

DUGGAN DIVING APRIL 2009 NEWSLETTER

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INFORMATION OF INTEREST TO DIVERS:

We have said this before but will repeat. Make sure your passport will have six months remaining after the trip. Most countries will not allow you to travel there without six months remaining.

We started a six day course over three weekends in February 09. There will not be one in March, but there will be one every month starting in April. If you have trouble getting here on weeknights this is for you. There is no reduction in overall hours or standards in this course.

This is a special for Kisawari Resort in Lambah Straits, Northern Sulawesi, Indonesia. They are offering group rates for four people. If I can find three others that want to go I will schedule it for 14-21 Dec this year. Here is the info;

The date will need to be Dec 14-21 or Dec 16-22 because there is no flight on Tuesday for SIN-MDC-SIN.

Here is the flight info and published rate:

USD1490.00 460.70XT USD1950.70ADT
1 SQ 11Q 12DEC J LAXSIN NN1 110P 125A 14DEC
2 SQ5274Q 14DEC M SINMDC NN1 925A 105P
OPERATED BY SILKAIR
3 SQ5273Q 21DEC M MDCSIN NN1 145P 510P
OPERATED BY SILKAIR
4 SQ 12Q 22DEC T SINLAX NN1 950A 1125A

NET to you would be \$1430 + tax 460.70 = \$1890.70

Payment by check only. Credit card payment add 3% for VI/MC & 5% for AX.
It's less than published rate.

For Kasawari cost : 7 nights package

Ground transfers

Meals

Diving, tanks, weights, boat

Published rate: \$1840 per person less a \$50 discount per person = \$1790

Total net cost of 4 paxs = \$7160

Total cost per person from LAX is \$3730.70

TRAVEL

I planned on being in Utila for two weeks at the height of the whale shark season. I arranged a week at two different resorts so I could run a comparison. The first one was the Utila Lodge, a small resort right near the downtown area. The second was a newer, more luxurious resort near the north of the island. The northern side is where all the whale shark action takes place.

My flight from Houston to Roatan was comfortable but crowded as this was the first week of Spring Break. Once at Roatan I processed the slow moving immigration and then the rapid customs area. I was greeted by a representative of the charter that the resort had set up. They collected my baggage along with everyone else that was going to the resort and guided us through the airport. We were shortly put on the small plane (would hold 20 but there was 12 of us). Our baggage had already been loaded and although I was prepared for overweight charges none were collected.

It was a short 20 minute flight to Utila and we landed on the small runway there. There is no terminal, just a lean-to for shade. A truck arrived and took ten of us to the resort; two remained behind to come with the baggage. Since we rode in the back of the truck there was no room for our baggage.

Upon arrival we were offered a cold drink and shown to our rooms. We were informed that the formal briefing where we would also present our passports, C cards and proof of insurance would take place in two hours. This gave me a chance to unpack and set up my camera.

The briefing was short and concise; informing us of mealtimes, diving departure times and procedures when encountering whale sharks. They have some definitive rules about approaching them, taking pictures and the sequence boats must follow to get snorkelers (scuba is not allowed) into the water. Unfortunately some of the dive boats ignore these rules. We would have three chances to see whale sharks on northern dive sites.

The diving is good and we encountered sea horses, eagle rays and numerous turtles.

Visibility on the south side was fair as there was a lot of particulate matter in the water.

The resort is simple but nice with lots of room. Meals are buffet style but usually had more than one choice. Eggs were made to order every morning.

We made two dives every morning and then either an afternoon or night dive. There was

no shore diving available. Nitrox was offered at an additional fee.

Dives were typical for this part of the Caribbean with drop offs, walls and some sandy bottoms. The first night dive had rays, a small octopus and stargazers as well as the usual reef offerings.

The dives on the northern side were clearer and the coral looked much healthier with a lot less of the algae that is ever present in the south. We also encountered numerous dolphins there. All northern dives are walls.

During our surface intervals we watched for boils, (a foaming surface caused by the tuna feeding on the same plankton and krill the whale sharks eat). When the boil is spotted all boats rush to the area hoping to be the first one there. This is where a fast boat is handy. The boat skippers and dive masters were always cooperative and tried to get you the type of diving you desired. A half dozen whale sharks were spotted and dove on the first week; unfortunately none by our boat. We found some boils but no whale sharks were in them. If the boils were promising the slower boat kept us from getting there in time.

The closeness to town is a double edged sword. It makes it easy to get things you need or to shop for souvenirs, but exposes you to the noise of the partying that goes on at night. If you're a light sleeper you might not get a great deal of sleep.

The slow boat and noise are the only real objections to the resort.

The second resort we used is accessible only by boat. The Utopia Lodge did its best to live up to its name. They pick you up in their fast roomy boat (they were able to transport twenty divers and their baggage at one time. A trip that would have taken us an hour in the slower boat was less than thirty minutes. There is about a hundred yard walk from the pier to the lodge (you also walk it each morning to get on the boat) but they transport your luggage by small truck. Since there is a beach here the no-see-ums are abundant when there is no wind. Take some lightweight long pants and deet bug spray for the evenings.

The resort is fairly new and the rooms are large and well laid out. The beds are comfortable and room is well furnished. All rooms are close to the main lodge and bar. This is the way a resort should be. Nice rooms, great, air-conditioned lounge with flat screen TV and videos available. Excellent food and a well stocked bar.

The hotel and dive staff do everything they can to make your stay comfortable including washing your gear each day. Each diver has a locker in the gear room but after putting your gear there the first day you rarely go there again (when doing an afternoon shore dive you hang your gear in the locker) until time to pack up for the trip home.

This is an eco-resort and uses a septic system and gravity flow to keep waste water out of the ocean. The one inconvenience is the inability to flush paper down the toilet (something all traveling divers have encountered on dive boats) and putting it into a receptacle that is dumped each day. The rooms have both air-conditioning and ceiling fans so cool down rapidly. Hot water is abundant and water pressure excellent.

You depart each morning for a two tank dive. Your gear (other than cameras) is already on the boat and assembled (if diving Nitrox the regulator is not on so you can analyze the gas). Weights are on the boat so you just have to tell them how much is needed. The first dive is in a shallow area so you can add weights and get your buoyancy adjusted before deeper dives are done.

The surface interval between dives is used to search for whale sharks. You would be well advised to sharpen your snorkeling skills as scuba is not allowed. The boat we were on had an excellent skipper and his ability to see boils and get us to them rapidly was unbelievable. The first surface interval we saw two whale sharks and the next day three. One stayed in about five feet of water long enough for everyone to swim alongside and get a chance to really examine the extraordinary creature. The shouts and rapid banter after the swim left no doubt about how exhilarating everyone found the encounter with the oceans largest fish.

Afternoon dives were usually from the dock, with exit near the lounge. This wall is inhabited by barracuda, numerous other fish and a resident turtle. There is also a good chance of seeing an eagle ray swimming by.

Since there is no boat diving offered on the day before departure you can just relax around the lodge or take one of the many excursions offered for an additional fee. Finally the time to depart arrives. The last morning the boat gives you a rapid transit to the shore where transportation awaits you for the ride to the airfield. As mentioned before, there is no terminal so no need to arrive too early. Once there they load your baggage, you board and are on your way to Roatan or the mainland. We opted to go in through Roatan as there are more flights there than to San Pedro Sula and more small charters to take on to Utila.

Will I come here again? You bet. Next March I will be back for another encounter with the whale sharks in what is probably the most dependable encounter area in the Caribbean. While whale sharks are seen year round, the best time is either March/April or September/October.

Remember to brush up on your snorkeling unless you want to swallow a lot of water. Contrary to many opinions the snorkel is not an obsolete item.

PANAMA CITY FLORIDA (17-21 May, 2-6 Aug, 11-15 Oct 2009)

These are trips that offer six dives on the shallow wrecks of Panama City. The trip includes four nights in a motel (dbl), three days of two tank boat diving, going away dinner at Capt. Anderson's. Tanks are also included with air fills. Nitrox is extra. The cost is \$618.50 for a diver and \$314.00 for a non-diver on the May trip and \$595.00 for a diver and \$280 for a non-diver on the Aug and oct trips. We had the meals dropped except for the going away dinner at Capt. Anderson's as it is easier to get our own and keeps the price down.

The Wreck diver and other specialties are available on the trip at a reduced cost. Wreck is \$100 for PADI (non-penetration) and \$150 for penetration certification from NAUI (you need a reel (not a finger spool) for the penetration course).

We will try to follow each trip with an optional day of diving on the Oriskany Aircraft Carrier in Pensacola. These will be recreational dives on the island above the deck at a max depth of 130 feet. These dives are not included in the above fees and cost approximately \$150 for a two tank dive. Sign up at the shop or call for additional information. Fuel fees are also now in effect . About \$5 a diver per day.

COZUMEL 13-20 JULY 09: This is a one week trip with five days of two tank guided boat dives and unlimited shore diving. Seven nights (dbl occupancy) at

the Village Tan Kah Hotel (near the Casa Del Mar). Cost is \$595 per person and includes taxes.

Not Included:

Round trip air fare, about \$350 on Continental. Also look into Viva air from Austin as they sometimes have a shuttle from San Antonio).

Cozumel Marine Park Fee (about \$3 per diving day)

Hyperbaric Chamber Insurance (DAN covers it)

Ground transfers (you can get these at airport)

WAKATOBI. October 2009 .Three days in Bali followed by ten days at the resort. Rebreathers can be supported there. Fantastic diving and excellent resort. I am looking at doing a flip flop for myself and 11 others. We could spend a week at the resort and then do the outer islands on the Pelagian for a week. I can take 11 people on the boat. Everyone gets their own air to Bali and back. Cost for the resort is :

	Garden Bungalow	Beach Bungalow	Select Bungalow	Wakatobi Villa
7 Day	\$2510	\$2810	\$3140	\$3460
10 Day	\$3490	\$3910	\$4350	\$4820

Above prices do not include the round trip air on their private charter which costs \$465.

Prices include: meals, rooms as above double, diving (pretty unlimited), transfer from airfield to resort by van and then boat.

PELAGIAN Live-Aboard Costs:

	Standard	Deluxe	Superlux	Master
7 Day	\$2540	\$2790	\$2940	\$3190
10 Day	\$3540	\$3890	\$4090	\$4490

Not included;

Indonesian Visa (about \$25 at airport)

Nitrox (must be paid at the resort or on boat)

Oxygen and scrubber if using your rebreather

Alcohol or soft drinks

Tips if super service and you want to, no pressure.

Round trip air to Bali from the US

Hotel in Bali (I will check on prices for the Santika)

Tours in Bali (great and reasonable)

FOR FULL DETAILS ABOUT ROOMS ETC. GO TO WWW.WAKATOBI.COM

If interested I need a \$700 deposit asap.

KEY LARGO FLORIDA July 12- 15 July 2009 I will send a deposit when I have 10 interested. The cost is approximately \$600 for three days of diving It includes accommodations (dbl) Two tank morning dives (one on the Speigel Grove and one on the Duane weather permitting), one night dive. Tanks and weights are included. Spirit air flies into Fort Lauderdale round trip for under \$200. We may have to adjust the trip days by one day to accommodate their schedule. We will split rental vehicles. Cal the shop with your \$200 deposit which is fully refundable if we do not book the trip due to lack of interest. Final payment if booked will be 5 May 09.

BONAIRE OCT 17-24 2009. 16 PEOPLE ONLY.

Bonaire has again been rated the best diving destination in the Caribbean, best shore diving, best marine life, best reef conditions, best visibility, and the best value for the dollar for the seventh straight year.

Here are the prices for your Bonaire group for October 17-24, 2009!

Need a \$600 per person deposit ASAP. Final payment due 15 Aug 09.

\$1579 per person includes:

**Round trip air from SanAntonio to Bonaire

**7 nights @ Sanddollar w/4 in a 2 bedroom/2bath fully equipped condo with full kitchen

**6 days of 1 tank boat dives

**6 days of unlimited shore diving

**Free unlimited nitrox

**Double cabin pick up truck w/ac for the stay

**taxes (except on truck ---those are paid on island)

Air schedule:

DL4372 17OCT San Antonio to Atlanta 530A 845A

DL 313 17OCT Atlanta to Bonaire 935A 143P

DL 312 24OCT Bonaire to Atlanta 245P 701P

DL4391 24OCT Atlanta to San Antonio 945P 1114P

Delta flights can give you Continental miles as long as they are sky team members.

DIVE THE WONDERFUL WATERS OF RAJA AHMPAT (THE TOP DIVING DESTINATION IN THE WORLD). PRECEDE IT WITH A WEEK IN THE LEMBAH STRAITS AT KISAWARI RESORT.

First 12 days on the Luxurious Paradise Dancer followed by 5 days at The Kasawari Resort, a new fantastic place on the Lembah Straits. The Dancer goes from Sarong to the Raja Ampat area of Indonesia. This is rated the best dive location in the world.

Lembah is the best macro photography and exotic creature area in the world.

You can do the 12 or the five day trip or both.

We can also do Bali on the way back if desired.

Very expensive trip. \$4200 for the 12 days on Paradise Dancer alone.

Waiting for full costs.

Lembah and Bukanan. One week at upscale Kisawari in Lembah plus one week at Santika Resort at Bunaken is \$2985 per person dbl.

Kisawari is three dives a day and all meals (nitrox and extra dives additional).

3 dives a day at Santika (lunches not included here).

Air cost from Houston to Singapore and then to Manado on Singapore airlines (super airline) is \$995 plus taxes.

No firm date yet but looking at this winter (their summer) around Jan 2010 or next summer (their winter) around July 2010.

Need a \$500 deposit for this trip. Suggest your selected time to go.

DIVE TRIP ON THE SPIRIT OF NIUGINI LUXURY BOAT from Talawi Resort in Milne Bay. Oct -Nov 2010. This is a fantastic boat at a fantastic location.

Boat will depart Tawali Resort in Milne Bay New Guinea and cruise the outlying islands seldom dove by anyone else. The boat holds 16 People in double rooms with ensuite bath. Cost for main deck rooms is \$2760. For lower deck is \$2560.

There is also a \$199 fuel charge added on to each type of room. We will most likely fly from LAX to Nadi, Fiji on Air Pacific and then on to Port Moresby and Talawi on Air Nuigini. Too early for prices yet. A \$200 deposit holds your place on this adventurous trip. I have been on the boat before and it was great. I am planning to offer an additional week at Walindi Resort or Kimbe Bay if people interested. Originally considered Tufi but when I checked it out the boat rides were too long each day to get in more than two dives.

Utila at the Utopia Village 13-20 March 2010. This is a luxurious resort with a terrific location for whale sharks.

Price is:

\$1875 per person includes:

**Round trip air from Roatan to Utila

**7 nights at Utopia Beach Resort w/2 per room

**ALL MEALS daily

**5 days of 2 tank boat dives

**1 night boat dive

**unlimited shore diving (weather dependent)

**Unlimited use of kayaks

**Taxes

** free wireless internet if you have your own laptop

The above does not include air travel to Roatan where we catch the shuttle to Utila. Does not include the \$25 reef fee for the park.

POTENTIAL TRIPS:

I have tentatively scheduled several trips. I need to know exactly who wants to go and is willing to make a deposit before I send in several thousand of non-refundable deposits to them.

FIJI BEGA LAGOON AND OPTIONAL DIVING WITH WHALES ON TONGA.

You can do either week or both of them. I am looking at a trip in August 2010. I need 10 people to make it go. The Fiji trip with air out of LAX to include room (dbl), meals, diving and transfers is \$2860. The Tonga trip with air from Fiji would probably add about \$1200. The Tonga trip itself would be about \$3100. If interested let me know. If I get 10 I will set it up. This is your chance to dive with humpbacks and maybe sperm whales.

Beqa Lagoon Resort www.begalagoonresort.com

\$2599 PLUS \$305 FUEL SURCHARGES = \$2904 per person includes:

**Round trip air from Los Angeles to Nadi, Fiji

**7 nights at Beqa Lagoon Resort w/2 per Bure

**All meals daily

**5 days of 2 tank boat dives

**Unlimited shore diving

**Unlimited use of kayaks

**Transfers to and from airport/resort

**Taxes

If interested in any of these trips let me know. If I have ten we can make it go at group rates.

TRAVEL TIPS:

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO TIPS: Need a handy white balance sheet for your camcorder? I started using a white sink stopper about 5 inches wide. I attached it to a wrist lanyard and have it there all the time. It was cheap and should last a long time. Best part is it is hard to use.

If your camera is capable, shoot in the raw mode. It allows Unfortunately some cameras require a lot of time to process the shot. If your camera is JPG only, shoot the highest quality you can. For real professional work the digital SLR housed camera is best. It is also much more expensive than other models. Unless you plan on using the pictures professionally, the smaller (read less expensive) cameras are your best choice.

Video rule of thirds. Tech divers are familiar with the rule of thirds for air consumption, but for video, it means never centering the shot. Use left to right, right to left and entering and exiting to enhance to feel of movement.

TRAINING Apr/May 2009

Open Water Course Start Dates(two week course): Apr 13 &27, May 11 & 25

Six Day Course on weekends: Apr 11,12,18,19, 25,26. Class 11 & 18 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the shop. Pool Diving 12 & 19 Apr from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the pool. Open water dives (2 each day) on 25/26 April.

Advanced Open Water Course: Call shop to inquire

Rescue Course Start Date: Call shop to inquire

Nitrox Classes:NAUI/PADI/TDI/ These classes cost \$100 plus training package. There are evening and weekend classes. Classes last 3-4 hours.

Evening classes: 6:00 PM at store on

Weekend Classes: 10 AM at store on

Other dates available call store to arrange.

TECHNICAL NITROX/DECOMPRESSION Start Date: April 16 at 6 PM at store.

RECREATIONAL TRIMIX (Helitrox) at 6:30 PM at store. \$200 plus gas.

TRIMIX Course Start Date: Course in progress. Next Course late spring 2009.

INTRODUCTION TO TECHNICAL DIVING (doubles/Din regs/lift bags and reels supplied) \$250 21 Apr at 6 PM at store

Introduction to Rebreathers; Learn and dive semi-closed and fully closed circuit rebreathers. Cost is \$300 with rebreathers, and materials supplied. The course will include classroom, practical application such as packing scubbers and assembly of units as well as diving the unit in a controlled environment. On demand.

REBREATHER Course on Draeger Dolphin (rebreather supplied) \$500. This fully certifies you to dive the Draeger Dolphin or Atlantis (the main unit available for rental worldwide) and is a good preparation if you plan on going on to closed circuit rebreathers. As requested

DRY SUIT Course: As requested. \$150 if you have your own dry suit. Free if you buy the suit from us.

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY Course (35 mm shark Camera in housing included) starting as requested at 6 PM at store. \$150.

NAUI FIRST AID /CPR Course as requested (\$60 plus book). If you want the full certification to include oxygen provider, blood borne pathogens, AED and Marine Life treatment, the course cost is \$180 plus book.

ARE YOU A PHOTOGRAPHER? DO YOU FIND YOURSELF TRAILING BEHIND WHILE YOU TAKE PICTURES? DO YOU HAVE 100 DIVES LOGGED? ARE YOUR BUOYANCY AND DIVING SKILLS GOOD? IF SO YOU MIGHT WANT TO BECOME A CERTIFIED SOLO DIVER. THIS COURSE TEACHES YOU HOW TO SAFELY DIVE ON YOUR OWN. COST IS \$250 PLUS BOOK AND REQUIRES TWO OPEN WATER DIVES. IF QUALIFIED AND INTERESTED CALL THE SHOP.

EQUIPMENT: Mares is coming out with a new computer. Have only seen pictures but will let you know next month.

EQUIPMENT TEST: The small digital scale is wonderful. Prevent the pain of changing stuff from bag to bag at check-in, or paying overweight. We have them in stock.

NAUI/PADI/SDI/TDI/SSI NEWS:

NAUI is totally rewriting its Technical Wreck Diving Course
PADI is really getting its Go Pro program updated
SDI/TDI Are going more and more on the internet. Several of their cpu

STUDENTS CERTIFIED IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

PADI Open Water (Instructor Andy Ramirez)

Chris Miller

Celesta Luna

Instructor Terry Thomas

Lisa Bill

Teran Delgado

Doug Montgomery

Adam Peterson

Stephan Sheets

Instructor John Duggan

Sean Zerger

NAUI Scuba Diver (Instructor John Duggan & Ron Hamada)

Chris Chang

Yashika Dooley

Chris Frey

Elizabeth Frey

NAUI Adaptive Scuba (Instructors John Duggan, Richard VonTrapp, John
Thompson)

Conrad Calderon

Leonard Charguaqlet

Ryan Clark

Brian Coles

James Garden

Jeff Iwanski

Mike Lowe

Eric Morante

Giovanni Pascascio

Nelson Peters

James Sowers

Ryan Richardson

Daniel Robles

NAUI Adaptive Scuba (John Duggan & Andy Felth)
Ronald Boisvert

NAUI Nitrox (Instructor Tom Carnes)

Dean Finley

Karen Finley

Doug Page

Joe Page

Travis Praker

Discover Scuba Diving (Instructor Jerry Lucas)

Stephanie Friederichsen