

THE REEF SEEKER



REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO.
P.O. Box 634
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
(310) 652-4990
www.reefseekers.com
e-mail: kenkurtis@aol.com

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MY HEART IS BREAKING

I can't watch the George Floyd video. I don't understand why the wheels of justice in Minneapolis took so long to start turning. I'm appalled at the Amy Cooper's attitude towards Christian Cooper. I don't know how anyone can't hear the story of Ahmaud Aubery and not be stunned.

I'm all for peaceful protest. I'm all for dynamic and spirited discussion. I'm all for finding solutions.

I don't get looting.

I don't get setting buildings on fire.

But it all has a common them: Man's inhumanity to man.

I wish there was a way to magically alter this. But I think we have become so divided and so inured to only caring about our own well-being that there may be no going back. We may not be fixable. And that just breaks my heart.

VETS PARK PARKING LOT IS OPEN

No more long schlep from the street. As of Friday afternoon, the large parking lot at Vets Park in Redondo, as well as the smaller strip lot that runs from the Pier to Main Stairs, were both open. This means you don't have to park on the street anymore and then schlep down to the beach. Bring quarters for the parking because, as far as I know, that's still in force.

I'm not sure if they're trying to enforce social distancing in the actual parking lot. It would obviously be good if you can leave at least one empty space on each side of you when park but that may not always be practical. And, since people generally park and then leave the area, may also not be as critical in that you could be parked next to someone but they're never at their car the entire time you're there.

Bear in mind all the other protocols required for beach access by L.A. County are still in place. This would also mean no loitering or setting up on the beach, no coolers down on the beach. No 10x10 pop-up tents or stuff like that. I don't know that you'll need a face covering when walking down to the beach, but you should probably be

using one while hooking up gear and the like in the parking lot.

As we said with diving in the Park, these rules will likely change over time and may be different by the time you go to Vets than they are at the time I'm writing this. My best advice if you're approached by a police person or lifeguard is to follow their instructions.

We'll keep you posted as things progress. One interesting note to all of this, at least as of last Friday, is that we're in the middle of another Tuna Crab invasion, and that's always pretty cool to see.

LOCAL TRIPS

If your favorite dive boat or dive shop is starting to run trips again, make sure you know what their COVID procedures are. Some boats are holding back because of social distancing issues, while others are pushing ahead. Make sure you have a clear understanding of what's what, including how many people will be on the boats. DEMA recommends that dive businesses operate at 25% capacity. Someone asked me if boats could survive financially at 25% capacity. I said, "Of course. But we'll have to charge you four times as much." Make sure you've got the full picture. COVID is serious stuff and shouldn't be taken lightly.



AVALON U/W PARK IS OPEN

The Avalon Underwater Park is once again open for business but under some new protocols/restrictions due to the on-going COVID-19 concerns. (Bear in mind that these are likely going to change over time.)

One big thing to consider now is that they prefer you don't just show up at the Park. Reservations are recommended. You do that through Catalina Divers Supply (310/510-0330). The reason for this is that they've created specific areas to gear up, seven in all, and the hope is to generally confine divers to those dive stations so as to maintain social distancing.

Each of the dive stations is actually a number of large rubber mats (like cashiers stand on) bunched together. Each mat can accommodate up to seven divers, so the max for the Park would be 49 divers. Compare this to a "normal" summer day when we might see as many as 200 divers using the Park. The dive station mats will all be sanitized at the end of each day which is why there's a \$20 charge for them, to cover their labor and materials costs for sanitizing. (Seems reasonable.)

If you need rental gear or airfills, you'll arrange that at the time you

make your reservation. CDS says they're following the various guidelines for sanitizing rental gear after it's been used as well as trying to minimize contact between the divers and the CDS staff as much as possible. So no more congregating around the truck waiting for airfills. Generally a group leader should be the main contact between staff and your group.

Obviously, this will all take a little getting used to. And I'm not exactly sure what the procedures will be if rather than groups of seven, you have seven groups of two (or any number way less than seven) who reserve the mats. The Park falls under the jurisdiction of the County Beaches & Harbors so most of the same rules that would apply at a beach will apply here. But I'm also not sure how they'll deal with things we might normally do between dives like sit around and snack. In theory you're not supposed to have coolers on the beach. But does that apply to dives in the Park as well? (You should ask.) One thing for certain, keep your face covering (I'm trying to say that instead of "mask" for obvious reasons) handy because you should wear that when you're out of the

water and around other people.

The other thing to bear in mind is that, at least through June 28th (which is as far as the sked goes right now), Catalina Express is **ONLY** running from Long Beach at 7AM and leaving Avalon at 7:30PM. There are no boats running for now out of San Pedro nor any other going-over/coming-back options during the day. That sked is the same every single day of the week until at least the end of the month. I talked to a diver who went over last weekend, and she said it wasn't too bad but that things got jumbled up when they arrived in Avalon and everyone started lining up to get off. Give some thought to staying in your seat and being the last one to leave.

As I said at the top, this is a situation in flux and things will not only change over time but also may change between the time I'm writing this and you're reading it. So the best thing to do is call Catalina Diver Supply to not only make your reservation, but to confirm whatever the rules are. You can also go to their website (www.catalinadiverssupply.com) to watch a short video about Park protocols.

2020-21 DIVING VACATIONS

August 1-8 • Isla Mujeres

Aug. 28 - Sept. 5 • Bonaire

October 17-29 • Indonesia

January 13-22 • Socorro



READY TO TRAVEL YET?

I'm still not so sure. At least, not internationally.

The biggest questions are still (1) What countries are re-opening and when, and (2) Will there be a quarantine requirement when you arrive?

As to point #2, if there is, that pretty much kills any chance of a dive vacation unless the local rules are such that if you stay strictly on the resort property and dive only with them, that qualifies as self-quarantine. (You use the word "quarantine" when referring to people who aren't sick or symptomatic – even if they may have been exposed to people who are – and "isolation" when referring to people who are already sick.) But my guess is "self-quarantine" will mean arrive at the hotel, go to your room and stay there for the quarantine period, which is usually 14 days for COVID. Even within the U.S., if you want to go to Maine or Hawaii, plan on an extra 14 days.

Since there's no sense in flying somewhere if you're going to be told to turn around and go home, who is open and when becomes key. Originally Bonaire was going to open May 9 but the travel ban has now been extended until at least June 15. And looking just at

POSSIBLE LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

| DAY | DATE | BOAT/SITE | PLANNED DESTINATION | PRICE |
|------|---------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Wed. | June 3 | - CLASS - | - PHOTO WORKSHOP - | \$150 |
| Sun. | 7 | <i>Catalina Express</i> | Avalon U/W Park (3 dives) | \$25 |
| Thu. | 11 | Redondo (Vets) | ••• Night Dive ••• | \$25 |
| Sat. | 20 | Redondo (Vets) | Beach dive (single tank) | \$75 |
| Wed. | July 8 | - CLASS - | - NAUI NITROX - | \$150 |
| Sat. | 18 | <i>Catalina Express</i> | Avalon U/W Park (3 dives) | \$25 |
| Thu. | Aug. 13 | Redondo (Vets) | ••• Night Dive ••• | \$150 |
| Sat. | 22 | <i>Catalina Express</i> | Avalon U/W Park (3 dives) | \$25 |

the United sked to Bonaire, they're not planning any flights until July 9. (No sense in going if you can't get there.) In Mexico, San Jose del Cabo appears open, but Cancun, which was set to open June 1, now has that date pushed back a week.

This all makes it extremely hard to plan. Add in to the mix the issue that some places that are opening early are seeing an increase in COVID cases once they're open, forcing them to either scale back or close again. It's become ever more convoluted.

For the time being, while I'm leaving all of our planned trips on the calendar, please be aware that those could change on very short notice. I'm not really comfortable with committing us to go anywhere until we've got a really good idea that we'll be able to get there and back. Working backwards, I'm fairly certain we'll be OK for the January Socorro trip (where we still have spots available and the airfare to SJD is really good), I'm 60/40 that we'll be able to go to Indonesia in October, 50/50 that we'll be able to do our postponed Bonaire trip in late August, and not confident at all that things will be in place for the August 1 trip back to Isla Mujeres.

So keep an eye on this monthly newsletter and TWARS to stay up to date, or give us a call or drop us an e-mail to see what's what.



VIRTUAL SCUBA SHOW 2020

I hope you were able to tune in for some (or all) of the seminars during the virtual Scuba Show 2020 over the weekend. In case you didn't get a chance, all six of the seminars that were presented can be found on the Scuba Show 2020 FaceBook page. I've also shared the two seminars I did ("Why Diver Die" on Saturday with Coroner Capt. John Kades and Chamber Director Karl Huggins plus "The Conception Fire 9 Months Later" that I did by myself on Sunday) on both the Ken Kurtis and the Reef Seekers FaceBook pages. It certainly wasn't the same as doing them in person but, by the same token, because you didn't have to choose between seminars to attend we had really good crowds watching (125-250 people at any given time) and since you can access them on-line, they're getting exposed to a lot more people. Hopefully you "attended," hopefully you enjoyed, and hopefully you learned something. (And hopefully, we're back at the Convention Center next year.)

BAGGIES FOR GEAR

One of the recommendations if you are diving, especially if you're on a boat, is not to let your dive gear touch anyone else's gear. Obviously, of maximum importance would be the regulator and your dive mask as the nose and the mouth are prime entry points for COVID. And what do you do if someone on the boat is asymptomatic . . . but sneezes in the general direction of your gear?

Laurie Kasper suggests carrying some baggies with you. At the end of your dive, take your primary and your octopus, slide them into a baggie, zip it shut, and leave it that way until you're ready to use it again. Same thing with the dive mask. This way, if there's COVID

in the air or coming your way, it'll stay on the outside of the baggie and not on the inside of your body.



MARK YOUR TANK

It's likely been a while since you dove. It may be a while until you dive again. If you own your own tanks, when it's finally time to dive, you may wonder two things: (1) How much air is in the tank, and (2) How old is that air?

Assuming you know when you last got the tank filled, take a piece of tape or even a piece of paper, and note the fill date. You should also hook your reg up and see how much air is in the tank and note that too. Tape it all to the tank.

Air shouldn't go "bad," but personally I probably would dump anything more than a year old. But when it DOES come time to dive, you'll know how "old" the air is, if you gauge it again before you go, you'll know if any leaked out, and if you REALLY want to be cautious, you can also throw an O2 analyzer on it – even if it's just air – to make sure that it hasn't fallen below 21%, which could happen if there's significant rust inside and the rust is eating up all of the oxygen in the cylinder.

PICTURE PAGE - Just some pretty pix

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2020)



**Flamingo
Tongue**



P.O. Box 634
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



**Lined
Seahorse**



**Queen
Angel**



**Oceanic Whitetip
with escorts**



**Juvy
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