

THE REEF SEEKER



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GUADALUPE STILL CLOSED

Isla Guadalupe, the isolated island SSW of Ensenada that's home to fabulous Great White Shark encounters, is still closed to dive boats that normally go to that area. Numerous operators have this on their summer and fall schedules, so this can impact a lot of people.

The season normally begins in early-to-mid July but a bureaucratic order prevented the island from opening to dive tourism on time. This has nothing to do with COVID. Operators are now hopeful of a September 1 opening date so they can salvage at least some of the season for the trips.

As we've mentioned previously, if you have a Guadalupe trip planned this year, you might want to double-check with your tour operator to see what's what. Some of them have moved boats to other areas around Mexico. Others may be substituting more local diving in lieu of Guadalupe. (Read your trip agreement carefully to see if what you've signed up for is

Guadalupe-or-bust or if a destination substitution can be made.)

We'll give you an update next month with hopefully better news.



ZOOM SEEKERS IN AUGUST

Mark your calendars for Tuesday, August 9, at 7:30PM for this month's edition of Zoom Seekers, our Zoom-based speaker series. Our guest this month is Selena McMillian, the Southern California Regional manager for Reef Check. She'll talk about what Reef Check does and how it's expanded over the years, plus give you some info on how you can become involved if you like. Reef Check is the epitome of the idea of "citizen science" and I think you'll find Selena's talk very interesting. I'll send out the Zoom link in next Sunday's TWARS.



CASE OF MISTAKEN (FISH) INDENTITY

Last week in TWARS, I published two of Susy Horowitz' Avalon UW Park pix and said the red fish was perhaps a Greenling. Nope. It's actually a Large-Mouth Blenny. Thanks to Debbie Karimoto and Dana Rodda for promptly pointing out the error in my ways. (For the record, I did get the Giant Sea Bass ID correct.)

PAY ATTENTION

From FaceBook today, this is why eating near the shore can be risky if you're not always alert. (Although this looks more like a hawk stealing the sandwich than a seagull.) But then end result is the same: No more sandwich to eat.





TRAVEL IN 2023

Now that we've got our October 2022 Indonesia trip full and nailed down, I'm starting to think about where we should go in 2023. The world still isn't fully open so sometimes the planning can be a little tricky.

On top of that, my philosophy in all of this is to try to first take care of the places where we have long-term close relationships that have been established over the years. The people at these places are our friends and we'd like to do everything we can to help them start to recover financially from essentially two years of no income. So that's a long way of saying we're not necessarily looking for new destinations or operators since we'd like to first take care of those who have cared for us in the past.

One place we'll keep a close eye on is Yap and Manta Ray Bay Resort. Supposedly Yap – and the rest of the Federated State of Micronesia – will reopen on August 1. However, the fly in the ointment there will be United Airlines which offers the only way in. Currently, United is flying from Guam only once a month (not a typo), and it doesn't look like they're resuming twice-a-week service until November. There are many island residents who need to come back so the assumption is, from a practical standpoint, it'll be tough to get to Yap this calendar

year. But 2023 will hopefully be another story and Yap is high on our list. We generally go in March so that's my initial thinking.

We will most likely revisit Bonaire again in May of 2023. We had a great trip this year (also May) and it seems to be a good time to go.

We deal a lot with Nautilus Dive Adventures and might, in the spirit of supporting our "regular" vendors, give some thought to a different thing with them which would be a land-based trip to San Ignacio Lagoon to experience the Gray Whales that winter there. Nautilus sets up a seasonal camp there – with both nice private camping tents and REALLY nice (glamping) tents – and it's a very unique experience. We'd fly into Cabo and overnight, and then fly the next day in a small plane to the lagoon campsite. You get 4 days (3 nights) in the area and then fly back to Cabo. Unclear if we can make a connection to LAX or would need to overnight again. But the point is, this is a vendor who we like dealing with and it's something different from them. The season for this is January/February/March.

The other thing we might do is a

return to Indonesia, based on the interest we've had with this year's trip. We love staying with our friends at Murex and the diving is simply incredible.

The other thing on my radar would be a return to the Maldives, most likely in the fall, perhaps November-ish. We'd again dive with our buddies at Manthiri, which also means we're limited to 12 people total, as that's the capacity of the boat. By going in November-ish, we'd again try to spend some time near Baa Atoll and specifically Hanifaru Bay, where the legendary gathering of hundreds and hundreds of manta rays happens each year.

I'm certainly open to other suggestions. We've got a good relationship with the Aggressor Fleet and haven't done a trip with them lately so that opens up other possibilities. But at this point, feel free to let me know if you're interested in anything mentioned above (I always kept a "possibilities" list for each trip) or suggest something else.

The world is reopening and it's time for us to climb out of our COVID caves and start enjoying diving to the fullest again.

2023 DIVING VACATIONS

Jan/Feb/Mar • Gray Whales?

May 2023 • Bonaire

July 2023 • Indonesia again (?)

Sometime in 2023 . . . Yap



AVALON MID-MONTH AND MID-WEEK

Our next Avalon day trip is slated for Wednesday, August 17. We'll leave out of San Pedro on the 7:30AM boat and we'll have time for three dives in the Avalon Underwater Park. (San Pedro has always seemed to me to be an easier terminal and parking lot than Long Beach.) We might try to speed up the day a bit and make the 3:35PM coming back or we can take our sweet time and come back on the 6:00PM. We'll poll those who sign up and see what the preference is.

All of our trips are led by me (Ken Kurtis) and I'm happy to guide each dive or you're certainly free to go off on your own. Dives can go for as long as we have air or until we get cold. (In July, the cold got to us after about 30 minutes.) Trip fee is \$175/person and includes round-trip Catalina Express, taxi to and from the UW Park, tank rental (AL80s – steel available for \$5 more) with airfills, and all the fun you can handle. We usually do a short lunch break be-

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Thu.	Aug. 4	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night Dive •••	\$30
Sat.	6	Redondo (Vets)	Beach Diving (single tank)	\$30
Wed.	17	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$175
Wed.	24	--- CLASS ---	--- Easy Tables & Computers ---	FREE
Sat.	27	Redondo (Vets)	Navigation (single dive)	\$30
Thu.	Sept. 1	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night Dive •••	\$30
Sat.	17	Redondo (Vets)	Mastering Surf Entries & Exits	\$30
Wed.	21	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$175

tween dives two and three. We bring our own food rather than walk somewhere to eat, which saves a little time, not to mention a few bucks.

We'll go on our usual quest to encounter Giant Sea Bass – a number of them spend the summer hanging out around 50-70' at the Park – and we'll see what else we can find. On our July trip, we spotted a number of Abalone, Lobsters, and even found a nice-sized Moray Eel. (Plus I got to use my new OrcaTorch underwater laser pointer to highlight where these critters were.)

One thing to be aware of – and it wasn't that big a deal last month – is that both Tuesday and Wednesday are now cruise ship days in Avalon. This means there will be a decent number of cruise ship people not only walking around town, but more impactful to us, signing up for Discover Diving or guided snorkeling tours or they'll just be doing it on their own. So the stairs might get a little more crowded than what we've been used to lately but it wasn't that big a deal in July. (And some of them even seemed appreciative when we pointed out that walking forwards in fins could result in falling and breaking one's nose.)

If you're interested in joining us for our monthly outing, shoot us an e-mail or call 310/652-4990.

MISSING BOAT DIVES

I miss our Reef Seekers-sponsored boat dives.

As best I can tell, we stopped doing local boat trips sometime in 2015. But I freely confess that I miss hosting those floating parties. In our heyday in the mid-90s, Reef Seekers did about 50-60 local trips each year (which included 5 or 6 2-day trips and an occasional 3-day trip) and there were summer weekends where we had one boat on Saturday and a different boat on Sunday. Good times.

The local boat diving market has certainly changed. Many of the bigger boats that used to run regularly no longer exist. And economics has generally dictated that most trips are Catalina day trips Santa Barbara, San Clemente, and San Nichols (along with the fabulous Begg Rock) are rarely visited nowadays.

This isn't intended to be just a nostalgia rant but to simply point out that we're still willing to book some of these types of trips if we know there's a market for them.

So if you're interested in doing some boats dives, let me know. Regardless, we will continue to offer our monthly Avalon trips and Redondo dives because we can do those with only a couple of people. But we're getting into prime diving season so . . . let's go diving!!!



MORE MARINE LIFE US POSTAL STAMPS

Go to your local post office this Friday for the new Marine Sanctuaries stamps. Each block contains 16 first-class Forever stamps, featuring animals that are found in various marine sanctuaries. These include various fish, marine mammals, and some topside views as well. On top of that, there's a map of the National Marine Sanctuary System on the back of each pane of 16 stamps.

USPS will live-stream the unveiling ceremony through their FaceBook page this coming Friday starting at 10AM. You can view the live-stream by going to FB through this link: <https://www.facebook.com/USPS> .

PICTURE PAGE - What we see when we go

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2022)



Whale Sharks
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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



Giant Mantas
Yap



Leaf Scorpionfish
Maldives



Seahorses
Bonaire



Ghost Pipefish
Indonesia