

How to spend a New Zealand summer

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In 2009 when I set up TDNZ I had a vision for how I wanted my new business to run. Clearly I needed to earn enough money to pay the rent and feed myself, but I also wanted variety. I didn't want to run the same mediocre couple of classes week-in week-out, or visit the same tired dive sites. I wanted to offer a range of exciting, challenging and rewarding dive trips and classes, which would inspire me as well as my students. This is the goal I have been working towards for five years and this summer I know I have achieved it.

I began in mid-January with our annual trip to Blue Creek Resurgence, 10 days of project based cave diving. (For more details see my Blue Creek 2014 article.) As I was already in the South Island it seemed crazy to ignore one of NZs best wrecks, so immediately after Blue Creek I headed to Port Gore for yet more overhead diving – three days on the Mikhail Lermontov. Sure the visibility can be a bit patchy outside of the wreck at this time of year, but once inside this is a dive which will challenge, excite and terrify even the most hard-core wreck divers. Mel and I did a series of excellent dives, with

our extended penetrations through the kitchen and hospital areas being particular highlights.

Once back up north, February, March and April turned into a non-stop round of classes and dives. I had an extremely experienced Fundies class in Tutukaka, followed by some rebreather diving with Northland Dive and then another Fundies class at Global Dive. Next there was a Cavern Diver class at the Poor Knights followed by an Introductory Cave Diver class and then it was exam time. In early March Rich Walker (my original fundies Instructor) came over from the UK to examine me for my Tech 1 Instructor rating. (For more details see my Tech 1 Exam article.)

At this point a break would have been welcome, but immediately after T1 I swapped from my Instructor hat to my Instructor Trainer hat and spent time working with James to help develop his gas dynamics and decompression lectures, in preparation for his Instructor exams.

After a short interlude for cyclone Lusi it was off to Wellington for another Fundies class, immediately back to Auckland for a GIRLS ONLY Fundies class and then straight into three more back-to-back classes. On consecutive days I ran a scooter class, followed by a side-mount workshop, followed by the very first Documentation Diver class ever to be run in NZ. (For more details see my Doc Diver write up.)

And suddenly it was Easter, which means more rebreather diving - part of our preparations for another New Zealand first, Richard Lundgren teaching a GUE CCR class here at the beginning of May. And then it's immediately into Tecfest at Taupo, where I'm presenting a talk on cave diving projects and running a series of scooter try dives. After that I'm finally going to relax!

Five years ago I decided I wanted variety and at last I have it. During this summer alone I will have been involved with over a dozen different classes or dive activities. I'm tired, my gear needs servicing and I'm a little behind on getting this newsletter out to everyone – but I'm happy. Passionate instructors make the best teachers and in my experience there is no better way to remain passionate than to enjoy as much variety underwater as possible. Bring on the next dive!