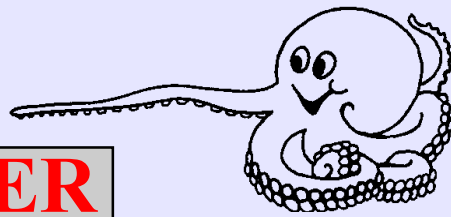


# THE REEF SEEKER



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May - 2025



## CHAMBER DAY APPROACHES

It's this coming Wednesday, May 7, in case you've been under a rock (or a rockfish) for the past two months. It's also the largest single-day scuba charity event in the United States but more importantly, it's the key fund-raiser for our Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber.

The boats participating this year are full but there's still time – but not much time - for you to make a donation to the Chamber Challenge, sign up for the Flying Dutchman, join us for virtual Chamber Eve, or even (until Friday at 5PM), grab a seat for the in-person event at the Aquarium of the Pacific.

Here's what's what:

### THE CHAMBER CHALLENGE

Each year, the SoCal diving community comes together to raise critical funds for our Chamber through the Chamber Challenge. These donations play a vital role in keeping our Chamber operational and contribute a significant portion of the total funds raised during Chamber Day & Eve.

It's simple: Make a donation and

challenge your friends and fellow divers to do the same!

Last year, the community came through with an incredible record-breaking total of \$141,980 in Challenge donations. Can we beat that number this year? Let's aim for a new record!

Want to donate in someone's honor? You can make a contribution in memory of a loved one or to honor someone special. Donations will be tagged with both your name and the honoree's name.

Gold, Platinum, Diamond, and Chamberium donors receive special recognition from our Chamber for their generosity. Contributions can come from individuals, dive clubs, shops, boats, publications, and other organizations. Groups may also combine donations to reach a higher tier.

Employer Matching Grants: If your company offers a donation matching program, most Chamber Challenge contributions qualify!

### THE FLYING DUTCHMAN – A VIRTUAL DIVE WITH A PURPOSE

The Flying Dutchman is a legendary virtual dive—and an easy way to support Chamber Day without ever getting wet.

Before you ask...  
There is NO boat.

There is NO dive.

You are NOT getting in the water. (Yes, every year someone asks where the Dutchman departs from.) In nautical lore, the Flying Dutchman was a ghost ship doomed to wander the seas forever. But for Chamber Day, this mythical vessel raises essential funds for the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber. At just \$95, this is the perfect option for non-divers, those who can't make it to the event, or anyone who prefers to stay dry.

Why Join the Dutchman Crew?

Support the Chamber & the dive community

Receive an exclusive Flying Dutchman t-shirt (only available to Dutchman divers!)

Your pirate name will be featured on the front of the shirt in a mosaic skull design

Be part of the tradition—Dutchman participation rivals real boat sign-ups each year!

### VIRTUAL CHAMBER EVE – JOIN FROM HOME

If you can't attend in person, Virtual Chamber Evening lets you participate from the comfort of your home while still supporting the cause. Virtual attendees receive:

10 raffle tickets

A Chamber Evening t-shirt

Access to the live-streamed event

### CHAMBER EVE 2025 AT THE

**AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC** Chamber Evening is a festive and meaningful gathering where we come together to support the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber. Many attendees dress up, reconnect with fellow divers, and make this a truly special night. Once again, we are excited to host this incredible evening in the Great Hall of the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach.

To ensure an exceptional experience, attendance is capped at 350 guests (35 tables of 10). Many groups have already started reserving tables, so don't wait—secure your seat now!

**Ticket Price:** \$175 per person

**Aquarium Access:** 7:00 - 8:00 PM  
– Explore the exhibits before dinner

**Dinner Begins:** 8:00 PM – A gourmet meal with vegetarian/vegan options available

**Raffles & Recognitions:** 9:00 PM  
– Incredible prizes and acknowledgments

**Event Wrap-Up:** 10:15 PM

Your event ticket includes five raffle tickets for the “Pick-A-Prize” raffle. Additional raffle tickets will be available for purchase at the event.

One lucky winner will receive a 9-day “Passport to Paradise” dive trip with Murex Dive Resorts in Indonesia! Only attendees of Chamber Evening (or Virtual Chamber Evening) will be eligible for this exclusive prize.

### **Why Your Support Matters**

Chamber Evening is more than just a dinner—it's a crucial fundraiser that helps keep our Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber going 24/7/365. While we remain hopeful about the future, the Chamber still de-

pends on diver contributions to stay financially secure.



## **2026 VACATION TRIPS**

I believe I've mentioned this previously, but I'm starting to lay out the planned dates for our 2026 trips. Looks like what we'll end up with is three trips, all of which are longer than a week. The thought is to do Yap in March, Indonesia in July, and Dumaguete, Philippines in September. I'm still working on the specific details for each. The first two are land-based but the Dumaguete one will likely be a hybrid trip, which means part land-based and part liveaboard, but I'll likely set it up so that you could do one or both.

I've already started generating interest lists for each trip. Right now there are nine folks for Yap, sixteen for Indo, and nine for Dumaguete. So if you've already sent me a note about one of the trips, you don't need to do so again. But if you haven't and you want to

be on the “interested” list (there's no cost or obligation to you), shoot me an e-mail. I hope to finalize trip dates once all the Chamber Day stuff is behind me.

## **WEATHER SERVICE CUTBACKS**

Among the early targets in the DOGE massacre of government services has been the National Weather Service (NWS). It's estimated that most offices now have at least a 20% vacancy rate and that could go higher. There are concerns that this will have widespread ramifications, since a lot of sectors of industry and the public rely on the NWS for accurate storm and weather info.

How will this affect diving? Good question.

Some of you may recall (or will just now find out) that I was the weekend weather guy for KABC-TV 1983-84. Part of my job involved going to the Federal Building in Westwood each day for the daily map discussion in the NWS offices. Weather systems generally move west to east in the Northern Hemisphere. And what I

### **2025-2026 DIVING VACATIONS**

**June 28 - July 5 • Roatan**

**September 19-28 • Maldives**

**March (dates TBA) • Yap**

**July (dates TBA) • Indonesia**

learned, and what people don't realize is how little weather info there is once you get west of California. So people living on the east coast have the benefit of getting all sorts of weather readings in the days leading up to the arrival of a storm system. Not so on the west coast because to the west of us, it's just empty ocean and scattered islands until you reach Asia. So what we tend to rely on for west coast weather and for weather in the Pacific in general, are things like deep-water buoys, satellite cloud movement maps, and even weather balloons, along with other types of weather-info-gathering devices.

A lot of that appears to be on the chopping block. More specifically, it's the people who run these things and who interpret the data who have either been fired or laid off or fear they will be in the next wave. So we face the potential of a dearth of weather information upon which to base decisions about where to go diving and whether or not to dive on a given day once we're there.

Remember in Trump's first term when there was that brouhaha about the track of a hurricane and Trump displayed for everyone a hurricane tracking map where they added an adjustment to the projected path in black Sharpie? Well, that's the kind of info we may be reduced to if these types of budget cuts are fully implemented.

Not sure what you can do other than perhaps write your Congressperson or Senator to bring it to their attention. Ironically, the NWS has an annual budget of roughly \$1.3 billion dollars. That sounds like a lot until you remember that the entire U.S. budget is \$6.75 trillion dollars. Put another

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	\$\$\$
Wed.	May 14	--- CLASS ---	--- NITROX ---	<b>95</b>
Sat.	17	Veterans Park	Surf Entries Made Easy	<b>FREE!!!</b>
Wed.	21	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon UW Park	<b>180</b>
Thu.	Jun 12	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	<b>35</b>
Wed.	18	--- CLASS ---	--- FISH I.D. ---	<b>35</b>
Wed.	25	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon UW Park	<b>180</b>
Sat.	Jul 12	Veterans Park	Beach Diving made Easy	<b>35</b>
Wed.	16	--- CLASS ---	--- TABLES & COMPUTERS ---	<b>FREE!!!</b>

way, if you made \$67,500 a year the weather info would be costing you \$13 annually. Pretty good bang for your buck IMHO. I hesitate to think what the weather future holds for us and how this will affect reefs, let alone divers venturing out into unknown conditions.



### THAILAND RESTRICTS U/W PHOTOGRAPHY

It seems that everyone wants to take photos nowadays. And it's not unusual for those of us who teach, to have one of our students ask if they can bring a camera on what otherwise is a training dive. For me at least, the answer is always "No" because I want your full attention on the training task at hand, not on something else (like stalking a fish for a photo).

The country of Thailand, a major dive destination, has addressed that

issue head-on and has issued a directive that any diver without an Advanced card and who has less than 40 logged dives is prohibited from taking a camera down with them. Further, divers and instructors are specifically prohibited from using a camera during training dives or exams. (Although it will be interesting to see what the story is if the class being taught is Underwater Photography.)

But the underlying premise, which I happen to personally agree with, is that divers need to become better with their diving skills before they start putting a camera in their hands. Too often, we see novice divers sometimes literally crashing into a reef trying to get a picture. Once they realize what they've done, then they frantically start finning like mad trying to extricate themselves, and only make the matter worse as well as likely cause more reef damage.

Divers' egos and coral reefs have something in common: They're both very fragile. There have already been complaints about this policy in some of the various scuba forums. But the bottom line is that if you don't protect the reefs, then there won't be anything left to photograph.

And Thailand's not the only one with restrictions. In Bonaire, you're asked to stay two feet off of the reef and the guides will (gently

- and sometimes not so gently) pull you back if you get too close. In Cabo Pulmo, the rule is to be six feet away from the reef.

One other aspect of the Thai rule is that it applies to snorkelers (freedivers) as well. They can only be in areas where the reefs are at least six feet underwater. And it says they have to wear “life vests” (not sure if they mean a BC or an actual orange boating life vest) unless they’ve passed a scuba or free-diving course, which sort of muddies the water when it comes to how snorkelers will deal with this.

Enforcement is up the dive boats and guides as well as instructors. And failure to regulate the divers who are under your supervision may lead to some severe penalties,

including some hefty fines, as well as up to two years in prison. Yikes!!

I realize this may read like an April Fool’s joke but it is not. It seems a bit drastic but, given the general state of reefs around the world these days, if protection measures aren’t enacted, we stand to lose the reefs that we so love exploring.



## SCUBA SHOW – BACK IN LONG BEACH

We’re looking forward to end of this month – and the beginning of next – for the annual Scuba Show,

which is back in Long Beach this year. Show dates are Saturday, May 31, and Sunday, June 1 at the Long Beach Convention Center.

This is a consumer-oriented show and you’ll see just about every scuba manufacturer there is, see a bunch of dive shops, get exposed to tons of travel, and can attend some informative seminars too. (I’ll team up with John Kades from the Coroner/Medical Examiner and Karl Huggins from our Chamber for the annual “Why Divers Die” panel on Saturday at 4PM.)

Ticket prices range from \$20 (single-day exhibit hall only) to \$65 (exhibit hall and seminars for both days) and can be purchase at [www.scubashow.com](http://www.scubashow.com). Hope to see you there on either or both days.

# PICTURE PAGE - Chamber Day & Eve



(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2025)



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