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Operated by the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the High Adventure Sea Base in the heart of the Florida Keys offers Boy Scouts from all over the world a variety of activities, from camping, sailing, and deep-sea fishing, to exploring exotic islands, snorkeling, and scuba diving. Except for one program in the Bahamas and another at an island west of Sea Base, all of the programs originate from Sea Base's main facilities in the village of Islamorada on Lower Matecumbe Key, which is 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of Key West and 75 miles south of Miami International Airport.

Sea Base was brought to life in 1974 by a small, dedicated group of volunteers from Miami, FL, and Atlanta, GA. "We offered aquatic programs to young people from throughout the United States, utilizing leased and borrowed equipment," remembers Sam Wampler, founder and director of Sea Base. In 1975, operations expanded to include sailing, using leased vessels. "Named the Florida Gateway to High Adventure," says Wampler, "the plan rested on having no owned vessels or facilities, but on acting somewhat in the role of agent to help scouts try this type of experience. A year later, after a national promotion effort, 180 youngsters signed up to ply the ocean on chartered boats."

Since 1976, Sea Base has grown from a staff of one, a budget of \$19,000, and 160 participants, to a staff of 86 during the summer and more than \$6 million in capital assets. The base now serves 10,000 young people a year from every state of the United States, as well as from other countries, including South Africa, Japan, the United

Kingdom, and the former Soviet Union. And more than 1,000 scouts participate in the Scuba Adventure and Scuba Certification programs.

During a typical 1-week scuba diving program, scouts and dive masters make at least nine dives in uncharted reefs throughout the Keys, as well as one night dive and a dive in the Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary. Before undertaking any scuba diving at all, however, participants must be fully certified for the sport. Sea Base offers a week-long scuba training program in which scouts train in the intricacies of safe scuba diving under the guidance of instructors who have been certified by recognized organizations.

Each scout also has the opportunity to contribute to the Sea Base's ongoing construction of a new artificial reef site by building and putting in place a concrete "reef ball." The 3-foot- (0.9-meter-) diameter hollow balls serve as homes for small fish and many other types of sea life, including coral itself. Today, the reef, made up of some 200 balls, is estimated to be more than 20 yards (18 meters) wide and at least 60 yards (55 meters) long.

In addition to its scuba programs, Sea Base offers five other week-long adventures. And Sea Base is just one of three locations where the Boy Scouts of America conducts its High Adventure programs. All of the programs are designed to expand opportunities for scouts to explore and appreciate the wilderness--something scouting has been all about since its inception in the early 1900s.

"While scouting has always encouraged vigorous outdoor activities," says Travis Golding, scuba program director at Sea Base, "the High Adventure program enables scouts to travel and to enjoy experiences beyond what usual scouting activities offer. The program helps them grow both physically and mentally," continues Golding. "It helps them develop character, leadership abilities, self-reliance, and teamwork. Most of all, it opens doors to excitement and fun they're not likely to find anywhere else."

To read the full text of "Underwater World of High Adventure," [click here](#).

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Read about the air compressor system that supplies breathing air for the scuba tanks in the sidebar "[Charging Sea Base's Tanks](#)."

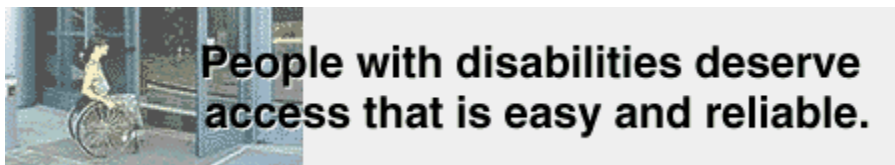
Will the Boy Scouts find some "[Underwater Treasure?](#)"

Find out how scuba diving evolved from snorkeling and skin diving in "[From Skin to Scuba](#)."

Visit Florida's High Adventure Sea Base online at
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