

SCUBA DIVING MAY 2021 EDUCATION EXPLORATION

# THE LIVEBOARD ISSUE

# SCUBA

D I V I N G

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF PADI CLUB

## COME SAIL AWAY

EXPERIENCE THE LUXURY AND ADVENTURE OF THE LIVEBOARD DIVE LIFE

P 56

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PADI CLUB



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**DREW RICHARDSON, ED.D.**, president and CEO of PADI, has logged more than 6,000 dives worldwide and received many industry awards, including 1992 DAN/Rolex Diver of the Year.

# LOVE OF LIVEBOARDS

It's a lifestyle, a true immersion and a great way to live your passion

As I gently transitioned awake, the hammock I'd been dreaming morphed into mattress, but the peaceful rocking that had lulled me to sleep last night lingered. Still early, so I tiptoed to the main salon, then headed deckward to enjoy coffee bathed in the warmth of a Monet-worthy sunrise. As other divers drifted from below with their steaming mugs, leaning over the side, one finally broke the silence. "Awesome. You can see the bottom," she said in quiet voice, before starting to put her gear together. Fed and caffeinated an hour later under bright morning sky, we splashed into the first of the day's remember-forever dives.

There's only one place you can have this kind of experience, and this issue of *Scuba Diving* is dedicated to it: on liveaboards. As I blogged some time ago ["Uniquely Diving," [blog.padi.com](http://blog.padi.com)], liveaboard diving is unique. No other recreation has anything quite like it, and it differs from shore-based diving in significant ways.

Among other advantages, you get more dive time with less "commute," and you get to more types of sites—those beyond reasonable reach of shore-based diving are especially pristine. You unpack and repack your gear just once for days of diving, and you have everything during surface intervals—not just what you managed to grab for a morning on shore.

But the main reason I love liveaboard diving is that it's time spent with diver friends, old and new. Living at sea, you're amid the ocean's wonders 24/7, so you'll see sights and hear sounds that rarely greet you when staying ashore. Shore-based diving has its advantages, to be sure—and I would not give it up, either—but the best way to say it is that a liveaboard trip is all about the diving lifestyle, the ocean experience and being a PADI Torchbearer. In a sense, you're still diving even when you're not—and that's rare apart from liveaboarding.

Nineteenth-century American author Kate Chopin wrote, "The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace." There's no better place to hear its voice and feel its touch than on a liveaboard.

Good luck and good diving,

**DR. DREW RICHARDSON**  
PADI PRESIDENT & CEO



*Okeanos Aggressor I,  
Cocos Island,  
Costa Rica*



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# TIME FOR A REFRESH?

Key PADI Club benefits could make your liveaboard trip even more enjoyable



It's no secret many of us haven't been diving—and certainly not traveling—as much as we would've liked in the past year or so. If this issue inspires you to book a future liveaboard trip, it might not be a bad idea to refresh some of those skills and safety best practices, especially since the typical liveaboard itinerary is

## A PADI Club membership also pays off if you plan on continuing your education while diving via liveaboard.

packed with way more dives per day than any other type of dive excursion.

Whether you're planning the trip of your dreams or just want to get back in the swing of things, PADI's ReActivate™ refresher program and the DAN Prepared Diver course—both free with your

membership to PADI Club—will have you more comfortable and confident in the water in no time.

A PADI Club membership also pays off if you plan on continuing your education while diving via liveaboard. Among benefits exclusive to PADI Club members is 20 percent off 18 of PADI's most popular courses, including Enriched Air Diver, the most common specialty taught on liveaboards the world over—and key to getting the most bottom time out of those repetitive dives off the boat.

At just \$49.95 per year, you can receive all these benefits, plus a subscription to *Scuba Diving* magazine and our digital archives, as well as savings on PADI Travel and PADI Gear—a value of more than \$500 that is continually improving as more benefits are added.

Learn more about PADI Club and join today at [padiclub.com/save](https://padiclub.com/save).



## THE OCEAN IS CALLING

Join PADI Club today and become part of a movement toward a billion PADI Torchbearers who love the ocean as much as you do. Your annual membership dues of \$49.99 gets you access to *Scuba Diving* magazine, free refresher and safety courses, a 20 percent discount on 18 of PADI's most popular continuing education eLearning® courses and savings from PADI Travel and PADI Gear.

It's all waiting for you at [padiclub.com/save](https://padiclub.com/save)



SEEK ADVENTURE.  
SAVE THE OCEAN.



COURTESY AGGRESSOR

First dive of the day on a flat-calm morning—and knowing there will be a tasty snack on your return—*ahhhhh*. The liveaboard life does not disappoint. **Get tips for choosing the liveaboard trip that’s right for you, and update yourself on travel restrictions and best advice for making long-haul trips right now, starting on page 22.**

## OUT OF THE BLUE: DISCOVER THE WORLD BELOW

a

16  
LESS IS MORE

20  
GREENING THE FLEET

26  
BREATHE EASY



When species attract visiting divers, they are more likely to be protected from habitat loss, overfishing and by-catch.”

SEA HERO SAMANTHA WHITCRAFT  
PAGE 20

## Sea Hero

## SAMANTHA WHITCRAFT

An ocean advocate helps lead a liveaboard company into a greener future

**YEAR DIVE CERTIFIED:**

1995

**AGE WHEN CERTIFIED:**

28

**DIVE CERTIFICATION LEVEL(S):**

» [PADI Instructor](#)

» [SSI Platinum Pro 5000 Diver](#)

» [Served as dive safety officer for the Kaho'olawe Marine Reserve off Maui, Hawaii](#)

» [NOAA Research Diver with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Miami, Florida](#)

**WORDS TO LIVE BY**

[The ocean is my church; water my religion.](#)

—[Samantha Whitcraft](#)

Whitcraft and a friend at the Bahamas' famed Tiger Beach. Opposite: Diving Cuba's Gardens of the Queen to assess endangered corals.

Samantha Whitcraft was a force in conservation long before she took over the Sea of Change Foundation, which is supported by Aggressor Adventures, one of the world's largest liveaboard and adventure travel companies. As executive director of Sea of Change—where 100 percent of donations go to conservation projects—Whitcraft connects the dots between conservation and commerce, knowing that the future of the dive industry depends on the marriage of ecotourism and community-based conservation. For that she is our May Sea Hero.

**Q: Why is the connection between commerce and conservation so important?**

**A:** I've long believed that well-planned, sustainable ecotourism can be a powerful tool for conservation, having seen the approach successfully initiated decades ago in Costa Rica's rainforests and sea turtle nesting beaches. That country realized that its natural resources were worth more to tourists than to hunters and poachers. The key lesson of my undergraduate field work in Costa Rica was

that, for most conservation to be viable, it must at minimum 1) be supported by and involve the local community, and 2) provide economic benefit to that community.

For example, divers often say that one of their most sought-after encounters includes big shark species. These species are seen most where they are protected, like Guadalupe Island, Tiger Beach in the Bahamas and the Galapagos Islands. In turn, the presence of these protected areas and their sharks adds value to the local dive industry and thus the local community too.

Recognizing this, the Sea of Change Foundation funded the first marine life census in Las Catalinas, Costa Rica, with an eye toward developing tourism around a ray nursery. With our partners at the University of Costa Rica, Ocean First Institute and ConnectOcean Dive Center, we funded the purchase and installation of an acoustic tracking array to better understand how, when and where to protect charismatic ray species that could attract more divers to the area. When species attract visiting divers, they are more



FROM TOP: COURTESY SEA OF CHANGE FOUNDATION; OPPOSITE: COURTESY HARRY SKEGGES; COURTESY SEA OF CHANGE FOUNDATION



**“Most people rarely think of the ocean and don’t fully understand it’s an integral part of the life-support system of our planet.”**

likely to be protected from habitat loss, overfishing and bycatch.

**Q: What are your Reef Rescue and Rapid Response grants?**

**A:** In 2017, I helped lead a whale survey in Indonesia with the Oceanic Society; I was thrilled to finally get to dive Raja Ampat. There was so much life, color, texture—all pristine. Diving in Raja Ampat gave me a renewed sense of hope for the future of coral reefs.

Shortly after I returned, the *Caledonian Sky* cruise ship grounded on a dive site I had just enjoyed, destroying approximately 1,600 square meters of coral reef. I was heartbroken, and imaged what I could do with some funding if I were there. This solidified my resolve to lead the Sea of Change Foundation in creating a new kind of grant to enable local, timely responses to such incidents. Soon after, we launched the Reef Rescue and Rapid Response (RRRR) Fund.

The goal is to empower local divers as first responders to vessel groundings and anchor drops; storm damage from failed infrastructure like docks and jetties; and

oil spills, for example. When these impacts happen, there is a lot divers can and want to do. For example, divers can restore dislodged corals to allow the colony to recover, physically remove debris, install oil booms where needed, and collect coral fragments for transplanting. Because we recognize that time is of the essence, we make the application process short—generally one page—so we can send out funds as quickly as possible, ideally in under two weeks. Once a project is approved, we provide funds ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 for things like boat gas, lift bags, meter tapes, oil booms and field gear and materials. Divers can learn more at [seaofchange.com](http://seaofchange.com).

**Q: You also lead Aggressor’s sustainability initiative—tell us why this matters.**

**A:** Soon after I joined as director of conservation and outreach, I was thrilled to be sent on a yacht to learn the ropes. Coming from a research background, I was impressed with the service and operations. At the same time, I was surprised to see plastic straws and water bottles. When I mentioned it to CEO Wayne Brown, he immediately agreed that we could provide guidance to expand sustainable choices into daily operations; we soon realized that most of the guidance applied equally to our land-based operations, including our headquarters in Augusta, Georgia. The “three R’s” of plastics that come before recycling—reduce, reuse, repurpose single-use plastics—could be adopted everywhere in the company. “Green the Fleet” also includes improving energy efficiency, choosing environmentally friendly sunscreens, choosing sustainable foods, limiting unnecessary packaging and much more!

**Q: What are the greatest challenges in marine conservation?**

**A:** Societal awareness of and responses to the plight of our oceans. As divers, we sometimes forget that most people have never seen below the ocean’s surface; most people rarely think of the ocean and don’t know or fully understand that it’s an integral part of the life-support system of our planet. That has to change, and soon.

Each Sea Hero featured in *Scuba Diving* receives a Seiko SRPF77 watch valued at \$595. For our December issue, judges select a Sea Hero of the Year, who receives a \$5,000 cash award from Seiko to further his or her work. Nominate a sea hero at [scubadiving.com/seaheroes](http://scubadiving.com/seaheroes).



People of action, **devoted to protecting** the planet’s oceans and **marine life** through **conservation, technology** or by simply **helping others**. If you spot a Sea Hero, join Scuba Diving, Seiko and the 2021 Sea Heroes program by nominating him or her at [scubadiving.com/seaheroes](http://scubadiving.com/seaheroes)







## SAFE TRAVEL RESOURCES

- COVID-19 FAQ search tool: [covid19.state.gov](https://covid19.state.gov)
  - COVID-19 travel restrictions and coronavirus statistics: [covid19.state.gov](https://covid19.state.gov). Scroll down, click on “Travel Information and Alerts,” then click on the tab in the gray bar labeled “COVID-19 Country Specific Information.”
  - Register your trip with the Department of State so you can be contacted and assisted during a crisis: [step.state.gov](https://step.state.gov)
  - General travel advisories and embassy locations: <https://travelmaps.state.gov/TSGMap>
  - Coronavirus updates for scuba divers: [scubadiving.com/scuba-diving-coronavirus](https://scubadiving.com/scuba-diving-coronavirus)
  - Country-level diving restrictions: [travel.padi.com/scuba-diving-after-coronavirus-world-map](https://travel.padi.com/scuba-diving-after-coronavirus-world-map)
  - Coronavirus precautions and health information for divers: [dan.org/covid-19](https://dan.org/covid-19)
- By Alexandra Gillespie

# HOW VACCINES ARE SHAPING FUTURE TRAVEL

As more people receive inoculations, divers begin to look ahead toward liveaboard trips

BY MELISSA SMITH

As COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed around the world, global travel chatter is evolving from “when will restrictions ease” to “what will the rules be when they do?” Countries around the world are debating whether to require “vaccine passports” as airlines mull mandating vaccines for international trips. As of press time, no country is currently requiring proof of vaccination to enter, but some cruise ship lines are considering such a step.

Getting the vaccine protects both divers and their destinations, says Francois Burman, DAN’s director of risk mitigation. “Regardless of which vaccine may be available to you, it will reduce your chances of getting COVID-19 and likely minimize the symptoms if you become infected. Remember that many of the destinations where divers like to travel...are ill-prepared for outbreaks.”

Large-scale liveaboard operators such as Aggressor Adventures and All Star Liveaboards do not have vaccine requirements. Aggressor CEO Wayne Brown says his company “would never” require passengers to be vaccinated, while, as of press time, All Star had not reached a decision on that. Each continues to focus its efforts on adhering to the Centers

for Disease Control's recommendations and international governments' travel requirements. "We have a lot of protocols in place to try to ensure everybody is staying safe," says Kevin Purdy, sales marketing manager at All Star.

Both operators have arranged COVID-19 testing for trip participants either aboard their vessels or at the dock upon returning from sea. They have also taken additional safety measures on board, such as enhanced sanitization and nixing self-serve meals.

Each reports an uptick in bookings since vaccine distribution began. Trips at the end of the year and in 2022—when divers are more confident widespread vaccinations will have loosened travel restrictions—are increasingly common.

"We hear more and more from our older clientele that are either already making

reservations or looking forward to traveling later this year," says Brown. This tentative upswing is mirrored in the travel industry more broadly as cases fall and vaccines roll.

Aside from vaccination, DAN's Burman reiterates there are additional safety steps travelers can take to mitigate COVID spread: avoid confined spaces as much as possible, have an action plan if you become infected and, if on a liveaboard, ask your operator about outbreak contingency plans.

Since travel requirements are always changing and vary by region, divers planning trips will want to reach out to operators and travel agents early in the process for up-to-date information about which destinations are closed and what specific conditions must be met to travel to those that are open.

## ASK BEFORE YOU BOOK



- 1 Is travel safe, responsible and permitted between my home and the destination?
- 2 Would a quarantine be required at the start or end of the trip? Would my work and family life accommodate that?
- 3 Would I want or need to get tested upon my return?
- 4 Will business closures at my destination mean I need to bring extra supplies like hand sanitizer, snacks and water?
- 5 What health services are available at my destination? Does my medical insurance cover illness abroad, or will I need additional coverage?
- 6 What happens if I cannot fly home on my initially scheduled date because of a border closing or illness?
- 7 Am I comfortable renting dive gear, or should I plan to pack my own? If that means using a larger suitcase, am I comfortable going through baggage check-in and collection at the airport?

**For additional questions and considerations, and more information on traveling once you're fully vaccinated, head to the Centers for Disease Control website: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and click on "Travel." —Alexandra Gillespie**



Planning a liveaboard trip? Ask your operator before departure about their COVID contingency plans, and always read the fine print.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: STEFAN NEUMANN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; COURTESY AGGRESSOR; NICOLA SVOJISIN/44/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM





Whether an intimate sailboat or a steel-hulled vessel with luxe staterooms, live-aboards get divers up close to the underwater action they crave.



## A BOAT FOR EVERY TYPE OF DIVER

Choosing the right liveaboard to suit your needs might seem daunting—but it doesn't have to be. Here are some questions to ask when researching your trip.

### WHAT COURSES ARE OFFERED ON BOARD?

Most liveaboard staffs include qualified instructors who offer guests the opportunity to advance their training on the high seas. Consult your operator before you go for a full list of what's available on any given yacht.

### WHEN IS THE BEST TIME FOR A SPECIFIC ENCOUNTER?

If you're going to travel thousands of miles hoping to see a bucket-list animal, such as a manta ray or whale shark, make sure the trip you're booking is scheduled at the appropriate time. Seasonal migrations in particular mean different animals are present at different times of the year.

### WHAT ARE THE PERKS OF THE BOAT?

From free Wi-Fi to morning coffee delivered to your berth;

warm, fluffy towels proffered after every dive; chef-prepared meals; unlimited beer and wine; and onboard massage services, some live-aboards will make you consider becoming a stowaway.

### WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED?

Transfers, gratuity and equipment rentals are among common fees that aren't covered in the price of the trip.

### HOW MUCH SPACE WILL I HAVE?

Ask how much storage space you'll have, both in your berth and at your dive-deck gear station.

### WILL I HAVE A ROOMMATE?

Some liveaboards try to fill every bed, so it's likely you'll be sharing accommodations with a stranger. On some yachts, you may pay a higher fee to ensure a single-occupancy

berth, but if not, you'll find sharing a cabin is very rarely a problem—you typically are not spending much of your time in the cabin anyway, except to sleep. Be sure to ask your operator if single-supplement policies have changed due to COVID safety protocols.

### ARE BATHROOMS IN EACH STATEROOM?

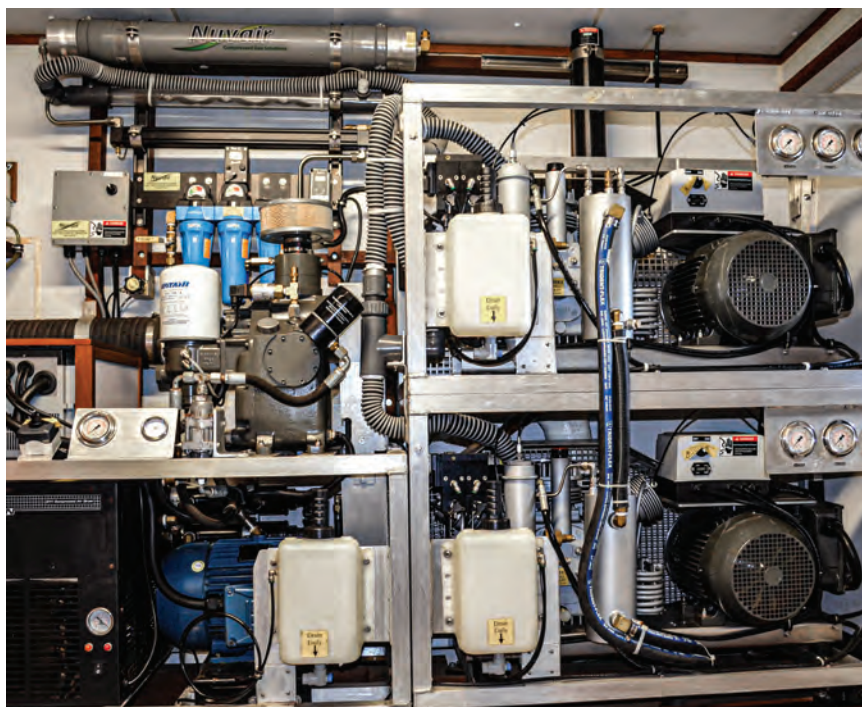
If not, make sure you'll be comfortable sharing one.

### CAN I MAKE SPECIAL FOOD REQUESTS?

Allergies and dietary restrictions can usually be accommodated if you make them clear when you're booking.

### WHAT IS THE CANCELLATION POLICY?

Take note of "cancel by" dates in case something comes up that changes your plans—always read the fine print.



## UNDER PRESSURE

Experts worry about the compressor on your liveaboard so you don't have to

BY ROGER ROY

**T**alk to a diver just back from a dream liveaboard adventure and you'll hear about the diving, the food, the service, the tropical sunsets. The compressor system, not so much. Yet without a reliable source of quality, high-pressure breathing gas, it wouldn't be much of a dive trip.

To find out what's required to keep the gas flowing on liveaboards, we talked to Glenn Huebner, CEO and founder of Nuvair, an international provider of compressed-air systems for more than 30 years.

**Q: Having been belowdecks on a liveaboard, it doesn't seem like a very friendly place for sensitive machinery. What's involved in designing and building a compressor system for a liveaboard?**

**A:** You're right. Belowdecks on most liveaboards is an unforgiving environment. Cramped, hot, humid and poorly ventilated is the rule of thumb in these compartments, making it difficult for machinery to work efficiently without significant

modifications. Ocean-going vessels add the additional concern of corrosion.

Off-the-shelf compressors—like what you would see in a dive shop—rarely work on liveaboards. We evaluate each liveaboard as to air/nitrox delivery requirements, and custom design an equipment layout based on available footprints. That regularly requires equipment installation on multiple decks. Our team designs everything from the air intake snorkel to the scuba tank fill whips.

Depending on the application, our marine compressors are built on a stainless-steel chassis and can be either water-cooled or air-cooled. An optional refrigerated air dryer is a good investment on poorly ventilated air-cooled systems. Dryers extend air filter life and reduce internal corrosion of compressor components. Stainless-steel multibank fill panels can handle different delivery pressures and gas mixes.

**Q: With the variety we see in liveaboards—modest-size sailing vessels**

**to large yachts, monohulls, catamarans, trimarans—it must make every compressor design job different.**

**A:** Many liveaboards were not purpose-built for diving, and that means retrofitting high-volume, high-pressure breathing-air compressor systems into compartments with oddly shaped and disjointed open spaces. The team at Nuvair has decades of experience designing and fabricating compressor systems for any size vessel, whether a breathing-air system was an afterthought or part of a new liveaboard vessel design.

**Q: It's been a real benefit to divers that now we see liveaboards even in the most remote locations offering nitrox on board; what sort of technology has made that possible?**

**A:** At Nuvair, our semi-permeable membrane systems generate enriched air nitrox from ambient air, thereby eliminating the need for partial-pressure blending, booster pumps or cylinders of dangerous high-pressure pure oxygen. In essence, the membrane allows oxygen molecules to pass through while expelling a portion of the nitrogen molecules. Our low-pressure nitrox system delivers up to EANx40 to a high-pressure compressor for delivery to scuba tanks or storage cylinders.

Our fully automatic series of Voyager water-cooled nitrox systems are a great example of how a turnkey package can deliver 22 percent to 40 percent enriched air nitrox. Imagine if liveaboard guests diving the same site but on different profiles wanted EANx29 and EANx36 for dives to 126 feet and 95 feet, respectively. Our system allows tanks to be filled with custom nitrox mixes, giving divers the best nitrox mix for their intended maximum operating depth. And, without partial-pressure blending, tanks do not require oxygen clean servicing.

**Q: The technology in this field has progressed so much in recent years; what sort of technical advances can liveaboard divers expect in the future?**

**A:** We are working on upgrades to the Nuvair Nitrox Manager to allow deck crews to select nitrox blends by using a touchscreen compressor controller. The screen will also provide full control of the compressor components, system status indicators and customizable pressure delivery.

# YOUR LIVEABOARD GUIDE

In whatever seas you choose to sail, one of these 11 dive yachts has what you're looking for, from luxurious staterooms to chef-driven delicacies and dive-deck amenities





## ***BAHAMAS AGGRESSOR***

The headliner act in this western Atlantic dive haven is the sharks

**S**pread out over more than 500 miles of Atlantic Ocean, the 700 islands and 2,400 cays of the Bahamas offer thrilling underwater adventure practically anywhere a diver giant-strides into the water. And with its proximity to the United States, the island chain is a place divers return to year after year. For many, these islands are like a favorite pair of jeans—comfortable and familiar. But there are always enough surprises to keep even advanced

divers on their fin tips.

*Bahamas Aggressor* offers two itineraries. The Exuma Cays and southwest Eleuthera itinerary departs from Nassau to deliver divers to the dramatic walls, lush coral reefs and exciting animal encounters that define this region. With their beautiful aquamarine water, sandy beaches and scores of dive sites, these Out Islands will not disappoint. Caribbean reef sharks can punch up the excitement on any site, such

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam 100 feet/22 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 14/16 **Staterooms/Beds** 6/14 **Bathrooms** Staterooms have private head and shower, individual climate control, toiletries, fresh towels daily and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with Jacuzzi, wet bar and shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi** Wi-Fi is available in the marina; email is available on board through the satellite system; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing email



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

Nassau, New Providence Island; for Tiger Beach itineraries, the yacht departs from Freeport, Grand Bahama

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

### DIVE CONDITIONS

75-82°F

### TRAVEL TIP

Port fees for seven nights is \$110, and \$158 for 10 nights. All fees are paid on board at the end of the charter.

as Amberjack and Danger reefs. Cracked Coral Head, Cathedral and Pillar Wall are lavishly decorated drop-offs with colorful elephant ear and tube sponges that teem with tropical fish. Night dives are perfect for spotting octopuses, shrimp, squid and crabs. Hole in the Wall is a site with a “split personality”—you can meander around a huge coral mound on the reef top in 45 feet of water or you can sacrifice some bottom time by dropping



The Tiger Beach itinerary aboard *Bahamas Aggressor* is the perfect way for divers to get their shark fix. Caribbean reef and lemon sharks can be seen in addition to the area’s namesake tigers. For a different experience, try night dives on the lush reefs of the Bahamas Out Islands. Either way you go, there will be no shortage of amenities, such as the Jacuzzi on deck, for recharging and relaxing in between dives.

through a swim-through and end up on the wall at about 90 feet. Out in the blue, you may spot turtles and eagle rays.

If it’s sharks you crave, book a Tiger Beach itinerary. From late April through July, *Bahamas Aggressor* visits the world-renowned Tiger Beach and the remote areas around Grand Bahama’s west end. Besides the tiger sharks the region is famous for, encounters with Caribbean reef and lemon sharks are common. Sharks aren’t the only marquee attraction—dolphins, groupers and jacks often play starring roles on these dives.

No matter which itinerary you choose, you’re sure to experience the bounty of the Bahamas—sparkling blue water, colorful reefs and sharks galore.

### CONTACT INFO:

[800-348-2628](tel:800-348-2628)

[706-993-2531](tel:706-993-2531)

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### GET MORE

As the Bahamas and other destinations reopen to tourists, Aggressor Adventures has placed an emphasis on their guests’ health and safety. Aggressor’s staff implemented new cleaning, sanitizing and social distancing protocols, and updated standard operating procedures. Throughout the day, staff sanitize hand-touched surfaces in all public areas, including handrails, doorknobs and handles. All guest rooms are serviced twice daily. On the dive deck, staff will minimize contact with guests’ gear and only handle second stages by the hoses. Mask rinses will be done via a freshwater hose or saltwater dunking, as communal mask rinse buckets will no longer be available. Before traveling, Aggressor recommends each guest review each country’s travel restrictions, the specific airline regulations, and the destination’s entry requirements. For the most recent updates, visit [aggressor.com/pages/clean-refresh-sanitize](http://aggressor.com/pages/clean-refresh-sanitize).





## ***BELIZE AGGRESSOR III AND BELIZE AGGRESSOR IV***

Dive the best of this western Caribbean locale—coral atolls, sheer walls and huge schools of fish

**W**hy do divers love Belize? Maybe it's because this small country delivers big-time Caribbean adventure. The world's second-largest barrier reef, running 600 miles along the coast of Belize and southern Mexico, is everything you'd expect it to be. Coral atolls rise from an endless horizon of flat turquoise. Sheer walls are covered in corals and sponges. Schools of jacks are so big you could get lost inside. Plus, this Caribbean

locale is easily accessible to divers of every skill level. It's magical, unique and pristine.

Liveaboard diving is the smartest option for divers who want to experience both Lighthouse Reef and Turneffe atolls. Most of the sites on weekly itineraries of *Belize Aggressor III* and *Belize Aggressor IV* are walls, including Half Moon Caye Wall and Long Caye Wall. Jump in, and what strikes you first is the cobalt color of the water and the endless visibil-

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam **BAIII** 110 feet/22 feet **BAIV** 138 feet/26 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** **BAIII** 18-6 **BAIV** 20-7 **Staterooms/ Beds** **BAIII** 9/18 **BAIV** 10/20 **Bathrooms** Staterooms have private head and shower, individual climate control, toiletries, fresh towels daily and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with Jacuzzi, wet bar and shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi** Email is available on board through the satellite system; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing email



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

Belize City, Belize

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

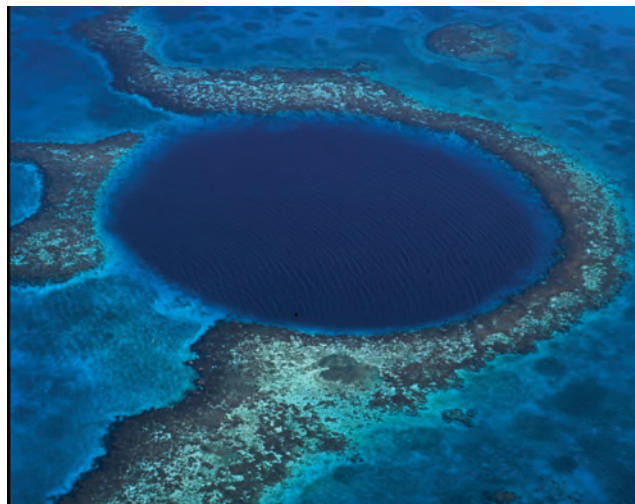
### DIVE CONDITIONS

78-82°F

### TRAVEL TIP

For a small country, Belize is blessed with a multitude of natural and cultural treasures. Let Aggressor Travel arrange an extended-stay excursion to the Lamanai Mayan temples and New River Safari, Caves Branch river tubing or rainforest zip-lining.

ity. Look to the edge of the wall to watch passing eagle rays, tarpon and blacktip sharks. Look down on the reefs to find a host of critters. These ecosystems rank high among the Caribbean for biodiversity due to the fact that much of Belize's 200 mangrove islands remain untouched, acting as nurseries that serve to populate reefs with schools of black grouper,



*Belize Aggressor III* and *Belize Aggressor IV* [opposite] allow divers access to the clear blue waters and stunning wall dives along the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef, best accessible by liveaboard due to their distance from the coast. In between fine dining and relaxing on deck, guests have a lot of options for underwater exploration, from biodiverse reefs home to schools of highly sought-after tropical fish to night dives searching out hunting tarpon as well as favorites such as reef squid and octopuses.

blue angelfish, creole wrasse, blue tangs, indigo hamlets, rainbow parrotfish and so many more. One ecosystem that's often overlooked is the sea grass beds, a hotbed for macro life, which you'll see when diving with Aggressor guides. You'll also dive the legendary Great Blue Hole in Lighthouse Reef Atoll.

Night dives off the atolls are as dramatic as the day-time dives. One popular nighttime dip at Uno Coco showcases a feeding frenzy as divers shine lights on the reef, aiding tarpon in their hunt for smaller fish. Night-time dives on the atolls yield a banquet of nocturnal critters, such as octopuses, lobsters, whitespotted toadfish and reef squid.

Unlock the one-of-a-kind diving in this beautiful country from either *Belize Aggressor III* or *Belize Aggressor IV*.

### CONTACT INFO:

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### GET MORE

*Belize Aggressor III* will host an Aqua Lung Demo Week July 10-17. While on board, divers can try new equipment, including a variety of BCs, regulators, computers, masks and fins. Ted Foreman, Aqua Lung's regional manager of the Caribbean and South Florida, will be available to explain the research and development that went into engineering the company's newest products. [Note: While new Aqua Lung equipment will be available for testing, guests will need personal dive equipment for this trip.] *Belize Aggressor III* will also host a Family Week, July 17-24, with Capt. Jay Roberts. Family Weeks combine a fun, safe and educational program for all ages, from age 5 to older teenagers. Activities include scuba diving for certified youths, snorkeling and shore excursions. Kids ages 5 to 17 get a 25 percent discount.



## ***GALAPAGOS AGGRESSOR III***

Darwin's Enchanted Islands deliver an abundance of big-animal encounters during a bucket-list trip like none other on Earth

**T**he Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador offer encounters that are the stuff of myth: hundreds of scalloped hammerheads, golden, mobula and eagle rays, mola mola, whale sharks, false killer whales, sea lions, fur seals, sperm whales, blue-footed boobies and massive schools of yellowfin tuna. These animals are part of a complex ecosystem that inspired Charles Darwin to formulate his theory of evolution. But while

Darwin was preoccupied with finches, visiting divers are treated to a spectacular buffet of ocean fauna and flora.

It's as if the Galapagos were conjured by divers. Perhaps most sought after are the electrifying hammerhead encounters—these beautiful fish can school in the hundreds—but the action is rarely confined to just one marine species. Instead, sea lions, mobula rays or yellowfin tuna will join the parade unfolding before your eyes.

**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam 100 feet/22 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 16-9 **Staterooms/Beds** 8/16 **Bathrooms** Staterooms have private head and shower, individual climate control and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with Jacuzzi, wet bar and shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi** Email is available on board through the satellite system; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing email



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

Baltra, Galapagos

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

### DIVE CONDITIONS

65-80°F

### TRAVEL TIP

Whether you fly into Guayaquil or Quito, you must make a domestic flight to the Baltra airport. Let Aggressor book your domestic flights for better baggage allowance. Bring enough cash to cover the national park fee and transportation.

On a *Galapagos Aggressor III* itinerary, you will be treated to masses of big fish.

Big pelagics strut their stuff at Wolf Island, located in the north of Galapagos National Park. Here, Galapagos sharks, schools of hammerheads so thick that they blot the sun, formations of eagle rays, massive schools of tuna and wahoo, and silky sharks make your bottom time disappear all too quickly. Luckily, as long as conditions permit, you will make multiple dives at Wolf—you won't want to



From top: Hammerheads abound in the Galapagos Islands, sometimes schooling by the hundreds, but they are nowhere near the only big-animal species that frequents this hotspot of marine biodiversity en masse; dine on fresh chef-prepared meals every day while traveling aboard *Galapagos Aggressor III* [opposite]; dives at the iconic Darwin's Arch site are sure to be sharky—don't miss unforgettable encounters with whale sharks, Galapagos sharks, hammerheads and tiger sharks.

skip any of them.

Darwin's Arch may be one of the world's most famous sites, and for divers, it may be one of the sharkiest. At the right time of year, you will hook into the reef and watch whale sharks, Galapagos sharks or hammerheads out in the blue. Depending on your dive plan, you may unhook and let the current pull you into a shallow channel, where the shark fest often continues with tigers.

The water temps at Punta Vicente Roca are generally lower than elsewhere in the islands, but many marine species, including mola mola, penguins, marine iguanas and sea lions, are drawn to the nutrient-rich waters.

Cousins Rock is another standout site. Massive schools of barracuda can gather in the current just off the rock, while Galapagos sea lions will dive-bomb past you at head-swiveling speeds.

*Galapagos Aggressor III* is offering a brand-new itinerary, in compliance with Galapagos National Park regulations. You'll love every minute.

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### GET MORE

Hidden in the forested hills of the central island of Santa Cruz, Pikaia Lodge is an incredible, environmentally conscious retreat. The black volcanic rock and glass building is ultra contemporary, carbon neutral and powered by alternative energy sources. This Aggressor Adventures Exploration Package is designed for adventure travelers who also like creature comforts. The itinerary allows guests to explore the land-based wonders of the nearby islands, with secluded white-sand beaches and incredible wildlife. And when you're not exploring, you can unwind in the lodge's spa or pool.



## ***MALDIVES AGGRESSOR II***

The exotic islands of the Maldives offer divers a something-for-everyone smorgasbord underwater, from rushing channels surging with pelagic action to reefs that teem with the tiny

**A** bundant pelagic life, from whale sharks and oceanic mantas to Napoleon wrasse and hammerhead sharks, distinguishes the Maldives, an island nation south of India that is beloved by divers.

The majority of dives are timed with incoming and outgoing tides, giving guests the chance to ride the flow, which not only makes for an exciting dive experience but also attracts legions of hunters eager to take advantage of

a surge that pushes a buffet of life in their direction. The opportunists include big schools of barracuda, giant trevally jacks, unicornfish, snappers and more. Beyond the rush and the big animals, these islands are home to reefs teeming with macro life, such as nudibranchs and ghost pipefish, daily finds in this Indian Ocean outpost.

Altogether, the destination contains 1,190 islands, far more than any vessel could visit in a week. Because of

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam 135 feet/28 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 22/16 **Staterooms/Beds** 11/19 **Bathrooms** Staterooms have private head and shower, individual climate control, toiletries, fresh towels daily and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with Jacuzzi, wet bar and shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi Available** Email is available on board through the satellite system; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing email



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

Depends on itinerary

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

### DIVE CONDITIONS

80–86°F

### TRAVEL TIP

There are no dress requirements while on board, but when on land, modest clothing and covered shoulders are recommended. Guests are not permitted to bring alcohol into the country from other airport gateways, but local beer and wine are included during the charter.

this, *Maldives Aggressor II* splits its time among eight itineraries in three areas.

In the area known as Best of the Maldives, which includes North Male, South Male, North Ari Atoll, South Ari Atoll and Rasdhoo, guests can choose between three separate itineraries that focus on different islands within the region. Highlights of this area include drift dives alongside gray reef sharks, whitetip reef sharks, eagle rays and other pelagic life.



Divers who visit the Maldives have a multitude of options when it comes to dive sites among the nation's nearly 1,200 islands. Guests on *Maldives Aggressor II* will travel on one of eight itineraries in the region, relaxing with onboard amenities such as a wet bar and Jacuzzi in between dives that offer experiences for nearly every type of diver, whether searching for sharks and mantas in current or hunting macro finds such as nudibranchs and ghost pipefish. What's more, the region offers year-round chances for whale shark encounters.

This area also serves up dives on wrecks and pinnacles.

The Southern Hemisphere area is largely devoted to channel diving, so divers need to be comfortable in this environment. Here, the rewards are many: oceanic mantas, whitetip reef sharks, gray reef sharks and Napoleon wrasse, as well as massive schools of tunas and jacks.

The third area, referred to as Far South and the Deep South, is only visited in February and March, and targets some truly exceptional spots, including Whaleshark Point and a night dive at Alimatha House Reef, where stingrays and jacks feed in an action-packed frenzy that makes for adrenaline-filled viewing.

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### GET MORE

Sri Lanka is a common jumping-off point for Maldives-bound travelers—and is home to the Aggressor Safari Lodge. From this upscale tented lodge, guests will travel to the grass plains and watering holes of Wilpattu National Park to encounter leopards, sloth bears, water buffalo and more, and to Minneriya National Park to watch the socialization of groups of Indian elephants. Day trips can also target the palace of Sigiriya, a wonder built in the fifth century atop a towering rock formation. Visit [aggressor.com](http://aggressor.com) for more information.

Even if you opt to remain in-country, the white-sand beaches of the Maldives are legendary, not just for that sugar-soft sand but also because, with so many atolls and such a small population, visitors can spread out, luxuriating in privacy. Whether you're traveling solo or with a loved one, this exotic paradise warrants a few extra days lounging on the beach or in an overwater bungalow, such as those of Bandos Island Resort or Lily Beach Resort and Spa, both of which Aggressor Travel can arrange.



## ***OKEANOS AGGRESSOR I AND OKEANOS AGGRESSOR II***

The remote Cocos Island offers some of the planet's most exciting underwater thrills

**A** voyage to Cocos Island is on every diver's dream list, thanks to its big-animal bounty. For starters, it's famous for schools of scalloped hammerheads numbering in the hundreds. Seeing the sun blotted out by so many powerful ancient predators is easily one of the most life-changing experiences a diver can have.

Hammerheads frequent these eastern Pacific waters as Cocos Island is the northern point in what's known as the Golden Triangle, a

hotspot where these animals concentrate, migrating between points; the other two are the Galapagos Islands of Ecuador to the southwest and Malpelo Island off Colombia to the southeast.

So remote, 342 miles west of Costa Rica, the volcanic Cocos Island, with its underwater seamounts and pinnacles, serves as an oasis that attracts leagues of big animals, in addition to the hammerheads. Ten species of shark are found here, including silky, whitetip reef,

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam **OAI** 110 feet/24 feet **OAI** 120 feet/27 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 22/8 **Staterooms/Beds** 11/22 **Bathrooms** Berths have private head and shower, individual climate control and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi** Email is available on board through the satellite system; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing email



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

Puntarenas, Costa Rica

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

### DIVE CONDITIONS

75–86°F average water temps

### TRAVEL TIP

If you prefer flatter seas and better visibility, travel December through May. June through December is the rainy season, when nutrient upwellings lure in the big numbers of hammerheads, whale sharks and mantas.

silvertip sharks and more. The *Okeanos Aggressors* offer 10-night itineraries.

And of course, whale sharks. During the rainy season, June through December, the waters become thick with plankton, which attracts the world's largest fish, spanning 40 feet. This season is also when the largest numbers of giant mantas are seen resting at cleaning stations and



Remote, tropical Cocos Island is a bucket-list destination for many divers. Hammerhead aggregations are synonymous with these life-rich waters, but diving here is a more or less constant parade of pelagics: multiple types of sharks, mantas, tuna and whale sharks galore. Both *Okeanos Aggressor I* and *II* bring you up close with the nonstop action, which can be accessed only via liveaboard due to the island's location hundreds of miles from the mainland.

flying endless loops as they siphon up plankton.

Out here, you'll also witness schools of tuna and jacks descend upon the group like curtains, obscuring the view of the divers to either side. Bottlenose dolphin sightings are also common mid-dive, and on occasion, so are short-finned pilot whales and humpback whales.

Because so many big animals are prevalent in big numbers, divers also get the chance to witness interactions between several species at a single site. You might witness hammerheads at a cleaning station, while yards away, dolphins feed on schooling sardines.

Of course, anything can happen, but diving in Cocos is like playing with a stacked deck. It's the type of place where every dive feels like the most thrilling yet.

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### GET MORE

From May 28 to June 4, join Les Stroud, Canadian wilderness survival expert, filmmaker and former star of Discovery Channel's *Survivorman*, for a seven-night, six-day adventure exploring southern Costa Rica from Copa De Arbol Beach & Rainforest Resort. This eco-luxury resort on the Osa Peninsula is only accessible by boat yet still has all the amenities of a full-service hotel. You'll visit the crocodiles of Tarcoles River, and beach hike and snorkel at Caño Island, exploring Corcovado National Park, the "crown jewel" of Costa Rica's national parks. Corcovado boasts 13 different ecosystems supporting an abundant variety of wildlife including tapirs, jaguars, puma, squirrel and howler monkeys, sloths, giant anteaters, toucans, scarlet macaws, and a large array of other tropical birds, reptiles and insects. Contact Aggressor Adventures for all the details.





## ***RED SEA AGGRESSOR II AND RED SEA AGGRESSOR III***

Egypt's Red Sea is on many divers' dream-destination bucket lists for four good reasons—gorgeous corals, unique fish life, historic wrecks and sharks every which way

**J**acques-Yves Cousteau chose the Red Sea as the place to introduce the world to the wonders of the under-sea realm; today, the sites he explored are the stuff of legend. Aggressor Liveboards offers two yachts that make this bucket-list destination a reality for divers. *Red Sea Aggressor II* handles the seven-night “best of the north” itinerary, including the famed British naval ship *SS Thistlegorm*, sunk in 1941. Divers will find cargo rooms loaded

with jeeps, motorcycles, trucks and tanks. Conditions permitting, *Red Sea Aggressor II* also gets divers to the *Dunraven*, *Rosalie Maeller*, *Gianis D* and *Carnatic* wrecks.

There is a host of spectacular dive sites off the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, including the ones in Ras Mohammed National Park. The Red Sea boasts an eye-popping array of soft and hard corals and more than 200 species of fish that are found nowhere else on earth,

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam *RSaII* 138 feet/26 feet *RSaIII* 130 feet/26 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** *RSaII* and *RSaIII* 22-12 **Staterooms/Beds** *RSaII* and *RSaIII* 11/11 **Bathroom** Berths have private head and shower, individual climate control and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with Jacuzzi, wet bar and shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi** Email is available on board through cellular when close to shore; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing email



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

**RS II** Hurghada, Egypt  
**RS III** Port Ghalib, Egypt

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

### DIVE CONDITIONS

74-84°F

### TRAVEL TIP

When flying from the U.S., the recommended flights for guests on both yachts are through Cairo and then to Hurghada or Marsa Alam [depending on the yacht], for a Saturday boarding. Keep in mind that the salinity of the Red Sea is higher than nearly any other place on the planet, so you'll need to wear a few extra pounds.

and Ras Mohammed puts this bounty on full display. Reef sharks, mantas and dolphins are likely to accompany your group as you drift over acres of colorful corals at sites like Shark Reef and Yolanda Reef. At certain times of the year, you'll find huge shoals of bohar snapper, batfish, jacks, unicornfish and barracuda.

*Red Sea Aggressor III* visits the southern Red Sea.



The modern port of Hurghada—a thriving scene offering a wide array of restaurants, bars and shops—is jammed with sleek, gleaming dive yachts, but none more beautiful than *Red Sea Aggressor II*. Onboard amenities include fresh, locally influenced cuisine and loads of space for cameras and more. Most diving is done from expertly handled tenders, but you'll descend from the motherships from time to time also, into waters bursting with glorious fields of healthy coral.

The itinerary includes the Brothers Islands, Daedalus Reef and Elphinstone Reef. Both Big and Little Brother are remarkable for their soft corals and encounters with pelagics like hammerhead sharks, oceanic whitetips and occasional thresher sharks. The spectacular *Nu-midia* and *Aida* wrecks cling impossibly to the wall at Big Brother. Sharks find Daedalus irresistibly attractive; heart-thumping encounters with whitetips, gray reefs, hammerheads and threshers are possible at this open-ocean site.

*Red Sea Aggressor III* also ventures farther south to put guests in the water for all the exciting action at Daedalus, Fury Shoal and St. John's. Fury Shoal's more exposed reefs and wall dives are a magnet for big fish. The southernmost location in this itinerary, St. Johns is amazing for its pristine corals and stunning water clarity. With luck, you may encounter schooling hammerheads at sites such as Habili Gaffar.

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### GET MORE

For guests arriving early, Hurghada and Port Ghalib are safe cities with many restaurants, cafes and shops. Want to do both the northern and southern Red Sea itineraries? You can book a 14-day itinerary and spend seven nights aboard each yacht. Aggressor Travel can also assist you in adding a must-do extension to your itinerary: the treasures of the Nile. See the Karnak and Luxor temples, Valley of the Kings, Hatshepsut Temple and Colossi of Memnon, all while aboard a river cruise on *Aggressor Nile Queen*. End with three nights in Cairo, to see the Great Pyramids, treasures from King Tut's tomb and more.



## ***ROATAN AGGRESSOR***

These islands have a wealth of underwater treasures—seahorses, whale sharks, wrecks, walls and pristine coral gardens

**T**he diving in these western Caribbean islands—Roatan, Utila and Cayos Cochinos—is spectacular and diverse. It's a phrase used often when describing a vacation locale, but in this case, it's absolutely true—there's something for everyone. There are dramatic cliffs and gently sloping walls, open-ocean seamounts and sheltered cays, sun-dappled coral gardens and fish-filled valleys, small and large wrecks, and an excellent

chance of encountering a nearly endless list of ocean creatures—seahorses, sea turtles, eagle rays, octopuses, schooling fish, dolphins and sharks. And, yes, with a bit of luck, maybe even a whale shark.

The Bay Islands are blessed by their location along the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef system—the second-longest barrier reef in the world—which extends north of the Yucatan Peninsula and down to the Ca-

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam 120 feet/21 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 18/6 **Staterooms/Beds** 9/17 **Bathrooms** Staterooms have private head and shower, individual climate control, toiletries, fresh towels daily and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with Jacuzzi, wet bar and shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

French Harbour, Roatan

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

### DIVE CONDITIONS

78–82°F

### TRAVEL TIP

The port/park fee of \$125 for seven nights and \$185 for 10 nights is payable in cash only at the beginning of the trip. For guests departing Saturday afternoon, a day package option can be purchased. It includes transportation from the yacht to the Clarion Resort, where guests can enjoy lunch, use of the facilities and transportation to the airport.

ribbean coast of Honduras. Roatan and Utila’s fringing reefs are shallow, roughly 300 feet from shore; they slope down to the drop-offs that have made the islands so popular among divers. The sparsely populated cays that make up Cayos Cochinos, reached only by the luxury yacht *Roatan Aggressor*, offer a string of seamounts and a pristine fringing reef.



The diving in the Bay Islands is both fun and accessible—so much so that you might not want to get out of the water. But ending a great dive isn’t so bad when you’re greeted with a warm towel or, after a night dive, hot chocolate, perhaps spiced with a splash of Caribbean rum if you like, to keep you warm until you can get to that hot tub. Worried about staying in touch with folks back home? *Roatan Aggressor* is never too far from shore, and is often close enough to pick up cell service.

*Roatan Aggressor* also visits the remote Coco’s Seamount.

No matter which island you’re diving, you’ll find gorgeous fissures in the reef, such as Mary’s Place and Calvin’s Crack off Roatan, their sides adorned with sponges, sea fans, and stacked piles of plate and sheet corals. The stunning drop-offs, such as Half Moon and Taviana’s Wall off Roatan and Utila’s Raggedy Cay and CJ’s Drop-Off, are decorated with delicate bunches of translucent blue-bell tunicates and black coral. Along the wall, spotted eagle rays are frequent visitors; on the sun-filled reef tops, an assortment of fish keeps divers entertained during safety stops. Then there are the wrecks—from Roatan’s *El Aguila*, *Odyssey* and *Mr. Bud* to Utila’s *Halliburton*, these islands deserve being mentioned among the Caribbean’s best for wreck divers. Throughout the islands, you will find macro life that rivals some of the richest sites in the Pacific. In Cayos Cochinos, a site called Toon Town is home to an entire kingdom of tiny animals, such as small crabs, nudibranchs, banded coral shrimp and flamingo tongue cowries.

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### GET MORE

If you’re spending a few extra days on Roatan, visit the island’s West End, where you’ll find a fun-filled beach scene, restaurants, bars and shops. Half Moon Bay Beach is perfect for kicking back and relaxing; at night, local bands provide entertainment. Roatan’s lush hilltops are on full display at Carambola Gardens, where you can hike up to see exotic orchids and mahogany trees. The 360-degree view at the top is spectacular. For a bit of adventure, sign up for a zip-line tour.



## SOCORRO AGGRESSOR

Mind-blowing encounters with sharks, whales, dolphins and mantas await you in Mexico's eastern Pacific islands

**W**ant the chance to have unforgettable encounters with manta rays, sharks and massive schools of fish? When Aggressor Adventures launched *Socorro Aggressor* in late 2018 it added not only a new yacht to its fleet but two adrenaline-pumping trips that are the thrill of a lifetime.

From now until late June, *Socorro Aggressor* takes guests to Socorro, San Benedicto and Roca Partida to dive with giant Pacific manta rays, large schools of fish and

multiple species of sharks. From August through early November, the yacht offers four-night expeditions to cage-dive with great whites off Mexico's Guadalupe Island.

There are scores of great whites that congregate in the sheltered bay of Guadalupe, where *Socorro Aggressor* has its anchorage. The experience is designed to ensure the safety of the guests and the sharks. You will rotate into the cage at the surface at one-hour

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam 135 feet/27 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 26/11 **Staterooms/Beds** 13/26 **Bathrooms** Berths have private head and shower, individual climate control, toiletries, fresh towels daily and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi** Satellite phone calls are available; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing calls



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

Port of Cabo San Lucas, Mexico [Socorro]; Ensenada, Mexico [Guadalupe]

### DIVE SEASON

January to June [Socorro]; August to November [Guadalupe]

### DIVE CONDITIONS

73–76° F [Socorro]; 67–73° F [Guadalupe]

### TRAVEL TIP

There is a \$480 USD national park fee; it may be paid in cash or by credit card.

intervals, up to four times a day, and use surface-supplied air. *Socorro Aggressor* offers both surface and submersible-cage experiences. Usually, you will see one to three sharks at a time, but some encounters feature even greater numbers.

The waters of the Revillagigedo Islands swirl with massive schools of jacks, patrolling hammerhead sharks, huge baitballs, occasional humpback whales, acrobatic dolphins and manta rays, and



Divers aboard *Socorro Aggressor* can enjoy freshly prepared meals in between experiences with the main attraction off Mexico’s Guadalupe Island: sharks, including cage dives with great whites. *Socorro Aggressor* visits Guadalupe from August to November. From January to June, the boat plies the waters of the Revillagigedos, no less exciting for lovers of big animals, which in this part of the world include hammerheads, manta rays, humpbacks, whale sharks and more.

with luck, a passing whale shark or two.

The Revillagigedos are more commonly called the Socorros [named after the group’s largest island]. Socorro, San Benedicto and Roca Partida boast some of the most rugged underwater geology found in the world and a never-ending parade of jaw-dropping marine life.

One hotspot on the itinerary is off Roca Partida. It is here that divers have the chance to encounter hammerheads, giant schools of fish and bottlenose dolphins, sometimes on the same dive. Off San Benedicto, the Boiler is a popular cleaning station for majestic mantas, which will swoop playfully close.

No matter which itinerary you choose, *Socorro Aggressor* will put you in the middle of all the action on each and every dive.

### CONTACT INFO:

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### GET MORE

When planning a liveaboard vacation to the Socorros, season and location are everything if you have a specific species of marine animal you want to see. Even though the abundance of wildlife is present year-round, some encounters can depend on the time of year and where you are diving. The season for humpbacks is mid-February through mid-April; giant Pacific manta rays between November and May; and whale sharks in November, December, April and May. The shark and pelagic action around these islands is head-swiveling awesome, and sometimes—as when you’re lucky enough to encounter a whale shark or humpback whale—practically spiritual. This trip is recommended for advanced divers who are comfortable in open ocean. The Hotel Tesoro Los Cabos is the host hotel for the Socorro itinerary.



## ***TURKS & CAICOS AGGRESSOR II***

Two very special itineraries aboard this luxury yacht deliver a memorable dive vacation

**W**hether you choose the Turks and Caicos itinerary or the Silver Bank humpback whale snorkeling charter, your week aboard *Turks & Caicos Aggressor II* will be unforgettable.

Southeast of the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos sits atop two limestone banks separated by the 6,000-foot-deep Turks Island Passage. Rising above the submerged Caicos Bank are six islands, including Providenciales and West Caicos. These are the islands

*Turks & Caicos Aggressor II* visits, plus French Cay. The diving in Turks and Caicos features mind-blowing walls and all kinds of fish life, including sharks.

Providenciales, commonly called Provo, is famed for Grace Bay Beach, a sugar-white strand lapped by clear turquoise water. Low-key diving is found at numerous Grace Bay sites, including Graceland, Pinnacles and Aquarium. The dive sites here feature sunlit shallows,

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**BOAT SPECS** Length/Beam 100 feet/22 feet **Passenger-to-Staff Ratio** 18/16 **Staterooms/Beds** 9/18 **Bathrooms** Staterooms have private head and shower (two twin staterooms share a bathroom), toiletries, fresh towels daily and hair dryer **Sun Deck** Yes, with Jacuzzi, wet bar and shaded area **Food/Beverages** Yes, including local beer and wine **Wi-Fi** Available at the marina and at other places depending on the yacht's location. Email is available on board through the satellite system; there is a charge for incoming and outgoing email



## NEED TO KNOW

### HOME PORT

Turtle Cove Marina,  
Providenciales

### DIVE SEASON

Year-round

### DIVE CONDITIONS

78–84°F

### TRAVEL TIP

You will be on a tender for long stretches of time when you're on the Silver Bank itinerary. Pack a pair of freediving long fins, plenty of sunscreen, sun hat and wide-angle lens for your camera.

fascinating coral formations and nice walls.

There are more than a dozen sites clustered along Provo's renowned Northwest Point. Amphitheater is usually a slam-dunk for encountering sharks that materialize as soon as divers hit the water. Black corals abound, and giant stovepipe sponges hang from ledges draped with whip and wire corals.

West Caicos, 10 miles southwest of Provo, offers dizzyingly steep drop-offs



*Turks and Caicos Aggressor II* offers two distinct itineraries along this Caribbean archipelago. From mid-January to March, guests embark on a once-in-a-lifetime snorkeling experience with humpbacks at nearby Silver Bank. The liveaboard's other itinerary brings divers face to face with reef denizens such as octopuses at sites like West Caicos. And the fun doesn't stop once back on board.

just 100 yards off the island's west shore. Choice sites include Elephant Ear Canyon, packed with healthy tube sponges and black coral. Turtles are often encountered.

From mid-January through March, the yacht cruises the Dominican Republic's Silver Bank, where guests snorkel with the hundreds of North Atlantic humpbacks that congregate here to calve and mate. The whales start arriving in late November; *Turks & Caicos II* plans its schedule to coincide with the busiest period to help ensure in-water encounters. You'll be treated to breaches, tail slaps, tail lobbs, fluke displays, and playful and curious antics by the calves. It may be cliché to say this, but this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get close to one of the world's most beautiful animals.

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### GET MORE

*Turks & Caicos Aggressor II* whale-watching excursions are conducted from two 18-foot inflatable chase boats with Bimini tops for protection against the sun and ladders for easy exits. Designated as a marine sanctuary, the Silver Bank provides a safe wintering haven for the entire North Atlantic humpback whale population. Whale runs are conducted throughout the day. The staff is experienced in maximizing the Silver Bank humpback whale experience, with some in-water encounters lasting several hours. They are experts at interpreting whale behaviors, and advising snorkelers how to approach and observe the humpbacks. The rules are strictly followed, and the whales will determine the proximity and time of each interaction. Some humpbacks, especially calves, will want to interact. Some mothers encourage their calves' curiosity; others do not want to interact.



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