

# THE REEF SEEKER



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March - 2026



## CHAMBER DAY 2026

Let's start with this: Chamber Day 2026 is Wednesday, May 6.

In case you didn't know, this event is not only the annual fund-raiser for our Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber; it's also the largest single-day scuba charity event in the USA and perhaps even the world. Your continued participation, no matter how large or small, makes that possible.

And then there's this: Can we top the record-setting amounts we've raised the past few years? Last year, we were tantalizingly close to going over \$200,000 for the first time ever. Can we make this the year that happens? We certainly can when you pitch in to help.

As we have for the past few years, we're running our traditional format for the day. We have six dive boats coming over to Catalina to do two dives as well as a walking tour of our Chamber facilities, including a 1-foot dive inside our Chamber. We have the Flying Dutchman for those who can't take the day off to dive. We have the Chamber Challenge for direct do-

nations to keep our Chamber going for another year. And we have a sit-down dinner for Chamber Evening at the fabulous Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach. (This part of the day will also be live-streamed.)

Every dollar this event raises goes directly towards funding our Chamber for the coming year. Our Chamber relies on the diving community for over 50% of the annual operating funds, making Chamber Day crucial to the continued, uninterrupted operation of our Chamber.

### HISTORY

Our Chamber opened on October 5, 1974, and had the first treatment a week later. This was all made possible by a small grant from Los Angeles County. By the mid-80s there was regular talk of L.A. County removing their funding, which might have caused our Chamber to close. In 1988, loss of this funding seemed imminent. Roger Hess, owner of Charisma Charters, came up with the idea of all of the local boats getting together on a single specified day to go diving over at Catalina and tour the Chamber, with all the proceeds donated to the operating account of our Chamber. Thus, Chamber Day was born. (This is also why we refer to Roger as the Father of Chamber Day.) The first event was held in June of 1988 and raised a

little over \$15,000.

In the years since, the event has grown tremendously, as well as moved to the first Wednesday in May. In 1991, we added a raffle. In 1998 we added Chamber Eve, the Flying Dutchman, and the Chamber Challenge. In 2020, as a response to the pandemic, we went all-virtual. In 2022, we returned to doing everything in-person but kept Virtual Chamber Eve for those who weren't yet comfortable attending in-person events.

The financial success of the event has increased over the years as well. From our humble beginnings, we passed \$50,000 raised during the 90s. We made it past \$100,000 for the first time in 2006. We passed \$150,000 in 2021. As mentioned earlier, we are now within striking distance of the event raising \$200,000 for our Chamber. We can do it with your help.

Here's what we have planned for 2026:

### CHAMBER DAY

Once again, we want to take you diving and touring.

We've got six boats ready to plop you into underwater SoCal on May 6. In alphabetical order they are: Cee Ray, Giant Stride, Pacific Star, SoCal Diver, Sundiver, and Sundiver Express.

All of our May 6 boats will do two

dives in the general area of the Isthmus, and will pull into the Chamber dock to unload people for a walking tour of our Chamber. Cee Ray, Pac Star, and Sundiver will do the tour first and then dive. SoCal Diver and Sundiver Express will do their dives and then come in for the tour. (Giant Stride will do their dives in the summer.) All participating divers receive a Chamber Day 2026 t-shirt, ten daytime raffle tickets, food and an airfill on the boat, and a walking tour of our Chamber facilities, which will include a chance to talk with various rescue and first-responders. We're keeping the price the same as last year: \$175/person. Generally, the boats leave their respective docks at 7AM and return no later than 5:30PM.

#### **THE FLYING DUTCHMAN – FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T TAKE THE DAY OFF**

The price for the Dutchman stays at \$95. We know not everyone can play hooky on a Wednesday and go diving. We also know that some of you simply don't like diving cold water anymore. And that's why we've got the Flying Dutchman, our mythical boat that lets you "dive" Chamber Day without actually having to take off work or go in the water. You'll get the unique Flying Dutchman t-shirt (only available to those who sign up for the Dutchman) along with 10 daytime raffle tickets as well as a ticket for the "on-board" boat raffle as well. When you sign up, give us your "pirate" name and indicate Reef Seekers as your regular shop/club affiliation and you're good to go.

#### **CHAMBER CHALLENGE**

This is a straight donation to our Chamber and is a major factor in our record-setting totals. Every

Challenge donation – big, small, and in-between – makes a difference. That being said, we give special recognition to donations of \$1,000, \$5,000, \$10,000, and \$15,000 or higher. Companies that offer matching grants help increase the value of your contribution. We absolutely appreciate the help, and every donation will be put to good use.

#### **CHAMBER EVENING – AT THE AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC**

We're delighted to invite you to join us in-person again at the fabulous Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach for Chamber Evening. (More on the virtual option in a moment.) The date is also Wednesday, May 6, and the Aquarium doors will open at 7PM. Last year we limited attendance to 350 people (35 tables of 10) and we'll hold at that level as that seemed to be a comfortable number. Our tables are hosted/sponsored by a local dive shops and clubs, and we have one table for "unaffiliated." Some tables have already started filling. So look over the options and don't get left behind.

Despite rising food costs – we don't pay anything for the Aquarium

facility but we do have to pay the caterer for the food – the cost of a seat this year remains at \$175 (the same as the price for the Daytime portion). For those in attendance, you'll have a chance to wander around and explore the Aquarium from 7-8PM. We're working on another fabulous feast that will start a little after 8PM. You'll also get five evening raffle tickets and you'll have an opportunity to buy more at the Aquarium. Our program of raffle prizes and recognition starts a little after 9PM, and we'll send you home around 10:15PM.

Speaking of prizes, would anyone like to spend nine days exploring the amazing reefs of Roatan? Our Grand Prize this year is a 7-day stay at Anthony's Key in Roatan. The prize includes 17 dives during the week and all of your meals. ONLY those who attend Chamber Evening (or sign up for the virtual version) will have their names in the hopper with a chance to score this wonderful dive experience. Note that you must be present to win (except for virtual attendees).

#### **CHAMBER EVENING V.G.D. (VERY GENEROUS DIVER)**

If you'd like to enhance your

### **2026-2027 DIVING VACATIONS**

**March 9-22, 2026 • Yap**

**July 1-14, 2026 • Indonesia**

**Sept. 2026 • Philippines**

**August, 2027 • Eclipse & dive**

evening experience, sign up for the V.G.D. package as an add-on to your Chamber Eve ticket. We're holding the price of the VGD at \$50 this year, the same as last year. That gives you get early access to the Aquarium (starting at 5PM), 10 extra raffle tickets, one extra Grand Prize ticket (Anthony's Key is calling your name), a private outside lounge area (Harbor Terrace Veranda) with assorted appetizers, complimentary soft drinks, and a cash bar for alcohol. Especially if you're coming from far away, this add-on will greatly enhance your enjoyment of the evening.

But if you'd rather stay home . . .

### VIRTUAL CH-EVE

As we have done for six years now, we're offering a virtual version of Chamber Evening, which is perfect if you can't spend the evening in Long Beach or aren't comfortable with this type of an indoor event.

Cost for the virtual version of the event is the same as the Flying Dutchman and has not increased - \$95. Virtual attendees will get ten raffle tickets (since you can't buy more) and will also be entered in the drawing for the Anthony's Key grand prize. Plus, you'll get a Chamber Evening t-shirt mailed to you (after the event) as part of your package. And because we want you to feel connected to what's happening at the Aquarium, you'll receive a link to our live-stream of the evening, so you can observe and enjoy from the comfort of your own home.

That's where everything stands. The key takeaway to remember is that ALL the monies raised go to benefit our Catalina Hyperbaric

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

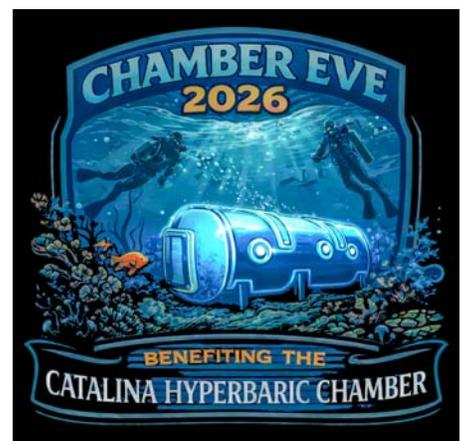
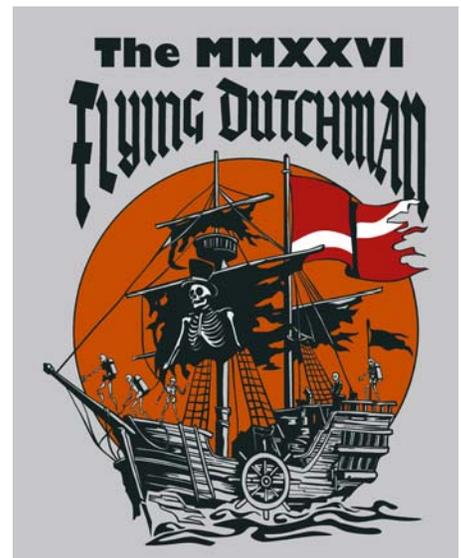
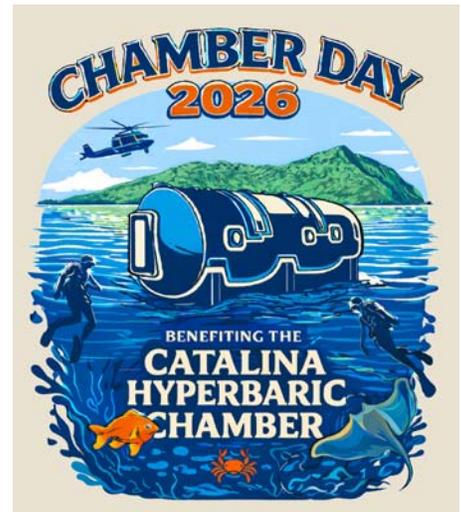
DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED ACTIVITY	\$\$\$
Wed.	Mar. 25	--- CLASS ---	--- FISH I.D. MADE EASY ---	25
Sat.	Apr. 4	Veterans Park	Navigation Made Easy	25
Wed.	8	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Thu.	23	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	25
Sat.	May 2	Veterans Park	Surf Entries Made Easy	25
Wed.	13	--- CLASS ---	--- TABLES & COMPUTERS ---	25
Thu.	21	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	25
Wed.	27	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180

Chamber, which in turn benefits our diving community. We'd hate to think of how diving SoCal would change without having our Chamber standing guard 24/7/365 for divers in need. For more information about all of this, visit our website at [www.chamberday.org](http://www.chamberday.org). You can sign up there using our secure server, you can get info and sign up directly through some of our sponsors, or you can call Chamber Day HQ at (310)652-4990.

### WHY WE DO THIS

Those of us who work in this industry and behind the scenes for this event put a lot of time and effort into Chamber Day & Eve 2026. That's because we believe it's really important to have our Chamber available to us 24/7/365. When a dive accident occurs, getting an injured diver to our Chamber alive means that he/she has an excellent chance of survival and recovery. Knowing this while you're performing first aid, administering oxygen, or doing whatever it takes is a reassuring thought. Our Chamber is an invaluable safety net that we simply don't want to lose. Your participation in any or all of the aspects of Chamber Day will help to ensure our Chamber's future and is very much appreciated.

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, May 6 and Chamber Day & Eve 2026.



## QUICK NOTES

- We're starting final prep for our Yap trip which departs next Monday (March 9). We'll be staying, as always, with our good friends at Manta Ray Bay Resort. One of the big attractions of Yap are the manta ray cleaning stations and we hope to have some good encounters, as well as getting in a Mandarinfish dive and a shark feed. We'll be posting Top 10 Daily Pix to our Reef Seekers and Ken Kurtis FaceBook pages.

- The Avalon Underwater Cleanup was held under blue skies last Saturday (February 21). 232 divers participated, 1200 pounds of trash was retrieved from the ocean, and the event raised about \$10,000 for the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber as well as \$10,000 for the Beautify

the Park efforts of the Avalon Rotary Club.

- The Aquarium of the Pacific isn't just about going to look at pretty fish. They're also involved in rehabbing hurt marine creatures and returning them to the wild when possible. Their latest success story involves a Green Turtle found near the mouth of the San Gabriel River (there are other turtles in that area) who was missing a front flipper. They did surgery to properly amputate and treat the missing flipper, rehabbed him for a year, and released him on Friday to where he was originally found. Kudos to the Aquarium and good luck to the turtle.

- We generally create in late November our schedule of classes and local dives for the coming year.

And sometimes that sked needs to change. This is just a simple way of reminding you that when you see a specific event that you're interested in, double-check with us to make sure it's still going off as planned. Sometimes we have to change the date and sometimes we cancel the event because not enough people signed up before the deadline. Point is that while we're happy to explore this wonderful world of diving with you, sometimes schedules get upended and we don't want to leave you adrift. So confirm ahead of time.

- Don't forget that Daylight Savings Time starts next Sunday (March 8 – same day as the L.A. Marathon) so be sure to turn your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed Saturday evening.

## PICTURE PAGE - What we see diving in Yap

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2026)



**Lots of sharks**



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**Giant clams**



**A parade of Moorish Idols**



**Many marvelous Mantas**



**Cute Cuttlefish**