

## The Utila Dive Trip

(from the view of Maureen...a newly certified diver)

I had such a great weekend scuba diving! I am so glad that I am certified now! Let me tell you everything:

Utila is very Caribbean - the beaches are beautiful, the people are friendly, the weather is damn hot, the food is awesome, and the modernity is lacking. I was very happy there - it was like being in a movie or something - sugar beaches and sapphire water. The first time we went down underwater, it was overwhelmingly gorgeous. We did our drills, and then toured the coral for about twenty minutes. It was so amazing: enough to make an atheist like me believe in a higher power. I mean, the colors, the brilliance, the variety! We saw about seven different types of coral, butterfly fish, angel fish, parrot fish, clams that looked like pearls embedded in the coral, crabs that looked like kelp, fish with stripes, spots, checkerboard patterns, iridescent green, radiant yellow, glowing blue... it seemed as though some kind of design must be governing it all, one with a highly-developed aesthetic sensibility.

It was a good thing that the first day was so lovely, because the second day was horrid. The swells were really high, and I threw up while waiting in the water for my group to get in. I had never been seasick before, and so of course had the arrogant attitude that I couldn't get seasick. Wrong. Then we went down, and we were being buffeted about on the bottom. Everything was rocking, swaying - we were trying unsuccessfully to avoid bumping into the coral and each other. We were also trying to do all our drills, but it was awful. I threw up down there! I purged my regulator like my teacher had showed me, but I felt like hell. We couldn't see ten feet in front of us. When we went up, I had to remind myself of the beauty I had seen the day before, and remember that it would not always be like this. Otherwise, I think I would have bagged the whole thing.

The third day was great again. Visibility was high, I saw a lot of great stuff (including blue and red crabs, a stingray, and a big jellyfish), and no puking this time. I think we even saw a little shark (luckily we were in the boat on the way back)! The other group got to see dolphins - we weren't so lucky. But still, it was an awe-inspiring trip. I was sick with a cold on our last day, but Ron bullied me into going anyway. I was glad he did. Now I am all done, and can go scuba diving anytime I want. I'm a scuba diver! Me!

Other than that, I just enjoyed the laid-back atmosphere of the island. The food was great (they have all these diver dudes that live there, backpackers, etc., so there was lots of yummy vegetarian stuff for me), the mosquitoes were horrible (I was using 29% DEET, and still got eaten alive, but I took my anti-malarial meds), and life was good. I and the other teachers all

had an incredible time.

Now I'm back at school, and it was good to get back. Though I have a ton of work to do, I missed my kids, and coming home is always nice.