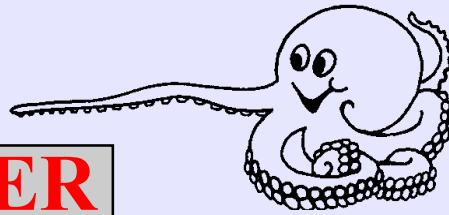


# THE REEF SEEKER



REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO.  
P.O. Box 634  
Beverly Hills, CA 90213  
Phone & text: (310) 652-4990  
web: [www.reefseekers.com](http://www.reefseekers.com)  
e-mail: [kenkurtis@aol.com](mailto:kenkurtis@aol.com)

June - 2024



## SCUBA SHOW THIS WEEKEND

The annual Scuba Show, the largest consumer-oriented dive west of the Mississippi, is being held this weekend at the Los Angeles Convention Center in the South Hall. (The move was dictated by the Long Beach Convention Center not being able to accommodate the show this year.) But a new venue means more exhibit space, new exhibitors, and more stuff for you see and discover.

Over the years, the show has really bumped up the presence of travel providers so for those of you interested in doing some sort of a dive vacation, this will be a bonanza. Many resorts have booths of their own and some destinations are represented through their various tourism agencies. But it's a great chance to do some travel shopping and you WILL be overwhelmed by the variety of choices.

A number of dive shops also will have booths (we do not) and will be selling good services on the

show floor. If you're looking to buy some new gear, this is a good opportunity because you can basically go from store-to-store to see what they have to offer, what their prices are, and then you can try to haggle. Some of the prices can be quite low, especially if there's close-out merchandise available.

The show runs Saturday from 10AM-6PM and Sunday from 10AM-5PM. There's also a free party Saturday night starting at 6PM when the show closes which will feature food trucks (you pay for the food yourself) and cash bars in a designated party area right off of the show floor. The Saturday night party culminates with a raffle and the presentation of the California Scuba Service Award to Jon Council, longtime president of the Historical Diving Society and also the man who runs the Diving History Museum in Avalon in the base of the Casino.

Throughout the day both Saturday and Sunday, there will be numerous seminar speakers (additional ticket required) covering numerous topics of interest to divers.

The big seminar on Saturday is reserved for the end of the day and that's the annual "Why Divers Die" panel which Coroner Captain John Kades, Chamber Director Karl Huggins, and I (I'm the Forensic Consultant to the Coroner for

Scuba Fatalities) review the actual cases from L.A. County last year. John Kades will give the overview of the case, Karl Huggins will tell you what the Chamber's role was, I'll give the instructional/diving lessons to be learned, and then John will reveal the official cause of death. Although we "only" have two cases this year, the second one is REALLY interesting in that the initial incident occurred in 2017 but the diver didn't expire until last year. Join us in room 309 to find out more. (And if you're around Sunday at 4PM, I'll be doing "Secrets of Fish ID" in room 308-A.)

The Scuba Show is a great experience on all kinds of levels and something that I hope you have on your plate, whether you're planning on coming for one day or both. (If you're only coming for one day, it seems that Sunday is just a tad quieter than Saturday.) Hope to see you downtown!!!

---

## ROATAN TRIP REPORT & PIX

Everything is done and available through the Reef Seekers website at [www.reefseekers.com](http://www.reefseekers.com). There's the trip report, SmugMug slide show, and short videos of snorkeling with wild dolphins and of an octopus hunting at night. Enjoy!!!



## **AN IMPORTANT LESSON**

*This is excerpted from the Roatan trip report but I think it underscores a valuable lesson and want to make sure you see it, so I'm copying it here as well.*

We dove two wrecks over the course of the week, the El Aguila and the Odyssey. I like the El Aguila, although it's somewhat deep bottoming out at a little over 100 feet. It's got a decent amount of fish and sponges on it, plus it's adjacent to a nice reef where you end the dive. The Odyssey is a big wreck (some 300+ feet long – that's the length of a football field), also deep (around 115 feet), and was the site of an embarrassing personal experience when I lost the entire group. This was totally my fault but also can serve as a good lesson to those of you who are photographers.

The plan on this wreck was to drop down on the stern area and superstructure, go inside and then up the five interior decks (you can see out the entire time and there's always an exit nearby), and then make our way down the length of the vessel to the bow. I don't recall us saying exactly where we were going to end the dive, but there's a reef perhaps 50 feet in front of the bow.

I didn't want to penetrate the superstructure so I made my up the outside and could see the divers inside. John emerged and led ev-

eryone forward along the edge of the wreck, where we found a small halibut in the sand. We continued towards the bow, which was sort of bent and pointing upright. I ducked under and inside the pointy end to see if there was anything worthwhile and came across an interesting red sponge as well as a lionfish and shot them both.

According to my photo data, I spent no more than three minutes under the bow. And when I came out . . . uh-oh . . . there was no one in sight. I thought perhaps they had moved on ahead to the reef in front of us so that's the way I headed. Nobody. I looked back and could see maybe 100 feet. Didn't see anyone along the length of the ship. Where could they have gone? I looked up. Nope. I looked around again. Nada. So I figured I had somehow screwed this up and decided to abort the dive – we were about 20 minutes in to a planned 30-minute dive at this point – and ascend to 15-20 feet, trying to see if I could spot any bubbles as I rose.

I also now had to choose where to surface. I started my ascent around the reef but wasn't too keen on coming up in an area that could have boat traffic. But then I no-

ticed that there was a boat tied up to the mooring line at the bow of the wreck. I could clearly see the bottom of the boat and knew it wasn't ours – it had two engines whereas we had one – but I also know it's safer to surface near a boat, even if it's not yours, than it is to surface in open water. I figured once I got to the surface, I'd be able to see where our boat was and swim over. No biggee.

I was about 4 minutes into my planned 5-minute safety stop when I glanced again down the length of the wreck and thought I saw a hint of yellow. As I looked that way, it was John, coming to look for me. (He wears a bright yellow rash guard and bright yellow pants to make himself more visible.) I gave him an OK sign, he returned same and motioned towards the stern of the boat which is where the group had gone. Everyone was now hanging on the stern mooring line doing their safety stop. I joined them and we finished the dive.

Once back on boat, I was obviously teased about what happened by took ownership of the situation. And there are valuable lessons to learn here for anyone.

As most of you know, I dive all the

### **2024 DIVING VACATIONS**

**July 8-19 • Indonesia**

**September 9-21 • Yap**

**Sept. 19-28, '25 • Maldives #1**

**Sept. 29 - Oct. 8, '25 • Mald. #2**

time, am comfortable diving by myself, and have plenty of dives under my weightbelt. (6,000+ if anyone's curious.) But even an experienced diver can make a mistake and do something that separates them from the group. Even more so when you're a photographer, since we tend to want to stop and take some shots, and the group won't always – nor should they – feel like they have to stop while we get the proverbial perfect shot.

So ESPECIALLY if you're a photog, you have an obligation and responsibility to know where the group is heading and, once you're done shooting, head in that direction and catch up. There's certainly an adage in diving that, when diving as a group, you want to move at the pace of the slowest diver. In other words, if someone is generally a slow kicker (or you're a fast kicker), you match the speed of the slowest member. You don't force them to go faster. But that's under "normal" circumstances.

Being a photog throws "normal" out the window at times because we know the photog is going to stop frequently and deliberately. That doesn't mean the group leader won't take that into account at times. But it also means if you're going to spend 10 minutes photoing a fascinating nudibranch – or in this case, three minutes shooting a sponge and lionfish – it's not the group's duty to wait for you.

The other interesting perspective that this brings up – and this is a discussion I've had over the years with many divers and guides and where there is no easy or "right" answer – is that everyone on the boat, even John, said some variation of, "We knew you were OK

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	June 12	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>180</b>
Wed.	19	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox Diver ---	<b>95</b>
Sat.	22	Redondo/Vets	Navigation	<b>35</b>
Thu.	27	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	<b>35</b>
Sat.	July 6	Redondo/Vets	Taming Surf Entries	<b>35</b>
Thu.	25	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	<b>35</b>
Wed.	31	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>180</b>
Sat.	Aug. 10	Redondo/Vets	Beach Diving	<b>FREE</b>

because we know you're a good diver." Well, yes but no.

Even "good" divers can get into trouble. And it can be dangerous to assume that everything's OK. For all anyone knew, I'd had a heart attack and was lying on the bottom. Or maybe I'd gotten stuck in the bow and was slowly running out of air trying to free myself. Or perhaps I'd had serious leg cramps that made it impossible to kick and I needed someone to come assist.

When a diver goes missing, there's no real way to know what the reason was. You hope it's benign as it was in my case. But, especially if you're a dive guide as well as if you're "just" a dive buddy, assuming the worst can mean the difference between saving someone's life or just getting a good scare. There's no perfect answer. Do you look for them on the bottom, inside the wreck (in this case), or on the surface? Because, especially if it's a case of someone unconscious underwater, you don't have a lot of time (perhaps 4-6 minutes if a diver's not breathing) to find them and get a successful outcome.

There's no easy answer in any of this nor any "perfect" methodology. In this case, I just gave everyone a scare (for which I was truly sorry and repentant). But it's a good lesson for all divers of any skill level or experience, and that's why I wanted to share it here.

## YAP IN SEPTEMBER

Yup, I'm yapping about Yap again. And the only place to consider in Yap is the fabulous Manta Ray Bay Resort & Yap Divers (part of MRB).

We're going back this year from September 9-22 (those are the travel dates – actual dive dates will be September 11-20) and we'd love to have you join us. Actually, let me reverse that. You will have a great time by joining us.

I'm finalizing some of the cost parameters right now but this trip will come in around \$4,000 (give or take). That will get you 10 dive days and a total of 26 dives. We generally do three dives/day but there are two days that we'll cut that back. Breakfast is included every day as is lunch (on the boat) on all of the 3-dive days. (We're on our own for dinner and can either eat at Manta Ray on the Mnuw, their sailing vessel that's a restaurant or at other places). Nitrox is included (for those qualified), as is a Mandarinfish dive, Shark feed, ½-day island tour, crew/staff tip, airport transfers, and late check-out on departure day.

Yap has a fabulous collection of dive site choices, the most famous of which are the cleaning stations in either Goofnu Channel or along M'il Channel. Plus there's the amazing Stammtisch where giant



manta rays will glide effortlessly a foot or two over your head while they're getting serviced by the cleaner fish on the reef.

But Yap is much more than just mantas. As I mentioned, there's Mandarin fish activity every night at dusk and we'll observe that. There are great walls with vertical drops, sloping reefs, caverns through which to glide, and all sorts of nooks and crannies to explore. It's hard to have a bad dive there. (Since Yap is the Land of Stone Money, we'll even show you some underwater Stone Money.)

We'll also take a short break from diving to expose you to some of Yap's history and role during World War 2, and give you an idea of the history of the islands well as how Stone Money came to be an

accepted currency. (And of course, we'll also take you to a Stone Money bank as part of the tour.)

I always love going back to Yap not only because of the richness of the experience but because of the wonderful service and care that the entire staff at Manta Ray Bay takes to make sure our vacation is simply a superb one. For me, it's a home-away-from-home. And I'll bet you'll end up feeling that way too. So if this is something that you might be interested in, let me know.

Manta Ray Bay will be at the Scuba Show in booth 237. Go by and say hello to Bill and Patricia Acker, the owners of Manta Ray Bay, and let them affirm that what I'm telling you is true. I guarantee you it'll be a stop worth your time.

## **MALDIVES TOO, BUT IN 2025**

One of our other favorite places to go is the Maldives and when we're there, the only choice for us is the liveaboard Manthiri. For 2025, we've got back-to-back trips booked. Do one or the other or do both. We've contemplated doing the first trip as a northern run and the second as a southern run to showcase the best the Maldives has to offer. Trip dates are September 19-28 and September 29 – October 8. The boat only takes 12 divers (plus 11 crew) and we're already about half full for each trip. So don't get left behind. Talk to Manthiri rep Mark Potter in booth 613 and he can give you more reasons why diving with Manthiri is a special experience.

---

## **PICTURE PAGE - Roatan 2024**

*(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2024)*



**Dive Guide John Carter  
making air rings**



P.O. Box 634  
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

[WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM](http://WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM)



**Colorful  
sponges**



**Barry  
Cuda**



**Conch staredown  
(my fav shot of the trip)**



**The  
Squidron**