

 **Diving over Christmas** 

**I want to wish all of my friends and family a Merry Christmas and a very merry New Year!!!!!!!
!!!!**



I know this is a bit late but I was away from my computer for two weeks while I was on my vacation. The only thing missing for my time off was my family! Other than that everything was perfect. The trip went a little like this.....

Linda Arrives!

The main reason I had such an exciting break was the fact that I didn't know my travel partner that well. We had met in 2001 at the Job Fair for International teaching. After breakfast and a plane flight we exchanged email addresses and went off in our own directions. Linda went to teach in Thailand and I came down to Honduras.

Flash forward to last summer. We had not kept in touch because I had changed my email without her knowing. But, we got back in touch and she had moved back to Florida and knew there was great diving in Honduras. So, we decided to travel and dive for the Christmas break. Talk about a little scary. We were about to travel for two weeks barely knowing each other.

I had offered to do all of the planning since I live down here. For the next couple of months I researched Belize and made some reservations in Utila. The idea was to spend the first week somewhere I was familiar with and the second week somewhere neither of us had been to before.

Linda was flying in on a new Honduran airlines called Sol Air. Her tickets said Falcon Air Express. Go figure. My friend Lila had driven me out there to retrieve Linda. Even with her Spanish expertise

(she is Nicaraguan), it took Lila a while to figure out when the plane was actually arriving. Most things happen late in Honduras so it was no surprise that we had an hour wait. We got a cup of coffee and I explained to Lila how I know Linda.

So she arrived just fine. Lila dropped us off and I came to the realization that the only friend or family that had visited me, so far, was Linda, whom I barely know. Well, I didn't dwell on it for long. There was a lot to do! The first stop was the caseta for lunch. I introduced her to baliadas (similar to a soft taco) and the local beers. Then, it was off to the local tourist market for a few gifts.

The next morning we took a 3hour bus ride to La Ceiba on the northern coast of Honduras. Unfortunately, there were too many people on the island of Roatan so the ferry had to go back to Roatan first, and then go on to Utila. The usual 45 minute trip turned into 2 hours instead. That meant no diving for the 22nd. Instead, we unpacked and went out for some dinner and an early night.

And so began the diving! There were only a few people on the island at this time just before Christmas. That meant only a few dive masters to guide us on our dives. I ended up leading a few dives since I know the sites. One dive was a bit off though. Linda and I got a bit lost when the dive master went to the surface and left me without setting my compass heading. So Linda and I led the dive group astray. We managed to make it back to the boat but only after a lot of kicking and backtracking against the tide. Oh well.

The best dive was our night dive. I am an avid fan of the night dive. This particular one was at a wreck site. A few years ago, some of the dive shops in Utila got together and sunk an old cargo ship. It lies in about 90 ft of water. That is not too deep, but when you do a direct descent to it at night it gets a bit spooky! Once we got down to the wreck it was downright eerie. There was a bicycle on the port topside deck and a swim through site in the main cabin. I didn't do the swim through because I was too busy watching a large green octopus scoot around the below deck area. I love watching octopi move in the water!



Christmas Dinner

This year was my first international Beach style Christmas dinner. About 10 of us grilled out at a local dive hotel. We were from all over the world. (Germany, Denmark, Britain, US, just to name a few) It turned out to be a great dinner with moonlight over the Caribbean. I never knew that spotted eagle rays jump up to three feet out of the water. Did you? I saw one jump in the moonlight. Awesome.