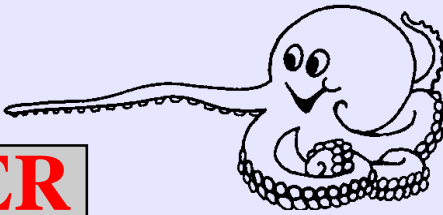


THE REEF SEEKER



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January - 2009



THE YEAR BEHIND, THE YEAR AHEAD

There's an old Chinese proverb that I'm always fond of: May you live in interesting times. 2008 was that and more.

On a world stage, we have the financial crisis, renewed fighting in the Middle East, the continuing conflict in Iraq & Afghanistan, a new President coming into office in three weeks, and all kinds of other things for us to think about.

Strictly looking at the past year from a diving standpoint, it's been an interesting one for our industry.

Many stores and manufacturers are seeing business fall off, due to the economic times, by anywhere from 15-40%. In an industry with thin profit margins, that's huge. In fact, partly because of that, we saw five local SoCal shops close their doors in the last half of 2008. And there are a few more than many of us inside this industry don't see how they're staying afloat and we won't

be surprised if a few more go under.

The economic turmoil is projected to continue well into 2009. As President-elect Obama has said, it's going to get worse before it gets better. And everyone wonders what exactly that will mean for them.

During the last big recession in 2001, we noticed an interesting thing: People were cutting back but not eliminating the things they really liked doing. And for a lot of you, that was diving. What we noticed was that people would give up doing other things so they'd have the funds around to continue to dive. And hopefully, that will be the case in 2009 as we plod through these hard times.

The great thing about something like diving is that it presents a figurative and literal escape. It's not only a chance to get away from the office or home but you literally enter another world where "bail-out" means jumping in with all your gear removed and "liquidity" is what we're jumping into.

Diving offers you an opportunity to leave the problems of the "surface world" behind and enter a realm where air supply and buoyancy are your main concerns. I remember that when I got certified in 1978 - I was running a radio station at the time - I told people that

one of the things I loved about diving was that it let me go to a place where the phones didn't ring and people couldn't bug me to solve their problems for them. Ahhhh, bliss.

Hopefully you feel the same way about our sport and the escape it offers you as well as the amazing experience it provides. At reef seekers, we'll do our best throughout 2009 to provide you with the best diving opportunities that SoCal has to offer and we'll also be looking at some chances for you to get away with us to foreign locales.

It always an amazing journey and we're very appreciative that you let us accompany you (or vice versa) for the ride.



FOR THOSE WHO MISSED IT . . .

In case you missed it in the December issue, we're re-publishing our 2009 local boat schedule here. Cut it out and hang it in a prominent place.

NO FUEL SURCHARGES

The good economic news is that we're starting the year out with no fuel surcharges on any of our local trips. not only has the price of fuel started coming down (but not nearly as much as gasoline) but the first of the year is a time for prices to normally reset to account for price increases/changes that may have occurred during the previous year.

Each year in the last quarter of the year, everyone starts laying out their plans for the following year. Those of us who regularly book charters lay out the entire year with the boats that we use. In turn, those boats figure out what their costs are expected to be and try to factor in any seasonality or expected price increases in the prices they charge us. We, in turn, based on that pricing, then figure out what we need to charge you to cover our costs and turn a small profit on trips.

The dilemma occurs when costs go far beyond what you anticipated. And that's what happened in 2008. When prices were being projected in October of 2007 for 2008, diesel was around \$3/gallon. Who ever thought it would approach \$5/gallon? And it's those kind of wild price swings that trigger things like fuel surcharges. When you stop to think that a dive boat can burn through a couple of hundred gallons of fuel in a single day, a price swing of even \$1 can become significant and something that has to be passed down the line.

But we start off the New year

knowing where we are price-wise, hoping it continues to go down, and have set our prices accordingly. And that, once again, means no fuel surcharge as we begin the new year. So the price you see is the price you're charged. Early Purchase saves you \$15 in 2009, and Reef Saver discounts (10%) apply for both Early and Regular Purchase pricing.

Bottom line - let's go diving!!!!



BONAIRE AIRFARES REDUCED, THEN RAISED, THEN DOWN . . .

Well the good news is that Delta dropped their LAX-Bonaire airfare by \$200 bucks in the middle of December. But . . . OOPS . . . at the end of the month they raised it \$100. Now this is still slightly cheaper than it was three months

ago. but it also underscores the volatility of booking airfares and trying to price things out.

But the price jumping also highlights that sometimes it pays to wait, and sometimes you need to jump when the price looks good. Remember that no airfares are guaranteed until ticketed and that's why one of the first things we'll try to do is you're traveling with us is buy the plane ticket so we can lock that airfare in.

And we also can't understate the importance of looking in to mileage tickets. Even though fuel prices are coming down, airfares can still be all over the place. I'm doing a personal trip to Shanghai, China (total solar eclipse) in July and the airfare have ranged anywhere from \$1300 (which is what I got it for) to \$2000 depending on when you tried to book. But this for the same plane, same airline, same schedule I've got. Go figure.

So it may take a little more finagling in 2009, but we'll get you where you want to go. And the more lead time you can give us, the better deal we can probably find. But save those pennies because a foreign trip with Reef Seekers will always be a vacation you'll remember for the rest of your life.

DIVING VACATIONS

**February 8-14 • Florida
(Manatees & Caverns)**

May 15-24 • Bonaire

October 11-18 • Sea of Cortez



**IMPORTANT STUFF
YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Tickets are fully refundable with 14 days or more notice. 8-13 days notice, future trip credit. 7 days or less, no refund/credit. But if we sell spot, refund is issued.

All diving must be done within recreational sport diving limits: depths 130' or less, no-deco bottom times, with standard compressed air used as a breathing gas.

Limit one scuba tank per diver. Pony bottles do not count as a second tank.

All of our *Great Escape* trips have a limited number of staterooms (bunks with a door), reservable for \$10/diver extra.

Boat landings & locations:
Cee Ray - Queen's Wharf (LB)
Great Escape - Queen's Wharf (LB)
Sea Bass - Ports O' Call (SP)
 Driving directions on our website.

Phone reservations are accepted on all trips and will be held for up to 72 hours. After that time, unpaid reservations can be cancelled without notice.

All destinations are dependent on weather and may be changed at our sole discretion w/out notice.

You must show your certification card at sign-in. No c-card, no scuba diving.

A general briefing is conducted on each trip and is mandatory for all divers.

We generally try to offer 4 dives on all trips but sometimes, due to various circumstances, we may only be able to offer 3.



REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO.
2009 LOCAL DIVE TRIPS
 Also on-line: www.reefseekers.com

Prices listed are for early purchase (spots must be *paid in full* 14 days or more prior to the trip) and regular purchase (paid in full less than 14 days before trip). Early Purchase saves you \$15. Reef Saver discounts (10%) apply to both prices.

Reservations: (310)652-4990

(If you get the machine, please leave a message.)

All trips include food, sodas, up to 3 airfills

NEED RENTAL GEAR? GET A 20% DISCOUNT AT HOLLYWOODIVERS, OCEAN ADVENTURES, & SCUBA HAUS (SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY)

DAY	DATE	BOAT	DESTINATION	EARLY/REG.
Saturday	Jan.10	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Catalina backside	\$150/165
Sunday	25	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (Pyramid Cove)	165/180
Saturday	Feb. 7	<i>Sea Bass</i>	••• Oil Rigs (limited load) •••	145/160
Saturday	21	<i>Cat. Express</i>	Avalon U/W Clean-Up	\$120
Sunday	Mar. 8	<i>Cee Ray</i>	Santa Barbara Island	160/175
Saturday	21	<i>Great Escape</i>	Catalina (Ship Rock/Eagle Reef)	140/155
Sunday	Apr. 5	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (NW Harbor)	165/180
Saturday	18	<i>Sea Bass</i>	<i>Palawan/Avalon/Dominator</i>	140/155
Sunday	May 3	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Catalina backside	150/165
Wednesday	5/6	All boats	Chamber Day Benefit Dive	\$95
Saturday	16	<i>Sea Bass</i>	••• Oil Rigs (limited load) •••	145/160
Sunday	31	<i>Sea Bass</i>	<i>Star of Scotland</i> /Palos Verdes	150/165
Sunday	June 14	<i>Cee Ray</i>	Catalina (West End)	140/155
Saturday	27	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	160/175
Sunday	July 12	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Catalina backside	150/165
Saturday	25	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (Backside)	165/180
Saturday	Aug. 8	<i>Cee Ray</i>	<i>Olympic wreck</i> /Catalina	140/155
Sunday	30	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	160/175
Sunday	Sept. 13	<i>Great Escape</i>	Catalina (West End)	140/155
Saturday	26	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (Frontside)	165/180
Sunday	Oct. 18	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Catalina backside	150/165
Saturday	31	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	160/175
Saturday	Nov. 14	<i>Sea Bass</i>	••• Oil Rigs (limited load) •••	145/160
Sunday	Dec. 6	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (Pyramid Cove)	165/180

Santa Barbara	Clemente	Farnsworth Banks	Oil Rigs (adv. dive, limited load)	Catalina Island (various)	Wrecks (various sites)
Jan. 25	Jan. 25	Jan. 10	Feb. 7	Mar. 21	Apr. 18
Mar. 8	Apr. 5	Jan. 10	Feb. 7	Mar. 21	Apr. 18
June 27	July 25	May 3	Feb. 7	Mar. 21	Apr. 18
Aug. 30	Sept. 26	July 12	May 16	June 14	May 31
Oct. 31	Dec. 6	Oct. 18	Nov. 14	Sept. 13	Aug. 8

Saturdays: 1/10, 2/7, 3/21, 4/18, 5/16, 6/27, 7/25, 8/8, 9/26, 10/31, 11/14

Sundays: 1/25, 3/8, 4/5, 5/3, 5/31, 6/14, 7/12, 8/30, 9/13, 10/18, 12/6

Thanks for choosing Reef Seekers

CRABS

It was distressing to reading a recent *Los Angeles Times* article about how lousy the Dungeness Crab season is. This is on top of the cancellation of the salmon fishing season due to the collapse of the Pacific Chinook salmon fishery.

Fisherman are calling the events “unprecedented” and “unpredictable”. Environmentalists are saying, “I told you so.” This all comes as the Marine Life Protection Act process gathers steam in Southern California.

What’s interesting about all of this is that it follows a familiar pattern: Those who make a living extracting from the ocean insist there’s nothing wrong and that any fluc-

tuations seen are simply naturally-occurring cycles. Others insist that the fluctuations are really early-warning signs that indicate something needs to change and change quickly. By the time any governmental bodies or regulators get around to doing anything, it’s too late.

Witness the salmon. The same pattern happened years ago in Georges Bank off of New England in 1994. Despite warnings from conservationists, fishing lobbies insisted nothing was wrong until the entire fishery collapsed. There’s been a moratorium of fishing there for well over a decade and only now are they starting to see some signs of a comeback. But it’s got a long ways to go.

You can only take so much out of

the ocean for so long before Mother Nature says, “Enough already!!!”

Take good care of the ocean and the ocean will take good care of you. Let’s not lose sight of the fact that 75% of our planet is covered by water. When we have healthy oceans, we have a healthy planet. Right now, it’s estimated that 90% of the large fish are gone from our oceans, that 67% of the world’s coral reefs are being severely stressed, and don’t even get me started talking about the problems of deforestation . . .

The point is that we can - and must - do a better job of taking care of our planet. If we don’t . . . well, the consequences are pretty severe. If you’re concerned about this, do what you can and make your voice heard.

HAPPY NEW YEAR & WELCOME TO 2009!!!

(Pix by Ken Kurtis © 2009)

