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November - 2016



R.I.P. TOM BINKLEY

It is with great sadness that we have to tell you, if you didn't know already, that Tom Binkley has died. Tom was one of our Reef Seekers DMs for many years and most recently was second captain on the *Cee Ray*, and the *Great Escape* prior to that.

On Saturday, November 19, there will be a celebration of Tom's life at the Tallyrand Restaurant in Burbank (1700 W. Olive, between Buena Vista and the I-5) from 2:00-4:30PM. This is open to anyone who wants to attend. The family says, "We will have a slideshow of memories and a microphone for telling about them if you're inclined. Please bring pics or music

or just yourself to remind us all of how loved and loving Tom was. There is strength in numbers. Contact Greta or Lucas with questions 818/426-9690 or 818/517-3265."



HEADING TO THE MALDIVES

We're leaving Wednesday for our long-awaited return to the Maldives. This will be our third trip there and we're looking forward to seeing our friends on the *Manthiri* and seeing how the diving's changed over the years. The Maldives has an incredibly rich underwater eco-system and we're hoping to have some great images, videos, and stories to share with you when we return.

We're also going to be interested to hear what their reaction is to our political climate. We'll be away on Election Day and I don't think there's Wi-Fi on the boat, so I'm not sure how long it will take us to find out what the results are, at least of the presidential race. But foreigners always have a keen interest in what happens in the U.S., since we're such a large force on the world stage. I remember when we were traveling to Indonesia in 2008 and we had a layover in Tokyo at the Narita Airport. An elderly Japanese man sat down across from us and said, "Are you all Americans? What do you think of Obama?"

One thing I love about diving around the world is that you get exposed to many different viewpoints and you come to realize that an American-centric one is not always the way the rest of the world sees things. So this trip will be interesting on many levels.

GOODBYE DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

Don't forget that Daylight Savings Time ends at 2AM this coming Sunday, November 6. Be sure to set your clocks back one hour. It'll be a little weird for us while traveling because the Maldives doesn't observe DST to begin with and while Turkey does, they've decided to remain on DST yearround. Not so in the U.S., so be sure to change your clocks.

TRAVELING THROUGH THE HOTSPOTS OF THE WORLD

And I don't mean Wi-Fi . . .

One of the great things about diving is that we truly get to see the world. Becoming a traveling diver also greatly improves your knowledge of geography. Who else but a diver would know where places like Yap, the Maldives, Isla Guadalupe, or Bonaire are?

But traveling to some of these locations has other issues as well that relate to security. Especially if your journey takes you to or through the Middle East, there are legitimate security concerns of which you need to be aware. For instance, during our trip last December to the Red Sea, we spent time touring Cairo and they have a separate division of the police force that's literally called the Tourist Police and they provide armed escorts for tour buses as well as a plainclothes armed guard who rides with you.

On Wednesday, our group for the Maldives departs on Turkish Airlines and we're going through Istanbul plus we're doing a 3-day layover there on the way back. Just a few days ago, we received a travel warning about Istanbul from the U.S. State Department. By the same token, they've also issued recent warnings about travel to Mexico, Haiti, and the Bahamas. So while on the one hand you don't want to overreact and feel like you need to go into a hole, you also don't want to be too complacent.

One thing you can do is register your trip with the State Department's "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program" (STEP) which is free. This then helps the local U.S. Embassy contact you in case of natural disaster, family emergency, or civil unrest in your destination. State will also send you - as they did with us - any travel alerts or warnings about your intended destination. The service is free and State also swears they don't share their information with anyone else without your written permission.

Some of the advice might be destination-specific, and some of it is generic and common sense:

- Stay away from large crowds, including at popular tour ist destinations.
- Exercise heightened vigilance and caution when visiting public areas, especially those heavily frequented by tourists.
- Stay away from political gatherings and rallies.
- Follow the instructions of local authorities in an emergency.
- Stay at hotels with identifiable security measures in place.
- Monitor local media.

While you never want to diminish these kinds of warnings, it's also important to remember that other countries caution their citizens about some travel within the United States that we wouldn't think twice about. For instance, countries such as the United Kingdom have added the U.S. to the list of countries where travelers face a "moderate risk" of catching the Zika virus. European governments have warned about a spate of gun violence in the U.S. and the French government's travel advice website informs citizens that it is legal for many Americans to carry firearms. The Bahamas warns their citizens about interactions with police, especially for young males. And while we may scoff at these admonitions being overblown, don't forget that there was that shooting at LAX Terminal 3 a few years ago that killed a TSA officer and that would qualify as a terrorist attack.

So the best thing you can do is be aware, be alert, don't take things for granted, and use common sense. There's no perfect answer and we certainly don't live in a perfect world. And some times, we just might find ourselves in the wrong place at the wrong time through no fault of our own.

2017 DIVING VACATIONS

March 18-25 • Bonaire

June 10-17 • Isla Mujeres

July 7-19 • Yap Immersion #1

July 21 - Aug. 2 • Yap Imm. #2

BACK TO BONAIRE

We didn't have it on the sked for this year and we weren't able to get enough people to go in 2015, so it's high time we went back to Bonaire!!!

The plan for next year is to go March 18-25 which is Saturday-to-Saturday. We'll most likely fly Delta through Atlanta as they seem to have the best sked, though the air fare right now certainly doesn't qualify as a bargain (around \$1150).

We stay at Buddy Dive and usually get either 2-bedroom (3-4 people) or 3-bedroom (4-6 people) apartments. The good thing is that these are not only fully furnished but are truly apartments with living room, full kitchen, and patio for each. Plus each unit gets a rental vehicle/truck so we've got wheels which allows us to enjoy and explore Bonaire to the fullest.

From a diving standpoint, we'll generally plan on two boat dives each of the six dive days we're there and we try to schedule those as 2-tank morning dives. That leaves us the afternoon to go shore diving or relax or do whatever.

And speaking of shore dives, they're legendarily easy in Bonaire. We'll hope to hit the likes of Ol'Blue, the Salt Pier, Larry's Lair, and even the Hilma Hooker. And don't forget about the Buddy Dive house reef, appropriately called Buddy Reef. We usually do at least a dusk dive there every day. We used to, in our younger days, do "true" night dives, but what we do now is a daily dusk dive where we get in the water around 6PM which lets us see the last remnants of the day critters

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES

November - We're in the Maldives December - TBA

and the first sign of the night critters. Plus we almost always get a look at the River of Fish, which is a seemingly endless flow of Creole Wrasses, maddeningly making their way north to some unknown destination but moving pretty much as fast as they can. And it goes on and on and on and happens just about every day around 6PM. Way cool.

The other great thing about Bonaire is its reliable conditions and relatively "easy" diving, so it's perfect for someone without a lot of dives under their belt or someone who hasn't been diving in a while. But it's also got enough charm and sealife to satisfy an old salt as well.

If you're interested and I don't already have you on our list, shoot me a note. Given that we're talking about five months from now, I want to try to nail this one down once I get back from the Maldives later in November.

TRAVEL TIP OF THE DAY

It's always a good idea before you let your checked baggage leave the check-in area, to double-check and make sure that the bag tags

indicate the correct city. This is a good idea domestically as well as internationally. For instance, if you're going into Lehu, Papua New Guinea (LHP) but they tag your bag LHR, you'll need to go to London's Heathrow Airport to pick it up. So always know the airport codes of your destinations and double-check lest your bags fly to somewhere where you're not.

I'm reminded of this because on the very first trip I did to the Maldives (MLE), it was a group of dive shop owners and instructors, many of whom were coming from Dallas. They were to meet me at LAX and then we were all going together to Singapore (SIN) by way of Tokyo (NRT). I told them ahead of time to double-check their bag tags and when I met up with them at LAX, they reassured me in their Texas drawl not to worry that everything would be all right even though they didn't bother to double-check the bag tags.

Sure enough, when we got Singapore, not a single one of their bags had made it. Fortunately, we had a day for the bags to catch up but when the airline finally figured things out, it turns out their bags were sent not to SIN but to SIT, which is the airport in Sitka, Alaska.

It pays to be a little anal and doublecheck this stuff.



GREAT WHITE SHARKS REVISITED

We've had such good luck and such a good time diving with the Great Whites of Isla Guadalupe, that we thought we'd give it another shot in 2017.

The dive dates are September 1-6 and that's over the Labor Day Weekend. As in the past, this is a trip that effectively starts in San Diego, so we'll need to be down there by 7PM on September 1. Then we take a coach-style bus

down to Ensenada, which takes about three hours. At that point, we'll get on the *Nautilus Belle Amie* and away we'll go.

It's a 20-hour ride out to Isla Guadalupe so you'll have all day Saturday to get briefed and fiddle with camera gear, and then we'll start diving around 7AM Sunday morning. We'll have all day Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday to go nose-to-nose (from inside a cage) with one of nature's Top Predators, and then when we're done Tuesday, we'll head back to Ensenada, arriving Wednesday early afternoon. At that point, we take the bus back up to San Diego and then drive on home to L.A. (or you can fly from San Diego to your home destination).

It's a really great trip and there's

something very magical about seeing these awesome creatures up close. You will definitely walk away with a different perspective on all sharks, not just Great Whites, after this trip.

We're still finalizing all the details but if this is something that's of interest to you - and because it's hookah diving and there are cages at the surface, they'll even allow non-divers to observe the sharks from the surface cages - then make sure we've got you on our list if we haven't done so already.

And if you want to see the pix from this year and read the trip report, start with this link: http://www.reefseekers.com/PIXPAGES/Guadalupe%202016/Guadalupe%202016%20trip%20report.html.

PICTURE PAGE - Maldives past



Leaf Scorpionfish





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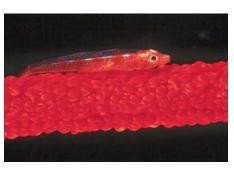
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Fierce Stonefish



Exploring a swim-through



Coral Whip Goby



Vlaming's Unicornfish