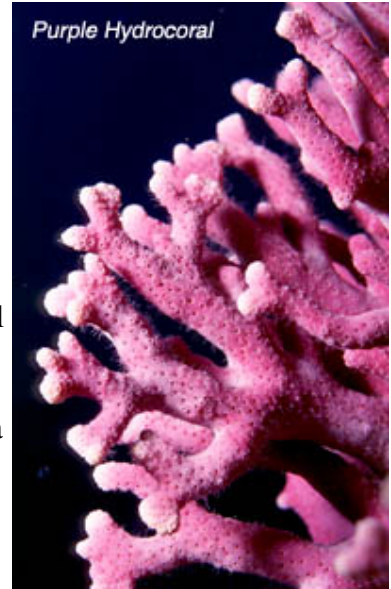


Farnsworth Bank

I peered over the side for a better look and watched the reef drop away to a vertical wall. Even though the visibility was well over 80 feet, I could not make out the bottom below. When I switched on my light I was dazzled by the color—purple hydrocoral, orange sponges, and pink gorgonia. Just then an enormous school of bait fish swam up the wall and over my head.



Another great dive at Farnsworth Bank. Farnsworth Bank is a sea mount located in open ocean on the windward side of Catalina. The top of this underwater mountain is in about 65 feet of water, and much of the main pinnacle is shaped like a mountain plateau—sort of flat, but sculpted with valleys and sink holes.

There are numerous spires around the main pinnacle. Schools of mackerel, sardines and barracuda are often found encircling Farnsworth, but don't be surprised to see bigger fish feeding on the smaller fish. Look for sea lions, giant black sea bass, torpedo electric rays, and yellowtail.

The shallow rocks are covered with strawberry anemones in some areas and kelp in others. On the valley walls and between larger cracks in the rocks grow large trees of California hydrocoral. Both the purple and pink varieties are found here, and are sometimes so thick that they bridge the gaps between narrow valleys. The valley walls are also painted with colorful sponges and sprinkled with red anemones.

Sink holes on the plateau offer shelter to little critters and fish from the sometimes stiff current. Look for moray eels back in holes, along with spiny lobsters and small fish. Numerous species of crabs and shrimp take shelter in the small cracks in the reef. This is a great spot to find aeolids nudibranchs such as Spanish shawls, hermissendas, and Hilton's. While not a true nudibranch, the navanax is also quite common here. Do be on the lookout for some extremely rare and beautiful nudibranchs, such as bright orange Engel's berthella and the funky Santa Barbara janolus.



you think.

When you get to the edge of the bank you'll find a vertical drop-off that seems to go down forever. The walls are sprinkled with large pink and golden gorgonia, and hydrocoral. This is as close as many of us will get to flying without wings.

It is easy and thrilling to soar along the wall and down into the depths. A little too easy at times; divers should watch their depths closely, in the clear water it is easier to get deeper than

Divers often prefer ocean pinnacles over near shore sites. The reasons are obvious—clearer water and an abundance of marine life. Farnsworth Bank is one of the more accessible pinnacles due to its close proximity to all of the diver-friendly facilities of Catalina. Get out and experience one of Southern California's world class sites—Farnsworth Bank.

Dive Spot At - A - Glance

Location: Farnsworth Bank is approximately two miles west of Ben Weston Point, Catalina Island.

Access: Boat only.

Skill Level: Advanced.

Depths: 65 to 130 feet.

Visibility: Excellent, often 60 feet or better.

Hazards: This dive can be demanding due to open ocean conditions, deep water and currents. Divers should watch for boat traffic.

Hunting: Fair lobster hunting in season; good spearfishing for rockfish and pelagics.

Photography: Outstanding macro photography for nudibranchs and other invertebrates; good wide-angle for hydrocoral, gorgonia, and reef scenes.