

CLUB MED SONORA BAY



ON MEXICO'S
SEA OF CORTEZ

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

For the vacationer who wants good diving and a whole lot more, Club Med Sonora Bay may be just the ticket. There are so many things to do you may have difficulty deciding how to work them all in! Sonora Bay offers guests a magnificent location, fabulous food, sporting activities galore, nightly entertainment and a complete dedicated diving facility. Club Med has more than 110 locations throughout the world and a 40 year reputation for knowing just how to make your vacation ideal.

GETTING TO CLUB MED SONORA BAY

Club Med Sonora Bay is near Guaymas, Mexico on the Sea of Cortez. For our trip to Club Med, we took a very comfortable Alaska Airlines flight from Portland to Phoenix and then boarded a special Club Med American West charter to Guaymas. (Alaska Airlines and her sister company Horizon Airlines provide frequent nonstop, direct flights to Phoenix from cities throughout the western United States. Alaska also flies to a number of dive destinations in California, Mexico and the Pacific Northwest. For reservations or more information telephone (800) 426-0333.)



DAY OF ARRIVAL

Upon landing at the Guaymas airport, you will see the razor sharp Algodones Mountains edging down the coast against the beautiful blue ocean. The 15 minute bus ride from the airport to the village takes you through the countryside, giving you a taste of what the local tours have to offer. At the gates of the village there is a massive grove of cacti but, once you cross the threshold, an oasis awaits you. You go directly to registration where you are processed in and quickly on your way to your room. Simply point out your bags and they appear in front of your room.

The rooms are in pueblo-style buildings and each has a unique view of the ocean or the courtyard facing the mountains. The air-conditioned rooms feature sun decks, safes, showers and extremely comfortable beds. After a brief stop at your room, it's back to the main auditorium for an introduction to your GOs—*gentils organizeurs*—the French term for cordial hosts. These dedicated individuals will do everything necessary to make your vacation enjoyable.

During this briefing you find out about all the sports and activities taking place during the
(Continued on Page 160)



Opposite page: Although Club Med Sonora Bay is a dedicated dive resort, it offers a variety of other sporting activities, entertainment, relaxation, food and friends. Above/right: Divers play with rambunctious sea lions. Clockwise from below: The diving provides ample macro photography opportunities; three buffetstyle, incredibly varied meals are served daily; Club Med also offers open water certifications; one of the club's new boats—*Nomad*.



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CLUB MED SONORA BAY

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week. These include horseback riding, tennis, windsurfing, waterskiing, sailing, snorkeling, aerobics, volleyball, basketball, scuba diving, arts and crafts and many more. The well-rounded schedule of events provides a little bit of everything so there is something for everyone. Club Med gives you the chance to be introduced to sports you never thought of trying. You don't have to be an expert to participate, many of the other guests are just beginners, too. The philosophy at Club Med is dare to try, dare to be yourself.

DEDICATED DIVE CENTER

On the village's south beach you will find the Dedicated Dive Center. It caters to certified divers as well as those who would like to become certified. For a nominal charge, open water certifications for PADI, NAUI, SSI and CMAS are available. But, if you're already certified, diving at Club Med doesn't cost anything additional—it is already included in the price you paid before leaving home. You don't even need to bring any equipment as the dive shop will provide you with everything you need (also at no extra cost). When you arrive for the morning dive, check out all your necessary gear and place it in a mesh bag. Then all you have to do is get yourself and your mesh bag on the boat.

DIVE BOATS

Two new dive boats have recently been purchased to make the quality of Club Med diving even better. The *Sabrina Gale* is a 45 foot, single 650 horsepower engine boat that can accommodate 30 divers, 64 tanks and assorted gear. The 56 foot *Nomad* is a 650 horsepower, single engine boat that can accommodate more than 120 tanks, 60 divers, food and all the necessary dive gear. Both boats can cruise at more than 15 knots, ensuring that they reach the dive sites in the shortest possible time. The tanks are color coded and preloaded on the boat. A sundeck on each boat allows guests to catch some rays before reaching the dive site.

Club Med Sonora Bay offers two types of trips—a two tank dive or a one tank dive. On the two tank trips you dive many of the various reefs and sea-mounts to depths of 100 feet and see a wide variety of animal life. On the last dive we made we saw moray eels, octopuses, anemones, pufferfish, angelfish, many species of starfish, scorpionfish and dozens of other animals we hadn't seen before. Upon resurfacing you feast on a morning snack of meat,

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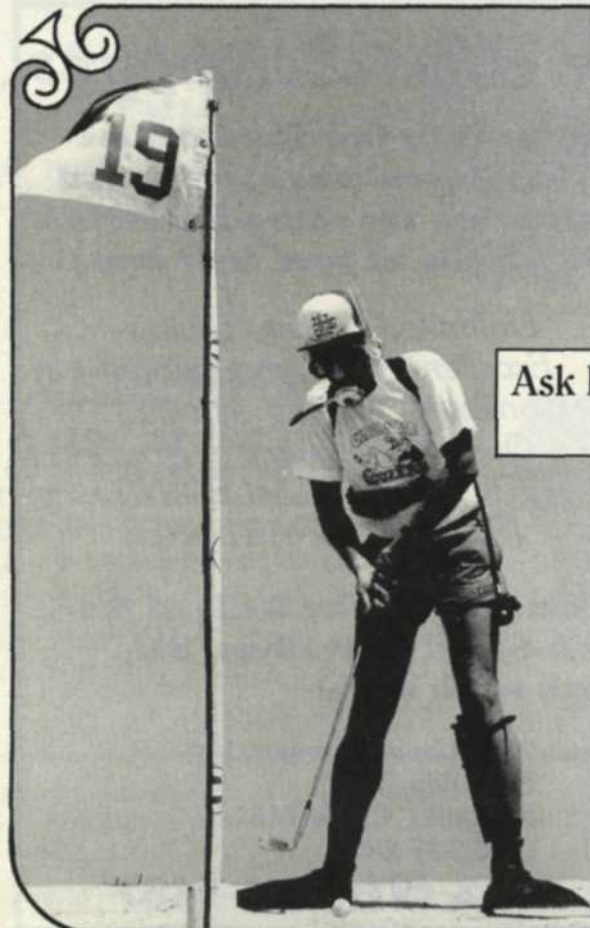
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cheese, fruit and juices, before taking the plunge again. A short boat ride gets you back in time for lunch at one of the village's three restaurants.

If the conditions are good, the single tank dive trip is to **Seal Island**. Here you experience the excitement of diving with friendly sea lions. When you first enter the water, the animals come out to greet you and your buddy, swimming circles around you and providing great photo opportunities. On our first trip to Seal Island we found a large male that insisted on being in all our pictures. When we returned the next day, our curious shadow eagerly greeted us.

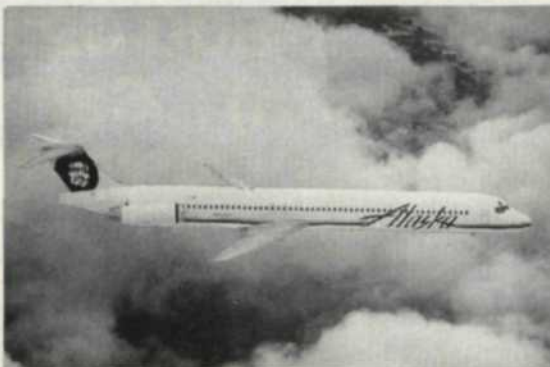
The bottom along Seal Island is yellow-green algae that takes on the appearance of flowing wheat fields. If guests get tired of playing with the sea lions, they can comb through these fields and find myriad animal life to satisfy the explorers as well as the well equipped underwater photographers. Optional night dives are planned twice a week and take guests to one of the many sites near the village.

Upon returning to the dive shop you rinse your equipment in huge tanks and return it. If you have your own equipment there is an area for hanging wetsuits and lockers to store gear until the next day's diving. Before leaving the dive shop, divers check the schedule

and sign up for the next day.

FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT

After an enjoyable day of diving, you can stroll back to the freshwater swimming pool, stop by the bar and get a drink or participate in some afternoon sports—such as water volleyball—try your hand at sailboarding or just lie back and dream of tomorrow's dive. Club Med gives you the freedom to do it all—or just sit back and do nothing. The choice is yours.



Three meals a day are served buffetstyle. At one evening meal we counted more than 25 entrees, 20 desserts, 15 different breads, 10 different fruit drinks, a massive salad bar and a table loaded with every fruit possible. Keep in mind that was only the American food section: There was just as much variety in the Mexican food section.

At about 9:00 pm, the action starts

again in the large auditorium, with stage shows, amateur skits and Broadway style singing and dancing. A beer drinking contest, water and fire extravaganza in the pool, comedy acts and *piñata* breaking are some of the events scheduled throughout the week. If you want more, a disco some distance from the main village allows the dusk to dawners to party all night.

CLUB MED PHILOSOPHY

Club Med Sonora Bay is a Dedicated Dive Resort but does not contend that scuba diving should occupy 100 percent of your vacation. Sonora Bay Village is designed so guests can mix a variety of sporting activities, entertainment, relaxation, food and friends—thus creating a well-rounded vacation. The village welcomes children over age six and allows a nice family atmosphere for divers and nondivers alike.

Most of the guests stay for one to two weeks but Club Med understands that with tight daily schedules, it is not always easy to get away for as long as you'd like, so it also offers flexi-vacations for a few days' escape. Come discover the Club Med world, which offers you the freedom to try it all or just kick back and relax. For further information and reservations call (800) CLUB-MED. 🐟



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