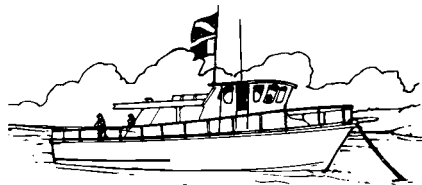


THE **REEF** SEEKER



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July - 2008



DIVE BOAT FUEL SURCHARGE

Well, you knew it was only a matter of time and that time is now. Effective July 1, we will be adding a fuel surcharge on all of our local dive trips. Right now it looks like \$5/person should generally do the trick. But with fuel prices climbing almost hourly, that may have to go up in the near future.

We don't like doing it any more than you like paying it but circumstances don't leave us much choice. Fuel costs for the boats - who already operate on slim margins - have skyrocketed and they can't eat the difference any more nor can we.

The hope, of course, is that common sense prevails and the price of oil comes back down but that may just be a pipedream. The weirdest thing is trying to figure out what costs could possibly have risen in the production of oil to justify these ridiculous prices. (And it wasn't comforting to hear the Saudi Oil Minister the other day "reassure" us that he didn't think oil would hit \$200/barrel. Thanks a lot.) A lot of the experts

say it's speculators, similar to the housing market, who are driving the price up and up and that, also like the housing market, it's a bubble that will burst and the prices will come back down.

You know you've been conditioned (or brainwashed) when you think wistfully of the days of \$3/gallon gas as "the good old days." But it doesn't look like this is coming down anytime soon though we promise you that when it does, the fuel surcharge will disappear. But for the near future, that's where we are.

AIRLINE BAG REGULATIONS

Remember the good old days when flying was fun???? While we understand the need for the airlines to make money, it not only seems like they're nickel-and-diming us to death but they're being rather nasty about it. ("We've had a sudden lose of cabin pressure. The masks are free but the oxygen will be billed at \$1 a minute for those who'd like to remain conscious.")

As scuba divers, there's only so much consolidation we can do when we travel. The best advice is to really watch the weight of your bags. It's frequently cheaper to check an additional bag than it is

to pay the overweight charge.

But also be aware that they're charging for almost every piece of luggage now. Most airlines are charging for the second bag and many are starting to charge for the first bag. I read an article today that said they are now going to start more heavily policing carry-on luggage and will make you check anything they deem too large, generating more revenue for them and further pissing off us.

Especially for those of us who flying with cameras and laptops, best advice is probably to pack modularly, so that if they make you check your carry-on bag (my rollerboard is about 2" too big for some of the overhead storage bins), you can pull out the essentials and just give them the bag or the almost-empty bag.

It's also not a bad idea to pack a bag-within-your-bag. Get a light-weight nylon small gym bag that weighs next to nothing and which rolls up tiny. Carry that in your carry-on so that if you have to check that bag, you can whip out your smaller nylon bag, transfer stuff to it, and give them your bigger bag, but still be able to carry-on the essentials that you'll want to on the plane.

It's a good thing diving is so cool. Because at some point, the flying gets to be a real drag.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

July 3	Fish I.D.	Aug. 7	Fish I.D.
9	Night Diving	9	Beach Diving/Nav
10	Photo Workshop	13	Night Diving
12	Beach Diving/Nav	16	CPR/Oxygen/1st Aid
17	Tables & Computers	30	Practical Navigation
19	CPR/1st Aid/Oxygen	Sept. 4	Fish ID
24	Digital UW Photog.	10	Night Diving

BUDDY SEPARATION

There was a recent fatality that involved buddy separation. That's not too unusual (the separation part) expect that there was some question as to whether or not they even realized the guy was no longer with the group.

There have been other instances where buddies got separated and one buddy just assumed the other guy was OK and continued his dive, only to return to the boat or shore to find his former buddy in full cardiac arrest while people feverishly performed CPR. In both cases, some basic safety rules have been bent if not broken.

First of all, if people are going to pair up, especially when diving as part of a group, make sure there's no question about who is diving with whom. There's nothing wrong with diving in larger groups as long as you realize that what you're diving in are really a collection of groups of two. That way, everyone has a specific buddy for the dive and you can all resolve to generally hang together as a group.

Secondly, if you and your buddy get separated **DO NOT** assume that everything is OK. Assume that something is not only wrong, but terribly wrong. Most of the time, you'll be over-reacting, but the

one time in a hundred that there IS something wrong, you'll be glad of what you did.

Think of it this way: If something has gone terribly amiss and your buddy is in trouble (and by that, I'm presuming unconscious), he needs to be found within at most 6 minutes of passing out. So the sooner you decide to "over-react," the better the chances you have of saving his life if there really is something wrong.

The procedure is simple. You learned this in your basic class. If you get separated, you search for no more than one minute and then surface (without a safety stop) if you can't locate your buddy. If your buddy is not already on the surface or hasn't surfaced within 30 seconds or so of you, assume that something's wrong and alert someone that you have a buddy

separation situation and that you need help.

The exception to this would be when there's a buddy separation as part of the dive plan. What we're talking about is something that's NOT planned but is unexpected. If you lose them, go find them. If you can't find them, get some help in doing so.

Think of it in a worst-case scenario: In case something really is wrong, will you sleep better at night knowing you reacted quickly and did everything possible? Or do you think it will bother you at all if you took a la-de-da approach, assumed everything was fine, and your buddy died.

We see buddy separation frequently. 99% of the time, it's nothing. But as a diving community, we need to deal with this a little more seriously. All it takes is for quick action to save one life to make it worthwhile.



DIVING VACATIONS

Aug. 30 - Sept. 12 • Indonesia

October 11-18 - Sea of Cortez

February, 2009 - Fla Manatees



OUTER ISLAND TRIPS

There was a post recently on one of the BBSes that we'd like to take slight issue with. It stated that Outer Island trips (Santa Barbara, San Clemente, San Nicolas) are now a thing of the past.

Well, not if you look at our schedule.

I think what the poster meant was that with rising costs and fewer divers diving, many stores and charterers are cutting back on their outer island trips to keep costs down or to lessen their financial risk in the trip. So they're changing all the destinations to Catalina. The result of this is that if you go shopping for a trip, pretty much all you see is Catalina-Catalina-Catalina.

So we agree that the Outer Island trip is somewhat of an endangered species. But the perspective should not be to kiss them goodbye, but to embrace them when you can find them.

Reef Seekers is one of the very few stores/charters that are still doing Outer Island trips. Yes, they're more expensive than Catalina trips. But we will remain committed to them as long as we can continue to get enough of you to go on them with us. We don't want to keep going back to the same places over and over again. We love Catalina, but we love the other places too.

The upside of other charterers canceling their Outer Island trips is

UPCOMING BOAT DIVES

Sun	July 13	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Catalina back	\$140/150
Sat	26	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (backside)	150/160
Sun	Aug. 10	<i>Magician</i>	•• Oil Rigs (adv. dive) ••	135/145
Sat	23	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	150/160
Sat	Sept. 6	<i>Magician</i>	Catalina (West End)	130/140
Sun	21	<i>Magician</i>	<i>Olympic</i> wreck/Catalina	130/140
Sat	Oct. 4	<i>Cee Ray</i>	Farnsworth/Catalina back	140/150
Sun	19	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (frontside)	150/160

Prices are listed as 14-day advanced purchase/regular. Food/air included all trips. All diving to be done on compressed air only - no nitrox. \$5 fuel surcharge will be added.

that we've made a lot of new friends since the folks they used to dive with have effectively abandoned them. So welcome to the Reef Seekers family. Happy to have you.

We try to get to Catalina, Catalina backside (Farnsworth), the Oil Rigs, Santa Barbara, and San Clemente. (San Nicolas is simply too far for a single day trip, let alone with current fuel prices.) Plus we throw a few wrecks (*Star of Scotland, Palawan, Olympic*) into the mix. We think it's a really good, diverse schedule where we cover all the bases. We hope you agree.

So don't despair. The Outer Islands are still within reach. And Reef Seekers is the place to come to reach them.

SUMMER BOATS

Just a reminder that our summer boats generally tend to fill faster than "off-season" trips. And don't forget that if you pay for your trip two weeks or more ahead of time, you save \$10. But that doesn't mean we can't accommodate you

at the last-minute or stick you on a waiting list for last-minute cancellations.

Good examples of this are our next three trips. The trip July 13 to Farnsworth (two weeks away) has about 6 spots available. The July 26 trip to Clemente (four weeks away) has about 12 spots open, and the August 10 Oil Rigs trip (six weeks away) has about 14 spots open.

Remember too that you can always book ahead and cancel if you have to. More than two weeks ahead of time, it's a full refund. Less than two weeks but more than one week, credit to a future trip. Less than one week, no refund and no credit. But in the second and third example, if we fill your spot, you get refunded.

We run trips every two weeks. For a variety of reasons, I rarely bill you until we're within the two-week range. So if you do book way ahead of time and need to cancel, it's absolutely not a problem.

We appreciate very much that you continue to dive with us and want you to know that we'll do everything we can to make those trips, fun and enjoyable and worth your effort.

SMALL CLASSES

Although we're not teaching basic classes anymore (but we can still set these up for you on a private basis), we're still offering selected advanced classes.

Much as we like to have lots of people in each class, the reality is that many times we're willing to do these classes with only a handful of people. We've done some of them with as little as one or two people. So don't worry if you call to sign up for one and it turns out that you're the first person. It may not be an issue.

A lot of these classes are not only (hopefully) fun for you to take but fun for us to teach as well, so that's why a small turnout is not always a deal-breaker. Let us know what

you're interested in, and we'll do our best to make it happen.

WHERE TO IN 2009??

I'm starting to think about 2009 trips and wondered where you'd like to go. I've been toying with the idea of going back to the Maldives (we haven't been there in a number of years), I'm committed to doing the Florida manatee trip again (most likely in February), I'm sure we'll have Bonaire on the schedule, and we'll do the Sea of Cortez again in October 2009.

Where else would you like to go? Many times, if only two or three or four of you settle on a location, that's enough of a seed group for

me to get something going. And since we've sort of gotten to specialize in relatively small groups, we don't need a ton of people to go to these places. (I've never understood people who sign up for group trips where there are 25 or 30 people going and think they'll be getting any kind of special attention from the group leader.)

At any rate, at this point, sky's the limit. A number of you have asked about Galapagos which I'd be happy to do. In fact, I was talking with the *Aggressor* folks about that at the Scuba Show as the problem there is boat availability. Same thing with Cocos (which I'd be happy to return to).

So give me your wish list and we'll see what excitement we can make happen for 2009.

PICTURE PAGE - Sea lion faces

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2008)



Quite flexible



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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



Checking out his reflection



Kissing and playing



The welcoming committee



Coming in for a closer look