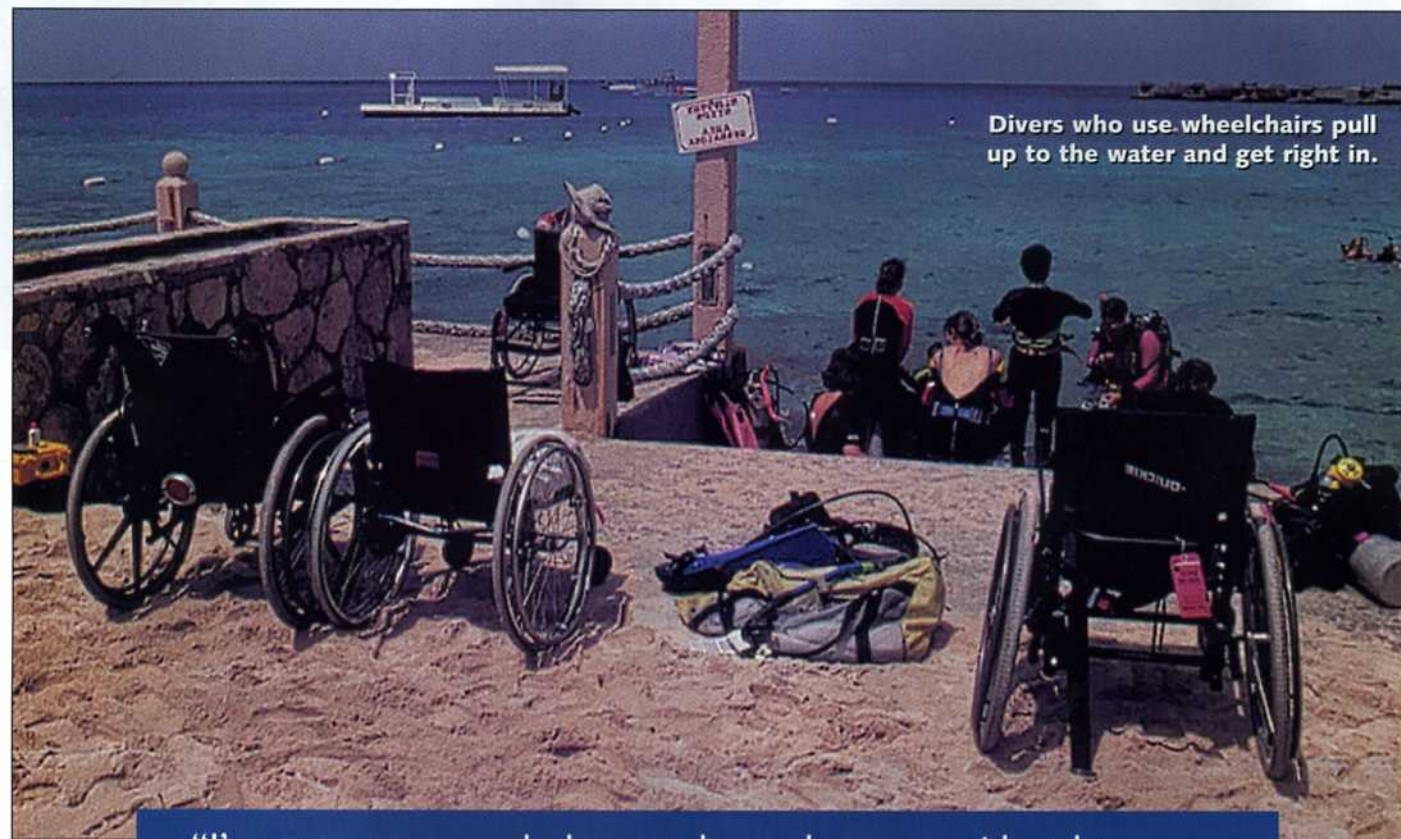


Underwater Discovery

How People with Disabilities Can Enjoy Scuba Diving

by David Chamalian



Divers who use wheelchairs pull up to the water and get right in.

“I’ve seen moray eels, barracudas, seahorses, squid, and so many other things, so many different fish. I’ve seen a shipwreck, which was awesome. And it’s great just being down there at 40 to 50 feet, sharing the experience with others.”

—Kristina Lee McClain, 21, certified Open Water Diver. (See interview on page 74.)

People who have never scuba dived need to be let in on a little secret: Scuba diving is, as Kristina states it, “awesome.”

A growing number of people with disabilities are gaining access to the marine world in all its silent splendor, exploring the colorful life in the deep. After their first dive they

find that scuba is not the mystery or the exclusive sport they once thought it was. With the chance to experience a world so different—and so strikingly beautiful—from the one we live and breathe in every day, scuba offers a highly unique form of physical exercise. It gives people a chance to reach “new depths” in their skills. Says Marianne

Preker, of Chicago, who has had extensive experience in dive training for people with disabilities, “I’ve been teaching diving to people with all kinds of disabilities since 1991, and I’ve noticed that there are more and more people coming out and enjoying it. And man, they’re loving it!”

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