

Winner of the 2010 Go PRO Challenge Testimonial Contest

Alex Aines

Alex's Contest Entry

I'm a PADI Pro for the Love of It

By Alex Aines

When I was ten years old, my family spent Spring Break in Barbados. My Dad would disappear for a full afternoon every couple of days and return with a gleaming shell for me, or a tale of a majestic ship that rested a hundred feet or more below the sea. I would marvel at these stories and I still have the shells he brought me from the deep. In my dreams, I could explore this wetter world, but in reality, I never thought that I would be brave enough to do such a thing. I'd always loved the water, but breathing under its surface and entering a new world that did not belong to my species was a bit daunting. I decided dreaming would just have to do. Fate had other plans, though. My Dad returned from a dive one day and announced that he had signed me and my older cousin up for an Open Water scuba diving course. And so my relationship with diving began.



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From that week in Barbados, I only remember learning how to dive. No other memory could trump that. It was all fascinating to me: the equipment, the effects pressure had on my body, the animals I could encounter, all so foreign. I passed my test and on my first Open Water dives, I was more excited than scared. We saw a lobster and some seaweed on my first dive, but that was enough to hook me on the sport for life.

I spent the majority of my summers since then going to "camps" where I lived on boats and dove all day every day. I got my advanced when I was 13, my rescue and Master Diver when I was 14, and I counted down the days until I turned 18 and could finally become a Divemaster. This summer, that is just what I did. The feeling of reaching that goal that I had had since I was ten was fulfilling in every way; diving had given me a purpose, and now I could give back to the diving community.

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As a Divemaster, I want to reach out to kids who were just like me. Diving changed my life; that is no exaggeration. It is what I did on every vacation and for a month every summer. It is why I want to study marine biology in college, and it is why I want to work for Sport Diver magazine someday. When I was ten, I was a cautious kid. I didn't take risks, and scuba diving was a scary thought to me; it was way outside of my comfort zone. But, once I tried it, there was no turning back. That cautious side disappeared and diving became more than just a hobby to me; it was therapeutic too. I feel more comfortable under the water than I do on land and I think up my best ideas and even make my most levelheaded decisions when underwater.

Now, as a PADI professional, I know I can help people discover diving and the profound effects it can have on someone. I want to give people the skills to explore the underwater realm responsibly, and I want to help them have the best experience that they can when beneath the surface. One good dive can hook a person for the rest of their life. I want to help them discover the same dream, happiness, and excitement that I have found, and now, as a Divemaster, I know I can. I get to lead people on dives as a JOB. What could be better? I can go work all over the world, meet new people, and make a living off of diving; there is nothing that I would rather do. There is so much to learn from the underwater environment, and so much to explore. To be able to transform other peoples' lives by showing them this liquid world, while doing something that I love is amazing; that is a rare combination.

I can't wait to begin my freshman year of college ready to put my new skills to the test by hopefully working at a dive shop near school. I also plan to become an Open Water Instructor in the near future. As a PADI Professional, my opportunities are endless, and I can't wait to help other divers obtain those same opportunities, and watch diving touch lives.



Alex and
her Dad.

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