



# Taking a DIVE

*Scuba diving is the ticket to underwater adventure*

By Michelle Ochsner

**T**hey were once called frogmen—naval special operations combat personnel trained to dive for tactical assault missions. Today, divers go by many names and dive for recreational, technical, scientific, or professional reasons. Over the last 70 years, scuba has become a world-wide special interest.

Two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered with water and there are many interesting places to visit under the sea. Some will even take you back in time. One diver's paradise is Chuuk Lagoon (formerly Truk Lagoon), northeast of New Guinea. During World War II, over 60 Japanese ships were sunk there. Today, they remain

loaded with fighter aircraft, tanks, bombs, and weapons, lying in crystal clear water, free from normal ocean currents.

Charlie Sterling, owner of Boise Scuba Center, has trained in the Treasure Valley for over 30 years and has certified thousands of divers. Charlie's passion for diving has opened exciting opportunities. "I've always loved the water and water sports," he says. "One night I was watching a James Bond movie and it had several diving scenes. I couldn't get enough. I wanted to know more about diving. Soon, I enrolled in a course and loved it so much I wanted to become an instructor and make it my career. I love teaching people how to dive, counseling them on the correct gear, and then escorting them to various dive destinations around the world."

Diving is fun for the entire family. Charlie encourages women to put aside their protective instincts and internal



As with any sport, there are risks involved when scuba diving. Descending into the depths of an awe-inspiring body of water, a person is completely dependent upon their training and equipment. Having proper instruction in safety and emergency training assures divers have the knowledge to resurface without working gear. This is why it's absolutely imperative that you buy gear and receive professional training from reputable scuba training facilities.

Scuba diving is a safer sport than many other adrenalinizing, extreme pastimes. This fun and exciting recreation will have you going to the most beautiful parts of the world. Not only will your vacation be one of wonderment on the surface, it will also be an underwater adventure and you'll be left with a lifetime of magical moments.

safeguards and try this sport. "Women have always been cautious about learning but once they do, they tend to be the best divers," he says.

Boise Scuba Center offers both PADI and NAUI certification courses. PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) is an open water course that breaks down instruction from Entry Level to Master Scuba Diver. NAUI balances diving skills and conservation with a focus on safety and awareness.

Regardless of course choice, you'll need real diving experience before partaking in an underwater vacation. Classes generally require about 44 hours before certification upon completion of four to five open water dives in places such as

the springs in Hagerman. Scuba instructors stress that no one should scuba dive unless they know how to rescue a fellow diver.

With over five miles of trails, Eagle Island State Park hosts many family events. Scuba professionals, especially those with Rescue Diver Certification, are sought after as volunteers so the venue is prepared if an emergency should arise.

Locals who learn to dive in Idaho's harsh environment discover ocean dives to be extremely easy. Frigid water temperatures and unexpected climate changes can make even experts shiver in their flippers as hypothermia becomes imminent. Check out Redfish Lake in

Stanley, Lucky Peak Reservoir, and Payette Lake for open water scuba diving. Another favorite spot is Blue Heart Springs near Hagerman, which attracts divers from across the country. With surprisingly unlimited visibility and a year round temperature of 58 degrees, scuba divers enjoy unusual aquatic life and over 300 square feet of natural springs pushing through the walls and floor. On the floor of the springs, water actually bubbles out of the sand, creating a magnificent sight.

Most excursions are just a short drive from Meridian and there is no better way to connect with nature. Travel on beautiful scenic byways, hike, boat, and experience the scenic wonders of Idaho in a new way. **ML**

