

Come Sail Away

ODYSSEY EXPEDITIONS

NINE OF US WERE SITTING on the bow of the catamaran, dipping into the water with each oncoming wave. The sun and sail were high above; we peered below to watch a racing pod of dolphins, a friendly welcome to the British Virgin Islands. As our destination neared we rushed into position, each occupied with a different task, from working the jib to grabbing the mooring ball. It was our job to work together to make it to St. Vincent in one piece. Thankfully, when it came to sailing, we had been taught well. Being teenagers, most of us had never been away from home. Now Odyssey Expeditions would teach us to dive, sail and learn about wildlife, all in just two weeks.

My buddy and I took our strides off the boat and descended into schools of circling parrotfish. Our eyes grew wide as we explored the rolling hills of coral. The ocean life was endless — lobsters, eels, basket stars, shrimp and other creatures. A colossal hawksbill sea turtle munched on a large barrel sponge, the biggest wild turtle I had ever seen. Moments later, a giant octopus sneaked across the ocean floor while a flying gurnard soared beneath our fins. There was a thrill behind every coral head. As the dive came to an end, the group assembled on the bow of the boat, ready to learn. Every day of our 14-day voyage we'd gather to study the creatures and corals that dwell in the area.



Night was rapidly approaching, and my anticipation grew. It would be our first night dive — a scary thought for a team of inexperienced teens. Luckily, we were all in it together; in the blink of an eye, we were descending.

Ocean life at night is vastly different than during the day, and I couldn't get enough, from wiggling worms to sleeping fish to dancing bioluminescents. At the end of the dive, all I could say was, "When can we go again?" — CC

Quick Guide ODYSSEY EXPEDITIONS TROPICAL MARINE BIOLOGY VOYAGE PADI Five-Star Dive Operator • Boats: Five 46-foot sailing catamarans, 12 divers each • Nitrox • Gear, computer and camera rental • Guided tours • Airports: Tortola and St. Lucia • PADI instruction to Divemaster • Other amenities: Summer educational adventure programs for teenagers in the British Virgin Islands and St. Lucia featuring marine-biology education programs with college credit, scuba and sailing training on 14- to 28-day live-aboard voyages • odysseyexpeditions.com



Students work on a Project REEF survey, sail in the Windward Islands.

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