

THE **REEF** SEEKER



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BUGGING YOU ABOUT DIVE SAFETY

By the time you read this, spiny lobster season in SoCal will be about two days old, having opened Saturday morning at 6:00AM. There are doubtless not as many lobsters alive now as there were at 6AM on Saturday. But we certainly hope there are as many lobster hunters alive now, as there were at 6AM on Saturday.

The sad truth is that the opening week of lobster season frequently produces one or more fatalities. The worst we ever had was five lobster-hunting-related fatalities in the first week a few years ago. None of this is because lobster-hunting in and of itself is dangerous, but because divers simply stop paying attention and allow their crustacean desire and quest to overwhelm their common sense.

In fact, the 6AM opening was instituted to hopefully increase diver safety. The old opening time of 12:01AM had some divers making their first dives after months of inactivity and jumping into cold,

dark waters, and then continuing diving on little sleep through the night. That's a recipe for disaster.

The most common - and most easily-avoided - mistake is running out of air. This is especially troubling when lobster hunting as you may take your last breath while your head is stuck in a hole &/or your buddy (if you have one) is nowhere nearby nor is he/she paying much attention to you because, after all, it's lobster season and you've got to get your limit.

The other issue we see regularly are medical issues, either known or underlying. So make sure you are fit to dive. This doesn't mean you have to have a complete physical (but it's a good idea to have one regularly) but at least do a thorough and honest self-assessment and if there's anything that doesn't seem right, don't go. As I like to say, you never get hurt on a dive you don't make.

So a couple of suggestions for you if you're going to be looking for lobsters:

- Watch your air and don't go below 500psi
- Check you SPG religiously
- If you've consumed more than 500psi since the last time you checked, you're not looking often enough
- Much as I'm OK with diving alone in general, dive with a buddy

- Ideally, make it a buddy who's not also looking for lobsters
- Do a double- and triple-check of all of your gear before the start of the dive
- If it's been a while since you dove (like maybe last lobster season), do your first dive or two as a daytime dive, not a night dive
- Above all, try to anticipate before the dive, what the possible problems could be, and do your best to avoid them

I am personally not a game-hunter but I understand that many people get the same thrill from hunting game as I do from photo-hunting. Just remember: No lobster is worth your life. Be safe, be cautious, and be around to dive another day.

INDONESIAN EARTH- QUAKE & TSUNAMI

The 7.5 earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Indonesia has killed 800+ people and left over 17,000 more homeless. This is a major tragedy with rescue and relief efforts still underway. Many of you have asked if Murex - which is in the upper right (NE) corner of Sulawesi and about 400 miles away from the epicenter - was affected. We saw a Facebook post from Murex owner Angelique Batuna Charlton which said that this did not affect Murex or Manado at all.

SPEAKING OF INDONESIA . . .

In Indonesia, we sometimes see small fishing huts around Manado Bay. However . . .

Some are anchored much further offshore and are permanently manned. In July, one that was manned by 19-year-old Aldi Adilang had its mooring line break loose and for the next 49 days (not a typo), the youth drifted as ocean currents took him towards Guam. His job was supposed to have been to light lamps at night to attract fish to be caught. Now his job was to survive.

The fishing hut - really no more than a raft - has no propulsion or steering. Aldi had some supplies onboard, including a radio. No one spotted him or answered his radio calls. But, on August 31, he saw a ship and found a radio frequency that they monitored and they picked him up. They took him to Japan from where he flew home to be reunited with his family.

So the next time you surface and you're waiting for the boat to come over and pick you up, and you think it's taking too long . . . remember that it could be much worse.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT & DIVING

Unless you've been totally divorced from reality the last few days, sexual harassment should be something you've been aware of and thinking about. It's certainly something that should have a level

of awareness within the diving community since we deal in a sport that requires us at various times to be relatively undressed and requires us to interact with each other in that state, by zipping our fellow divers in and out of wetsuits, helping adjust gear, and stuff like that.

When we had Reef Seekers open and were still teaching basic scuba classes, each year we'd have a January instructor and DM meeting where we'd talk about things that could be potentially sexually sensitive.

Especially in a teaching situation in a pool, you're dealing with people with very little clothes on and there are skills you are doing that require at times hands-on interaction with your student whether they be same-sex or opposite-sex. And it's certainly possible that in the course of routine teaching, your hand could legitimately slip or inadvertently grab a body part that could be misconstrued. By the same token, it would also be easy to do some inappropriate and then the excuse would be, "Oh, I'm so sorry. My hand inadvertently slipped." So we'd just have a general discussion about that, as much to raise awareness as anything else,

in the hopes of avoiding any uncomfortable, let alone liability-laden, experiences.

So given all that's been going on in the last week or so, I thought maybe this would be a good time and a good forum to remind you that these situations can occur even within the scope of recreational diving. Someone's changing out of their wetsuit and bathing suit and you open the door on the head where they're changing. Deliberate or accidental? You're tucking someone's hood into their wetsuit and your hand goes down further than it should. Deliberate or accidental? There are certainly plenty of other examples but I think you get the idea.

So I think it's important, in this age of heightened awareness, to be aware that we engage in a sport where not only innocent slips of the hand can be interpreted as something they're not, but also where deliberate violations of personal space can be hidden as an accident. And with this heightened awareness, hopefully we can all conduct ourselves in a manner where we respect the space and dignity of those we encounter on dive occasions.

2019 DIVING VACATIONS

January 5-13 • Easter Island

March • Truk & Yap

Late May • Bonaire

July 6-22 • Indonesia



PLANE MISSES RUNAWAY AT TRUK LAGOON

The good news is that no one died and it doesn't seem like anyone was hurt. But last Friday (Saturday in Chuuk), an Air Niugini flight coming for a landing in Chuuk (aka Truk Lagoon) missed the runway and went into the drink. Some reports say the plane was coming in too low, and may have missed the runway by as much as 500 yards. End result is still that it went into the lagoon waters. Passengers said they didn't really realize that had crashed until water started pouring into the aircraft.

There were 35 passengers and 12 crew on board and locals quickly mobilized boats and got everyone out of the water and took those who needed medical attention to the local hospital. It's unclear if the plane eventually sunk or if it was somehow stabilized or salvaged. Again looking at the pictures, the plane seems to be fairly close to shore so you'd think it's not very deep there.

But it also underscores issues flying into some of these islands, where runaways are oftentimes shorter than you might like. The runaway in Chuuk is 6,006 feet long, which is the same as in Yap (where we fly frequently). By comparison, the shortest runway at LAX is 8,926 feet and the longest is 12,923 feet. I checked a couple of aviation websites for minimum

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES				
DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Thu.	Oct. 4	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	FREE!!!
Sat.	13	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	20	Redondo	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Thu.	25	- CLASS -	- NAUI NITROX -	\$75
Thu.	Nov. 8	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	FREE!!!
Sat.	17	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Sat.	Dec. 1	Redondo	Navigation dive (single tank)	\$25

runaway length to land a 737-800 and came up with anywhere from 4,700-6,700 feet. So this was tight no matter how you look at it. By the same token, 737s land on these islands all the time and it was also reported that on this day, there was heavy rain, which will increase the landing length a plane needs due to a wet runway.

Bottom line: Everyone's safe and has a good (harrowing) tale to tell.

EASTER ISLAND TRIP IS CONFIRMED

We're going back to Easter Island January 5-13 and you should join us. We have seven people confirmed so far and can accommodate a few more. We first visited in 2011, it was magical, and we anticipate it will be that way again.

Of course, Easter Island - more correctly known as Rapa Nui - is best-known for the huge Moai, carved statues that are mainly giant heads that were first seen by outsiders when Easter Island was "discovered" on Easter Sunday in 1722. So part of this adventure includes visits to the various sites where Moai have been restored and learning more about the culture that created them.

But there's diving there too. We'll be doing our diving again with ORCA Diving Center. What's in-

teresting about the diving at Rapa Nui is that the water is relatively free of plankton. This means you can get incredible - up to 200' - visibility. But it also means that fish life without plankton is scarce.

That doesn't mean there aren't any fish. Rapa Nui is home to almost 200 species of fish, a number of whom are endemic, which means they're only found there. Rapa Nui also has phenomenally healthy and extensive coral reefs. So the diving is interesting in that you'll be cruising over what appears to be a thriving coral community, but you'll just have to look a little harder to find all of the fish.

Our general plan is for five days of diving (12 dives total) and three afternoons of touring the Moai. We're very excited to be able to do these tours again with Josie Nahoe Mulloy whose grandfather, William Mulloy, is revered on Rapa Nui as he was the main researcher who helped unlock the secrets of Easter Island.

Land portion for this, which includes hotel with breakfast daily, diving, tours, transfers, and tips, is \$2,995. Air fare (on LATAM) is running a shade under \$1,900. A \$1,000 deposit guarantees your spot.

At Reef Seekers, we go to some pretty interesting places. But this one definitely heads up the list. Hope you can join us.

DIVE WITH US IN THE MALDIVES IN OCTOBER OF 2019

We're also planning on returning to the Maldives next year, which we last visited in 2016. One of the goals this year is to explore the northern atolls, and hopefully run into some of the hundreds and hundreds of Manta Rays that frequent that area in large groups at this time of the year. And we'll do it all from the comfort of the *Manthiri*, under the expert direction of long-time dive guide Moosa Hassan.

We had an incredible trip last time and expect similar results this time. Amazingly, we are also getting close to being full of this trip, since the *Manthiri* only hold 12 divers. We are already at 8 con-

firmed and deposited with a number of other people thinking about it and trying to clear their schedules. As things stand now, we would leave LAX on October 12 and return no later than October 27. We have nine days on *Manthiri* which should give us plenty of time to explore. We hope to spend one dive (it's a snorkel in reality) in Hanifaru Bay within Baa Atoll and see if we hit the manta jackpot. We also might also add on a stopover for land-touring in Singapore, Dubai, Moscow, or another gateway city. (In 2016, we spent three days in Istanbul after the trip was over.)

This is definitely not a trip for the financially faint-hearted. (But perfect if you win the lottery.) Land portion includes overnight hotel

on the way in, overnight hotel in Malé, double-occupancy room on the *Manthiri*, all meals, all diving (8 diving days), taxes, green fee, crew tip and is \$5,695. We can't book airfare until December of this year but figure anywhere from \$1,500-2,000. If you do the optional 3-day stopover on the way back, add another \$500-1,000.

A \$1,000 deposit will guarantee your spot now and we'll create a monthly or semi-monthly payment schedule which will help take the sting out of the pricing. But, it WILL be money well-spent. This will be our fourth trip to the Maldives and each time we've gone, we've had marvelous experiences and fabulous stories to share. Join us for the new ones we'll create next year.

PICTURE PAGE - Easter Island

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2018)



**With topkats,
at Anakena**



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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



**Various Moai
at Rano Raraku**



**Endemic
Easter Island puffer**



**Probably the most
well-known ones**



**Triangle
fish**