

THE REEF SEEKER



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THE AVALON UNDERWATER CLEANUP IS FEBRUARY 26

This is a big one: The 40th Annual Avalon Underwater Cleanup. And we're quite happy to remind you that we're back to being an in-person event again this year. (Last year, you may recall that we were 100% virtual.)

One of the issues might be getting you on a boat to get over to Avalon. The 6AM boat out of Long Beach is already sold out. We're trying to get the Express to add another boat but there's nothing official yet. If you're not diving and just coming over to hang out, there's an 8:45AM out of San Pedro that would get you into Avalon around 10AM. (The Cleanup dive starts at 9:30 and everyone has to be out of the water by 11:00AM.)

If you want to be part of the Reef Seekers contingent, as of this writing, we still have two slots available. Ours is a package deal that

includes event registration, boat ride over and back (3:55PM return), and taxi to the dive site. Cost for our package is \$150 and you can call us at 310/652-4990 to grab one of those final spots.

You can also sign up directly for the event if you like, and choose where you'll dive, as well as what group (if any) you want to be part of. The direct URL for the website is: https://events.usc.edu/esvp/esvp_40thcleanup.

The general schedule for the day is as follows:

- 7-9AM – Check-in for pre-registered divers (I check in the entire Reef Seekers group at once)
- 9AM – Mandatory dive briefing at each of the three locations
- 9:30AM – Listen for the cannon to fire and off you go!!!
- 11:00AM – All divers must be out of the water
- 1-3PM – Awards ceremony at the Wrigley Stage in the center of town

For those who have never done the event, it's not only a lot of fun but it's for a number of good causes as well. The monies raised are split between the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber and the Catalina Conservation Divers. And all the trash we pick up makes the harbor a much nicer place. Given that we didn't dive it last year, there's really two years worth of trash on the bottom right now so it should make for

some interesting finds.

Also remember that your treasure finds are eligible for various Trash Awards. So when you're depositing your goodies post-dive, make sure to check with the trash-checkers and let them know what you found and give them your name.

Also remember that we give a prize for the best BS story behind what you've found. So if you've got a good story to tell (pro tip: It needs to be relatively short and should end with a punchline) make sure to have them enter you as a contestant for the "Coveted Ken Kurtis Silver-Tongued Devil Award." (Yes, that's really what it's called.)

We generally get around 400 divers (plus another hundred volunteers and hangers-on) for the day and the event runs rain or shine. It will also mark the first "official" SoCal community diving event in the last two years! So plan to be part of the festivities. Hope to see you there.



CLEANUP COVID PROTOCOLS

Because the Chamber is run by USC, the Cleanup is considered an official USC event. That means we need to comply with not only City of Avalon COVID regulations, but USC ones as well. (In cases where each one has a protocol, we go with the stricter of the two.)

USC has a set of protocols that they refer to as “Trojan Check” which they require anyone entering their campus, including students, to fill out before they can set foot on USC soil. The same protocol will apply here and it’s something you must do on Saturday morning. You can do it while you’re waiting to get on the boat or once you set foot on the island but all participants will have to fill out a Trojan Check.

Here’s how it’s phrased on the website:

“On the morning of the Cleanup, all attendees must confirm that they are not exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 nor are they under isolation or quarantine orders via the Trojan Check Wellness Screening form included in the waiver packet. While masks are not required for this event, we ask that attendees, vaccinated or unvaccinated, consider wearing them for their own protection and the protection of others. Unvaccinated individuals must wear a mask whenever they cannot maintain a 6-foot physical distance from those outside of their household. Please note that protocols are subject to change.”

Also realize that some of this could change, one way or the other, in the 3+ weeks between now and the

event. So on the day of the event (February 26) make sure you have the most up-to-date version of the Trojan Check.



ZOOM SEEKERS IN FEBRUARY

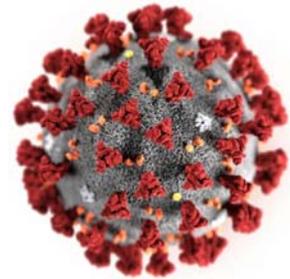
A year ago, we probably thought COVID would be gone by now. Surprise!!! It’s hung around. Luckily for us, so has COVID expert Dr. Doug Ebersole, who spoke to us last April about COVID and diving, and he’s agreed to another chat this February 8 (7:30-9:00PM) and will give us the latest information about COVID and diving. Our knowledge about the disease has benefitted from a year’s worth of data and discovery and Doug will share with us what he knows,

what’s stayed the same, and what has changed.

This a Zoom meeting which will also stream through FaceBook Live on the Reef Seekers FB page. For those coming through Zoom, if you join before 7:30PM, you’ll be placed in the “Waiting Room” and we’ll let you in at 7:30. We are limited to 100 people on Zoom. If the Zoom room fills up, go to the Reef Seekers FaceBook page for the live stream. If you have problems, call us directly at 310/652-4990.

The general format for our Zoom Seekers meetings are that our speaker will go for 30-60 minutes and then we’ll open it up to a moderated Q&A. I will send out the e-mail link in TWARS for next week and then will send out a reminder with the link on February 8 at 3PM.

Hope to see you for another fabulous Zoom Seekers!!!



2022 DIVING VACATIONS

March 11-20 • Socorro

May 20-28 • Bonaire

July (??) • Indonesia

Fall (??) • Yap



QUEEN MARY TO BE REPAIRED

I used to love it when the Scuba Show was held on the *Queen Mary*. It was a lot of fun for the local dive industry to take over the historic ship and I usually booked rooms to stay overnight on-board. Sadly, the ship has fallen into a state of serious disrepair lately and has actually been closed to the public since May of 2020. On top of that, the company that held the lease for the vessel declared bankruptcy and abandoned ship (literally).

Fortunately, the City of Long Beach has stepped in to save the day and has announced \$5 million for the first phase of initial/critical repairs. The work is supposed to start sometime this month and should be completed by the end of the year. Among the repairs will be the installation of permanent bilge pumps to ensure the ship doesn't sink where it now sits. (For the record, it really does float. It's not sitting on a solid bottom.)

There's more work required down the road but at least this is a good start for a truly iconic attraction.

PHILIPPINES REOPENS

As COVID cases seem to be peaking worldwide, the Philippines has announced that they will reopen to

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	Feb. 2	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox ---	\$95
Sat.	12	Redondo (Vets)	Navigation (single dive)	\$30
Wed.	16	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$170
Thu.	24	Redondo (Vets)	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE
Wed.	Mar. 2	--- CLASS ---	--- Secrets of Fish ID ---	\$30
Thu.	24	Redondo (Vets)	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE
Sat.	26	Redondo (Vets)	Mastering Surf Entries & Exits	\$30
Wed.	30	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$170

international tourism on February 10. You'll need to be fully vaxxed though – there doesn't seem to initially be a non-vax option – and have a negative PCR test within 48 hours of the start of your travel. There will also NOT be a quarantine requirement once you arrive.

BONAIRE BECKONS

Our March trip to Socorro is sold out but if you're ready to resume travelling a little later on in the year, we've got room for you May 21-28 which is when we go back to Bonaire.

Once again we'll be staying at Buddy Dive and will be able to do a mixture of boat and shore dives. In fact, we usually dive the house reef at Buddy Dive every single night right around sunset where we generally see what we've taken to calling "The River of Fish." It's a nightly parade northward of thousands upon thousands of Creole Wrasses who look like they're late for a meeting. One time we sat in a single spot around 30 feet deep for over 30 minutes and the flow of fish never stopped.

The other nice thing about the way we set this up is that with the boat dives, it gives us access to the sites on Klein Bonaire, as well as a few sites on the mainland side which are difficult to access. So we like

to think that we get the best of both worlds.

We book ourselves into 2-bedroom apartments and have either 3 or 4 people for each unit. They're all equipped with kitchens, a good-sized living room, and a patio or balcony depending on whether we're on the ground floor or the second floor. And because each unit gets a vehicle (for those who can drive a stick shift), it means we've also got easy access to the entire island. So we'll plan to dive places like Ol' Blue to the north and Salt Pier to the south, as well as hit some of the better flamingo areas along the way.

Cost of the trip as of this writing is \$2,250. Airfare will add another \$900 or so. (You can fly United, Delta, or American to get there.) Breakfast each day is included but we're on our own for lunch and dinner so add another couple of hundred bucks for that. If you figure around \$3,500 all in, that should be close to the mark.

Those of you who've been to Bonaire understand its charm and for those who haven't been, it's a great place to get back into the diving swing of things, especially since for many of you, it's been two years since you got wet.

If you're interested in joining us, give a call to 310/652-4990 and we'll work out the particulars.

SHARK FISHING BANNED IN HAWAII

On January 1, Hawaii became the first state to ban shark fishing in state waters. The ban has some specific exemptions – for instance, you’re allowed to defend yourself against an aggressive/attacking shark – but the overall effect should be to offer sharks much greater protection than in the past. If anyone accidentally hooks a shark while fishing (barbless hooks are encouraged), they are supposed to release it by cutting the line as close to the mouth as possible. There’s also an exemption for sharks caught as by-catch as long as they’re released.

Obviously, part of the issue here will be not only implementation

and public education but enforcement. But the fines may serve as a deterrent: \$500 for a first offense, \$2,000 for the second, and \$10,000 for the third. Plus it seems there can be an additional \$10,000 civil penalty imposed along with yet another \$10,000 administrative fine for each shark captured or entangled, whether dead or alive.

Time will only tell if this notion of protecting sharks spreads to other states bordering the ocean.

LOTS OF SQUID

We dove Redondo’s Veterans Park this past Saturday and were delighted to discover thousands upon thousands of squid eggs all over the bottom, mainly between Main Stairs and then heading north. It’s

a good sign of what will hopefully be a strong squid run this season.

Squid eggs take two weeks to hatch so you need to have new squid coming in to lay more eggs with regularity for all of this to hold. The lifespan of squid is 12-18 months and after they spawn, they die. But if you catch the run at night when there’s a mating frenzy going on, it’s really special. Plus you have other predators coming in to eat the dying squid so it can be quite busy underwater.

I mention all of this because our next squid dive is scheduled for Thursday, February 24. Plus it’s FREE!!!! Call us at 310/652-4990 to sign up. Like all beach dives, it’s weather/conditions dependent but fingers crossed that we’ll be able to get out.

PICTURE PAGE - Cleanups past

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2022)



**Off they go!!
(2017)**



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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



**Karl Huggins & Dr. Bill
(2018)**



**Kayak Patrol
(2019)**



**Signature Scuba divers
(2020)**



**Checking in post-dive
(2015)**