

Irving Gets Intimate with the Ocean: Chronicles of a New Diver

Contributed by Irving Guazon
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Growing up in Diatagon (Liangga, Surigao del Sur), a rustic town surrounded by oceans, rivers, and streams, I learned to swim at a very young age. Swimming with friends and plunging into the cold raging water are among my favorite childhood memories. It would be an understatement to say that I quickly became very comfortable in the water.

When my cousin WatWat tried to introduce me to SCUBA diving some 3-4 years ago, however, my response was less than enthusiastic. I admit that I had my own fears and reservations. Firstly, the prospect of going down to depths – possibly to fathoms where you can't see anything but darkness – somehow terrified me. Secondly, I believed early on that scuba diving was a luxury I could ill afford. Thirdly, I felt that I didn't have the time to indulge in such a mundane pastime.

But this all changed when I tried snorkeling for the very first time. I was pleasantly surprised to discover how much I truly enjoyed the experience. Awestruck by the variety of different fishes and beautiful corals, I started wondering how even more beautiful it could be below.

That incomparable experience finally convinced me to pursue an Open Water course last month. And, I discovered very soon, it was the best thing I ever did.

My graduation dive in Hilutungan was rather emotional for me. I cannot put into words the excitement and wonder that gripped me from the moment I took a giant stride from our dive boat to the precious minutes I spent floating among the fishes that, until then, I had only seen in books. At one point, I even felt like Keanu Reeves in the Matrix, hovering and reveling at zero gravity. It was an experience worthy of a National Geographic feature, and I truly believe that at that particular moment in time, I was part of something quite extraordinary. My only regret was that I could not bring an extra tank, and the moment was over all too soon.

After a month as a certified PADI open water diver, I have met new friends – doctors, lawyers, engineers, musicians, writers, businessmen, and several others – people from all walks of life united under a common love for diving. When we dive, we forget each other's professions. We forget one another's financial status or social standing. We are quite simply "dive mates."

I have vowed never to let go of this wonderful passion. Take my word for it, I will never stop exploring the beautiful world under the sea.... "under the sea... Darling, it's better, down where it's wetter...take it from me."

Until our next dive, my fellow divers! See you down below!

