

Jim Church School of Underwater Photography
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Fellow Shipmates,

Welcome to the *Jim Church School of Underwater Photography*. We are looking forward to diving with you!

Mike & I want you to know that we are there to teach you as much, or as little, about underwater photography as you wish. This is your trip! Learn a lot, learn a little, but above all, we want you to have a great time!! There is a sample COURSE ITINERARY further on in this document.

A few house keeping points...

If you have questions regarding the photo course, please direct them to us. (See info in letterhead). If you call and get the answering machine for Underwater Camera Repair, please leave a message that includes your phone number and a good time to call you back. (*A sample course itinerary is located later in this document.*)

Please direct questions about the vessel, equipment rental, dietary or special needs to Aggressor Fleet 1-800-348-2628; info@aggressor.com (more specific Aggressor email addresses are at the end of this document). A full information sheet about each Aggressor is available for download in PDF format from Aggressor Fleet at <http://www.aggressor.com/downloads.php>.

This is a trip for certified divers, please bring your c-card. We strongly recommend you bring a dive computer, one you are familiar with. Diving insurance, such as DAN (Divers Alert Network) insurance, is another strong recommendation. You can call DAN at 1-800-446-2671 or visit their website at <http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/>. The insurance and service they provide is well worth the minimal cost.

PLEASE ASSEMBLE YOUR CAMERA EQUIPMENT ENTIRELY BEFORE PACKING!! That way you can be sure you have all the parts necessary for your camera system. If you accidentally leave out a special screw or other part, we might not be able to find a substitute on the boat.

Software recommendations

Demo versions of Apple's Aperture (MAC only) and Adobe's Lightroom (MAC or WINDOWS) can be downloaded from their websites. These are excellent tools for organizing, processing and sharing your images.

Apple Aperture: <http://www.apple.com/aperture/trial/>

Adobe Lightroom: https://www.adobe.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?loc=en_us&product=photoshop_lightroom

EQUIPMENT INFO

Memory Cards:

Bring at least two memory cards for your camera. More is better. Depending on your camera and the image format you capture, consider a capacity of at least 1 gig or greater per card. In this case, bigger is better. It all depends on the size of your image files. These days, 2, 4 and 8 Gig cards are common. Mike & I dive with 2 Gig & 4 Gig cards. MM changes cards after each dive & MH changes after every other dive. You may want to change cards after every dive or at the very least at the end of each day to transfer images to your computer or backup device. If you do not have a means of transferring your images while on the boat, we will be able to help you. Please let us know before the trip if you'll need help transferring and/or storing your images.

Batteries:

Bring extra batteries for your camera. Digital cameras (especially Point & Shoot digital cameras) seem to exhaust batteries faster than film cameras did. It's a good idea to install a freshly charged battery in your camera before each dive. Finding your camera battery is low or exhausted before a dive can happen to any one of us. If you have extra batteries with you, you can keep one on charge, ready to go, for just those moments.

Bring extra batteries for your strobes. If you use rechargeable batteries such as Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMH) or Ni-Cads, bring extra sets. You can keep a set on charge while you are using a set in your strobe or camera. If you are using two strobes, bring an extra charger as well as extra batteries.

We use rechargeable AA NiMH cells. Your local camera store should carry the batteries and chargers. One good source of batteries and chargers on the web is Thomas Distributing. Their web site is <http://www.thomas-distributing.com/index.htm> and you will find all sorts of rechargeable batteries and chargers there. We are partial to the MAHA MH-C801D charger. It charges from 1 to 8 AA cells in 1-2 hours and it only requires one plug. It's not cheap, but it does a great job.

If your camera or strobe has a special rechargeable "battery pack", bring an extra one if possible. If your only battery pack develops a problem and standard batteries such as AA size cannot be substituted, that strobe may not be useable for the rest of the trip. Back-up batteries are a must! **AND DON'T FORGET THE CHARGER!!!!**

There is plenty of outlet space for everyone's chargers on board, but it is also a good idea to bring a small power strip that will give you 4-6 additional outlets from one single plug.

If you use disposable (non-rechargeable) batteries for your strobe, the key word is alkaline. Don't buy "heavy-duty" or other batteries not marked as alkaline. You don't need to buy the long lasting brand. We only use the top third of the charge in the battery with a strobe. Why? Recycle time becomes too long after that. We'd rather buy inexpensive alkaline batteries and change them after every 100 shots (to keep recycle times short) than buy more expensive, longer-lasting batteries and try to nurse extra shots (with annoyingly long recycle times) from each set.

Whatever batteries you use, rechargeable or alkaline, figure that you will be making anywhere from 3 to 5 dives per diving day. Plan on one set of batteries for each strobe for every dive or every other dive. This should help you decide how many batteries you need.

Specialty Disposable Batteries - Replace all old disposable specialty batteries and bring an extra one just in case.

Dive Computer - If the battery is user-serviceable, put a fresh one in before the trip and bring an extra along. If it is not user-serviceable, have it serviced by your authorized service center and have them install a fresh battery.

Laptops, Portable Storage Devices & Software:

If you are bringing a laptop, **REMEMBER TO PACK YOUR AC POWER ADAPTER!** There are plenty of plugs on board to charge your laptop battery or run from the AC adapter. If you do not have a laptop and are looking for advice on what to buy, please give us a call and we will be glad to offer our help (🍏).

Consider bringing small, portable hard drive that can serve as a backup device for your images on the trip. Once you download your images to your laptop, you can copy them to the portable drive so they are in two places. If you are bringing a portable storage device only, that's ok, but it will be hard to check your images on a small screen and you won't have them backed up in case the drive fails. A laptop *and* a portable drive is our suggestion.

If you have neither, Mike and I will have our laptops aboard. You can download your images to our computers and we can burn a DVD backup for you at the end of the trip. Please bring blank DVD discs for that purpose

We will have demo versions of photo related software with us to share with you. More on that when we get aboard. Please realize that you will eventually need some system of importing, cataloging and working with your digital images. We will review that with you in class and help you make a choice on what will work best for you. If you are currently using a system, terrific! We can help you if you have any questions with what you are using.

Please bring a *copy* of any software disks that came with your camera. It will be useful to have it available aboard.

Instruction Manuals:

Please be sure to bring the instruction manuals for your camera equipment to the course. While we have extensive experience with many different cameras, there may be some specific Custom Function or setting your equipment uses that may be different from what we are familiar with. It will be easier for us to reference it if we have your manuals available.

BAGGAGE TIPS & OTHER TID BITS

Fifty pounds per bag seems to be the magic number for international bags. Over 70 pounds per bag and it might have to travel as air freight. Check with your airline for their specific restrictions and overage costs as well as how many carry on bags they allow. Bring a change of clothes, toiletries, etc., in your carry-on. You never know if checked baggage will arrive late. (Follow TSA regulations for liquids in carry-on.)

Bring Credit Card or Traveler's Checks and lots of \$1 and \$5 bills.

Bring a supply of small bills (\$1 and \$5) for traveling tips (taxis & porters) and small purchases (airport magazines, gum, etc). The Aggressor accepts VISA & MASTER CARD, (some AMERICAN EXPRESS also), Traveler's Checks & Cash.

Crew Tip

A crew tip is customary at the end of the week (an industry wide custom, not just with Aggressor Fleet). This tip is for the crew--you don't tip us and we don't get a share of their tip. How much is fair? We believe that 10% of the trip cost per diving guest would be the about right. (We always leave at least \$250 - \$300 each for a one-week trip.) You can make up your mind after you experience the service. You can use a credit card for your crew tip. *Yes, it would be simpler if the tip were added to the package price. However, because it's optional you have the option of determining the amount based on the crew's performance.*

Like we said earlier, do a trial packing ahead of time

Assemble everything a few days ahead of time -- dive gear, camera gear, etc. Make sure that you have all the parts, pieces, tools and owner's manuals and make a packing check list now! If something is missing, better find out now while there is time to replace it. By the way, when you pack camera equipment, you can use clothing as cushioning material to economize on space.

Camera and dive gear insurance

Both DAN and Divers Equipment Protection Program (DEPP) will insure your cameras and dive gear at reasonable rates. The phone number for DAN information is 1-800-446-2671 <http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/>
The phone number for DEPP is 1-888-678-4096 <http://www.equipmentprotection.com/programs/depp.html> .

Clothing

Don't bring too many clothes for the boat. Shorts & T-shirts are the attire for on the boat. Casual is fine for dinner on land. Bring a sunhat. In a pinch, the vessel has a boutique with plenty of T-shirts, etc.

If you wear glasses

If you have trouble reading your gauges and camera settings, consider getting a prescription dive mask. One service that does good work is: Curt Walker Optician, 1-800-538-2878; john@prescriptiondivemasks.com; <http://www.prescriptiondivemasks.com> .

Dive and video lights

If you plan to do night photography, and your strobe doesn't have a built-in light, bring a dive light that can be attached (brackets, clamps or duct tape) to your strobe. Do not pack lights with the batteries inserted!

Sample Course Itinerary

Day 1 – Welcome Aboard!:

The crew will help you & your luggage aboard then show you to your cabin. They are there to help and will take your luggage to your cabin for you. PLEASE let them! After settling in, take this time to unpack your camera equipment and assemble everything. (You should have experience with this assembly part, right?) Mike and I will be there to help, answer questions and generally assist in conducting traffic. After dinner and the Captain's briefing, we will tell you about what we will be doing throughout the week. This is a long day for some folks, so we try not to pack it with too much information.

Day 2:

And so it begins... After Breakfast, there is usually a boat briefing given by the crew followed by the first dive. This first dive is a check-out dive, so we suggest you leave your cameras behind just this once. Our assignment to you is to get your buoyancy right! Arrange your weights so you are neutral or slightly negative at around 30 feet. Also, make sure your dive gear works, your computer functions and your mask does not fog or leak. It's a good idea to scrub the inside glass of your mask with toothpaste or a soft abrasive cleaner then rinse it out thoroughly. This, along with mask de-fog, will help keep your mask from fogging.

Topics for today's class will be Photo & Digital Basics.

Throughout *every* day, Mike & I are there for individual help and photo review.

Day 3:

Topics for today's class:

Ambient Metering – The Beginnings Of A Good Photo

Day 4:

Topics for today's class:

Adding Strobes and Balancing Sunlight & Strobe exposures.

Day 5:

Topics for today's class:

Composition and Lens Selection.

Day 6:

Topics for today's class:

Digital Workflow

Day 7:

It's graduation day! You pick 8 – 10 of your best photos of the week and Mike & I will assemble them into a show for tonight's graduation ceremony.

With the exception of Day 1, we are pretty flexible with the class presentations. Depending on the group, we can repeat presentations, shuffle the order or focus more on a specific topic. If there is something you personally want reviewed, we can work with you on that individually.

We generally have our formal presentations in the morning between the first & second dives. Because of the diving schedule at a few Aggressor locations some of our presentations move to the evenings. We'll let you know what the schedule is on the boat.

We also invite you to submit an image or two on the boat for us to process with the group. We learn better from a wide example of images.

Throughout *every* day, Mike & I are there for individual help and photo review.

TRIP PREPARATION LIST (MODIFY AS NEEDED)

THINGS TO DO AHEAD OF TIME

- Make course reservation with Aggressor Fleet
(1-800-348-2628)
- Make airline reservations--don't delay
- Get passport (if required)
several weeks ahead of time
- Purchase memory cards and batteries
- Order any new equipment--*anticipate delays*
- Test all equipment
- Label everything with your name
- Get prescription mask if you need it
- Have regulator and dive computer overhauled

THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU

Diving gear

- Certification card
- DAN card (for insurance)
- Dive Computer
- Dive mask
- B.C. and related gear
- Fins (& booties if you use them)
- U/W light
- Thin wetsuit, or dive skin if you chill easily
- Extra fin and mask straps
- Small dive light

Traveling items (hand carry)

- Passport (if out of U.S)
- Traveler's checks, credit card
- Bunch of one-dollar bills for
small tips while traveling
- Tickets, flight schedule, phone numbers
- Toilet kit, change of underwear, etc.,
in case baggage is a day late.
(Follow TSA regulations for liquids in carry-on.)

Camera gear

- Assemble entire system before packing
to be sure you have it all
- Owner's manuals for all new or
complicated equipment
- Spare parts and necessary tools
- All new batteries for cameras, meters, etc.
- O-ring grease & small wiping cloth

Personal items

- Shorts, light shirts, blouses.
Optional sunhat and walking shoes
- Two swim suits--much of day spent in these
- Lightweight, fold-up nylon jacket if you return
to cold climate
- Sunscreen--at least #15 for fair skin
- Decongestant, seasick pills. Antihistamine if
you are allergic to coral, bee stings, etc

SPECIFIC EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR AGGRESSOR FLEET

General

info@aggressor.com

Baja

baja@aggressor.com

Belize

belize@aggressor.com

Cayman

cayman@aggressor.com

Galapagos

galapagos@aggressor.com

Kona

kona@aggressor.com

Maldives

maldives@aggressor.com

Okeanos (Cocos)

okeanos@aggressor.com

Palau

palau@aggressor.com

Turks & Caicos

turkscaicos@aggressor.com

Utila

utila@aggressor.com

Travel Planning:

Airline

info@liveaboardvacations.com

Tell Aggressor about your trip

wecare@aggressor.com

SAMPLE packing and check list

Nikon D300 system (for example)

LV RETURN

- () () Nikon D300 Body (s/n xxxxxx)
- () () Nikon 60mm lens (s/n xxxxxx) with Shift & Focus gears for housing
- () () Nikon 105mm lens (s/n xxxxxx) with Shift & Focus gears for housing
- () () Nikon 12-24mm lens (s/n xxxxxx) with Zoom Gear for housing
- () () Tokina 10-17mm lens (s/n xxxxxx) with Focus Gear for housing
- () () 2 Batteries for D300
- () () Battery Charger for D300 Battery
- () () Instruction manual D300
- () () Aquatica Housing for D300
- () () Aquatica Macro Port
- () () Aquatica Dome Port
- () () Inon Z-240 Strobe Head (s/n xxxxxx)
- () () Diffuser for Inon Z-240 (store on front of strobe)
- () () Inon Z-240 Strobe Head (s/n xxxxxx)
- () () Diffuser for Inon Z-240 (store on front of strobe)
- () () Battery Clip for Inon Z-240 (store in strobe head)
- () () Sync cord #1 for Inon Z-240 strobe
- () () Sync cord #2 for Inon Z-240 strobe
- () () Sync cord spare for Inon Z-240 strobe
- () () 6 Ultralight Ball Joints
- () () 2 Ultralight 8" arm sections
- () () 2 Ultralight 5" arm section
- () () 2 Ultralight Strobe Adapter for Inon Z-240
- () () Chargers for AA Batteries (8 slots)
- () () 16 AA rechargeable batteries (4 sets of 4)
- () () Dive Light
- () () Dive light for strobe
- () () Holster for strobe dive light
- () () Tool Box with extra o-rings & grease
- () () 4 sets AA Alkaline batteries for lights
- () () Zip-lock bags
- () () Sharpie pens
- () ()
- () ()
- () ()

() ()