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REPORT:**

THE BEST DIVE GEAR OF 2007

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE RIVERS TRUST

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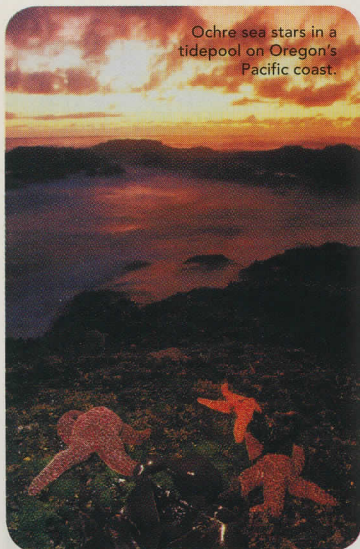
**10 Can't-Miss Dives
in the Bahamas**

YOUR TAKE-ALONG DIVE MAP

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Ochre sea stars in a tidepool on Oregon's Pacific coast.

Oregon: Coast to Crater

The scenic wilderness of the Beaver State includes mountains, river gorges and even desert—but diving? Surprised? You shouldn't be. **BY KATRINA HAYS**

OREGON isn't the easiest place to dive; it is tricky, often fickle, and asks a great deal of the diver in terms of patience, commitment and ability. But to the lucky few who choose to dive in Oregon, the state offers challenging, gorgeous and almost untouched diving that can rival anywhere else in the world. Sounds like a bold statement? Well, consider this: Oregon has both world-class saltwater diving, courtesy of 363 miles of coastline, and a line of gorgeous freshwater lakes that lie like a sapphire necklace along the Cascade Range in the center of the state.

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DIVE IN: Oregon

THE CENTRAL COAST: Despite cooler water (about 54 degrees), diving is better in winter because the algae blooms die off—prime dive season is September through February. The vis averages about 15 feet. **DIVE SHOPS:** Portland: Aquatic Sports (www.aquaticsports.com). Eugene: Eugene Skin Divers Supply (www.eugenekindivers.com). Florence: Central Coast Watersports (www.centralcoastwatersports.com). North Bend: Sunset Sports (www.sunsetsports.net). **THE FIN-**



TERS, SOUTH JETTY, NEWPORT: Go west on SE Jetty Way. Drive to the water and park between the third and fourth “finger” of rock. Enter the water just to the right of the fourth finger, or just to the left of the third finger. **NORTH JETTY DIVE PARK, FLORENCE:** Take North Jetty Road west. Past Harbor Vista Campgrounds on the left is the turnout to the dive site. Parking is at the end of a short road. **THE LAKES:** Besides Crater Lake, you can also dive Clear and Waldo lakes. • **DIVE SHOPS:** Central Oregon Diving in Bend (www.codiving.com), is a good place for information and tank fills. **CRATER LAKE:** No permit is required to dive here, but rangers will ask for your C-card. Hike down the Cleetwood Cove Trail, go past the boathouse and enter the water on the boulder access.

The Central Coast

Diving the Oregon coast is a tricky, often frustrating adventure. Visibility ranges from four to six feet in the jetties to 20 to 30 feet offshore. Commonly seen fish include lingcod, greenling, red snapper, sculpin, cabezon, black snapper and octopus. Steamer clams, butter clams, scallops, Dungeness, red rock and hermit crabs abound in the jetty areas, and the offshore reefs have cold-water anemones and sponges. It's rare but not unheard of to see sea lions and even orca whales. The problem with diving here is that you cannot count on reliable conditions. The rule of thumb for the Oregon coast is: Don't force it, and

plan to do something else if conditions aren't favorable.

The most consistent shore diving is found off the central coast, from Newport to Florence. Get a local tide chart, and dive only the slack period. The currents along the coast can be fearsome, but there are calm, quiet days when the ocean is invitingly flat. Water temperatures range from 50 to 65 degrees, and May through September tend to be the best months for diving the coast.

A short distance north of Florence are the popular Sea Lion Caves and one of the most photographed sites on the Oregon coast, Heceta Head Lighthouse. Recently, a state dive park was designated at the north jetty

“ To me, it seems unique, it seems like something that is done for the profit of the diver. It's done so that we can dive and feel good when we dive ... and so that we're protected ... ”

José Negroni
Attorney, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
New diver
& aspiring underwater
photographer
DAN Member*

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in Florence. The dive park is located on the Siuslaw River and offers easy entry, good parking and reliable conditions, so it's a good site for beginners. You enter in a sheltered cove area, drop down to about 35 feet, and head upriver 50 yards to the area known as Crab Hole. It's a great place to find crabs, clams and mussels. Diving during the slack tide is essential. You'll be diving beneath sportfishing and crab boats, so make sure you use a safety flag.

To the south of the Newport jetty, five fingers of rock stretch perpendicular from the main jetty at the site appropriately named Fingers. The jetty area provides some great hiding places for smaller marine life like red rock crabs, perch and lingcod, and the rocky fingers offer some protection from the current, which can rip at times. Dive the first three fingers, as the fourth and fifth are subject to much stron-

ger current. Plan your dive about 30 to 45 minutes before high slack tide. A great night dive for finding small octopuses.

For cold, freshwater diving that also happens to offer the added challenge of high altitude, the lakes of Oregon are hard to beat. One to have in your dive log is Crater Lake.

Crater Lake

In order to dive Crater Lake, you have to schlep your gear down—and back up—three-quarters of a mile of gravel trail with an elevation change of 1,000 feet. Crater Lake is not for beginners. The dive is made at a very high altitude (8,000 feet), and you have to make a rigorous hike. In addition, a diver needs experience with controlling open-water vertical descents and must have excellent buoyancy control because Crater Lake's bottom is 1,949

feet down. And that blue, blue water is so clear, it's very easy to get disoriented.

After hiking down Cleetwood Cove Trail, you'll scramble over boulders to access the water. The entrance is a vertical shelf that drops down 90 feet. Once in the water, that exceptional clarity is dizzying. It is possible to look up through 50 feet of water and clearly see trees on the cliff above the lake. The tumble of rocks on the side of the caldera remind you that Crater Lake was formed by a volcano. The rocks seem to be a frozen avalanche of stone, arrested in vibrant blue water.

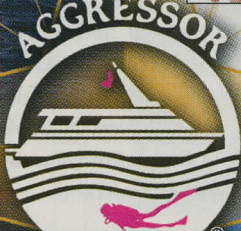
If you dive southeast along the wall, you'll find beautiful wall formations; on your right, the blue-violet water of the abyss. You may encounter a few brown trout flickering by, but there's not much life to see in Crater Lake. You go for the rock, and for the incredible blue water. **SD**

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