

THE REEF SEEKER



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January - 2019



HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

Welcome to 2019. Every year, I marvel at the fact that you allow us to continue with you on the journey to explore all things underwater. It's truly not something we take for granted and also truly something we appreciate and value every much. So here's to a continuation of that journey that we started with some of you all the way back in 1954, when Bill & Jean Wright first opened "Sunland Sports Lodge" in Beverly Hills which continued through 1985. It then continued as "Sunland Sports - The Dive Shop" under Don Kennedy from 1985-1988. But for most of you, the journey has been with us as "Reef Seekers" since 1988 and as an internet-based entity since January 1, 2007. It's been a fascinating journey so far and we look forward to adding more chapters throughout the coming year.

2019 LOCAL DIVES & CLASS SKED

Page 3 is designed to stand on its own, suitable for printing and hanging up on your refrigerator

(or wherever you keep such things). It's our complete, planned list of all local dives and classes for 2019. Here's what you have to look forward to:

DIVES:

- Redondo Beach - All are at Vets Park, just south of the Redondo Pier. All are single-tank. Squid Dives are at night, generally from mid-December through March, and are free. We also offer regular Beach Dives, Navigation Dives, and Night Dives. Each are \$25.
- Avalon Underwater Park - These are 3-dive days and include round-trip transportation on the Catalina Express, taxi to and from the Underwater Park, up to three tanks of air (you provide or rent the rest of the needed gear), and a guide (although you can also dive on your own). Generally we leave from San Pedro around 9AM and return around 7PM. These are \$150.
- Foreign trips - We also offer six weeklong (sometimes a bit longer with travel) vacation-style trips. All are guided by Reef Seekers owner Ken Kurtis. Prices vary but generally include hotel or live aboard, all diving (with weights & tanks), staff/crew tips. Some trips include various meals. (Liveaboard trips usually include all meals.) Air fare is not included in any of the trips.

CLASSES (all taught at Reef Seekers Westwood - each given

twice during the year):

- Photo Workshop - An informal evening of photo tips and tricks, plus an opportunity to bring your own digital copies of pictures you've taken and we can look at them and see what worked and what didn't. \$25.
- NAUI Nitrox - Learn the pluses and minuses of diving with nitrox and why it may (or may not) be a good choice for dives you'd like to make. This is a formal NAUI course that, when successfully completed, results in being issued a NAUI Nitrox certification card. \$75 + some course material fees.
- Fish ID - Paul Humann said it best. You took a class to learn how to dive, why not take a class to learn what it is you're seeing? Based on Humann's teachings, this class gives you an easy-to-use universal system of identifying fish that you're likely to encounter on dives, as well as showing you how to track down elusive ones you've never seen before. \$25.
- Tables & Computers - Let's be honest: You probably really don't have a good understanding of why your dive computer gives you the numbers that it does. That lack of perspective and understanding can get you in trouble. This class starts at the beginning with Boyle, Dalton, Henry and Haldane. We then move into a general discussion about dive tables and how to use them and - more importantly -

what they're telling you, and then go into how computers do sort of the same thing on a much more sophisticated level. Because we think it's SO important for divers to understand this stuff, this class is offered FREE OF CHARGE.

For any and all of these, make sure you sign up/register ahead of time. You can do that through e-mail to kenkurtis@aol.com or by phone to our main Reef Seekers number at 310/652-4990. Hope to see you on a dive and have you in a class during 2019!!!

BONAIRE RAISES FEES

Starting March 1, 2019, the Marine Park Tag fees to divers who spend a week or more there, will go up from \$25 to \$45. STINAPA, the official NGO that's charged with overseeing safeguarding and maintenance of the Park, derives much of their annual budget from these fees. Their initial request was for an increase in the dive user fees plus, additionally, to start charging to cruise ship passengers as well, to offset their impact on Bonaire's natural resources.

The government approved the increase in fees to diver, plus an increase to other watersports users (surfers, kiteboarders, snorkelers) from \$10 to \$25. But they declined to impose a fee on cruise ship tourists, who are typically in Bonaire only from morning to evening. Needless to say, this has caused a bit of consternation among dive operators and others whose customers will be affected.

Cruise now visit Bonaire throughout the year. Not every day nec-

essarily, and looks like the heaviest months are December-February with 20 ships a month, while the rest of the months may see only 8-10 visits. But that's still roughly 150 cruise ship visits annually. These ships average around 2,000 passengers each (some as little as 1,500 and some as many as 3,000) so you're looking at around 300,000 cruise ship visitors each year. Even at \$10/head, that would add \$3 million to the budget.

In 2016 (the latest numbers I could easily find), there were 136,000 tourists who arrived by air. Based on previous year numbers, rightly 60% of those are divers. So we would account for about 81,000 of those arrivals. At \$45/head, that's \$3.6 million for STINAPA. That's an 80% increase from the \$2 million generated at \$25/head. (I don't have an estimate for snorkellers/surfers/kiteboarders.)

But that same study puts the 2016 cruise passenger count at 217,000 (down 6% from 2015). So even at \$10/head - which certainly seems reasonable and also in line with what non-dive watersports users are charged - this would represent about \$2 million to STINAPA. To look at it another way, if you left

the dive fee at \$25/head and started charging cruise ship passengers \$10/head, STINAPA would end up with more money (around \$4 million) that they will with the dive fee increase and no cruise ship charge at all.

But some of this is likely politics at play as the Bonairean government doesn't want to piss off the cruise lines. If the average cruise ship passenger spends just \$50 during their port visit, that's almost \$11 million a year in the local economy, not counting whatever the cruise lines pay in dock fees just to be there. So there's a lot of money at play here and, once again, diving is a small economic blip on the overall picture.

So it'll be interesting to see how this plays out. I've already gotten some very politely-worded e-mails from Bonaire dive operators essentially apologizing for the fee increase. Not sure if it'll really affect dive tourism directly but some people on various Bonaire chat boards have already said they'll find other places to go.

The new fees go into effect on March 1 so the bottom line is budget an extra \$20 for the increase in park tag fees.

2019 DIVING VACATIONS

January 5-13 • Easter Island

March 11-24 • Yap Immersion

Mid-May • Bonaire

July 6-22 • Indonesia

REF SEEKERS DIVE CO.

2019 LOCAL DIVES, CLASSES & VACATIONS

RESERVATIONS (310)652-4990



IMPORTANT STUFF YOU NEED TO KNOW

All diving must be done within recreational sport diving limits: depths 130' or less, no-deco bottom times, on standard compressed air or nitrox (<40%) as a breathing gas.

Limit one scuba tank per diver.
Pony bottles do not count as a second tank.

Specific departure & return times vary trip-to-trip. Please confirm those when you book your spot.

Directions to all landings & Veterans Park are on our website.

All dives are dependent on weather and may be changed or cancelled at our sole discretion.

You must show your certification card(s) if asked.
No c-card, no scuba diving.

A general briefing is conducted for each trip and is mandatory for all divers.

Avalon trips are generally 3 dives. Redondo dives are single-tank.

We may add an occasional boat trip to this schedule.

Day-of-dive problems?
Call Ken directly at (310)995-3639

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Thu.	Jan. 17	Redondo	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE!!!
Wed.	23	- CLASS -	- PHOTO WORKSHOP -	\$25
Sat.	26	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	Feb. 9	Redondo	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Thu.	14	Redondo	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE!!!
Sat.	23	Catalina Express	38th Avalon U/W Cleanup	\$150
Wed.	27	- CLASS -	- NAUI NITROX -	\$75
Sun.	Mar. 3	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	9	Aqrm of Pacific	Divers Day	FREE!!
Thu.	Apr. 4	Redondo	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE!!!
Sat.	13	Redondo	Navigation dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	17	- CLASS -	- FISH ID -	\$25
Sat.	27	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Wed.	May 1	Many boats	Chamber Day/Eve benefit	\$120
Sa/Su	4-5	LB Cnvntion Ctr	- Scuba Show 2019 -	\$10
Wed.	11	- CLASS -	- TABLES & COMPUTERS -	FREE!!!
Sun.	June 2	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Thu.	6	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Sat.	15	Redondo	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	19	- CLASS -	- PHOTO WORKSHOP -	\$25
Sat.	29	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sun.	July 28	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	Aug. 10	Redondo	Navigation dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	14	- CLASS -	- NAUI NITROX -	\$75
Thu.	Sept. 5	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Sat.	14	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	21	Redondo	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	25	- CLASS -	- FISH ID -	\$25
Sat.	Oct. 6	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Wed.	30	- CLASS -	- TABLES & COMPUTERS -	FREE!!!
Sat.	Nov. 9	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Thu.	14	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Sat.	23	Redondo	Navigation dive (single tank)	\$25
Sun.	Dec. 15	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Thu.	19	Redondo	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE!!!

NEED A NICE RELAXING DIVE VACATION???

January 5-13 • Easter Island • Statues and diving

March 11-24 • Yap Immersion • Mantas, Mandarinfish, & more

May 18-26 • Bonaire • Excellent Caribbean diving

July 6-21 • Indonesia • Bunaken Park & Lembeh Straits

August 17-24 • Isla Mujeres, Mexico • Whale Sharks & more

October 12-27 • Maldives • Magnificent fishy reefs

December 4-10 • Cabo Pulmo • UNEXSO World Heritage site

Reservations: (310)652-4990

(If you get the machine, please leave a message.)



THAR BE SQUID!!!

Consider it a late Christmas present but it seems like the squid season is already a very active one. Diver reports from Vets Park over the last few days seem to indicate a wealth of squid eggs clusters covering the bottom in the 75-85' range. They may be more spread out than this, but the reports we saw had great success when going out from Main Stairs (by the big parking lot) and then heading pretty much straight out to the drop-off and down.

Squid season generally - but it's definitely hit-and-miss at times - runs from mid-December through about mid-April. Check our page 3 sked for all of our outings, but we've got our next Squid Dive

scheduled for January 17. The Holy Grail is having a swarm of mating squid so thick that you can barely see your buddy through them. But even without that, seeing the massive fields of eggs is still pretty impressive.

Also remember that gestation period is about 11 days. So not only is it cool to see the squid actually mating and laying their eggs, but then about two weeks later, those same eggs will hatch and the little squidlings will jet off. So for the process to continue for 3-4 months, it means there are always new squid coming in and laying new batches of eggs. And it also means that just because you may hit an off-night this week, next week could be a bonanza. You never know unless you go look.

AVALON CLEANUP - FEBRUARY 23

We're going over for the 38th annual Avalon Underwater Cleanup and we hope you'll be joining us. As usual, we'll camp out at the Green Pier for the dive. The nice thing about the Green Pier is that it also frequently produces some of the most interesting finds.

We'll be going over on the 6AM Express out of Long Beach. Cost if you're going with us is \$150, which includes event registration, taxi to the Green Pier, and gear storage or more Park diving later in the day. Call us at 310/652-4990 to get signed up. Net proceeds from this event benefit the Catalina Conservancy Divers and the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! - Rose Parades past

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2019)



2012
Swimming dolphins



P.O. Box 634
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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



2014
Nice Butterflyfish



2015
Hippo



2016
Weird fish



2018
Clownfish