



Dolphin Scuba Center Inc.

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Channel Islands Lobster Trips

Welcome to Dolphin Scuba Center's annual Northern Channel Islands lobster trips! Located off the coast of Southern California, these islands are swept by cold currents from the north and warmer waters from Baja creating a rich biodiversity. The waters are lush with kelp beds, rocky crevices, and ledges that are perfect for marine life. The California Spiny Lobsters live in small

communities that migrate around the reefs. The Rock Scallops are everywhere, and fish life varies from top to bottom. White Sea Bass, Yellowtail, Calico Bass, Ocean Whitefish, Rockfish, Sheephead, Lingcod, Cabezon, and Halibut are all desired by the underwater hunter, while many other species are exceptional for photography. You will also see Garibaldi, Opaleye, Hornsharks, Bat Rays, Octopus, Jellyfish, and many others!

Typical water temperatures for the Northern Channel Islands will vary from 50 to 60 degrees. Visibility will change periodically from 10 feet to 100 feet depending on the location, currents, plankton blooms, and season. Weather plays a crucial role in determining safety in any diving location.

Getting There

Truth Aquatics

301 W. Cabrillo Blvd.

Santa Barbara, CA. 93101

Ph. 805-962-1127

From Sacramento, take Highway 5 South to Kettlemen City. Then, take Highway 41 to Highway 46 to Paso Robles. From there, head South on Highway 101 to Santa Barbara. Take the Castillo Street exit to Harbor Blvd. Turn right, then left to enter the Sea Landing. Drive through to the end of the parking lot. The office will validate your parking ticket. They also have equipment, rentals, ice, fishing licenses, and other last minute forgotten items. Typically, the boat will be boarding after 4:00 PM, the night before departure. The boat will also be leaving dock at 4:00 AM the next morning.

Words to the Wise...

Be sure to have your gear maintained and checked well before the trip departure date. Battery replacements in computers, performance checks, and regulator overhauls will add to your enjoyment of diving instead of worrying about equipment malfunctions. Check all straps, buckles, clips, and attachment points for signs of wear and overuse. Always carry an audible and visible signal with you at all times in case of emergency. Make sure to bring backup gear and equipment in case you lose an item or something malfunctions.

Dive within your limits. Do not be afraid to sit out of a dive if you are uncomfortable. Remember, you're on vacation. Rest when you are tired, and never overexert yourself. Be self-sufficient and never rely solely on your dive buddy. There is a small inflatable boat to come pick

you up, in the event that you cannot make it safely back to the boat. Always ask questions if you don't understand something, and never hesitate to ask for assistance or help if needed.

Scuba diving is always a risky sport regardless of the diving destination. Dan Insurance is a great addition to providing you with safety and reliability. Accidents are rare, but do occur, and we recommend that you are prepared for them. An estimated cost for an emergency helicopter ride from the boat to the shore is \$10,000! This does not include the treatments you would need for your medical attention. The annual cost for Dan Insurance can be as little as \$40 per year! The next time you visit Dolphin Scuba, make sure to ask for a free brochure on Dan Insurance information, or visit www.diversalertnetwork.org

Dive Equipment Required

- Cold water wetsuit/ Drysuit with hood, gloves, and boots.
- Fins mask and snorkel
- Weights
- Regulator with dive computer and octopus
- Scuba Tank (one is ok. They will refill them on the boat. The more cubic feet, the better!)
- Knife or Shears
- Safety sausage and emergency whistle recommended
- BCD
- 2 Dive lights (for night diving, one primary and one backup.)
- Backup gear and replacement parts
- First Aid Kit

Personal Gear Recommended

- Sleeping Bag with a Pillow
- Earplugs (The boat motors are very loud during the evening and mornings.)
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, towel

- Bathing suit
- Coat or windbreaker
- Sunscreen, hat, and a good pair of sunglasses
- Hangers for your wetsuit(s)
- Motion Sickness pills are recommended
- Diver's logbook
- Alcohol is also accepted
- Good character and no bad attitudes!

Game Collecting

- Fishing License with an ocean enhancement stamp
- Lobster report card
- Primary lobster bag
- Live well lobster bag
- Lobster gauges (Bring more than one. They're inexpensive)
- Abalone iron or large steel knife for rock scallops
- Fish stringer
- Spearguns
- Extra bands, shockline, and spear tips
- Filet knife with sharpening stone
- Freezer Ziploc baggies and a sharpie
- Larger ice chest
- Scale and tape measure are good to have

Fishing Regulations

Unless specified otherwise, all fish filets must have a 1" patch of skin left on for identification purposes

- California Spiny Lobster: 3 ¼" minimum. Limit 7 per day
- Rock Scallops: No size limit. Limit 10 per day
- White Sea Bass: 28" minimum. Limit 3 per day
- Yellowtail: No size minimum for first 5. 24" minimum. Limit 10 per day
- Lingcod: 22" minimum. Limit 2 per day
- Calico Bass: 14" minimum. Limit 5 per day
- Cabezon: 15" minimum. Limit 3 per day; Must be kept whole while cleaning
- Rockfish: No size limit. Limit 10 in combination per day
- Sheephead: 12" minimum. Limit 5 per day; Must be kept whole while cleaning

Illegal Fishing Responsibility

Sometimes people decide to break the rules that the Department of Fish and Wildlife give us. There are major consequences to these actions. These fines can cost up to \$1,000 and 6 months in jail. If Department of Fish and Wildlife board the boat during our trip, or meet the boat at the dock, not only does this affect the person fishing illegally, but this will also affect the crew and fellow divers. The diver with the illegal lobster AND the Captain of the boat will be fined. The Department of Fish and Wildlife will hold every person on the boat until each game bag and frozen bag is gone through and checked for proper sizing, species, limit, etc. If you see someone breaking the rules, please discreetly and immediately talk to the Trip Leader or one of the Crew Members. Here is the Dolphin Scuba Center Policy to follow:

- Sizing and limit count is self-regulated
- All gauging of size is done underwater before coming onto the boat
- If sizing looks questionable, re-check immediately upon boarding the boat
- Any questions about sizing or species, ask your trip leader or crew member
- There is absolutely **NO TAILING** of lobster at any time on the boat
- If the lobster molts or dies, immediately gut the carapace and freeze as a whole lobster

- If you personally see a diver bringing undersized lobster, an over limit of lobster, or tailing of lobster on the boat, please privately talk to a trip leader or crew member

If you are caught with undersized lobster in your livewell bag, tailing your lobster, or with an over limit, you will be banned from the Dolphin Scuba Center Lobster trips.

Diving the Channel Islands

Upon your arrival, you will want to grab one of the large wheeled carts and load your gear onto the boat. Do not arrive too early, since the boat needs time to clean from the previous trip. Select a small area on the boat to store your diving equipment and ice chest. Try to avoid setting your gear on the bow of the boat. Numerous amounts of ocean spray happen at the bow when the vessel is underway. The crew also needs to be able to reach and work the bow anchor. Keep your equipment in your personal space, and try not to scatter it around the entire boat. If your tank is empty, grab a red tag from the stern of the boat, and place it on your tank valve. It would be a smart idea to set up your gear the night before. This allows you to make last minute trips to the Sea Landing dive shop for repair equipment.

On the evening of arrival, many people walk the pier of Santa Barbara in search for a great place to eat. There are many great bars and restaurants to dine at! However, keep in mind that you have a full three days of diving ahead of you, so don't party too long. You will need your rest and energy for the trip.

Waking up in the islands, with the smell of hot breakfast to your order draws you up to the deck and into your dive gear. The Captain will give a dive briefing before the first dive. Make sure to pay close attention, as he will be discussing safety procedures, boat rules, signals, and relevant diving information. The gate times will be short on these lobster boats, so make sure you're ready with all your gear when the crew drops anchor. You may exit the boat any way you like. In certain dive locations, only one area of the boat will be open to jump off of. Once you are finished with diving, you will swim towards the stern of the boat, and exit the water via a large swim platform. If currents are strong, or you have little energy to return to the boat, there will be a rope with a float running off the stern of the boat. You can use this to pull yourself in towards the boat. In the event that you cannot make it back to the boat, there will be a small inflatable that can come pick you up. Please use discretion when requesting a pick up from the inflatable. The crew on the boat will remove your fins and gather your game and speargun once arrived on the swim platform. Make sure to remember to hand your gun to the crew muzzle pointing down so no injuries occur to the crew. Load and unload your gun no closer than 50 feet from the boat. **Never bring a loaded gun aboard the boat.** Spearfishing knives are great for dispatching fish. The crew will cook your lobster for you, but only if you ask them. Store your

bugs in a livewell, bag your fish and scallops, write your name on the bag, and store it in the freezer down below.

You can dive as much or as little as you would like. Make sure to pace yourself, especially if you plan to do a night dive. The night dive will take place just after dark and is a great time to catch lobsters that are unaware. Two lights are required; a primary, and a backup. We recommend having a tank light as well so the crew can easily see you when you surface from the dive. You can purchase cyalume glow sticks or a constant “on” light for this use. There will be no spearfishing allowed on the night dive, for obvious safety reasons. There is a possibility that the night dive will be cancelled due to poor weather conditions such as; heavy fog, swell, currents, and things like these. Make sure to watch your dive computer and monitor your nitrogen levels when doing multiple dives!

Lobster Hunting

The California Spiny Lobster has a total of 10 legs, and no claws. The tail has extremely sharp spines pointing toward the inside. It has two large antennae that are used as feelers for far away, and two smaller antennae for feeding purposes. The eye stalks on top of the carapace are protected by two very sharp horns. The antennae are also connected to the carapace by two flexible jointed knuckles. The females have smaller claws on the hind legs to aid in managing the eggs. You can also tell the difference between males and females by the underside of the tail. The males will have small fan like tails underneath them, and the female will have larger ones to hold her eggs. Lobsters swim very fast in a backwards position by using their rear fins on the edge of the tail. They like to hide in shelves and cracks during the day. Sometimes, you will find a good amount of lobster nestling in the eel grass in shallow waters.

When hunting lobster, you should look and focus for antennas poking out of a crack or hole. When you spot one, go in fast and furious. Do not hesitate. Your goal is to get your entire hand on the bug, and pin it down, so it cannot kick backwards and swim away. If you grab the large antenna, they WILL break off. These are easy to grow back for the lobster. Watch out for the horns over the eyes, as these are very sharp and can cut through your glove. If you grab the tail, make sure to keep your hands clear of the underside. The sharp tail spines on the sides can cut you as well. Kevlar lined gloves work very well for not only protection from the spines but aiding in catching lobster as well. The Kevlar sticks to the hard body, therefore making it easier to grab hold of the lobster. If you reach into a hole and grab the knuckles of the antenna, make sure you have a positive firm grip on them. These will not break off. Make sure to grip tightly and shake as fast and hard as you can. This will shake the lobster up, and they will slowly come out of the hole. As soon as it is removed from the hole, make sure to grab the carapace or tail and hang on tight so they don't swim away. Lay the bug down on the ground, and measure from the horns

between the eyes, to the back of the carapace. If the lobster gauge touches the tail, it is a short. Place the lobster back into the hole. Another way you can measure the lobster is by hooking the lobster gauge in the back of the carapace and measuring in between the eyes. If the lobster gauge goes past the horns and makes the eyes move, the lobster is too small, or short as well. Please do not bring short bugs up to the deck and measure them. Shove the bug into your dive bag very carefully without letting your others escape! The punch-in bags work great for this. Another great lobster bag is the squeeze bag. This bag is spring loaded and can open up with just a squeeze of the handle. Once you end your dive and arrive on the deck, you will remove your lobster from your lobster bag, and place them in your Live Well bag underneath the boat.

Lobsters like to choose holes that have a front AND back door. A lot of times, you will reach into a hole to grab a lobster, and they will scurry out the back door. You can prevent this from happening by going around the backside and placing a rock, or your bag in front of the backdoor. Scare the lobster into the back of the hole, swim around to the backside, remove your bag, and grab your lobster! When looking inside of a hole, make sure to check on the roof. Bugs like to hang upside down on the top. If you see a hole with numerous bugs in it, be strategic in choosing your lobster. A lot of times you can achieve an entire limit of lobster in one glory hole! Avoid going into overhead environments, unless properly trained to do so. This can be extremely dangerous to divers who are unaware of their surroundings. However, these can be a definite promise that you will come across at least one bug. Many divers can successfully remove their scuba unit in order to fit into a tight cave for a bug. Once again, please do not attempt this unless you are properly trained to do so. Many divers have had fatal accidents in trying to recover their regulator.

Rock Scallops

Rock Scallops are fan shaped filter feeders that attach themselves to the reef from birth. They're attached by a cement-like excretion that requires heavy prying with a large knife or abalone iron to remove them. The scallop has a very strong muscle near the center that opens and closes the shell. Be careful not to get your finger in one because getting it back is questionable. This muscle is the edible part of the animal. Unlike your average quarter sized scallop button you find in a restaurant, an average Rock Scallop from the Channel Islands can range from 5" to 12" across on the shell, and 3" to 6" in the edible area! A complete bag load of scallops is extremely heavy. A lot of divers will bring a small knife with them on the dive and clean the scallop underwater. It only takes 2 to 3 minutes to fully clean one. When cleaning a scallop, you want to find a small opening, and place your knife inside. Angle the knife down onto the smoother side of the shell. Scrape your knife back and forth across the entire bottom. This is cutting the tenant away from the lower shell. You will know you succeeded because the shell will relax and slowly open up. Pry the shell open and scrape the other side away from the

shell. Now you have the internals left. Most people will keep everything whole until you arrive back on the boat. Others like to clean the scallop entirely while underwater. Peel the orange guts away from the button and clean up the brown residue. Now you have a clean, edible scallop button.

When looking for scallops, look at the reef structure for bright orange “lips” hanging out of the shell. Sometimes, they are brown or red as well. As soon as you get close to them, the shell will immediately shut, and most of the time the scallop will blend right into the reef. These animals are filter feeders, so make sure to look in areas that have a good amount of water flow. Channels, cave entrances, and alongside the wall of the islands are all great places to look for these amazing animals. Make sure to try them fresh and raw once they’re cleaned on the boat! Wasabi and soy sauce mixed is an easy way to enjoy this delicacy.

Spearfishing

The spearfishing in the Channel Islands is some of the best worldwide. The thick kelp forests and canopies offer a dense habitat for numerous species. You will find life from the very bottom of the ocean, to the very top into the kelp. This offers a variety of divers an opportunity to enjoy underwater hunting, whether on scuba or freediving. A record White Sea Bass was shot in 2007 by freediver Bill Ernst that weighed a total of 93.1 lbs. on a certified market scale! Humongous White Sea Bass, Yellowtail, Lingcod, and Halibut live in the Channel Islands.

While freediving, it’s recommended that you use a gun with a reel or use a float and floatline assembly. You can find more information on these two types by speaking with Dolphin Scuba Center. Line management becomes critical when shooting fish from distance. Make sure to keep free from entanglements. It is extremely recommended that you dispatch your catch immediately after you get a hand on it. This prevents the diver from being injured and makes it easier to handle the fish.

While scuba diving, a small banded or pneumatic speargun will work the best. This prevents you from having an overload of equipment on you that can be very restrictive to enjoying the dive. A lot of times, you will shine your dive light in a hole looking for bugs, only to find a giant sized lingcod or Cabezon. This is where a small speargun works the best. They have great power for close range shots, and they’re not as bulky as some larger freediving spearguns. Remember that most rockfish have poisonous dorsal spines, especially the Scorpionfish, or Sculpins. You can put smaller fish into your lobster bag, but having a fish stringer is the easiest way to carry your catch. Load and unload your speargun at least 50 feet away from the swim deck. Never load or unload your speargun out of the water. Please only take legal sized fish. Remember, if you’re not sure, pass by the animal. Chances are there is something bigger around the corner!

Respect the ocean, and it will treat you right! Dolphin Scuba Center encourages conscientious underwater hunters so everyone has a great time, and so there's hunting in the future.

Coming Home

The boat will arrive back at the dock at around 4:00 PM. Make sure to validate your parking ticket if you did not do so upon arriving. If you were happy with the diving, the crew, and the all-around trip, please be courteous and make sure to leave a tip on the boat for the crew! 10% is customary and recommended for all divers. Ice can be purchased at the Sea Landing store for your fish, scallops, and lobster. Make sure to lay a wet towel, your wetsuit, or your fins on top of the ice before placing the lobsters in. This will keep them alive and out of the freshwater for the trip home. The ride back can be a little rough for some, so make sure to be safe, and trade off driving duties with your carpool group. We want to see you come back to the shop and sign up for the next trip! We look forward to meeting with you on the dock and diving with you now, and on the many other trips to the Channel Islands! Please contact us for further information or questions you may have.

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