

THE REEF SEEKER



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AUGUST IS SHARK MONTH AT REEF SEEKERS

Move over Discovery Channel because we're hitting the sharks three weeks out of this month.

We start Monday afternoon as 14 of us converge on San Diego where we'll then board a charter bus down to Ensenada (always looking forward to that border crossing) where we will then board the *Nautilus Belle Amie* for the 20-hour journey SW to Isla Guadalupe. And while you never know what Mother Nature might bring, as of now, it looks like it will be a nice crossing.

We get to spend all day Tuesday at sea, which I rather enjoy. For one thing, it's a fairly relaxing day with plenty of time to meet the other passengers (there will be 27 people total), get to know the crew, hook up cameras, get briefed on dive protocols, etc.

But even more interesting to me is just going up to the top deck and watching the sea, especially in the late morning and early afternoon when we'll be far enough offshore that we can't see the mainland and not yet close enough to Guadalupe to see the island. Just watching the open sea and wondering if we'll see some whales or stuff like that really gives you an appreciation of

how vast the ocean can be, and it always makes me wonder what secrets are down there waiting for us to discover.

Then we'll have three great days of caged shark diving at Guadalupe. This will be our third trip there and we had a blast the previous two times. We've also been on the *Belle Amie* before and I think it's simply perfectly designed for Guadalupe trips. Lots of rooms for the cages, plenty of room on the back deck to stage people in and out, and the ship itself is huge at 135' long, roughly 35' wide and four passenger-accessible decks. LOTS of space and really well-designed. And they just came out of their annual refit so I'll be really interested to see what's changed since last year.

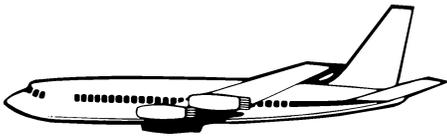
BTW, I think I'll have a (slow) Internet connection on board so be sure to check out the Reef Seekers Facebook page (please "LIKE" us if you haven't already) as well as my Ken Kurtis SmugMug page for pictures and updates. Their first day of diving this season was this past Thursday and I know that they had 4 Great Whites circling the boat throughout the day so we'll hope that continues and even improves by the time we get there.

When we're done with that trip, we take a week off to decompress and then fly down to Cancun and journey over to Isla Mujeres for

the first week of our back-to-back Whale Shark trips this year. We'll again be diving with Jim Silver and Aqua Adventures Eco Diving and plan to have a day of exploring the Cancun Underwater Museum, three days of Whale Shark snorkeling (you're not allowed to scuba with them), a day of diving the cenotes down near Tulum, and a day of wreck and reef diving around Isla Mujeres. Lots of stuff to do and the really neat thing about this trip is that each day is different from what you did the previous day.

Once we're done with the first week, I'll escort everyone back to the Cancun Airport, wave goodbye, and then pick up our second group and do the whole thing all over again. (Yeah, I know: I have a rough life and you REALLY feel sorry for me.) In all seriousness, it's a really neat trip (we've got a total of 25 people going this year), we try to keep our groups fairly small and manageable (as we do with all of our trips), and we enjoy it as much as you do.

On Isla, we should have a very reliable Internet connection so be sure to check our pages for daily updates and pictures. And, of course, when we get back we'll give you a full trip reports and photo essay on all three of the weeklong adventures.



WHY YOU WANT TRIP INSURANCE

I frequently hear divers debating about whether or not they should “bother” with trip insurance. My recommendation is that it’s a bother that can relieve a lot of stress down the road.

Depending on what type of a policy you get, trip insurance generally runs 5-10% or so of the value of what you’re insuring. So if all your trips cost about the same, if you cancel 1 out of every 15, you break even. And over the years, I’ve seen plenty of people suddenly not be able to do a trip but their trip insurance paid off.

One guy broke his arm a week before we were about to leave, another diver had a pacemaker implanted shortly before a trip and wasn’t yet cleared to dive, another person got called for jury duty, and another woman didn’t have a problem herself but the night before we were going to leave her husband had a heart attack and her policy covered her staying behind to care for him.

I’m mentioning this now because on our Isla trip, I just got a call from one of our divers who now can’t go because of a fairly serious medical condition that’s a total contraindication to diving. This same person was also supposed to be on our Red Sea trip last December and - for different reasons - had to cancel that one too.

In the instance of the Red Sea, the diver did not have trip insurance so had to eat the cost of the trip, the

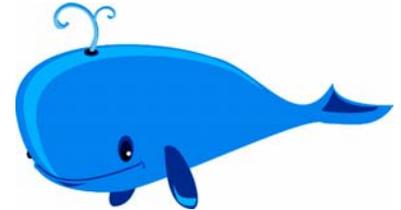
cost of the non-diving side trips to Cairo, and the cost of the airfare. A hard lesson learned but learned nonetheless because they DO have trip insurance for the Isla trip and it looks like that insurance will cover what they’re going to lose.

So if you’re thinking of trip insurance, one easy on-line marketplace to go to is www.insuremytrip.com. (And it certainly isn’t limited to dive trip insurance.) You’ll fill in some basic info, can add in some conditions as to the type of coverage you want, enter the trip cost, and they’ll give you a variety of plans from which to choose.

Just as a example, I plugged in our Maldives trip in November (for which we still have one spot available) to see what would come up. With airfare and a couple of days in Istanbul on the back end, the trip cost is around \$6,000. they quickly came up with a couple of dozen plans and, just picking one at random, there was a plan available from John Hancock Insurance that includes cancellation, trip interruption, baggage loss or delay, \$100,000 in medical costs and \$1,000,000 for medical evacuation, and even included a provision that you’re covered if an act

of terrorism occurs and the State Department says “Don’t go there,” all for a little over \$500. Not bad for that kind of peace of mind.

So when you’re planning your next trip, give some trip insurance serious thought. You can’t be too careful these days.



THAR BE WHALES!!!!

How cool is this? Genetic testing has confirmed that there’s a previously-unknown species of beaked whale in the northern Pacific Ocean. The whales have bulbous heads (I’m guessing somewhat like a Beluga) and their beaks resemble porpoises. At first it was thought they were a dwarf variety of more common whales but researchers were able to take samples from three dead whales that washed up on Japan’s northernmost island and confirmed that they were a different species.

And just when you thought there was nothing new to learn . . .

2016 & 2017 DIVING VACATIONS

August 1-6 • Guadalupe

August 13-27 • Isla Mujeres

November 2-18 • Maldives

7/7-7/19 & 7/21-8/2 • Yap



THAR BE STINGRAYS TOO!!!

An article in this past weekend's L.A. Times upset me a bit as it talked about how people in San Diego who were wading in shallow water were "attacked" by stingrays lying in the sand. Uh, I don't think so. These people STEPPED ON a stingray and as the terrified ray fled, it whacked them with their tail and drove the barb into their skin.

No one's been seriously injured but, as with most animal "attacks," the animal is simply reacting defensively to what it perceives as aggressive behavior. I'm sure if you were sleeping and someone stepped on you, your first reaction wouldn't be, "I'm so sorry that my bed and my body were in your way."

It's the same as when you hear about shark "attacks" but when you drill down deeper into the story, you realize that there was a speared fish on a line or something like that that attracted the shark and provoked the bite.

Even the most famous shark bite victim of all time, Rodney Fox of Australia, freely admits that when he was bitten (by a Great White no less), it was because he was spearing fish and had a stinger attached to his waist and THAT is what the shark was after, and wrongly got a piece of Rodney at the same time.

But the stingray story does offer

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES

**WE WILL GET BACK INTO
THE LOCAL SWING OF THINGS
IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER
WITH VETS PARK AND AVALON
EXCURSIONS**

good advice which is that when you're entering the water, shuffle along a bit so any buried rays can sense you coming and they'll get out of the way. For divers making a surf entry, this shouldn't be a problem because you're probably shuffling along anyhow, especially if you put your fins on at the high-water's edge (which is my preferred method). However, if you're one of those who walks out through the surf and dons your fins beyond the breaker line, be aware that a little shuffling on your way out might go a long way to avoiding an unpleasant encounter.



REQUESTS FOR 2017????

I'm getting to the point now where I need to do some serious thinking about our 2017 schedule. I've already got the Yap Immersion down which pretty much covers the month of July but what else strikes your fancy?

One thing we talked about in Palau was the idea of going to Raja Ampat. Since you can't get there without laying over somewhere, and that one of those somewhere's is Manado, I was thinking of maybe putting together what I'm tenta-

tively calling "Ultimate Indonesia."

We first fly into Manado and spend roughly a week diving with our friends at Murex. Then we'd fly from Manado (it's a fairly short flight) into Raja Ampat where we'd pick up our boat and then embark on a 10-day trip exploring the best of Raja Ampat. Since we have to overnight on the way back as well, it might make sense to finish up with three days in the Lembeh Straits at the Lembeh Resort (which is affiliated with Murex). It certainly won't be cheap or short (the whole trip will be about three weeks or maybe a tad longer) but what a magical time it will be!!! (We'd also be able to set this up so that if time &/or money are limiting factors for you, you could do just one or two of the three legs.)

I've also had some people ask about Bonaire and Galapagos. So this is a good time to let me know what's on your mind and what tickles your fancy. This is the time to do that because I'm still at a point where I can shift schedules and destinations around. As we start locking in more and more trips, that then becomes harder and harder.

Sky's the limit and there's certainly no obligation on your part. Let me know what's on your Diving Wish List and we'll see if we can make it comes true.

WANNA DIVE CATALINA & PALAU IN THE SAME DAY?

No, I'm not off my meds. In fact, I do this every Thursday morning. And it's not REALLY Catalina and it's not REALLY Palau but an incredible simulation. Because it's at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach.

As many of you know, I've been a volunteer diver there since just before the Aquarium opened in June of 1998. I love it. And if you've ever been interested in joining us, now's your chance.

The Aquarium will be doing another volunteer diver training sessions in the fall. The requirements are certified at rescue or above, a

minimum of 50 logged dives, you commit to a year and commit to making it 75% of the time, and if accepted, you're assigned to a specific shift. Shifts are every day of the week and either mornings ((a-1P), afternoons (1-5P), or evenings (4-8P). If you'd like to find out more, contact the Aquarium at 562/590-3100.

DON'T FORGET THE MALDIVES

We've sold out every one of our trips this year so far but we still have one more to go and there's one spot (male-share at the moment) still available and that's the Maldives November 2-18. Because it's literally half way around the

world, we're going to extend this to a 9-day trip rather than the "standard" 5.5 days so that we'll have plenty of time to catch the high spots of the Maldives. At the end of the trip, we're going to plan on spending three days exploring Istanbul which should be interesting not only on an historic basis but also because of the recent political happenings there. This is going to be a pretty special trip and if you're interested in securing that final spot, give us a call at 310/652-4990 and we'll chat.



PICTURE PAGE - Shark month

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2016)



**Who's
checking out whom???**



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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



**Simply
magnificent**



**Cancun
Underwater Museum**



**The Isla group
from 2014**



**Make way
for Whale Sharks**