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Scuba Certification: Questions You Need To Ask Before Getting Certified

By Jay Umbenhauer

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Learning how to scuba dive is your ticket to the ultimate underwater adventure. The scuba certification that you earn is internationally recognized, never expires, and allows you to rent or purchase your own diving equipment. You'll soon discover, however, that there is no shortage of dive companies out there competing for your hard earned dollars. It can be a daunting task trying to find one that has a proven track record of honesty, integrity, and reliability, while at the same time providing a positive certification experience for both you and your family. To help you comparison shop, I've compiled a list of questions any potential certification student needs to ask before getting certified. (There are a number of different scuba training organizations that a dive company can be affiliated with. This article deals primarily with certification courses sanctioned by PADI: Professional Association of Diving Instructors, the largest scuba training organization in the world).

1.How Long Does The Certification Course Last?

Scuba certification is performance based, meaning there is no set amount of hours required for completion. You move from one level to the next during the course at your own pace. You will find that most PADI certification courses advertised are based around an estimated 3 day time frame for completion. For the average person, however, this may not be enough time. 4 days for certification is a much more realistic goal.

2.How Much Does The Certification Course Cost?

Lowball prices are designed for 2 reasons.... to attract your attention, and to get you in the door. The hidden charges for the course, such as books and equipment rental, are conveniently never advertised. Look for an all inclusive certification course experience. Remember, in the end, you always get what you pay for.

3. Are References Available From The Most Recent Students?

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Always ask for phone or E-mail references from the most recent certification students who have just completed the course. Don't settle for written quotes that are years old and taken from some database of generic customer comments. If a lame excuse or noncommittal answer is given, take your business elsewhere. A quality dive operation that has nothing to hide will be happy to provide such references.

4. Who Is The Instructor?

5. How Long Have They Been An Instructor?

6. How Many People Have They Certified?

7. How Many Certification Courses Have They Taught?

Good instructors, who have an extensive resume of experience teaching scuba certification courses, are extremely hard to find. Dive shops have a notoriously high turnover ratio of scuba instructors to staff. Many of the ones who are there are recent hires, and have very little real world experience. They also work long hours for very little money, generally getting paid by the activity, not by the hour. Insist on someone who has certified at least 25 people, and has been teaching a minimum of one year.

8. Is The Instructor First Aid/CPR Certified?

While PADI doesn't require its scuba instructors to hold these important certifications, any instructor who's serious about teaching a certification course needs to go the extra mile and make this a requirement, not an option.

9. Will The Course Be Taught Using Rotating Instructors?

This is a common practice some dive operations use where one instructor "Team Teaches" the course with another, exposing you to differing personalities and teaching methods that will only confuse you. Unless you are doing a referral certification, where you are starting and finishing your course in different locations, steer clear.

10. Will Both Instructor And Student Use Similar Equipment Setups During The Course?

When both instructor and student are using the same brand of scuba gear, and have similarly designed equipment configurations, it allows students to learn faster and easier, both in and out of the water, during the certification course.

11. Will The Course Incorporate A Giant RDP Table Into The Academic Sessions?

Learning how to use the dive tables is perhaps the toughest academic challenge a student faces during the certification course. A quality dive operation will have available a giant version of the standard dive table, allowing students to more easily master this important academic information.

12. Can I Get A Student Discount After Getting Certified?

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Any reputable dive operation should give you a generous student discount towards future diving activities and/or equipment purchases you make from them, in appreciation for taking their certification course.

Jay Umbenhauer has been a PADI instructor in Hawaii for more than 12 years, and has certified 100's of individuals who now travel this Earth in search of the ultimate dive. His dive company, Scuba Gods, based on Maui, features first class service, professional scuba instruction, and all-inclusive pricing. Learn more at

Scuba Diving For Beginners

By Rick Abbott

Scuba diving is an exciting water activity for almost all ages. It involves using special gear to stay underwater for extended periods of time. That simple definition, though, belies the true excitement of this recreation – scuba divers enjoy seeing marine life up close and even see underwater shipwrecks, coral reefs, and caves, all from a unique perspective. Scuba diving has become extremely popular because it offers unparalleled excitement, a good workout, and a chance to see nature's wonders up close.

If you want to join other scuba divers, it is important to find the best scuba diving instructor - one who is certified by a professional body like NAUI (The National Association of Underwater Instructors) or PADI (The Professional Association of Diving Instructors)- since scuba diving has some risks. Getting good instruction ensures that you learn scuba diving safely. Both PADI and NAUI can also provide you with the facts about scuba diving, and dive certification is required to dive at most resorts and dive operations.

When selecting an instructor, it is important to select someone with the right certification levels. Levels include Open Water Diver, Rescue Diver, Master Scuba Diver, DiveMaster, Assistant Instructor, Boat Diver, Deep Diver, Drift Diver, Multilevel Diver, Night Diver, Search & Recovery Diver, Underwater Naturalist, Underwater Navigator, Underwater Photographer, Underwater Videographer, Wreck Diver, and others. It is important to select a scuba diving instructor with the credentials and certification that most meets your needs.

When you are just starting out as a scuba diver, you may be interested in travelling to one of the scuba diving hot spots -The Red Sea in Egypt, Malta, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand, and others. These popular scuba diving destinations offer beautiful dives and plenty of instructions for the new scuba diver. These destinations also allow you to easily rent all the gear you need for scuba diving - including a mask, snorkel, fins, regulator, exposure suits (wetsuit or dry suit), buoyancy compensators, weights, and tanks. All this gear allows you to stay safe and control your decent into the water. For beginning scuba divers, it can make sense to rent this equipment, as scuba diving gear can cost more than \$1000. For new scuba divers, renting also makes sense because it ensures that the gear is properly maintained and kept.

However you decide to approach scuba diving - whether locally or at an exotic destination, whether as

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a pleasant pastime or a regular hobby - joining the ranks of scuba divers worldwide is sure to be an eye-opening experience - and one that will create a life time of memories.

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