



The Whaler

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Up and coming trips

1. For the guys who are not qualified in scuba diving, it is time to get round to spending a little time to gain your qualifications, local diving is far less expensive and there are 2 excellent dive instructor available to assist you to gain your Scuba Diving qualification. Please contact either of the instructors below and enjoy the full summer season in your new found sport.

Andy Gray 0916130288 or greensward_98yahoo.com.tw

John Boo 0913388065 scuba_diving1@yahoo.com

The course will take about 3 weekends, so start now and don't miss out on all the rest of the summer trips into your new world on the ocean floor.

2. Orchid Island is probable the most renowned dive trip in Taiwan. The trip will be organized by Andy Gray during the spring vacation. The dates will be April 1st to April 5th. Planned travel arrangements, travel to Taitung the morning of April 1st and take a flight to Orchid Island, arrive in the early afternoon, settle in and have a look around the island. April 2nd, 3rd and 4th, we will have 3 boat dives each day. Fly back to Taitung on the 5th and then head for home. The 5th is Tomb Sweeping day so also a National Holiday

April is, according to the local dive captain, the very best time to enjoy the diving over on Orchid Island. As it is the beginning of the Flying Fish season. This attracts large pelagic fish into the waters around the island such as Jacks, Barracuda, Yellow fin and Dog tooth Tuna, Maui Maui and Marlin. The weather is as good as it gets on Orchid the whole year, not too hot, but sunny and warm with blue skies and outstanding underwater visibility at 40m to 50m. Plus the ocean is usually calm and the winds slight, this means that a whole bunch of dive sites are open to divers which are not at other times in the year

Cost for the dives will be NT\$2,500 per day for 3 boat dives, this includes the boat and deck hand, a very competent dive guide, tanks and weight belt. It does not include gear, however this is available for rent, a complete set is less than NT\$1,000 per day. Accommodation will be in the local hostel, clean and simple for NT\$400 per night or a hotel for NT\$700 per night for a twin share room.

3. Lanyu is Taiwan Southern most island, the trip is organised by Simon Contact hmsieh@yahoo.com. The dates are 5th April to 9th April flying from Taitung airport direct to Lanyu. The currents in this area attract the large pelagic fish, Night diving here is supposed to be the most spectacular around.
4. The Seven Stars [Chi Shin Yen]. Due to the specific location of this dive site there are only certain time s of year when it is available the next dates are April 23rd and May 21st. These may well be the only dates that this dive is doable this year.

For those of you who do not know this dive site it is an open ocean site 10k south of Kenting. Approximately a 50 minutes boat ride.



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Seven Stars is a group of large barren volcanic rocks out in the middle of the ocean, two currents meet at this point, one heading south the other north. The currents attract large pelagics. A variety of Tuna feed there, including Yellow Fin, Dogtooth and Blue Fin, there are also Great, Yellow stripe and Pickhandle Barracuda. There is an abundance of Marine life and even the reef fish are big. Key note fish are large schools of Banner fish and Moorish Idols, and huge Angel fish, Puffers of all types and large groups of Snapper and all sorts of Surgeon fish. There are the odd Turtle or two and sometimes Rays. There is also a wreck of an old steam ship albeit badly broken up, but the boilers and drive shaft are visible along with a little of the superstructure. Visibility is usually in the 25 to 30m range and can extend up to 40m.

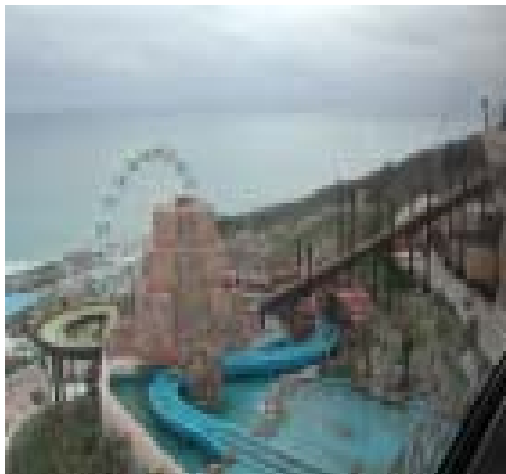
This dive is for experienced divers only. You need to be comfortable in a current, both on the surface and below. You need to possess a Surface Marker Buoy (SMB) and reel and know how to deploy it safely from 10-15m. You also need to know and successfully accomplish a negatively buoyant entry. i.e. off the boat fast and straight down, no bobbing around on the surface deflating your BCD, so if you have chronic problems equalizing this dive is probably not for you.

The dive averages about 25-30M+ so it is an ideal Nitrox dive. For those of you who are certified, Nitrox is available.

Unfortunately it is entirely dependent on clement weather. The captain will not risk going out there if the weather and sea state picks up and the decision to go is usually taken the day before. The boat a twin engine catamaran carries 20 divers comfortably, on a first come basis. Cost for the dive is NT\$1,800 to 2000, this includes two tanks of air and weight belts plus fresh fruit snacks and water. Nitrox 32 tanks are NT\$200 extra per tank.

Contact Andy Gray 0916130288 or greensward_98yahoo.com.tw

5. Kenting boat diving Advance dive course, 29th to 30th April. Organised by Wayne Sutcliffe Contact wayne.sutcliffe@tsp-tp.com.tw . Equipment can be hired locally from either of the two dive shops Approx 1,000NT\$. The boat cost 1,600 NT\$ for 2 tanks and weight, take this opportunity to improve your dive qualifications. Accommodation from as little as 300NT\$ per night, at the dive shop, to 3,000NT\$ at the nearby Toyo hotel.
- 6.



Hualien Ocean Park & Taroko Gorge, One for all the family, Come and swim with the dolphins at this amazing water theme park, enjoy the rides, and sight of this east coast resort.

On Sunday we plan to travel back through the Taroko Gorge to the hot springs.

Travelling on the 27th May from Taichung staying at the Ocean Park all day and arriving at a local hotel in the evening, accommodation from 2,500NT\$ twin sharing upwards.

Returning via the Gorge and hot springs on the Sunday. Bring you swim wear.

Contact c-hunter@tsc-tokyo.gr.jp



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6. Penghu



Penghu, for those who have not already had the experience, Penghu Island is fantastic location, with the clear seas, easy travel and white sandy beaches; we will probably fly in from Taichung on the Friday evening 9th June, and return on the ferry to Tainan on the Sunday 11th June.

The boat cost approx 1,600NT\$, equipment hire 1,000NT\$ and accommodation from 1,400 per night for twin sharing.

Early booking essential as the boat owner is strict on numbers and only the first lucky 9 people will be diving.

Contact c-hunter@tsc-tokyo.gr.jp

7. Sun Moon Lake

Sun Moon Lake is the largest inland lake in Taiwan, at a height of 748m above sea level it is spectacularly set in the Jade Mountains. The area offers many attractions, like the Wenwu Temple which is dedicated to Confucius, Travel on one of the many boats to Kuanghua island, see the Thao Tribal Village. Trip dates 10th to 11th June, Contact c-hunter@tsc-tokyo.gr.jp for more information.



7. Diving in Northern Taiwan no dates have been fixed, and the dive location are being found as this edition goes to press, so if any of you readers now of the best location around Taipei Give us a call or drop us a line with the details and contact numbers.

All trips will go on a first come first served basis, as most of the dive boats only take a fixed number of personnel.



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Dive Trip Stories.

Kenting Boat Diving

A different tack was needed to go boat diving at Kenting, as we have now been several times and not twice the same way. We hired a van from Kaohsiung which was very cheap and efficient way of getting down to Kenting and more importantly being able to move around while we were there.

The initial plan was to do 2 dives each day from a boat which Andy Gray had worked so hard to get us on as this was the last dive weekend before the Chinese New Year and every one wanted to join in.

Setting off at 5.30 in a morning took its toll on the travelling few, some said it was too early, some said too far to go, others said they would not be home from the night before in time to pack, and Suzuki was having to work on the Saturday morning which left just 3 divers to keep the flag flying.

We made great time arriving at the local dive shops by 7.45, John wanted to hire a vest to keep warm with and Wayne a hood. This was just the start of John's bad luck over this weekend, when the shop dog tried to take a morsel out of his calf, luckily enough it did not draw blood.

We had planned to meet Sammy the owner of Fu Dog Surf shack at 8.30 to finalise the arrangements with the boat captain, the boat was supposed to leave at 9.00, with not a "sole" in site, Sammy arrived at 9.15, and said that he had been trying to contact the boat captain all morning, what I could not understand was where were all the other people, Andy had tried to very hard to get the boat captain to take us as he was full.

Sammy disappeared to see if he could find any one else who could accommodate us, and to our amazement (and probably Sammy's too) he took us around to the other side of the harbour, where a refurbished catamaran had been put back on the water, it was a huge dive boat, and once we (Sammy) had established that we needed tanks and weights with the boat crew, they left to find some, the 9.00 departure time turned out to be 10.45 not bad for diving in Taiwan. After checking out with the coast guard we were whisked across the Nanwan Bay to our first dive site.



The crew did not speak any English, but when they saw us kiting up and that we had reels and SMB's they were quite happy, we eventually established the depth, and developed our dive plan, if we hit currents we would send up the SMB if not the boat would be able to follow our air bubbles, while we cruised the reef below.



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Wayne was first in and rolled off a few expletives of how cold the water was when he surfaced; at 24% it could not have been better. For the first time I used my 5mm wet suits, and entered the water a little to light and had to swim down to establish buoyancy as we levelled out at about 10M Johns bad luck struck again, he had just taken a photo of us descending, and went to take another snap of the marine life, only to find his camera missing, we immediately double back, but where unable to locate it. As we reached our planned depth of 30 meters we entered current, there were lots of fish life Wrasse, Puffer fish, Snappers, Black & white Damsels Etc, the corals where health and varied,

I sent the SMB up, as we where being swept between pinnacles of all different shapes, a forest of whip corals had attached them selves and were spiralling forever upward. The most fascinating site was of a shoal of Spanish Dances congregated under a ledge 20-30 possibly even more.

As we ascended to the top of the last pinnacle, I could tell that I was not going to complete the full 3 minute safety stop at 5M, Wayne already had his safety line out, and I had to rely on Wayne and John dragging me back from hitting the surface, spending most of the safety stop facing the bottom, swimming downwards even DM still get it wrong. The 2 access ladders on the platform made it really easy to get back on board, the crew where more than helpful in stabilising us as we boarded, with a 4/5ft swell building up, the captain headed for the shelter of the coast line, there I was able to borrow some fishing weights from another dive boat that was moored up.

The Second dive was planned at 18M, the visibility was less than we had on the deeper dive, once again lots of fish, Trumpet fish, Box fish, Trigger fish & shoals of sweet lips, the coral had great colours in them. With only a short ride back into the harbour, remove all the equipment from the boat, which also made the crew happy we changed and head back for lunch at the pizza parlour nearby Sammy's shop.

Suzuki arrived and we did a tour of the southern point of Kenting and onto the west coast, which has a rugged beauty, but exposed to the easterly wind, there are not many shore dive opportunities on this side of the peninsular.



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The day light fade all too quickly, and with the heavy cloud we where not to see the sun setting on the horizon, never mind that down to the hard graft of finding a suitable watering hole for the evening.

The picture to the left is of the southern most point on the island of Taiwan, thought I should mention that as there is no back ground.

What a picture, the first beers (not the last) The Toyo hotel has joined partners with the owner of the Benovista, to provide an Italian menu for the guest and patrons.



The food was great, the beer was better and when we had our fill of telling the day's stories to any one who would listen, the dive/surf shop was only a stones throw away.

As luck would have it I fell a sleep first, and kept the other awake for a while with a few renditions from the nasals cords.

The following morning we where all up bright and breeze (some not to bright), a force 4 was blowing off shore and the Nanwan Bay was white with surf and white horses, It reminded me of a similar experience in Oban Scotland, would we be diving? Of course we would.

The hardest decision was whether we should eat breakfast, wrong decision, we did and some paid the price badly later.

When we arrived at the dive boat, the tanks were already loaded, business in Taiwan is business, and the captain was not going to miss out on his daily crust even if the rest of the crew thought that we were nutters for diving in these temperatures of a lavish 24/5%.



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Once out on the bay the boat was pitching heavily and that was going out with the wind and waves, I knew the return journey was going to be somewhat different. The captain had to travel a long way around the coast to find a relatively sheltered dive site. Same plan as yesterday, current SMB up, no current, follow the bubbles.

The dive location was great, a huge puffer fish was waiting right at the bottom when we levelled out, shoals of yellow grunters, occasional lion fish, wrasse, grouper, and many more.

As we started to ascend John's line on his SMB got snagged and only by remaining close at hand did we recover the situation without the loss of any more equipment.

It is always a worrying site when you can see down on the boat one second and nothing but sea around you the next second, the swell was now 2-3M, once again with the aid of a very competent crew, we all boarded safely.

During the interval awaiting the next dive Wayne and I were giving score out to both John and Suzuki, for presentation, content and delivery on the contents of their stomachs.

On last dive there were only three of us, as John had sea sickness rounding of a poor weekend for him.

The return boat ride back to the harbour was a bit scary to say the least, at times the deck of the boat was under 6 inches of water with waves breaking right over the bow, unfortunately we did not have a camera available to capture the scene

Reported by
Clive Hunter

Congratulations

To Osamu Iki Project ECM on passing his Open Water course in Koe Samui Thailand
To Psycho Wayne on accomplishing his 1000th dive at Kenting.





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FOR SALE

Spiro Cryo XR2 with air flow control (only 2 dives since last professional service)
Spiro Aqualung spare regulator.

Aqualung dive computer in console with compass
UWATEC Air pressure gauge (in console)

Sea quest Balance Wing style BC Size XL (big but not quite fat bastard size.)

Technisub 'Idea 3' Giant Fins

Technisub Dive Knife with strap and holder

TUSA self purging mask

TUSA Imprex Hyperdry Snorkel with purge valve

Dive watch / computer with modem link for downloading dive data to home computer.
This is quite new and costs almost 300 GBP (quid) at to-days prices.

Waterproof dive bag

Some spares.

Contact Jim Bracegirdle at jim_bracegirdle@thsrc.com.tw

ON-GOING TRAINING.

Assistant instructor Clive Hunter

Rescue Course John Day

Advance course Osamu Iki
Jason Swatton



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INTERESTING READING LINKS

- **Palau - dive sites**

<http://images.google.com/images?svnum=10&hl=en&lr=&q=Palau&btnG=Search>

- **PADI - dive information**

<http://www.padi.com/english/default.asp?o=ap>

- **Nitrox diving explained**

<http://www.gasdiving.co.uk/pages/misc/Nitrox.htm>

- **Bolton Area Divers**

<http://www.boltonaradivers.co.uk>

- **Lanyu Island**

<http://www.lanyu.com.tw>

- **Fu-Dog Surf Kenting**

<http://www.fudog-dive-surf.com>

Distribution Lists

There are lots of people working in various companies on the HSR project who are qualified divers or just interested in diving or who would like to learn to Scuba dive.

Please forward this newsletter around, and as interested parties read it and would like any further information on any of the trips advertised or scuba diving information, please contact the editors of the newsletter and they can then be added to the distribution list.

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