

Star-struck in Jordan

I have just returned from two weeks' diving in Aqaba in Jordan, and want to tell you about the difference between two PADI 5* IDCs.

I booked 10 dives online with Seastar in Aqaba, as it was located inside a hotel and British-managed. The photos and information on the website are all well out of date. The hotel is now very run-down, and the dive centre has moved 20 minutes' bus ride away. I met no British staff.

We dived the house reef five times because of the centre's lack of working transport. Despite it offering the Wreck Diver speciality, it had no one to guide us for a wreck penetration.

Some of the other customers were concerned about the battered state of the hire equipment they were given. Some of our equipment was noticed to be chucked about by some staff from bus to van (after my careful loading), probably resulting in the damage done to my prescription mask.

After four days' diving with Seastar, we moved hotels and dive centres. We did six days' diving with Dive Aqaba, as well as our DSAT Gas Blender course.

Dive Aqaba is run by Rod and Ash and is all you expect from a 5* IDC centre. Rod is a PADI Course Director, DSAT Tec Deep Instructor and all-round diving guru. We never repeated a dive site, the boat Leila One was comfortable, and we were incredibly well fed. We also got to do the wreck penetration that we had been refused at Seastar.

Rod organised for us to get an extra dive in, so we left Jordan with 100 dives each and as Master Scuba Divers. Does PADI review the status of its centres once they are given 5* IDC status?

NICK TESSIER, WATFORD, HERTS

Simon Chance, PADI International Resort and Retailer Associations Manager, PIL, comments:

PADI employs full-time Regional Managers who regularly visit over 5,500 PADI-registered dive centres and resorts worldwide to advise on new techniques and products, and monitor customer service.

Where a centre is required to amend its facilities or practices, such activity is reviewed by the manager on future visits, and membership levels may be adjusted where appropriate. Further to this, a complete review of all PADI trade association memberships takes place from time to time - such a review is planned going forward into 2008.

In the specific cases highlighted by your readers, I appreciate them bringing these issues to our attention, and I can confirm that we are in communication with the centres involved.

I am sure Seastar aims to provide quality services, and congratulations to your readers on completion of their PADI Master Scuba Diver programmes with the team's assistance at Dive Aqaba. **Simon Chance,**