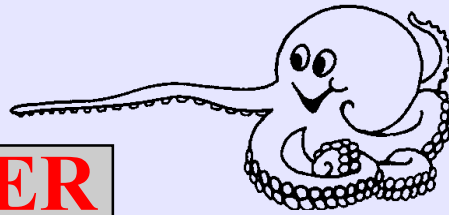


THE **REEF** SEEKER



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May - 2026



CHAMBER DAY 2026 IS THIS WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

Chamber Day is less than one week away. In case you didn't already know, this is the annual fund-raiser for the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber that we all hope we'll never need but which we rely on anytime there's a diving accident. And since public funding supplies well over 50% of our Chamber's annual budget, Chamber Day plays a critical role in the financial health of our Chamber. And your participation makes it a success.

The social highlight, of course, is Chamber Evening at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach. Be aware that we will close off ticket sales for this at 3PM on Friday, May 1. So, depending on when you read this, we may have already shut down that opportunity for you. But we've got other ways that you can still be involved and – more importantly – keep our Chamber on solid financial ground. Give some thought to these:

CHAMBER CHALLENGE - It's a direct donation to the Chamber. Most donations are \$100 but we also have \$500, \$1,000, \$5,000 donations and even more. Anything you can afford helps.

CHAMBER DAY (\$175) - 2 dives at Catalina and a walking tour of our Chamber facilities at Big Fisherman Cove. You can sign up as late as 6PM on May 5.

FLYING DUTCHMAN (\$95) - Our fake boat for those who can't take the day off or don't dive California anymore. Plus you get the unique Flying Dutchman crew t-shirt. Sign up any time.

VIRTUAL CHAMBER EVENING (\$95) - Can't come to the Aquarium? Watch the live-stream at home, maybe win a raffle prize, and get a Chamber Eve t-shirt.

T-SHIRTS (\$30 & \$40 plus \$10 shipping) - Wear your Chamber on your chest and get a t-shirt. Day or Eve in short-sleeves, Eve-only in long sleeve as well.

Your Chamber needs your participation and support. The last two years, this event raised over \$190,000 each year for our Chamber. But with an annual budget north of that amount, those funds have been spent and need to be replenished. When we all pitch in, maybe we can set a new record or even crack the \$200,000 level.

We hope that you'll help out by taking time and going to this direct link to get signed up for Chamber Day:
https://usc.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0jFziXyUHZALTIG

Thanks for your support and fingers crossed for another successful event.



UPDATE ON THE 2027 EGYPT ECLIPSE TRIP

I still have visions of making this happen and making it an around the world trip to boot. It's just that the logistics are complicated to say that least. And this doesn't even begin to factor in whether the war with Iran will affect the plans or not. It certainly won't stop the eclipse from happening.

As I've mentioned before, the eclipse happens on August 2 and there's obviously no way to change that date. So it's critical for us to be in Luxor on the 2nd. The biggest obstacle has been the hotels, which have yet to release rooms (according to the two travel providers I'm talking to). But there may be another option.

The woman who was our guide when we last visited Egypt suggested we could do a Nile River cruise that starts in Cairo and ends up in Luxor. The ideal way to do it would be to board the boat in Cairo, cruise to Luxor, and time it so we're in Luxor on August 2 for the eclipse, sleep on the boat that night, and then depart on August 3 to begin the journey home. This saves having to book a Luxor hotel.

Another option, though a bit

trickier to schedule, would be to stay in Cairo and check out of our hotel early in the morning on August 2, fly to Luxor for the eclipse, and then fly back to Cairo and continue the journey home. This also gets around booking a Luxor hotel.

A final option is to forget about Luxor and look at other major cities that the path of totality crosses. Those include – and granted, some of these are not ideal choices from a tourism standpoint – Gibraltar or Tangier, Benghazi, Port Ghalib or Maras Alam (where the Red Sea dive boats leave from), and Jeddah.

The point is that there are options and I'm still working on where we can be. Plus, I'm trying to figure out the diving along the way and make those skeds mesh with Luxor as well. (As I've mentioned, I'm thinking maybe Solomon Islands and Seychelles.) But I think it's crucial to nail down the eclipse-viewing portion because I need to build the entire trip around that. So this is, needless to say, a work-in-progress (with a lot of moving parts) and I will keep you posted.

If you're not already on my "interested" list, be sure to drop me an e-mail so I can add your name.



APRIL FOOLS NEWSLETTER

Hopefully you got as much a kick out of reading it as we do in writing it. Of course, since more and more of you know it's coming, it's harder and harder to really fool you but hopefully you got a laugh or two out of it. And it's the only newsletter of the twelve we do each year that has a specific date – April 1 – as a tipoff, rather than just listing the month.

LOBSTER CARDS DUE

If you are a lobster hunter and got a 2025-2026 lobster card, those were due to be turned in by April 30. You can mail them in or do it on-line. Even if you didn't catch a single bug all season or even if you didn't go out at all, if you got a card, you're required to report. If you don't, there's a penalty assessed the next time you get a lobster card.

2026-2027 DIVING VACATIONS

July 1-13, 2026 • Indonesia

Sept. 2026 • Philippines

Saba (??) - Feb. or March '27

July/Aug, 2027 • Dive & Eclipse

OTHER TRIPS IN 2027

I've been so bogged down and fixated on this around-the-world eclipse trip (as well as getting snowed under with Chamber Day stuff) that I haven't had much time to focus on our 2027 trip sked overall. But I haven't been totally ignoring it so here's what my thinking is at the moment (subject to adjustment of course):

SABA IN FEBRUARY OR MARCH – Audrey Anderson, who's a frequent traveler with us, raved about Saba and asked if we could schedule a trip there. I haven't worked out the particulars yet but tentatively have it slotted into February/March. This would be a weeklong trip.

BONAIRE IN MAY – Traditionally, May was the time we went to Bonaire because it was done after Chamber Day and around my birthday. And we went almost every year and stayed with Buddy Dive. We last went in 2023, right when the SCTL D outbreak was beginning. One reason we haven't been back since then is a combination of the effects of SCTL D, which is now almost everywhere in the Caribbean, and the very stringent restrictions Bonaire put on gear handling and where you could and couldn't dive. Many of those measures have now abated, so perhaps it's time we give Bonaire another look. We've certainly always enjoyed it in the past.

Mid-July/August would likely be the eclipse trip with diving at the beginning of the trip and eclipsing at the end, so the next open month would be . . .

ROATAN IN NOVEMBER – This is another place that we like,

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED ACTIVITY	\$\$\$
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
Sat.	June 6	Veterans Park	Beach Diving Made Easy	25
Wed.	10	--- CLASS ---	--- PHOTO WORKSHOP ---	25
Thu.	18	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	25
Wed.	24	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180

is easy to get to, fairly reliable and good diving and an excellent dive operation at Anthony's Key. I need to do some weather-checking because during our first trip to Anthony's in 2013, we managed to pick a week when it rained pretty much every day and we'd like to avoid that again. So there might be some schedule-juggling here.

But this generally what I'm thinking about for 2027 and hopefully, once we get Chamber Day behind us, I'll be able to do a better job of nailing all of this down.

CATALINA EXPRESS FARES WENT UP

It should come as no surprise that Catalina Express raised their fares due to increased fuel costs. The new round-trip adult fares (ages 12-54) between either Long Beach or San Pedro and Avalon (this includes the \$10 wharfage fee/tax) are \$99. The senior rate (55+) is \$90. Children (2-11) are \$78.50 and infants under 2 are \$10 (which is the wharfage fee).

I would think these fares will stay in place for the foreseeable future as it doesn't seem like the Iran war is winding down any time soon. And when it does, there's also no guarantee that oil companies won't keep their fuel prices high. So we shall see what the future brings.

HOLDING THE PRICE ON OUR AVALON TRIPS

Despite fare increase (why did I think of the Kingston Trio when I typed that?), we're holding the price on our mid-week Avalon trips at \$180. That gets you the round-trip ferry – we usually leave out of San Pedro – tank rental and airfills, taxi to and from the Park, three dives (guided or you can go on your own), and all the fun you can handle. (If you can't handle all the fun, there are no refunds for fun not used.) Check the sked and see what works for you and the get yourself signed up.

SHARK SIGHTING CLOSES BEACH

Sunset Beach, which is between Seal Beach and Bolsa Chica State Beach, near lifeguard tower #12, was closed Wednesday around 10AM when a large (9-10 foot long) Great White Shark was spotted feeding on a sea lion carcass in the surf zone. Authorities are exercising an abundance of caution, pointing out that sharks might aggressively defend their food source if they feel people in the water represent competition. The closure continues through Friday morning and stretches for one mile in either direction of the lifeguard tower.



**SCUBA SHOW
MAY 30 & 31
IN LONG BEACH**

The annual Scuba Show takes place at the end of this month but there are a lot of things that are going to be different because there are new owners.

First off, we're still doing our usually well-attended "Why Divers Die" seminar. This is where we

cover all the fatalities that happened in L.A. County during the previous calendar year. In 2025, there was only 1, so we might also revisit some older cases that offer good lessons learned. The big change is that they have us starting at 3:30PM (instead of 4PM) and we'll wrap by 5PM.

Other changes you'll note this year is that they've moved into a bigger hall (previously Hall C now Hall A) but it seems like they'll have roughly the same number of booths. So hopefully that means the aisles won't feel quite as crowded. But one thing you'll notice inside the exhibit hall is that there's also a large speaker's stage in one corner and another "Adventure Stage" along an opposite wall. (I believe our talk will be down in

one of the traditional seminar rooms.)

The other thing people have noticed is a price increase, from around \$20 to \$33 for either day (\$60 for the entire weekend). But now all seminars are included so you don't need a separate seminar pass to get into any of the talks.

The nice thing about the Scuba Show is that it's basically the entire industry under one roof, with a bunch of local shops and travel providers there as well. There are definitely deals to be had, equipment to salivate over, destinations to ponder, and things to be learned from the seminars. Plan to spend a day or even two days there exploring all the options. We're sure you'll find plenty of things of interest. Hope to see you there.

PICTURE PAGE - Chamber Day/Eve 2025

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2026)



Inside the Chamber hanger



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Inside the Chamber itself



Chamber Eve diners



Making the live-stream happen



The final result