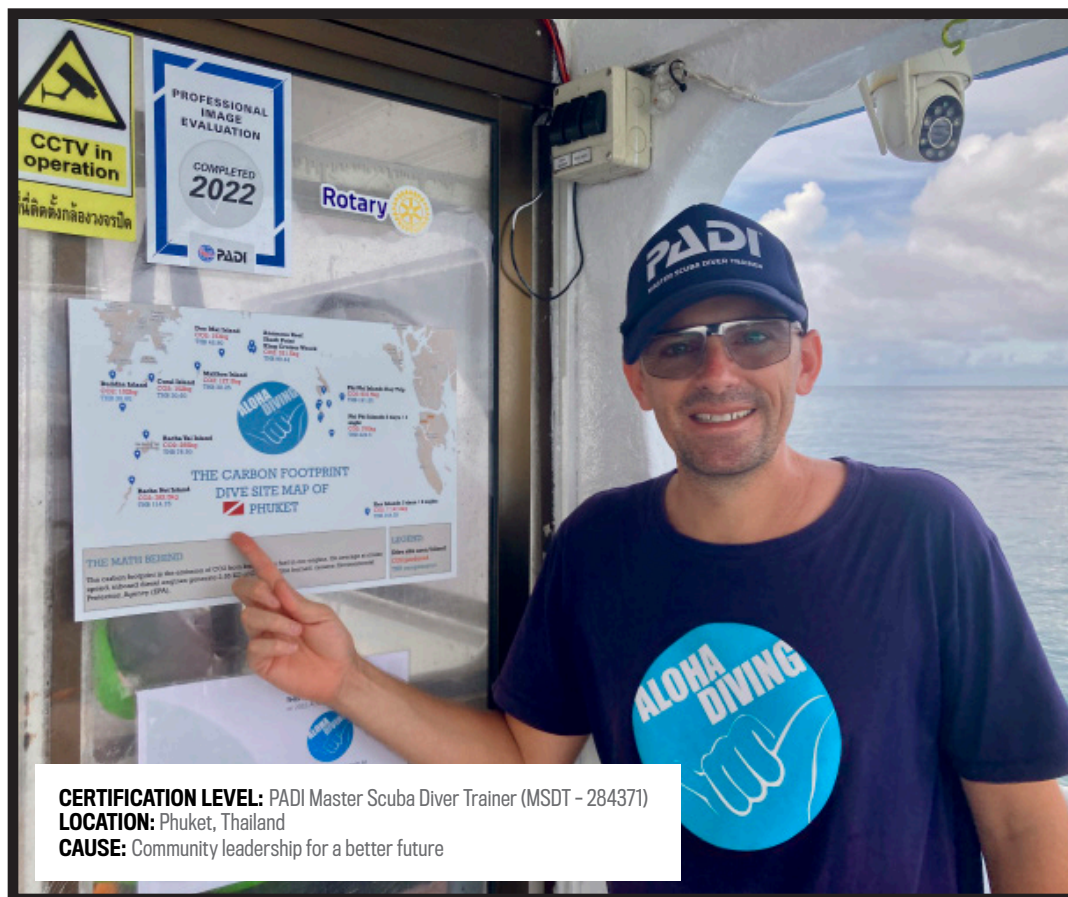


OCEAN TORCHBEARER AWARDS

Simon Wenk



CERTIFICATION LEVEL: PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer (MSDT - 284371)
LOCATION: Phuket, Thailand
CAUSE: Community leadership for a better future

Born in Switzerland, Simon Wenk is a PADI Master Scuba Diver™ Trainer now based in Phuket, Thailand. Together with his partner and fellow PADI® Professional, PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer Alice Voneschen (MDST - 299889), they own and operate sustainability-centric PADI Five Star Dive Center Aloha Diving (S - 28221). As a PADI Green Star Award recipient, early adopter of Green Fins Digital Membership and supporter of swimming education, turtle conservation and seagrass restoration, the team proudly claims they can offer the most carbon dioxide-neutral diving excursions in Phuket.

What drives your commitment to environmental best practice?

A: With rising environmental awareness within our society, the logical move for the travel industry and dive businesses

is to be more environmentally friendly. Everyone can find solutions in their area of expertise, and our strength is in diver education. So, we were looking for solutions to give back to nature while doing what we love – scuba diving.

How did you come to offer the most CO₂-neutral dive trips in Phuket?

A: We thought about the initiatives out there for compensating for your carbon footprint while flying. As all our dive activities are off our boat we thought, *We can do the same for diving trips.* We met the Founder of Oceans For All, a local foundation started in 2019 and became a BluePass member.

Earning a BluePass is a way of compensating for our carbon footprint by making a corresponding donation and helping finance the foundation's blue-carbon projects. We have offset the CO₂

emissions of our dive trips since 2019 and created a dive site overview map with the dive spots on it that includes the CO₂ pollution in kilograms and what it costs to offset it. The carbon footprint dive site map was born!

The map is prominently placed on our boat and we include an explanation in every boat briefing. Our guests love the initiative and often they book with us for that reason. Our donations go to Team Sea Garden, which plant seagrass through Ocean for All.

What other adjustments have you made to align your business with your sustainability values?

A: Thinking out of the box is in Aloha Diving's DNA. In 2018 we upcycled a shipping container and converted it into a swimming pool with a glass front to look inside (and of course outside) to



conduct our dive training. As a next step, we undertook a major refit of our dive vessel. With minimal operation costs in mind, it was a no-brainer to go with solar power instead of a diesel generator. This saves not only fuel and money but also reduces noise pollution into the ocean. By optimizing propeller pitch, installing trim tabs and properly maintaining a completely rebuilt engine we were able to reduce diesel oil usage by 50 percent and increase cruising speed by 20 percent! It was a win-win for the environment, our guests, our business and the ocean.

What is next for you in terms of sustainability?

A: We learned about the collaboration between PADI and Green Fins, and in October 2022 signed up for Green Fins digital membership as soon as we were able to. It is an easy process of filling out an online questionnaire and, based on your answers, you get an action plan for where to improve. One thing we did as a result was to incorporate Green Fins environmental guidelines into all our dive site briefings. It makes so much sense and Green Fins makes it so easy by providing amazing educational materials in many languages.

What other conservation and community achievements are you most proud of?

A: We dedicate all our dives to Dive Against Debris® citizen science, supporting the PADI AWARE Foundation™ marine debris database. As a member of the Rotary Club of Patong Beach, we recently released over 1,000 green sea turtles. We approved funds to 3D print an artificial reef out of cement. We also run a program called “Save a Child Swim,” to reduce the drowning of children nationwide. At the end of their swim test, we do a beach cleanup with the kids in their community.

What advice would you share with other PADI dive operators?

A: It is rewarding to take social responsibility and support a better future. I encourage all dive operations worldwide to do the same. Get in touch with the PADI AWARE Foundation™, become a Green Fins member and look for a foundation or NGO in your region and start supporting them locally.



The Ocean Torchbearer Awards recognizes PADI Members who are leaders in their communities, actively working toward a better balance between humanity and the ocean. Nominated by their Regional Headquarters, each Ocean Torchbearer Awards winner receives a Seiko Prospex SRPD43 watch.

OCEAN TORCHBEARER AWARDS

“Doing something new. That’s the adventure.”
— Adventure, Pineda, Mexico

Keep Going Forward
PROSPEX

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Ocean Torchbearers believe there is a better and more responsible way for humanity to live in balance with nature and inspire others to bring about meaningful change by turning passion into purpose for the ocean.

LEARN MORE ABOUT BEING A TORCHBEARER AT
padi.com/conservation-torchbearer-five

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