25 a year, but for every dollar you charge on your American Express card you get one frequent-flyer mile. Miles are accrued in the program and can be exchanged for miles from Delta, USAir, Continental, Southwest, Aeromexico, and Mexicana when needed. Call American Express at 800-327-2177.

Diner's Club Card has a similar program matching dollars for miles, which can be applied to any of the major airlines' frequent-flyer programs. Call 800-234-6377.

Citibank Advantage Mastercard offers one mile on American Airlines' frequent-flyer program for each dollar charged. Call 800-359-4444.

I charge gas, cable TV, furniture, meals out, even groceries. If the car craters and I have to spend \$1,000 on repairs, no sweat — I'm 1,000 miles closer to Palau.

Dialing Your Way to Palau

Sipadan. However, there are rumors that the government is considering moving all dive operations to a nearby island (just within eyesight on a clear day). That would be the end of the best shore diving in the world.

Not quite as alarming, but still of concern, is the news about Sipadan's night diving. An *In Depth* reviewer recently returned from a live-aboard trip. One of the guests on board had just come from Sipadan. He was 40 years old, certified in 1979, an excellent diver who had logged 1,000 dives. He had not been allowed to night dive with Sipadan Divers until he took a PADI night diving course at considerable cost. As

the reviewer put it: "I've been diving for 20 years with a Basic Diver certification, and I would resent some snot-nosed punk telling me I could not night dive until I upped some money for another course."

It turns out that Sipadan dive operators are nervous about the recent death of a Japanese diver who entered a cavern along the wall on a night dive, got lost, and drowned. Warning signs have been posted at the cave entrance, but everyone is still jumpy about night diving.

I did talk with one diver who had stayed at Sipadan Diving Lodge and dived with Borneo

Divers. He told me, "As far as night diving is concerned, as long as you have logged night dives, you can go out on your own, no problem with Borneo Divers." Night diving is great; there are lots of bumphead parrotfish, flashlight fish, and very colorful feeding corals, among other things worth a lot of trouble to see.

Other dive operators on the island are being vague about their exact policies on night diving. If night diving is important to you — and on Sipadan, it should be — I would suggest clarifying what the qualifications are with your dive operation or travel agent before booking Sipadan.

J. Q.

Accidents and Incidents

Learning from others' mistakes

From time to time we report on case studies of divers' deaths so that we may all learn from them. The cases cited here come from analyses of deaths in 1993 by the Divers Alert Network. The facts, though edited, are from DAN's reports; the commentary is ours.

River Diving

River diving is a specialty for which experience gained at Bonaire or Belize is no qualification. River flow is treacherous, rocks are hazards, and visibility can be a killer.

A 34-year-old woman, diving in a river looking for shark teeth with her boyfriend, failed to surface on time. Searchers found

her body the next day. Her tank was out of air and a fishline was wrapped around her regulator. A contributing factor may have been the four beers she was said to have consumed before diving. If rivers are taboo for ocean-certified divers, this untrained and unwise diver had little chance.

Iced Regulators

The more extreme the conditions, the more important it is to use a regulator that can handle those conditions. Diving in very cold water, for example, presents special hazards.

An instructor was performing a checkout dive with one student in a quarry with 45° water. The instructor wore 19 pounds of

weight, the trainee 22 pounds. Neither made it back to the surface. Their bodies were recovered at 74 feet. The student's tank had 1,900 psi, the instructor's 175 psi. It's not clear what happened, but the best guess is that one or both regulators iced and they used the instructor's equipment, which free-flowed until the tank was empty.

Falling Asleep

An inexperienced diver with a history of narcolepsy — a disease that makes one fall asleep uncontrollably — was participating in an underwater wedding. Using 29 pounds of weight, he made an unplanned rapid descent to 50 feet. He lost his regulator, began to ascend rapidly, became uncon-