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# Editor's LETTER



## Portuguese men of war sink battleship

I must admit I never expected to see a warship get blown up. Balls of fire bursting from deck to sky, the boom of explosives rattling my ribcage... These are the things that grandfathers tell us about, that ex-Forces-turned-authors write about, that Hollywood director Michael Bay might spend a cargo hold full of cash on for a two-second clip of Will Smith jumping heroically overboard with his shirt undone. But there I was, bobbing in a boat just a couple of hundred metres away from the General Pereira d'Eça, a 1,438-tonne Portuguese Navy warship, as a series of explosions ripped through her and sent her to the sandy seabed a short distance from the ferry port on the Atlantic island of Porto Santo. At 85 metres in length, and now sitting at a maximum depth of 30m - and, perhaps most appealingly, in an area with decent visibility year-round - she's a great dive. What's more, the team behind the sinking, which included the Portuguese Navy and the organisers of the Ocean Revival project, has cut holes in the wreck to make penetration safe for divers of almost all certification levels. It truly is a wreck for all.

And here's the *really* good news. A short distance from where the General Pereira d'Eça has gone down is Porto Santo's first artificial reef, the Madeirense. Having been on the seabed for many years, she gives us a flavour of what we can expect to happen to the General Pereira d'Eça. I had the privilege to dive the Madeirense a couple of years ago, and again on this most recent trip, and I'm happy to say it is absolutely smothered in life.

So the message is simple: get to Porto Santo. With a population of less than 5,000, good weather for most of the year and decent clear-water diving, it's a fantastic low-key option for a short-hop trip (flights from the UK take less than four hours). Ultimately, a lot of hard work, money and skill goes into creating these artificial reefs. They are fantastic for marine life and they are great fun for divers. A lesser-known European dive destination is pushing to put itself on the map by creating such a haven, and I for one think that is something worth supporting.

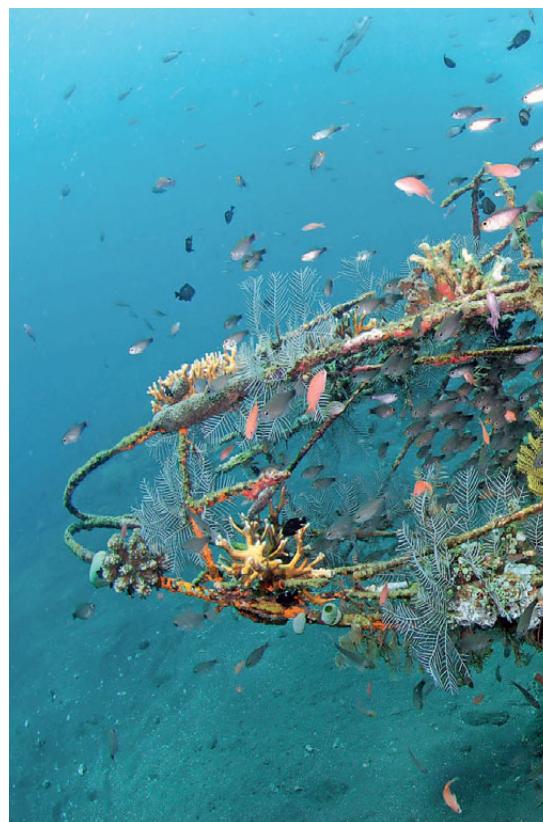
To see a selection of images of the sinking, both topside and underwater, visit [www.sportdiver.co.uk/portosanto](http://www.sportdiver.co.uk/portosanto).

**Will Harrison**, DEPUTY EDITOR

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PHOTOGRAPHER STUART PHILPOTT



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# NEWS

Each month, we collate the latest industry news from right here in the UK, as well as all over our water planet. To find out the most up-to-date news and views, check out the website: [www.sportdiver.co.uk](http://www.sportdiver.co.uk)

E h g f

**One of the Royal Navy's most historically significant ships, sunk in 1758 in the Solent, is to be rescued thanks to a £2 million LIBOR grant, received on the last day of the Cameron government**

Photographs by MICHAEL PITTS



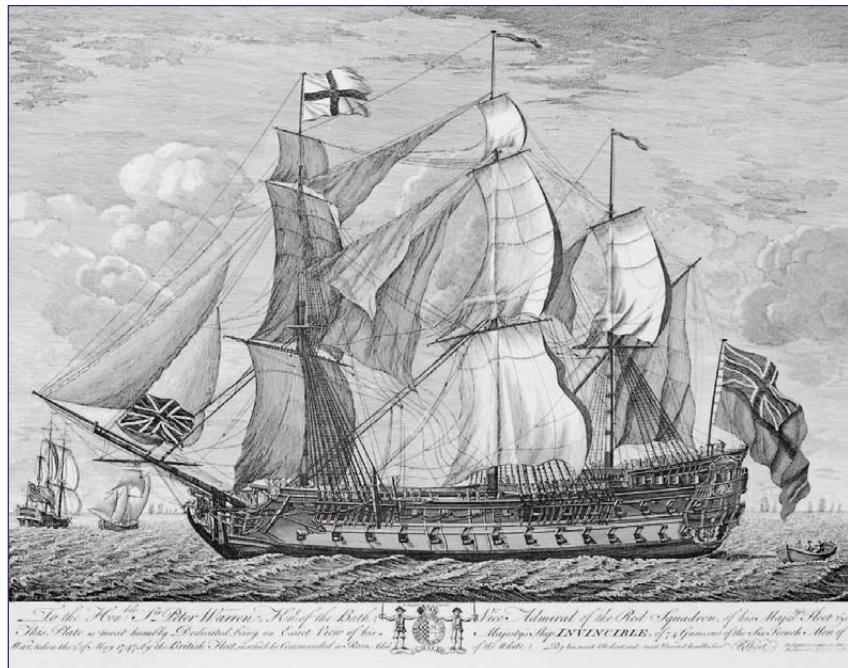
**B**uilt in 1744 and captured in 1747, HMS Invincible became the blueprint for the Royal Navy's 74-gun ships of the line until the end of the Age of Sail and the beginning of the Age of Steam, marked in the United Kingdom by the launch of HMS Warrior in 1860.

By the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, more than three-quarters of the Royal Navy's ships-of-the-line were 74-gun vessels. The French had invested new technologies in her: whereas most ships of the period were constructed of wood, Invincible was built with 200 iron knees. Later, under the British, she was the first ship to be fitted with an iron hearth to replace the centuries-old brick galley, and flintlock firing mechanisms were fitted to her guns. In fact, the maintenance of this class was one of the drivers of the industrialisation of the dockyards and, in turn, for the Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom.

HMS Invincible's remains represent the most-complete and best-preserved of a warship from the mid-18th century and the site holds invaluable clues to both French and British ship design, technologies and shipboard life. Uniquely, unlike HMS Victory (1765), she contains material culture of shipboard life and warfare at sea and not just of the ship herself. Invincible's heritage also fills an important gap chronologically

between the Mary Rose and HMS Victory in representing more than 200 years of the development of the Royal Navy.

Irreversible damage is already occurring to the site. Investigation has revealed that large areas are uncovering at an alarming rate, caused by the shifting sands. This exposure of the wreck is due to the natural migration of the sand bank, Horse Tail Sands. Since the wrecking of Invincible in 1758, Horse Tail Sands has moved southwards by 700 metres, leaving the site on the very edge of the sand bank. The movement of this mobile topographic feature has a significant impact on the burial environment surrounding the site; as the sand bank continues to track southwards the area of interest will continue to be uncovered. The long-term prognosis for the site is poor, as further exposure of the wreck and its location in shallow water means it is extremely vulnerable to high-energy storm events occurring over the winter months. These storms have been more numerous and sustained over the last three years and have resulted in a rapid loss of seabed sediments within and around the wreck site, revealing large areas of previously unrecorded parts of the ship and also fragile artefacts. There is, therefore, an urgent need to record these areas of the ship and rescue the vulnerable artefacts within before they inevitably become degraded or even lost through biological and physical decay. The



vulnerability of the site has been recognised by Historic England, who placed it on the Heritage at Risk Register in 2012.

Work will begin next year. It will be targeted, with six excavation areas chosen for their potential to provide maximum information about the site and/or where at risk from natural destruction. This approach limits the material recovered and associated conservation and storage costs, while also providing logical break points for the project. Excavation will be undertaken in self-contained phases such that if proven more difficult or interrupted by adverse weather conditions, then the Project can be halted at an earlier phase than was originally planned to ensure that it is kept within budget.

MAST, a charitable company launched in 2011, will manage the project with its partners, site licensee Dan Pascoe, Bournemouth University and the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth, where the archaeological material will be displayed. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to be trained and learn post-excavation skills, which will include the cleaning, recording and cataloguing of artefacts.

MAST will involve a number of Serving and ex-Service personnel during the lifetime of the project, which will be modelled on the lines of Operation Nightingale, a unique military initiative to employ the social and technical aspects of terrestrial archaeology to aid in the recovery process of serving and ex-Service personnel involved in the Afghanistan conflict.

Jessica Berry, CEO of MAST, said: "It's an honour for MAST to be associated with such a historically significant project. This is a unique opportunity for maritime heritage in this country."

[www.thisismast.org](http://www.thisismast.org)

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## Atlantic island of Porto Santo sinks warship for divers

A Portuguese Navy warship has been scuttled off the island of Porto Santo, creating a new wreck for visiting divers. Sport Diver was there to witness the sinking.

The boom reverberated off Porto Santo's dramatic coastline. A few onlookers, with cameras readied and gazes steadied, jumped at the sound, surprised by a bang for which they had spent the past two hours waiting. A second boom rang out as a ball of fire shot skywards, a plume of dense smoke left in its wake. Shutters clicked and TV cameras rolled. A few people whooped and hollered. Several more bangs followed in quick succession, precisely laid dynamite detonating at timely intervals. And then silence.

Fishing boats, dinghies and hired catamarans bobbed in the wind, the people on board watching on in quiet - almost solemn - respect as the decommissioned Portuguese Navy corvette General Pereira d'Eça slipped beneath the surface.

For those involved in creating Porto Santo's newest artificial reef, it was the culmination of two years of hard work. The visibility was such that the personnel at close quarters - the explosives team and commercial divers - were

able to immediately see that the vessel had settled on the seabed upright. Everything had gone to plan.

The 1,438-tonne, 85-metre General Pereira d'Eça (F477) corvette warship was built in 1970 and completed decades of active service. The decision to scuttle the ship as a dive attraction was a collaborative effort between the Portuguese Navy, Madeira's Promotion Association and the team behind the Ocean Revival Project, which has scuttled several warships off Portugal's Algarve coast in the past few years.

Just as the Ocean Revival wrecks were cleaned and made suitable for divers (with the addition of access holes, and so on), so has General Pereira d'Eça.

Porto Santo's newest dive site sits at a maximum depth of 30m, in year-round clear water, just a short distance from the island's first - and, it must be said, exemplary - artificial reef, the wreck of the Madeirense, which is now shrouded in life.



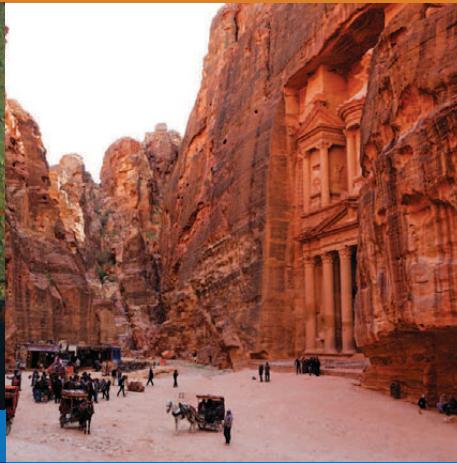
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## Team GB shines as records tumble at AIDA Pool World Championship

Great Britain's freedivers have played a significant part in this year's AIDA Pool World Championships, where national and world records tumbled.

A total of 22 national records and six world records were broken throughout the event in Turku, Finland.

The new world records were set by Magdalena Solich of Poland (DNF: 185m), Oleksandr Bubenchykov of Ukraine (DYN: 289m), Giorgos Panagiotakis of Greece (DYN: 300m) and a hat trick by Mateusz Malina of Poland (DNF: 232m, 244m and DYN: 300m).

Alice Hickson proved to be Great Britain's standout performer. She was the only female athlete at the event to qualify for all three A



Finals, and throughout the course of the event she broke two national records (DNF 180m and DYN 200m) and won a silver medal, making her the 2016 DNF Vice World Champion.

Team GB's others members were Georgina Miller, Lucelle Simms, Mark Gooding and Philip Fennell and coach Andy Jardine.

### DDRC unveils news 'Flying after Diving' research project

Since 2008, DDRC Healthcare has been conducting its ongoing "Health of Divers" project which has encompassed a broad range of health issues from the use of illicit drugs to more recently, mental health. Now, in 2016, the researchers are turning their attention to "Flying after Diving". Since the 1980s there has been much debate about the issue of flying after diving, with workshops in 1989 and 2003. Case reports have been discussed over the years, and recommended times to fly after diving have been debated, as well as the results of the first in-flight study of real-life dive exposures which was published last year (2015).



Hyperbaric chambers often see and treat divers who have come back from a diving holiday and present at a chamber with possible DCI problems. Because of this DDRC Healthcare is interested in finding out a little more about divers who fly home after a diving holiday - what type of diving were they doing, what was the actual surface interval between their last dive and when they flew home, did they experience any signs and symptoms of possible DCI during the flight? If so, did they seek any help, did any problems they may have experienced go away, what did they think was the probable cause, and so on.

The information the researchers at DDRC Healthcare hope to gather will be valuable in trying to understand a little more about the subject of flying after diving. As such, they are asking divers to complete an anonymous online questionnaire. If you have been on a diving holiday for example and have taken a flight home; or maybe you have been diving at home and then take a flight to go on holiday. Any "been diving and then caught a flight" scenario, DDRC healthcare would like you to participate.

Please note: You do not have to have experienced any problems before/during/after a flight to take part; DDRC would like to hear from all divers who have taken a flight after diving even if it was trouble free.

Participating divers are advised to have their logbook handy when they fill in the survey. To take part in the survey, visit [www.ddrc.org/Research](http://www.ddrc.org/Research).

### Marine life artist Nick Oneill wins Artist of the Year prize

Brighton-based marine life artist Nick Oneill has won the 'Into the Blue' category at this year's David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation 'Wildlife Artist of the Year' competition.

Nick, co-owner of the Dark Water Gallery in Brighton, won with a piece titled 'Heart of the Sea'. His winning painting was displayed at London's prestigious Mall Galleries.

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## IDESST - the inside track

IDESST (Inspectorate of Diving Equipment and Servicing and Testing) is an independent certification organisation that assesses cylinder test centre technicians and their facilities to British, European and International standards. It is accredited to ISO/IEC 17024:2012 by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to carrying out these assessments. It was founded in 1985 by the late Mike Todd, BSAC Diving Officer. He formed the organisation because of concerns about diving cylinders, and wanted to ensure that cylinder testing was carried out by a competent technician at a centre with specialist equipment (a competent person is someone who has received specialised training, has gained a qualification in testing dive cylinders, and

has been assessed independently of his/her training agent).

IDESST consists of five people actively involved in running the organisation - the chairman and three inspectors are all volunteers, paid expenses only. The administration manager is the only paid member of staff.

IDESST operates under the auspices of the Scuba Industries Trade Association (SITA) and has a section on the SITA website that can be found at: [www.sita.org.uk/idesst](http://www.sita.org.uk/idesst). The website is primarily for the test centre technicians, but is open to public viewing, and shows the latest news, technical documents for download, and bulletins.

**NEXT MONTH: More information on cylinder testing.**

## Egypt announces aviation security deal

Leading British aviation security firm, Restrata, has been appointed to deliver an aviation security programme for airports across Egypt, including Sharm el-Sheikh and the Red Sea Riviera. The announcement is the latest step in Egypt's upgrading of its security, ensuring a long-term, high level of security at all airports.

Restrata will advise Egypt's leading private security firm, Falcon Group International, which has been tasked by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to provide security at the country's airports. Using its experience of working with airports across the world, including London Heathrow, Restrata and Falcon will train 7,000 security staff over the next six months.

The two firms have also agreed to establish a training institute, which will support long-term sustainability of the partnership.

## Get your kids face-to-face with great whites for FREE!

Nautilus is offering free liveaboard berths to kids and teens on all Guadalupe trips this August.

The Guadalupe itinerary is famous for its great white sharks - it's the ultimate summer vacation!

Nautilus suggests the August itineraries are an amazing opportunity for divers to open their kids' eyes to the beauty and wonder of the ocean and, this year, save a tonne of money at the same time!

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More information on the boat and route can be found at [www.diverstravel.co.uk/maldives/orion](http://www.diverstravel.co.uk/maldives/orion).

## Pro Dive International hires third Course Director

Pro Dive International, one of the Caribbean's most established PADI 5 Star Dive Resorts, has announced the employment of a third fulltime PADI Course Director at their Scuba Academy in Playa del Carmen, Mexico.

Course Director is the highest and most respected professional rating in recreational scuba diving. Aitor Diaz Arevalo, originally from Spain, has worked in Pro Dive Mexico's GoPro team since 2013 and this year earned a place on PADI's Course

Director Training Course in the Dominican Republic after passing a competitive application process.

After successfully completing the eight-day intensive training course, he was awarded

Aitor said: "I'm really happy to reach the level of Course Director and would like to thank all those who have helped me along the way." Aitor will join Platinum-rated Course Directors Angel Navarro Moya (also from Spain) and Jo Armitage (from the UK). Angel added: "We're thrilled that Aitor's hard work and determination has led to him becoming a PADI Course Director. He has been a valued member of our GoPro team since joining us and I look forward to many more years of success as a team of three full-time Course Directors here at Pro

three full-time Course Directors here at Dive Mexico." For more information about Pro Dive Mexico, visit [www.prodivemex.com](http://www.prodivemex.com).

## Emperor Divers upgrades services and announces new loyalty scheme

Emperor Divers has upgraded the service on two of its Red Sea boats.

From 1 September 2016, Emperor's Red Sea service will offer complimentary red wine with dinner on all Red Sea boats, Emperor Asmaa, Emperor Superior and Emperor Elite (where this has been offered for some time). In the Maldives a complimentary glass of wine will be provided with dinner on Emperor Serenity and Emperor Orion. As a further service enhancement the number of free places has been increased to four on Emperor Leo and Emperor Orion when booking a full charter.

As well as the Red Sea upgrades, Emperor's new loyalty scheme, Friends of Emperor, recognises guests who have dived with Emperor Divers or Constellation Fleet on five or more occasions. As a thank you to loyal guests, when boarding a liveaboard in the Red Sea or Maldives, they will receive a complimentary bottle of wine per person and an Emperor gift voucher to use whilst onboard. Also, when booking, guests can ask for a free cabin upgrade and request 15 litre tanks, subject to availability.

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## DIVE DOCTOR: Medical Q&A

Dr Oliver Firth has gained considerable experience in the field of diving and hyperbaric medicine since joining LDC in 2006. He is an Approved Medical Examiner of Divers for the UK HSE, and a medical referee for the UK Sport Diving Medical Committee. He is involved in the management of all types of diving-related illness, including recompression treatment, as well as providing hyperbaric oxygen therapy for non-diving conditions. He remains a passionate diver and has participated in various expeditions and conservation projects throughout the globe.



**Q:** After years of suffering with mysterious aches and "all over body" pains, my osteopath has just diagnosed me with polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR). For confirmation I had blood tests taken this morning by my practice nurse, the results of which are due in 5 to 7 days - at which point I presume/hope my GP will concur. So to date there is no medicine prescribed. However, to get ahead of the game, I'd like to know how this might affect my diving? This is assuming of course that I cease to remain quite so immobile and as stiff as a bloody plank?

**A:** PMR is a debilitating illness which causes stiffness and aching in the muscles of the neck, shoulders, hips and thighs. Sometimes this is so severe that the unlucky sufferer becomes bed-bound, literally unable to lift a finger. It also causes a general lethargic listlessness, unrelieved by rest or sleep. It can come on suddenly after a viral illness but its exact cause is unknown. Although it cannot be prevented, PMR can be treated with steroids and anti-inflammatories, which should produce a rapid improvement. Now as far as diving goes, the issues are simply practical ones: would the stiffness stop you from getting suited and booted up for a dive? Would the lethargy impede your ability to fin and exercise underwater? These are questions that would need an individual assessment, and the answers might vary with time. The medications are perfectly compatible with diving, at least initially, so as long as you had no side effects these would not be an issue. On that last point (and this is looking a long way ahead), some PMR sufferers have to be on steroids for so long that their bone-thinning and fluid-retaining side effects can become a problem, and a set of lung function tests is required. At this stage though, a bit of targeted physio and some brisk weight-bearing exercise will work wonders for skeletal flexibility, so your days of stiffness will hopefully soon be over.

**Q:** I've often wondered about the so-called "liquid breathing" mixtures that have been talked about for some time as alternatives to compressed gas. Do these actually exist? And are they anywhere near practical usage in humans? I remember a film from the 1980's where one of the main characters was immersed in and "breathed" a pinkish fluid, but perhaps this was all just science-fiction movie magic...

**A:** The "breathing liquid" you mention is based on some degree of science - there has been a good deal of experimental work done on perfluorocarbon (PFC) emulsions, which initially held much promise to act as artificial oxygen carriers. They are colourless synthetic liquids, containing mostly carbon and fluorine molecules, into which can be dissolved significant quantities of gases such as oxygen and carbon dioxide - enough to support life with fluid-filled lungs. In effect they can behave as "blood substitutes", bypassing the need for blood products. Experiments on mice (including one carried out "for real" in the aforementioned film, *The Abyss*) demonstrated the proof of concept, some surviving for an hour whilst completely immersed. However, gas exchange in a liquid medium is somewhat reduced, and the increase in work of breathing too much for human trials to be attempted. Hence the "liquid breathing" goal has been all but abandoned. All may not be lost though, as there is ongoing research into whether PFC emulsions might be effective as an adjunctive therapy for DCI. In theory, combined administration with oxygen would have many beneficial effects - increasing oxygen delivery, accelerating the removal of nitrogen, acting as a surfactant to reduce bubble size... So watch this space for further developments (and hopefully for news of *The Abyss 2*)...

For more Q&As from Dr Oli, check out:  
[www.sportdiver.co.uk/divedoctor](http://www.sportdiver.co.uk/divedoctor)



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 DIVE RITE



# Eastside

Having been impressed by the diving off Mexico's Pacific coast, **DAVID JONES** heads east to see how the Caribbean compares...

Photographs by **DAVID JONES**





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**H**aving already spent more than a week on the Pacific coast of Mexico, I was ready for my second leg of my quest to discover how good Mexico diving really is. The flight from Cabo San Lucas on the tip of the Baja Peninsula was simple enough; a quick change in Mexico City, then onwards to Cancun. I decided to base myself in Playa del Carmen for convenience as it was central to what I had planned. An hour after landing, I was settled into my accommodation.

First stop was the island of Cozumel, a 45-minute ferry journey from Playa. At 28 miles long and ten miles wide, this cruise ship stopover is well known for its white sandy beaches and some spectacular diving. It was once a sleepy little fishing village, but then in the 1960s, Jacques Cousteau paid the island a visit and declared this underwater paradise to be one of the best diving locations in the world. The rest is history. Lying North-South, the island divides the Yucatan current heading towards the Gulf of Mexico. Deep water upwellings bring nutrients, plankton feeders and, ultimately, predators, resulting in an extraordinarily healthy reef system. All the diving is on the west side of the island as the Atlantic swell makes the east coast inaccessible. Everything here is big; big grouper, big shoals of barracuda, big fish, big turtles. Huge corals and sponges cling to limestone structures that were formed during previous ice ages. A network of tunnels and swim-throughs make this as exciting as it is beautiful.

During my visit (February and March), eagle rays could be found in large numbers hanging in the current at Punta Sur, the most southerly dive site of the island. I dived with Pro Dive Mexico, who ran a regular schedule of boats from two hotels and the majority of dives were just a few minutes away from the dive centre. Convenience and great diving in the one package! Every dive was a drift, and every dive was an adventure. Loggerhead turtles the size of small cars would swim by, marlin would cruise overhead, the elusive indigenous splendid toad fish would lurk under rocks, giant morays would swim freely around the reef. This was not traditional coral reef diving, this was something special.

After enjoying the peace and tranquility of Cozumel for a couple of days, I had to head back to the mainland - the bull sharks were back! This was one of the main reasons I was here and why I had travelled early in

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**"We were all looking in different directions when I spotted a solitary female approaching. I dropped to the sand quickly and the others followed suit"**

the year as it tied in the best of the Pacific and the Caribbean. Every year, normally around November time, large numbers of pregnant female bull sharks congregate in the shallower waters off Playa del Carmen. They are naturally inquisitive and although some dive companies feed the sharks to attract them in for divers, there doesn't appear to be any need to do so, certainly the company I was diving with didn't do it. They can stay until March, but at some stage, they all suddenly disappear. It is assumed they head into estuaries and mangroves to give birth to their young, but we don't really know. When they do this appears to be totally random, and how long they go for varies. I was lucky. They had been gone for four weeks, longer than usual, when I received a call from the dive centre that a signal had been received from one of the tracking tags fitted to one of the sharks. Traditionally sightings are better in the morning so I readied my gear for an early start.



As I dropped off the boat into the warm water in clear sight of beaches, I noticed several tourists splashing in the waves. The thought that few if any of them had any idea that huge predators were less than 100 metres away brought a wry smile to my face. There is always a current and we descended to about 16m. The bottom is at about 24m and it is just barren sand; staying above it reduced the nitrogen loading and gave us a better view. Large rays will fly beneath you, but if you don't have a shark encounter this is not a dive you will write home about. We were all looking in different directions when I spotted a solitary female approaching. I dropped to the sand quickly and the others followed suit. Anchoring ourselves with an outstretched leg in the sand we waited. It was inquisitive, but cautious, a bit like the one I had seen in Cabo Pulmo in the Sea of Cortez the previous week. Slowly it became more accustomed to us and moved closer. Powerful, efficient, even mysterious, bull sharks are the epitome of nature's finest handiwork. She circled around us for 15 minutes and then she was gone. Four weeks previously divers were enjoying groups of half a dozen sharks - I was going to have to be content with one.

The next day I was travelling again, another early start, this time north to Cancun. At a marina I boarded a speedboat for a journey 30 miles off Isla Mujeres where the warm Yucatan current meets colder water coming from the north of the Gulf of Mexico. These places where cold and warm water mingle are always interesting. Off the coast of North Carolina it brings about a diverse mix of temperate and tropical species in one place. Off the north eastern coast of Yucatan this oceanic phenomenon attracts migrating sardines - and that means predators. The top predator in these parts is the Atlantic sailfish, 90kg of hydrodynamic perfection travelling at up to 70mph. Often supported by small groups of Atlantic



spotted dolphins, these incredible animals operate like tag teams, rounding them up into bait balls and pinning them to the surface. Once suitably corralled they dart into the continuously diminishing bait ball, slicing into the sides of the small fish with rapier-like bills. Marlin are intermingled among them and from above the onslaught continues as frigate birds pick off any unsuspecting sardines that get too close to the surface.

You can't dive, only snorkel, but all the activity is close to the surface anyway. I lost count of how many times I jumped in and out of the boat trying to get close to the action, but as I only had one day available to me on this trip I really didn't care. The trek there and back didn't bother me either because, at the end of the day, the 45 minutes that I had spent in close proximity with this most-beautiful species was well worth the effort.

Time on my journey of discovery was rapidly running out. I love wreck diving so took the opportunity to dive on the wreck of the Mama Vina. Although small this wreck is really rather good. Huge barracuda sneak inside the main deck to pick off shoaling glass fish, while turtles are often found sleeping on the foredeck. My guide told me that they often see bull sharks on the wreck as well, but sadly that was not the case on this occasion. With two diving days left I broke out my second set of regulators and headed inland. The Yucatan peninsula is a vast block of limestone and below the

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Diver admiring a  
passing grouper



surface it resembles a sort of giant Swiss cheese. Huge cave systems, filled with crystal-clear water, stretch all the way down to Belize and, where underground caverns collapse, they leave cenotes, entrances to this vast underwater labyrinth. As a cave diver I took full advantage of my last couple of days, but you don't have to be a cave diver to enjoy the spectacular formations that found here. Open Water divers guided by suitably qualified cavern guides can follow pre-existing cavern lines to get a taste of this incredible geological wonder. What a great way to finish my adventure.

My intention had been to discover the true extent of the opportunities that Mexico has to offer as a diving destination. It had started on the Pacific coast with shoaling hammerheads and Galapagos sharks, giant Pacific mantas, dolphins, humpbacks, silky sharks and more. It had concluded with sailfish, eagle rays, bull sharks and some of the best cave diving in the world on the Caribbean coast. It had been an incredible journey during which I had crammed in as much as possible. There is no doubt in my mind that Mexico is a world-class diving destination. I had never imagined I would be able to see such a diversity of marine life in such a short period of time. However, that is not the end of the story. When you consider what I didn't manage to see due to time constraints, the great white sharks of Guadalupe Island, the sea lions and wreck dives of La Paz, the humpbacks of the Sea of Cortez, the hundreds of whale sharks that feed off Isla Mujeres in the summer, not to mention the saltwater crocodiles of Chinchorro Banks, then you start to get a real appreciation of the incredible variety and opportunities that Mexico has to offer. Mexico really is an ultimate diving destination and well worth a visit. ■

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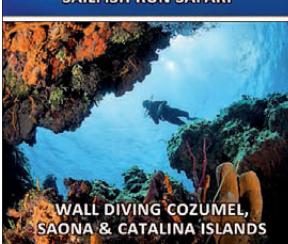
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## 2nd PADI Women's Dive Day - 'tick'...



As we go to press, we are just piecing together the story of another highly successful PADI Women's Dive Day, with many reports flooding in from the hundreds of group events held around the planet last weekend (16 July 2016).

The final tally for the inaugural event last year was 335 events across 60-plus countries, 25 US States and all seven Continents, however every indication is that these totals will be easily surpassed when all the bets are in (except the Continents thing - you can't beat 100 percent!).

Why is it important, or even desirable, to have such an event? Well, as I wrote back in March, the aim is very much to send the message that the days of diving being solely for big blokes in black boats are over; not that those legendary blokes don't have their place too, of course - we are hugely indebted to many of them, in many ways, as pioneers of the sport - however diving has always featured female pioneering too, so it's appropriate for diving to ensure the non-divers out there are aware of the equality inherent in the scuba experience.

My friend and colleague, Alexandra Demetriou-Engeler, put it beautifully in one of her many blogs featured via PADI's website; women are being

encouraged to try new things across many walks of life, and scuba diving is no exception. "What was before considered extreme has become safer", she writes, continuing "What was before considered unusual has become an experience not to be missed. Equality has given women the confidence to think 'I can do everything' and we can. Cultural differences may have meant that men were considered to possess greater physical strength, finding it easier to lift heavy scuba equipment, but that perception is a thing of the past.

"When I became a scuba diver my father had over ten friends who he would dive with - only one was a woman... When I signed up for the Divemaster course, however, things had already started to change. The dive centre where I received my training had more female instructors than male and my course had a balanced split of students from all genders and backgrounds. I felt more at home, and less of an anomaly. It became more and more evident that diving could be an interest for anyone, that it was a uniting force that allowed global discovery across the board." Beautifully put, Alexandra! Read Alexandra's full article at [www2.padi.com/blog/tag/alexandra-dimitriou-engeler/](http://www2.padi.com/blog/tag/alexandra-dimitriou-engeler/)

The PADI Diving Society has been in existence since 1997, and from humble beginnings has grown substantially, within a few years reaching heady heights of 'world's biggest diving club'. With membership now standing at over 180,000 keen, active divers across the planet, the PADI Diving Society represents a formidable 'tribe'. Now all three sectors of the PADI Diving Society - Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe, Middle East and Africa - have moved from being connected but fractured, uniting under a global banner and becoming one entity, with a unified approach and single magazine title reaching all members, everywhere. [www.padi.com/scuba-diving](http://www.padi.com/scuba-diving)

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## WOMEN'S DIVE DAY CASE STUDIES



### LANCASHIRE AND ANGLESEY, GREAT BRITAIN:

Bolton Area Divers started planning this year's PADI Women's Dive Day by looking online at what divers did last year to celebrate the occasion. The crew quickly realised most of the dives were done in warmer climates, with photos of female divers in bikinis and wetsuits. With the British weather being what it is, they decided to go for it anyway (but in drysuits rather than bikinis!). This year's PADI Women's Dive Day was celebrated over a whole weekend by Bolton Area Divers, with 40 divers taking part across the two days.

Once the dates were confirmed, they promoted the weekend's activities to all their Club Members. Following lots of discussion regarding the 'discriminatory nature' of having a dive day only for women, it was agreed men could also join in the fun, providing they were prepared to get into the spirit of the day by wearing something pink or feminine. On Saturday 16 July, a group of 13 women (plus eight men) met at Capernwray, near Carnforth for a day of women's diving. BAD are fortunate to have a lot of women actively diving with them on a regular basis. However, it was great to see so many women diving together on one day. Everyone had a lot of fun before, during and after the dives. Some preferred a nice shallow 'bimble' while others wanted to do a deeper dive, there was something for everyone.

On Sunday 17 July, BAD had ten women (plus nine men) meet in Anglesey for a day of shore diving and BBQs. It was an early start, with a two-hour drive but it was well worth it. The day was fantastic! The group had some great dives with unusually good visibility. The aquatic life was great and the weather was gorgeous; typically un-British!

[www.boltonareadivers.co.uk](http://www.boltonareadivers.co.uk)



### NASSAU, BAHAMAS:

PADI Course Director Hayley-Jo Carr and PADI AmbassAdiver Liz Parkinson had a great day with 20 ladies joining them at Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas. In the morning, Hayley and Liz taught the Sea Turtle Awareness Specialty course, teaching the ladies how to ID sea turtles and to also remove debris from the dive site. The day was complimentary thanks to Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas; all they asked for was a US\$50 donation to the Project Aware Foundation for the ladies who were certified as Sea Turtle Aware divers. The ladies will receive their special edition Project AWARE Certification card and raised a total of US\$650.

After lunch, the group headed out for a shark adventure dive at the Ray of Hope shipwreck. During the morning dives, a toy turtle was hidden at the dive site for the ladies to find and the lucky winner, marine biologist Sandra Schleier, had the opportunity of a lifetime to feed the sharks! The shark adventure is a unique opportunity for divers to see sharks up close and personal and proves how effective shark tourism is for shark conservation. The day ended with drinks and snacks relaxing onboard while docked in a beautiful bay.

[www.stuartcove.com](http://www.stuartcove.com)



### NORFOLK, GREAT BRITAIN:

Norwich's Christal Seas Scuba ([www.scuba4me.co.uk](http://www.scuba4me.co.uk)) ventured off the north Norfolk coast on Women's Dive Day to explore a nice shipwreck lying just off the beach.

## Seiko announces partnership with PADI



Since the launch of their first diver's watch in 1965, Seiko has brought to market a stream of innovative new technologies and designs that have made diving safer and easier for the professional and recreational diver alike.

By a strange co-incidence, a few months after Seiko's first diver's watch appeared, two American dive enthusiasts decided that standards of training in diving needed to be raised and founded the Professional Association of Diving Instructors.

Seiko and PADI share a passion for ensuring the safety and enjoyment of divers and for protection of the marine environment, so a partnership felt very right - and to celebrate and promote this partnership, two Prospex PADI Special Editions will be released this autumn.

The Kinetic GMT Divers uses Seiko's unique Kinetic caliber which, powered solely by the movement of the wearer's body, offers both precision and security to the diver. This model uses the same two-layer case construction as the legendary 1975 model, but it does so in a modern way, and is fitted with a silicone strap.

The Automatic Divers has a case and dial design that is also a reminder of a classic, the 1970's Seiko 150m Mechanical Divers. Famous for its unique shaped case, wide and clear hands and indexes, this watch is now widely collected and still has many admirers throughout the world.

Both special models feature PADI's characteristic red and blue colour on the dials and the bezels, and the PADI logo on the dials.

# Discover Tec

WHEN ONE TANK IS NOT ENOUGH



Curious about technical diving? Want to go for a test dive before committing to a full course? Then **PADI Discover Tec** is for you.

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PADI Discover Tec is open to certified divers over 18 years with a minimum of 10 logged dives.

Find out more and locate your nearest PADI TecRec Center at [padi.com](http://padi.com)



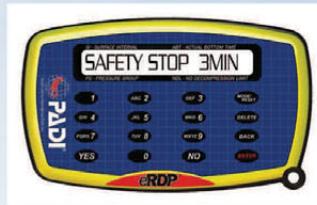


# PADI in the 2000s

2001 Seal Team Released

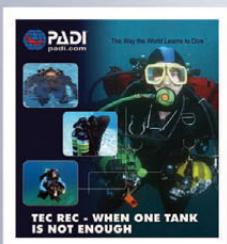


2005 eRDP Introduced



2000

TecRec launched



2005



2009

2007 eLearning program launched

## ● PADI Through the Decades: The 2000s

PADI entered the 2000s with plenty of momentum from the previous century. Between 2000-2010, PADI programs and courses were expanded to cater to an even wider audience, including children who wanted to try scuba for the first time, and advanced divers looking for a new challenge.

### ● 2000: PADI TecRec®

Technical diving gained even more attention during the late 90s and 2000s. Tec diving uses specialised equipment and procedures to take divers beyond recreational diving limits, and many divers were ready to explore places no-one else had been. Building on earlier research, PADI launched the first tec diving training programs based on established educational principles; Tec Deep Diver, Tec Trimix Diver and Tec Gas Blender. Tec diving continued to grow, and there are now 18 PADI TecRec courses.

### ● 2001: PADI Seal Team™

In 2001, PADI widened its programs so that kids could get a taste of diving. After extensive research on children and diving, PADI Seal Team was released, aimed at giving 8-10 year-olds their first scuba experience. In addition to basic skills, the program includes specialty AquaMissions like wreck diving, navigation, buoyancy and more. PADI also published tools to make teaching children safer and easier, including *Children and Scuba Diving: A Resource Guide for Instructors and Parents*. By extending scuba to children, PADI made it possible for families to bond through this unique and exciting experience.

### ● 2005: eRDP Launched

The first major update to the Recreational Dive Planner since its launch came in 2005; the electronic RDP. Three years later, the multilevel eRDPMLTM was released, combining the multilevel planning capability of The Wheel into a more modern, electronic format. Even with the recent growth in dive computer use, the eRDPML™ has remained popular with divers throughout their training and beyond.

### ● 2007: PADI Launches eLearning™

Digital learning became increasingly popular as technology advanced through the 2000s. Following the 1990s CD-ROM, PADI created the Open Water Diver Online course - the first eLearning course and eBook edition of the PADI Open Water Diver Manual. Divers could now work towards their certification anywhere, anytime, at their own pace. PADI eLearning® has become incredibly popular, with many divers choosing it over classroom tuition. Today, many PADI programs are available online, from Open Water Diver to the Instructor Development Course.

*Stay tuned for the final instalment of our 50th anniversary blog series next month - the 2010s. Missed a decade? Catch up on the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s in the May-August issues of Sport Diver.*

Project AWARE Foundation is a growing movement of scuba divers protecting the ocean planet - one dive at a time. Over the past two decades of underwater conservation we've learned that divers are true leaders in ocean protection. We're ocean heroes numbering in the millions across the globe. We believe together our actions will make a huge impact and will help to rescue the ocean. [www.projectaware.org](http://www.projectaware.org)

## JOIN THE MOVEMENT | PROTECT THE OCEAN



# MY OCEAN NEWS

*Domino Albert,*  
Project AWARE Communications Manager

A lot has been said in the media about the potential political, social and economic impacts of leaving the European Union, but what does it mean for the ocean? A report published in May 2016 - The Potential Policy and Environmental Consequences for the UK of a Departure from the European Union - outlines key environmental achievements of the EU and includes careful consideration of the environmental implications of Brexit. In the past, UK citizens have been constructive allies in the European battle for a sustainable fishery policy. We all remember the success of campaigns like the Fish Fight. I also vividly remember the time, when together with Shark Alliance partners, we asked MEPs across the UK to work together to close loopholes in the EU shark-finning ban. The UK championed a proposal to strengthen the EU shark-finning regulations. Richard Benyon, UK Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries at the time, even put his mask, snorkel and fins on, to dive in a shark tank at the London Aquarium to show his support for shark conservation. For six years, the Shark Alliance supported by its members, worked strategically with key EU officials from all member countries, including the UK, who played a significant role in securing a strong enforceable EU finning ban. The UK's exit from the EU will most likely take time to complete, but I'm confident that Seas At Risk, a European association of non-governmental organisations, will continue to work with its UK members, including Project AWARE, to push for the policies needed to keep European seas clean and healthy.

## CITES: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



In less than 100 days, South Africa will host the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP17). The event, which runs 24 September to 5 October, presents new opportunities for Project AWARE. But what is it, how does it work, and why is it important for sharks and rays? Project AWARE answers your questions.

### What is CITES?

CITES is considered as one of the world's most-powerful tools for biodiversity conservation through the regulation of international trade in wild fauna and flora. This intergovernmental trade agreement provides a framework for co-operation and collaboration among nations to prevent decline in wild populations of animals and plants. A country that has agreed to implement the Convention is called a Party to CITES. The Parties meet every two to three years at a Conference of the Parties (CoP).

### How does CITES work?

Species covered by CITES are listed under three appendices, depending on the level of protection they require and their conservation status. A set of biological and trade criteria helps determine under which appendix a species should be listed. When a species is listed on Appendix I, trade is prohibited and should be authorised only for non-commercial purposes (such as for scientific research). International trade in Appendix II listed species may be authorised through a system of export permits and certificates. This system seeks to ensure that

this trade is sustainable, legal and traceable. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade. It facilitates international cooperation in conservation and trade monitoring.

### Why is CITES important for sharks and rays?

International trade in shark and ray species, too often, drives overfishing, which - together with finning and bycatch - drives depletion. Project AWARE uses the power of CITES to help protect threatened shark and ray species - sought for fins, wings, gill plates, meat, oil, teeth and cartilage - from the devastating effects of unregulated, international trade. CITES can reduce the pressure on commercially valuable shark and ray populations.

During CITES CoP17, CITES Parties will review proposals to amend the CITES Appendices including those to control trade in thirteen species of sharks and rays - nine species of devil rays, three species of thresher sharks and the silky shark. In close collaboration with partner NGOs, including Shark Advocates International and the Shark Trust, Project AWARE will engage with relevant CITES Member Parties from leading supporting countries and from select undecided countries to achieve the two-thirds majority support needed for the proposed Appendix II shark and ray listing. We'll also bring the global voice of the dive community to this international forum to help bring a positive outcome for sharks and rays this September. [www.divers4sharksnrays.projectaware.org](http://www.divers4sharksnrays.projectaware.org)

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# Southern SPAIN SIMPLY SURPRISING!

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**Southern Spain is renowned for its beach holidays, but what's the diving like? SIMON BELL gives the lowdown on diving the Costa Tropical and Gibraltar**

Photographs by PHIL MILLS

**D**ropping down from my home in the Mijas mountains at the crack of dawn, the red sun rising over the Sierra Nevada mountaintops to the east giving a hint of Andalucia's Arab past, the big expanse of blue that is the giant basin of modern civilisation opens up in front of me, while to the west is the faint outline of the North African coast and the white limestone ridge of Gibraltar: the Twin Pillars of Hercules, according to Greco-Roman antiquity.

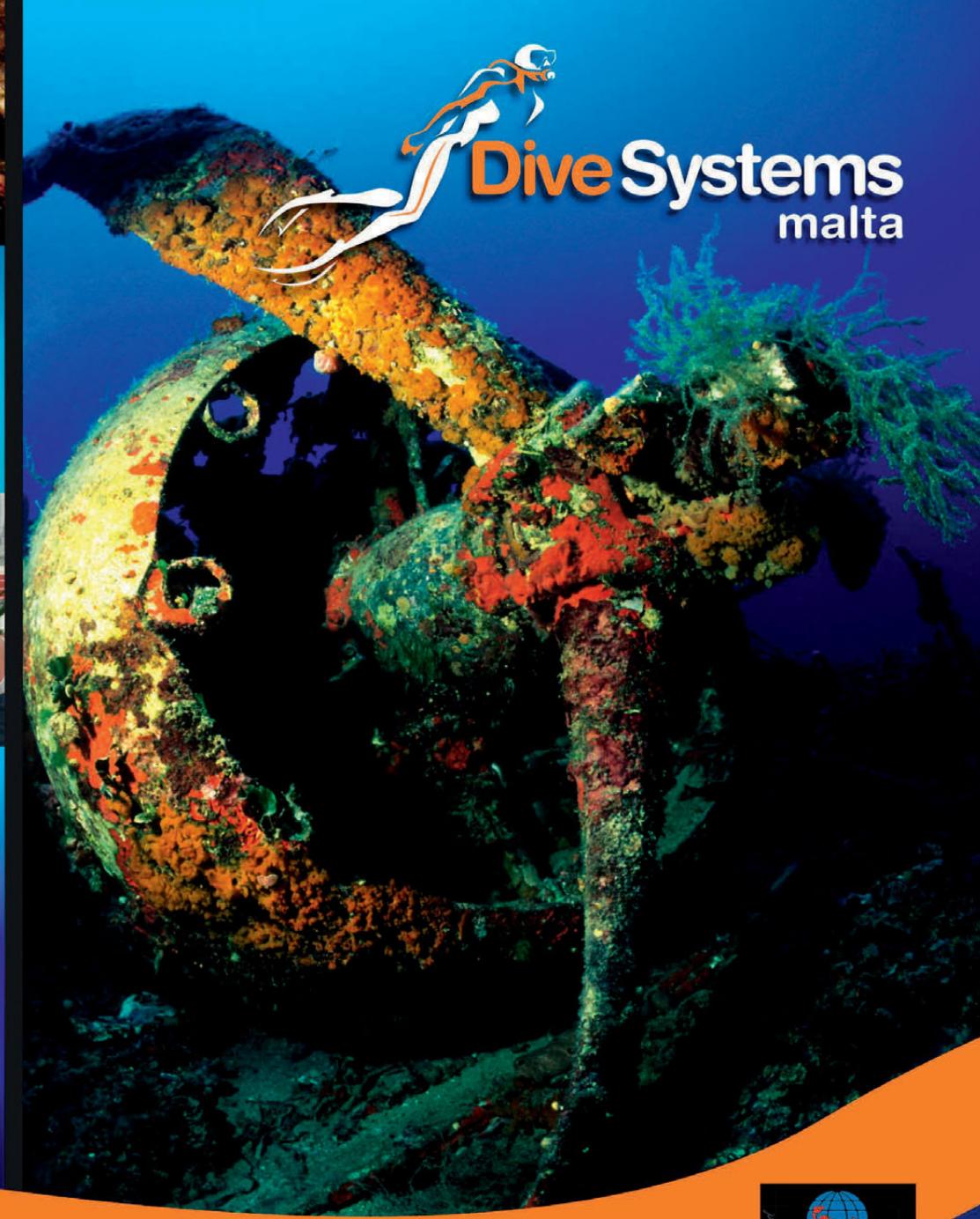
But it's not a history lesson my team and I are in for today, but a dozen PADI Discover Scuba Divers taking their first dip in the sea, with the promise of an octopus encounter that seems to be thrilling and terrifying them in equal measure.

Also along for some guided dives are ten divers who are already certified, a group of Open Water students and a pair being put through their paces on the final day of their Rescue Diver course.

It's a typical daily summer's schedule for Simply Diving and it's the Costa Tropical - Del Sol's less famous but more rugged next door neighbour - that is the destination for today's in-water activities. More specifically, Marina del Este, a site that can thankfully cater for almost any course on the entire PADI spectrum.

Tucked inside a small bay along a seaboard that is potted with hard-to-reach coves and plunging cliffs, Marina del Este is on the edge of one of Spain's biggest marine reserves and one of Europe's first ever.

Here you can find sandy patches in shallow depths for skills practice or some buoyancy refining, rocky reefs dropping to 18m plus and coral-covered walls that cascade down to 40m and beyond. So it's here we'll be bringing our mixed bunch from our Base Camp One in Torremolinos, home to one of our five-star CDC Centres since 1999.



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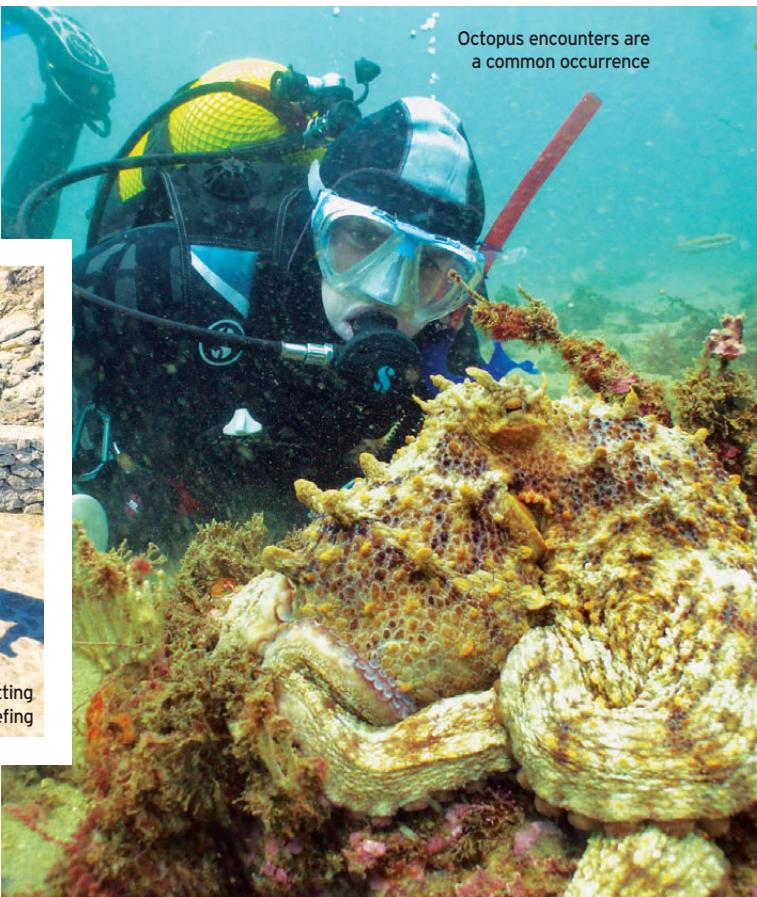
\*Based on 2 persons sharing twin room between April-June & Sept-Oct

Shoals of reef fish inhabit the Costa Tropical sites



"Many nudibranchs make their home here too, in all their flamboyant and psychedelic best: the blue and yellow elegant sea slug, the bright pink flabellina, the lady godiva with her gill-tips that look like they're on fire"

Octopus encounters are a common occurrence



Beautiful setting for a briefing

Recent dives have had divers coming nostril to nostril with Mediterranean moray eels that find solace in the many crevices, as well as their slightly less colourful but equally photogenic cousins, the conger. Also shy but sometimes happy to hang around long enough for the underwater paparazzi was an ocean sunfish (mola mola), much more common here on the southern Spanish coast than most would realise.

More often seen around the remains of two parked cars in 23m and 25m a short fin-kick away from a seamount named Fraggie Rock (for a reason no-one I've met in over a decade can explain... Doozers, anyone?), the pez luna, as they're known in Spanish, use these small, encrusted artificial reefs as cleaning stations. A so-far-unbroken record is 12 sunfish at once: a school so big not even the widest fish-eye could capture them all with one click.

Also more than worthy of a good camera strobe are some protected and endemic species of corals such as the sunset cup - a perfect bright orange backdrop to frame any photo - or a stunning dendrophyllia, known here as the yellow tree-coral and only found at 30m or deeper.

It was easy to lose count of the octopus on the first dive of the day, with some of them at their inquisitive best and generously allowing a close approach. Thankfully, we found out that of course they don't pull you into their lair and slowly devour your arm, as today's Discover Scuba Divers had worried. "That was the best thing I have ever seen" and "I can't believe it can change colours like that", shrieked first-timers Paul and Diane from Nottingham as they were handed their PADI certificates, the glossy proof of their holiday highlight.

Sadly this intelligent invertebrate is a huge favourite on the plates of almost every Spaniard and a good deal of our foreign visitors, but as with other cephalopods, the common octopus' vast numbers are safeguarded from spearfishing and angling in these parts with restrictions and hefty penalties for removing them, hence why it's an odd dive not to see at least one. They can range in size from a bull's head with tentacles longer than your legs, to so small that they could fit neatly in the palm of your hand.

A typical dive starts from the beach and follows the gentle drop-offs either left or further to the right. If you're experienced enough, it's likely you'll be taken out to Punta de la Mona, the headland that juts out from the bay and keeps it protected nearly all year round from any westerly winds. Here is best for a wall dive, maximum depth to the seabed about 45m, with a coral garden round the corner that has been compared favourably by many with the Red Sea.

With summer water temperatures topping 28 degrees C, a 2.5mm shorty seems to keep most comfortable during dives lasting between 40 minutes and an hour.

Visibility meanwhile can be a staggering 40 metres too, particularly in August, September and October, compared with the low season winter months when it reaches 10 to 20 metres. At the end of the day, Instructor Carl rounds up the gang and it's back to Torremolinos to wash down the day: fresh water for the kit, cold Cruzcampo cañas for the divers.

Torremolinos itself has had its own refreshing pick-me-up, managing in recent years to shake off its pie and chips reputation made famous by Eric Idle and his Monty Python chums' Travel Agent song and is now more remembered by its millions of annual visitors for its long sandy beaches, palm-tree lined avenues and even, dare I say it, cultural events. It hosted a quarter of all tourists to the province of Malaga last year and expects to continue to attract a good bulk of Malaga Airport's 14 million annual arrivals this year too.

From here, we can also reach the British Territory of Gibraltar and this is where we're heading next. A great spot to start the PADI Advanced Open Water Diver course for the students we have joining us (Wreck, Deep, Drift, Fish Identification, you name it), as well as for those diving just for fun.

Traditionally cooler than the Costa Tropical or other parts of the Costa del Sol, Gibraltar's waters coincide with the Atlantic Ocean and without doubt its reefs benefit unspeakably from the rich currents and overlapping of ecosystems.

Camp Bay, accessed by a beach on the western side of this colonial outpost, has a total of 15 wrecks. Most were sunk as part of an artificial reef project, started in the 1970s to encourage marine life regrowth following the claiming of chunks of seabed for sunbathing space. The project was initiated by a small band of local biologists and there's plenty of proof of its incredible success.

Six or seven wrecks are possible in one dive, providing you sip your air like it's a fine cognac, although a dive on just one or two of them will provide entertainment enough for others who like to breathe their money's worth.

A definite favourite is the Royal Navy mooring vessel, the 482M, which was sunk in 1990. At 30 metres long and sitting in just 17m (the deck at 12m), the benefits of a longer no deco time can be exploited to drop down into the hold, peer into the cupboards and cabins, or even navigate a swim through the engine room and neighbouring quarters.

Gibraltar's artificial reef project has been a huge success

Above the wreck can be fish soup at times, while the occasional diving cormorant has been known to surprise the hell out of divers drifting along in a daydream. Good buoyancy is essential while weaving around the scattered hulks, with gorgonians and other corals scrapping for every inch of space.

Many of the Costas' nearly 40 varieties of nudibranch make their home here too, in all their flamboyant and psychedelic best: the blue and yellow elegant sea slug, the bright pink flabellina, the lady godiva with her gill-tips that look like they're on fire. They all converge for a toxic snack on the dozens of sponge species that engulf each wreck.

Just over the other side of the Rosia Battery is Nelson's Anchorage and Rosia Bay, reachable in one drift dive, where Roman anchors and Georgian-era cannons can be uncovered by a shift in the tide and currents. It was here that the body of Admiral Lord Horatio himself was brought ashore in a cask of rum after the Battle of Trafalgar.

But that's another history class best saved for another day. For now it's time to get ready for tomorrow's re-run and to get myself back up into the mountains from where I can survey this special patch of the Mediterranean. ■

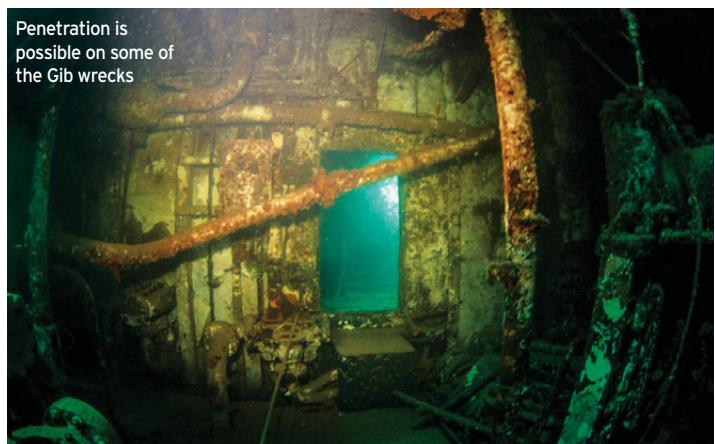


**"Thankfully we found out that of course octopus don't pull you into their lair and slowly devour your arm, as today's Discover Scuba Divers had worried"**

Octopus come in all shapes and sizes



Penetration is possible on some of the Gib wrecks



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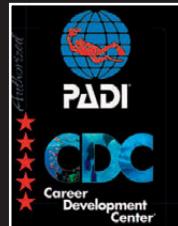
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# TALES FROM THE TANK

By SOPHIE MONTGOMERY, DIVE OFFICER, BLUE PLANET AQUARIUM



This month I thought I would write about something a bit different to what's going on in the aquarium, as we are really busy at the moment prepping for the summer holidays, so if you're in the area, you should come down for a visit, meet everyone and perhaps even book yourself onto a dive!

Here in the aquarium, everyone sees the sharks and all the different animals we have around the building, but not everyone gets to see or hear about what goes on behind the scenes, so I will tell you a little about that this month!

Quarantine is one of the most-important areas of the building. Not only is it where our divers get in and out of the water, it's where we prep all the food for all the animals in the building. Due to the vast amount of animals we have here at the aquarium we require a large amount of food and all eat different things. The food we use needs to be taken out the night before and defrosted in the fridge in time for the next morning. All the animal food gets weighed and enriched with vitamins before being given to the marine life, and most of our animals are target fed, meaning we know exactly which bit of food is going to which animal.

So to give you an example of the different things we feed; the octopus will generally have live crabs although occasionally we give chunks of mackerel; seahorses get mysis, a tiny type of shrimp; our jellyfish are fed on juvenile Artemia (brine shrimp); and then our two caiman are given trout

or roach and as much as they will eat once a week. Then, not to miss off our sharks and rays that everyone loves, the dive team prep the food for the main tank which takes about 45 minutes everyday and that is just for their section, so imagine how long it takes for the whole aquarium!

Our sand tiger sharks get fed three times a week on a fish called trevally, each weighing about 1kg as a minimum, and our lemon sharks have octopus, squid and haddock and are fed daily. The reason that sharks aren't all fed every day is because they have different metabolisms. Lemon sharks have a faster metabolism and swim around the tank quicker, meaning they are burning energy more rapidly and therefore get hungrier quicker, whereas sand tiger sharks have a slower metabolism and don't swim as fast. Both of these species of shark have food that has been gutted, so when we weigh it every morning we then add vitamins and dry food. The nurse sharks, zebra shark, guitar sharks and bamboo sharks all get fed in-water by hand and all get a mixture of whiting and mackerel. The food preparation is the same process as the sand tigers, with it being weighed and enriched using vitamins. Once the shark has eaten we record it on our feed sheets, stating the amount that the sharks have eaten and if there was any wastage. We also take note of how many vitamins each individual has taken - once this is finished it is entered onto the computer database ensuring we have a full history of feed records. ■

BLUE PLANET AQUARIUM, Longlooms Road, Cheshire Oaks, Cheshire, CH65 9LF

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# Grenada TEC-WRECK Jamboree

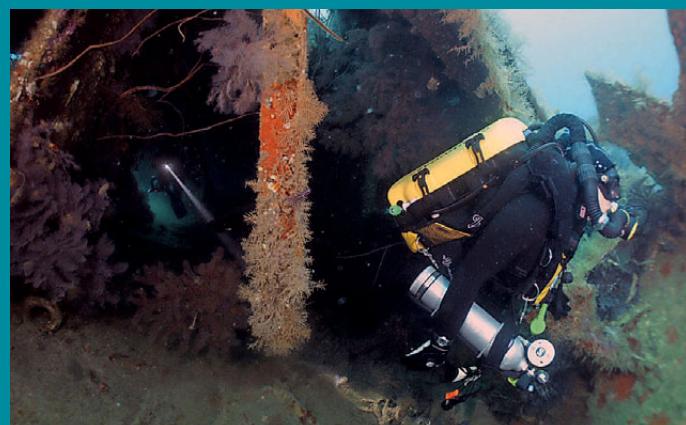
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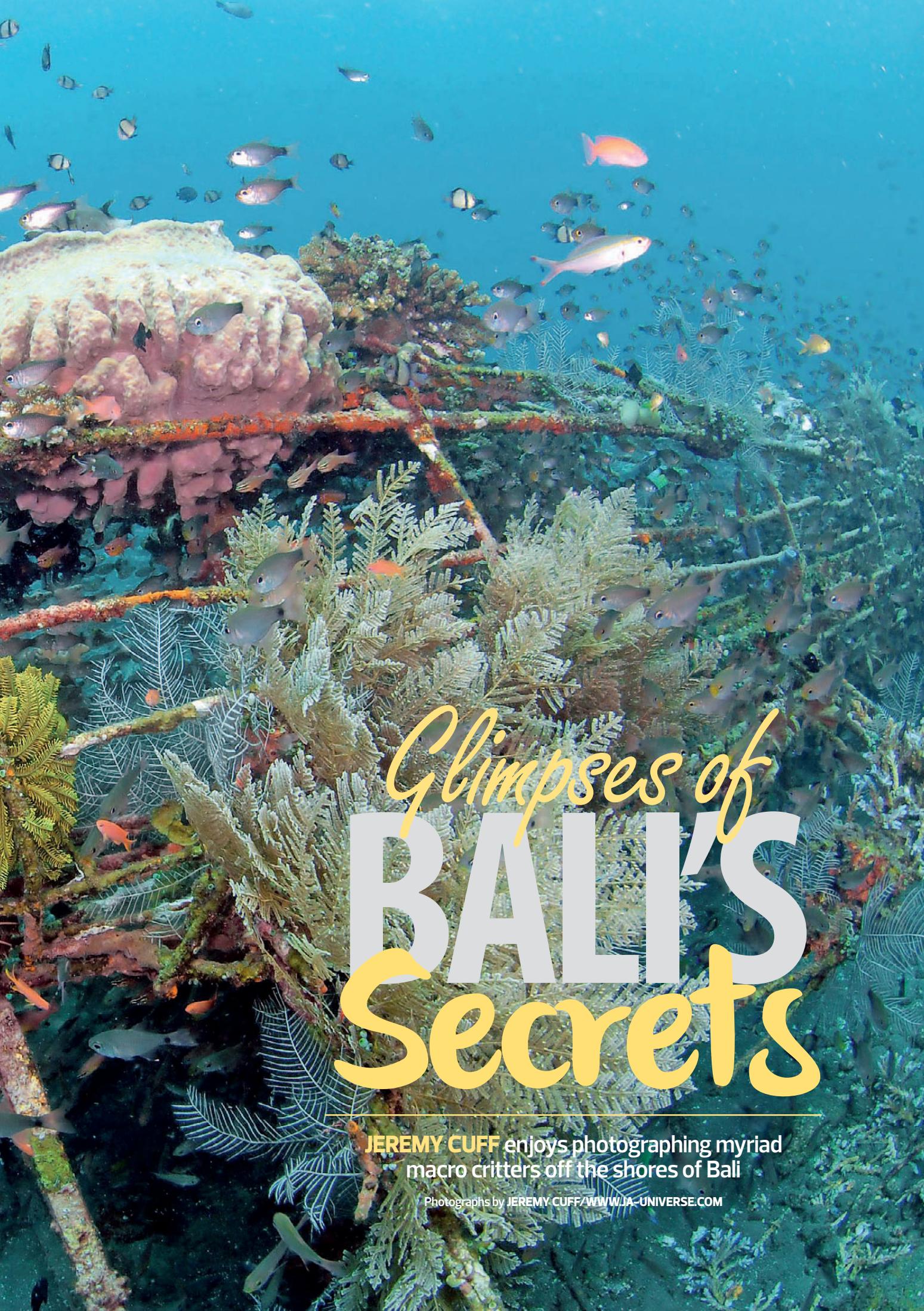
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A vibrant underwater photograph showing a coral reef teeming with life. Large, textured corals are visible on the left, while the right side is covered in dense green and brown foliage. Numerous small, colorful fish, including orange and yellow species, swim throughout the scene.

# Glimpses of **BALI'S** Secrets

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**JEREMY CUFF** enjoys photographing myriad macro critters off the shores of Bali

Photographs by JEREMY CUFF / [WWW.JA-UNIVERSE.COM](http://WWW.JA-UNIVERSE.COM)

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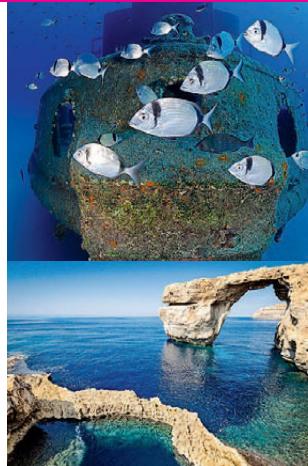
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**"This huge wreck is often the reason divers visit the area and it's not difficult to see why. It's unusual in that it can be done as a shore dive"**



The Liberty is well broken up...



...but penetration is still possible



Loading up the dive boat with cylinders



**F**or me, there's little more appealing than being based at a great dive resort, with fascinating diving literally outside your door. I'd heard many good things from underwater photographer friends who'd enjoyed some fruitful visits. When a window of opportunity for a ten-day trip presented itself, I just had to go and find out for myself...

Bali has long been considered an oasis of calmness and tranquillity, a stress antidote to the relentlessness of modern life, a place where you can get off the treadmill and recharge your batteries, or perhaps a sanctuary in which to reconnect with your inner self. Others may perceive it as a surfing and partying hotspot on the global backpacking trail. In truth, it's a place with many facets, capable of entralling many kinds of visitors with a variety of interests, including excellent scuba diving.

Like so many places in the world these days, Bali has a lot more people living there than a generation ago, so initial impressions are not one of calmness and tranquillity. Instead, I was greeted by heavy traffic, vehicle fumes and urban sprawl around the main city of Denpasar, which is the usual entry point for international visitors arriving by air. As populations tend to cluster around roads, any calmness and tranquillity had to be deferred until we were able to peel off into the seclusion of the resort.

The village of Tulamben, a renowned area for diving on the north east of the island, lies just off the main coastal road. Thanks to the busy roads already mentioned, it can take up to three hours to reach from the airport in the transfer minibus, but it's very much worth it when you get there.

Tulamben itself was rather like you'd imagine a Balinese dive resort area to be like: lovely mature foliage, and a black sand beach fringed by palm trees. As a backdrop, there's the brooding volcanic menace of Mt. Agung (which is possible to trek if you've got the time and inclination), which last erupted back in the 1960s, serving as a reminder that calmness and tranquillity cannot be guaranteed in Bali; one day it will erupt again.

Though there's plenty of great reef diving and many good wrecks to dive around Indonesia and other parts of the Far East, the region is especially renowned for its fascinating 'muck diving' for which Bali is no exception. The term 'muck diving' could be considered somewhat of a misnomer, as it's really 'sand diving' or in Bali's case 'black sand diving.' To me, black sand creates a different timbre or hue to the water, making it more mysterious than the 'white sand' variety; a darkness with secrets to unlock.

Over the course of several dives, my house reef began to reveal a few of them to me, mainly thanks to the helpful dive guides. They know these sites like the back of their hands, and without their help I would have found but a fraction of the stuff.

One of the great things about diving these black sand slopes is that small and non-descript looking bommies on closer inspection turn out to be hives of activity that are so good you could spend whole dives there, with a myriad of creatures cleaning and being cleaned, stinging and being stung, eating and being eaten.

At one such bommie at a depth of just over 20m, an impressive and imposing honeycomb moray eel dominated the scene, as shrimps continually attended to its oral hygiene in a symbiotic relationship of mutual benefit. Why certain bommies attain this status, while other similar bommies don't is a mystery (at least to me). It must be something along the lines of how certain towns become more prosperous and sought after than other towns.

It's also worth spending time out on the black sand itself, where you can discover all sorts of critters such as half buried scorpionfish waiting for something edible to swim within striking range, hermit crabs, decorator crabs, flounders and roaming groups of the bizarre shrimpfish (razorfish). Of the bigger things, skittish stingrays (the blue spotted variety) can commonly be seen gliding across these expanses.

Good though my house reef was, most divers will wish to explore the

wider choice of dive sites which can be accessed by the daily boat dives, most being no more than ten minutes away. As the boats are generally moored just offshore, the dive crew will cheerfully help anyone who is unsteady on their feet to navigate the boulders while wading through the shallows to the ladder.

One such site that we visited was the excellent Lombok View, named after the possible views across the straight on clear days. In terms of underwater topography, it's a sandy and weedy slope full of promise. It became known to me as the place we searched for the Rhinopias scorpionfish, one of the most prized of sightings in the diving community. I'd frustratingly missed out on seeing one a few years previously in Papua New Guinea when I had to sit out the diving thanks to a sinus infection, so I hoped this time it would work out. A fine specimen had been seen on previous dives at the site and the guides were confident.

There were plenty of other things to interest us as the guides searched for the Rhinopias. Especially memorable was a pair of harlequin shrimp, a beautiful but deadly species that specialises in dismembering and eating starfish - a real macro gorefest! Whilst I was otherwise engaged with photographic opportunities, the search for the Rhinopias

The Liberty is smothered in marine growth



Artificial reefs take all shapes and forms

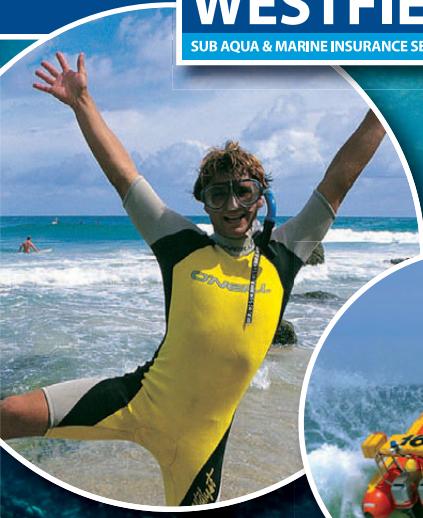


Soft corals and gorgonians on the Liberty



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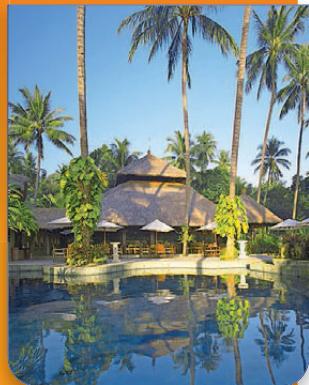


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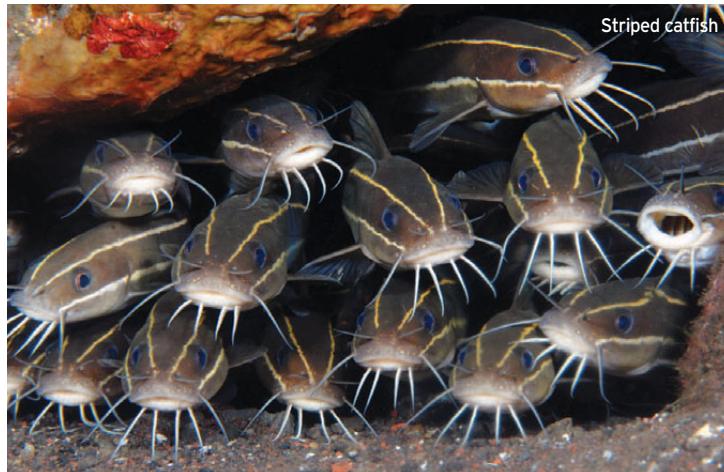
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Lionfish



**"Especially memorable was a pair of harlequin shrimp, a beautiful but deadly species that specialises in dismembering and eating starfish – a real macro gorefest!"**

Porcelain crab



Striped catfish

became more frantic as the guides adopted 'search and recovery' techniques to try and locate it based on where it was last seen. Eventually, we had to concede - he (or she) was pronounced 'missing in action'. Try as we might, we couldn't find it.

As with most good dive operations, the team will always try to buddy up divers with others of similar experience or interest. At some of the sites, I dived alongside a French photographer (a strange chap, but let's not get sidetracked on that one!) who was very into his macro images. Fairly late into a dive just along from the resort, he suddenly started squealing wildly; he'd either been stung by something nasty or he'd seen something special. It turned out to be the latter - a fantastic wunderpus which, in appearance, is rather like the better known mimic octopus. On another site we literally locked our antler-like strobe arms in our attempts to photograph a very mobile mantis shrimp carrying eggs. It would have been comical to film our efforts as we continually jostled to get in the best positions to photograph the roving crustacean.

At some sites around Tulamben, the local dive operations have placed artificial reefs and wrecks with a view to attracting additional life for the benefit of divers and the environment. These are always worth spending time around, where predators such as scorpionfish, lionfish and frogfish can often be found feasting on the more concentrated amounts of prey. One such submerged structure that we visited is modelled on an aeroplane wreck for added interest and novelty.

One wreck that most certainly is not artificial (and one of the most well known in whole of the Far East) is the Liberty. This huge wreck is often the reason divers visit the area and it's not difficult to see why. It's unusual in that can be done as a shore dive, though many resorts do it from a boat.

Close by is a cluster of dive centres and lodges ensuring that the wreck is often extremely busy with divers, which if you're a photographer can be frustrating. Trying to find an area or vista that you want to photograph without bubbles, arms, legs and fins everywhere can become a yearning on this wreck but it is possible if you're patient. During

my visits to the wreck, the visibility was average and it wasn't possible to photograph the wider wreck, only parts of it.

As the wreck is around 120 metres in length, ideally several dives would be good here in order to fully explore it, though I had time for just two during my visit. Deep dives of around 35m are also possible if that's your interest, but depth isn't essential here. In terms of timing, early morning visits are good if you want to see the schooling bumphead parrotfish, but any time of day should yield a good dive.

Each visit to Bali will be different depending on the season and prevailing conditions, but is always likely to be good. Alongside those already mentioned, I logged many sightings including numerous species of clownfish, porcelain crab, orangutan crab, batfish, pygmy seahorses, pipehorses, ornate ghost pipefish, ribbon eel, leaf scorpionfish, cleaner shrimp, crinoid shrimp, assorted nudibranchs, boxfish and various species of pufferfish large and small.

As expected, I found Tulamben to be a great area for diving. I had indeed found calmness and tranquillity among the muck, critters and wrecks. So much so that I didn't go anywhere else except the resort and the dive sites for the whole duration of my trip! ■

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Blue Hole - Gozo

*Photo: frankie van remoortel-cortebeek*

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## STAR LETTER

### No chum of chumming

In a world that seems to be ever more focussed on conservation and protection, I honestly cannot comprehend how we are still condoning shark feeding. It is absolutely beyond me. The diving community - and the wider ocean conservation world - is so hot on a number of issues, for which I wholeheartedly applaud them, and it could be argued that there are more pressing issues than feeding, but it's high time something was done about this. It's the fact that it's ocean conservationists that are doing it that makes it so sad. Yes, places like Shark Reef in Fiji have been rescued, but at what cost? Can we honestly accept that such interference won't be having an effect on these sharks' feeding and behavioural patterns? PADI has a great mantra: 'Take only pictures, leave only bubbles'. In my experiences, I am happy to say that most divers abide by it. Except for the feeders who touch, stroke and supply ready-meals for some of the ocean's fiercest creatures. Do they really think they're only leaving bubbles and not long-lasting behavioural traits?

I sometimes wonder if I'm the only one who thinks this way. I plead with you, let my voice be heard. Does anyone out there agree with me?

Elizabeth Pierce, via email



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## No Fujifilming in Fiji

Your Jul/Aug 2016 - Fiji Beqa Lagoon. You recommend going there. I was there in March and DO NOT recommend this site. Accommodation was horrible, limited Wi-Fi, diving was the worst - I didn't take a single picture. Reefs were dark and grey (no colour), visibility was poor, dive operators kept sending us out in strong currents and low visibility. If I hadn't stayed calm my second dive could have been my last - I was left by myself in almost zero visibility to deal with a strong current. I had to figure out how to get to our boat without drifting away. What we thought would be a terrific diving experience turned into a nightmare. I don't usually write, however I felt this one was needed.

Courtney Fonner, via email



## Thumbs-up for downed ships

I've just read your online account of the sinking of the new wreck in Porto Santo and have also seen news that the authorities in Florida plan to sink another ship off the Fort Lauderdale coast this coming weekend. This really is great news and a positive sign that the momentum behind artificial reefs is building, both within the dive community and among those that don't dive.

I have been diving for more than 20 years and have always especially enjoyed diving on wrecks. The magic of these sites really starts happening once they've been on the seabed for a number of years and coral and marine life colonisation is well underway. I applaud these two new additions to the seabed and hope I get to dive them.

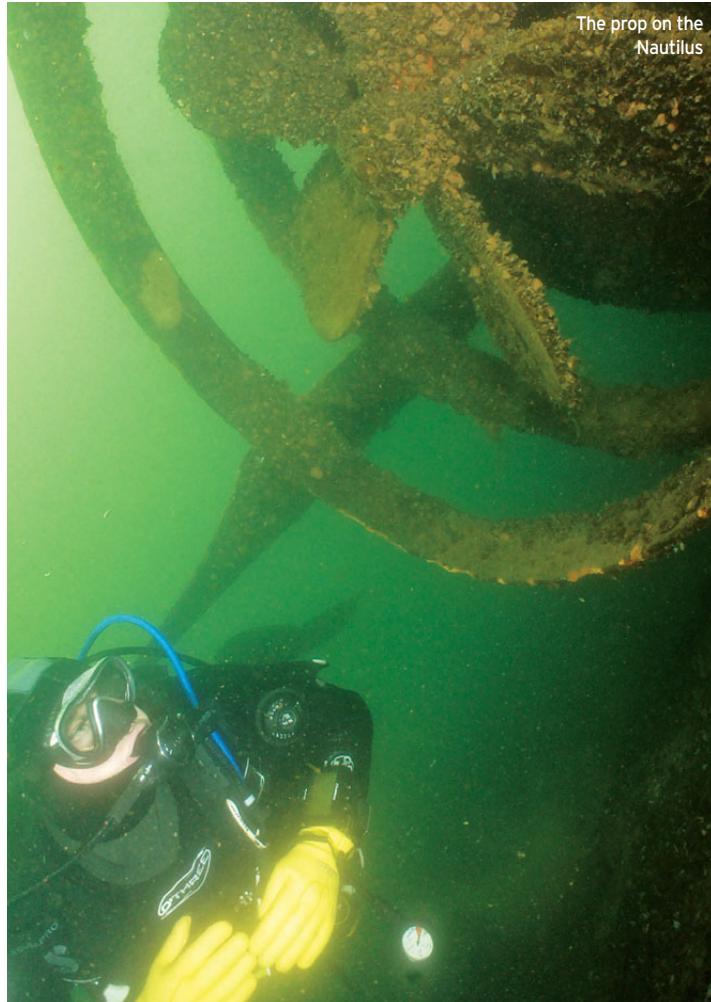
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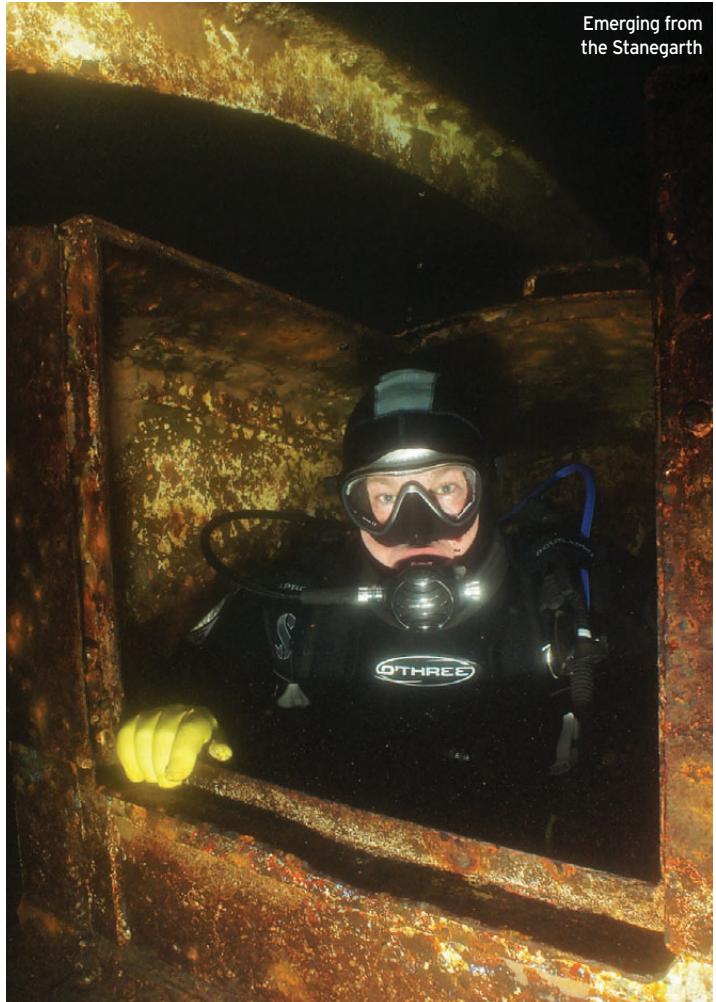


**SPORT DIVER** takes a look at the UK's best inland dive sites, this month visiting Leicestershire-based Stoney Cove

Photographs by MARK EVANS



The prop on the  
Nautilus



Emerging from  
the Stanegeth

**U**ndoubtedly one of the most-popular inland dive sites in the UK, Stoney Cove has been attracting divers for more than 50 years. A working quarry for more than 100 years - and one that relied on pumps to keep spring water at bay - the site was left to flood when quarrymen downed tools for the final time in 1958. It wasn't long before divers and other watersports enthusiasts arrived. As the years rolled by and the popularity of scuba diving increased, the site metamorphosed into the Stoney Cove we know today, where divers can find excellent facilities topside and a wonderland of attractions beneath the waterline.

## UNDERWATER ATTRACTIONS

**The Stanegarth / 22m** / The Stanegarth is Stoney's premier attraction. The 18-metre-long, 81-tonne tug makes for a superb wreck dive. Her accessible depth means she's perfect for divers undertaking their Advanced course or Wreck Specialty and her penetration potential means she's also a great wreck for lining-out practice. At more than 100 year old, the Stanegarth also offers visiting divers a slice of history.

**The Defiant / 22m** / Lying a short distance from the Stanegarth, the Defiant is another decent-sized wreck. At 14-metres-long and weighing 20-tonnes, she's not quite as impressive, but she's just as fun to dive. Rumour has it she arrived in the UK as a result of two Dutchmen fleeing Nazi Germany during World War Two.

**The Gresham Ship / 6m** / Not many inland dive sites boast an Elizabethan shipwreck... Believed to have been built in the 1570s, the remains of this vessel were found in the Thames by the Port of London Authority. A team of archaeologists moved the hull remnants to Stoney Cove in 2012, meaning visiting divers now have the opportunity to dive a genuine archaeological site.

**Armoured Personnel Carrier / 22m** / For divers interested in military vehicles, this dive is an absolute must. More than 3,000 FV432 APCs were

built over a ten-year period between 1962 and 1972, with this particular unit making its way to the depths of Stoney.

**Wessex Helicopter / 22m** / Although she's suffered at the hands of 'light-fingered' divers over the years, this once-pristine chopper is still a great dive and well worth the attention of visiting divers, particularly recreational divers looking to add to their diving education and go a little deeper.

**The Nautilus / 7m** / She might look real, but the Nautilus is in fact a piece of underwater art. At ten-metres-long, and with a very convincing prop and terrifying bow, the submarine is a decent-sized, fun attraction. Sitting on a shallow shelf, she's ideal for those divers still getting to grips with their buoyancy.

**Viscount Cockpit / 10m** / Sunk in the late 1960s as part of a rescue services training operation, this aeroplane cockpit now offers divers a great stop-off on the way to or from deeper parts of the quarry thanks to her positioning on the top of the roadway.

**The Bus / 22m** / Having been on Stoney's bed since the 1980s, there's little doubting this bus has seen prettier days, but it's still worth a visit if you've got the time, perhaps on your way up from Stoney's 36-metre shelf - the bus sits on the 22m plateau, just 30 metres from the drop-off's edge.

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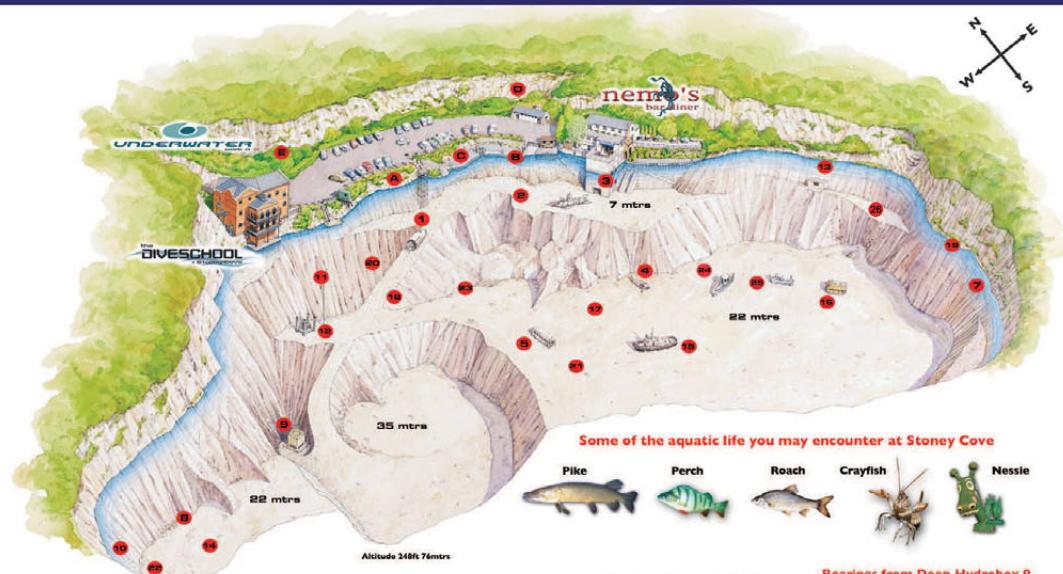
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## A Guide to Stoney Cove

### Key

- A** Entry point - the Bus Stop
- B** Entry point - the Slipway
- C** Eddies Quay
- D** Changing rooms
- E** Gas filling station
- I** Viscount Aircraft Cockpit
- 2** Nautilus
- 3** Archways Beneath the Pub
- 4** The Wessex
- 5** The Bus
- 6** The Monster
- 7** The Galleon
- 8** Aircraft Wreck
- 9** Deep Hydrobox
- 10** Submerged Trees
- 11** Tower (pole)
- 12** Blow-Off Preventer (BOP)
- 13** 4-metre Block House
- 14** Wooden Boat
- 15** Stanegarth
- 16** APC
- 17** Landrover
- 18** Block house
- 19** Winch
- 20** Work frame
- 21** Small Hydrobox
- 22** MG Cars
- 23** Anchor and chain to Stanegarth
- 24** Tug Boat Defiant
- 25** Trawler MV Belinda
- 26** Gresham Ship c1570



### Bearings from Bus stop A

- To I Viscount 165
- To 4 The Wessex 170
- To 5 The Bus 210
- To 7 The Galion 185
- To 8 Aircraft-Wreck 270
- To 9 Deep Hydrobox 275
- To 12 BOP 280
- To 15 Stanegarth 190
- To 16 APC Tank 160

### Bearings from Slipway B

- To I Viscount 290
- To 4 The Wessex 215
- To 5 The Bus 255
- To 7 The Galion 205
- To 8 Aircraft-Wreck 275
- To 9 Deep Hydrobox 285
- To 12 BOP 290
- To 15 Stanegarth 220

### Bearings from Viscount I

- To 4 The Wessex 170
- To 5 The Bus 220

### Bearings from the Wessex 4

- To 5 The Bus 290
- To 7 The Galion 195
- To 15 Stanegarth 220
- To 16 APC Tank 185

### Bearings from the Bus 5

- To 7 The Galion 175
- To 4 The Wessex 110
- To 15 Stanegarth 125
- To 16 APC Tank 165

### Bearings from the Galleon 7

- To 13 4m Block House 040
- To 14 Wooden Boat 230
- To 9 Deep Hydrobox 085

### Bearings from Deep Hydrobox 9

- To 7 The Galion 165
- To 12 BOP 080

### Bearings from BOP 12

- To 5 The Bus 155
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- To 4 The Wessex 230
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Inside the  
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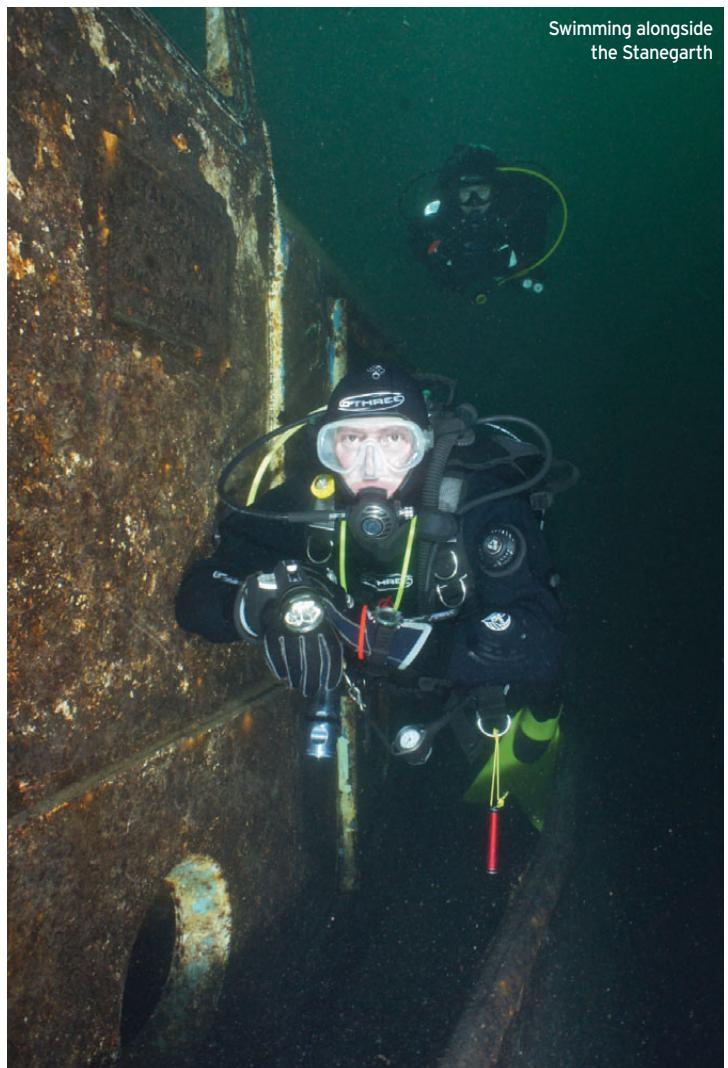
There are some  
monster pike in  
Stoney



**Pub archways / 7m** / Discover what lies beneath that wondrous place that serves beer and bacon butties. The bowls of Nemo's Bar are exposed to the quarry and make for a fun bimble at the end of a day's diving, before you head up top for that pint and bap.

**Deep Hydrobox / 36m** / Marking Stoney Cove's deepest point, the hydrobox is easily located courtesy of a marker buoy and line. Although not much to look at, the hydrobox makes for an ideal spot for Instructors to put Advanced and Deep Diver candidates through the necessary challenges and tasks.

**Other sites / 7-35m** / Ultimately, Stoney Cove is blessed with more underwater attractions than we have page space. As well as extensive and natural plateaus ideal for diver training, the quarry also boasts an array of alternative attractions in addition to those listed, including cars, a couple more boats and an aircraft, to name a few.



## TOPSIDE FACILITIES

**Parking** - There is plenty of parking alongside the water's edge, though an overfill car park is used during the busier summer months.

**Changing rooms** - Small but clean, these really only come in to play when it's raining. If the sun's out, it's far nicer to kit-up in the car park.

**Gas fills** - Located at the top of the car park near the shop, the gas filling station is never too far away when you're in need of a refill.

**Equipment hire** - Stoney offers a wide range of equipment hire, including DPVs.

**Food and drink** - Bacon butties and other tasty treats are served from a hatch if you're in need of a quick snack. Nemo's Bar offers a full menu of dishes if you're after a proper sit down meal at the end of the day.

**Dive shop** - Stoney boasts the most-comprehensive dive shop of any of the inland dive sites. Whatever you need, they've likely got it.

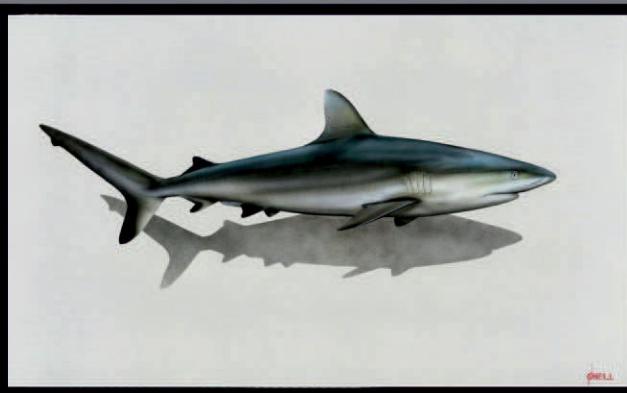
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# THE PROPSHOT *Challenge*

A wide-angle underwater photograph of the SS Borgny shipwreck. The focus is on the large, heavily overgrown propeller at the stern. The hull behind it is also covered in thick green algae and some orange-red sponge colonies. In the foreground, the sandy ocean floor is visible with scattered pebbles. A small, bright orange fish swims near the bottom right. The water is slightly murky, creating a natural underwater atmosphere.

**STUART PHILPOTT** dives the SS Borgny in a bid to take a decent wide-angle picture of its propeller

Photographs by **STUART PHILPOTT**



When Bryan Jones, the owner of Swanage Boat Charters, said in all his diving years he had never seen a good picture of the Borgny prop, I just had to take up the challenge. My aim was to get the ultimate wide-angle portrait shot that even Bryan would be chuffed with, not that I'm at all competitive... But the task turned out to be much tougher than expected and considering everybody's efforts I'm not sure that I've clinched the ultimate image. I guess only you, Sport Diver's readers, can be the judge of that.

The 70-metre, 1,149-tonne cargo steamer SS Borgny was built by Norwegian company Akers Mekaniske Versted in 1909. The ship's history and demise is not as well documented as some of the other wrecks I have covered. There seems to be some debate as to whether she was torpedoed by a U-boat or just hit a drifting mine. Captain Ole Hanson said a torpedo struck the starboard side. After hearing the explosion he went topside and saw a U-boat submerging 200 metres away. Adolf Gjerdling, the second mate, tells a slightly different story. He saw a dark shape off the port bow and then heard an explosion to starboard. No U-boat ever claimed the kill, which casts some doubt on the captain's report. But one fact remains indisputable: on 26 February 1918, at around 5am in the morning, the unarmed ship sank some three miles south-south-west of the Needles (approximately nine miles off Swanage) while carrying 1,466 tonnes of coal en-route from Newport to Rouen via Falmouth. Gjerdling said that within two minutes of the explosion the Borgny's decks were awash and some 20 minutes later the ship sank beneath the waves. The crew had sufficient time to lower the lifeboats and evacuate safely. No loss of life was recorded. Many years later the wreck was positively identified when a local diver prised off the brass letters from her stern. There is no mention of the bell ever being found.

## Commercial Diving - Are you Up for It?

Take your love of diving to the next level and train as a commercial diver; Chris Chell has done just that, and here he explains why he'd encourage others to take that step:

'Before training to be a commercial diver I worked as a welder for a heavy engineering firm. At the time I was a keen SCUBA diver and mixing my hobby with my previous employment seemed to lead to commercial diving.'

'At the Birmingham Dive Show I got the chance to speak to Ali MacLeod, Air Diving Manager at The Underwater Centre, Fort William, after which I was sure that the Centre was where I wanted to complete my commercial diving training. With my background, I chose to do the Construction Career Package, which gave additional training on welding and burning in a subsea environment. I found the instructors to be very professional and all very helpful. No questions were left unanswered.'

'I'm currently working as an inshore supervisor and diver in the shipping industry. The equipment used by commercial divers in shipping is very specialised so when you first start there is still an element of on the job training; however the Construction Career Package gives you the tools knowledge and experience needed to get the job in the first place. My first job was blanking the bow thruster on a Royal Navy minesweeper at night – nobody said it was going to be easy!'

'For me, the best aspect of being a commercial diver is the travel. I've replaced stern seals in the Bahamas and removed cofferdams in Doha. The hours can be hard, but there's nothing better than the feeling you get after a hard job done well.'

**What do I need to get started?** To work as a commercial diver you have to have the HSE diving certifications; HSE SCUBA and Surface Supplied allow you to work inshore and HSE Surface Supplied Top Up (using a wet bell) allows you to work offshore, where there is an increase in pay.

Sport diving qualifications generally don't allow you to take any shortcuts with the HSE training, however any experience you have under the water will help you to get ahead; being comfortable underwater is half the experience. After a while you will eventually forget that you're underwater, breathing through a helmet from the surface, and just focus on the environment around you and the job in hand.

**Could I do it?** If you're thinking of taking the step of going from leisure diving to commercial, Chris has this to say, 'There's definitely a niche for most people, if you're willing to put in the hours, both to find the job and see it through. You have to be willing to call round dive companies. Just keep at it.' Visit [www.theunderwatercentre.com](http://www.theunderwatercentre.com) or call 01397 703 786.



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The picturesque rudder and four-bladed prop sit at approximately 26m. I don't know of any other South Coast shipwrecks that are lying on the bottom in this position, which makes the Borgny quite unique. Bryan said: "It reminds me of the SS Dunraven wreck in Egypt." The ship must have originally settled on her starboard side but over the years the hull has twisted so the stern is now upside down with prop and rudder clearly visible. Bryan said the Borgny is a very popular wreck with charter boat operators because it lies at a maximum depth of 32m, which is a 'comfortable' limit for recreational divers. Bizarrely, when the underwater visibility is poor, it's quite easy to miss the prop altogether, because it's high up off the seabed. On average Bryan makes 12 boat trips each year.

In 2014 I managed to dive on the wreck twice but the underwater visibility was not the best for wide-angle pictures. I initially had about four or five metres, but this quickly reduced to two metres when the rest of the group started kicking about on the gravel and sand seabed. There was also a fishing net wrapped around the two portside blades so I didn't have a completely clean view. But all was not lost as I did manage to shoot one reasonably nice image of legendary femme plongee Linda Faux, without hood, slotted between the keel and the prop before a cloud of silt completely desecrated all further possibilities. In all I took a series of ten pictures and came away with one or two half-decent portrait results. It's very rare to see long blonde flowing hair in a UK shot, especially on a wreck 32m deep, so my thanks to Linda for her resilience and her patience.

At the beginning of the 2015 season there was a freak two-week period of ridiculously good underwater visibility and calm sunny days. In fact, this was the best I had experienced for many years. I planned a dive on the Firth Fisher and couldn't believe the results. Realising that this would probably be my best opportunity of the year, I booked onto Swanage Boat Charters' next available trip heading out to the Borgny wreck. Could this be my defining prop shot moment? The journey time from Swanage Pier to the dive site is about 40 minutes each way, so there is plenty of time for a cup of tea and a sandwich and, on this occasion, some sunbathing. Cost of the trip is £30 (2016 prices).

I persuaded Bryan to be my underwater model and as luck would have it only three other divers had booked on to the boat - happy days! There was plenty of room to spread out all my camera gear and more importantly fewer divers in the water meant less sediment to clone out during post processing. I also had a chat with everybody before we entered the water and pleaded for ten minutes of undisturbed playtime on the prop with Bryan before they all came blundering over. Editing out unwanted fins and bubbles is another bug bear of mine!

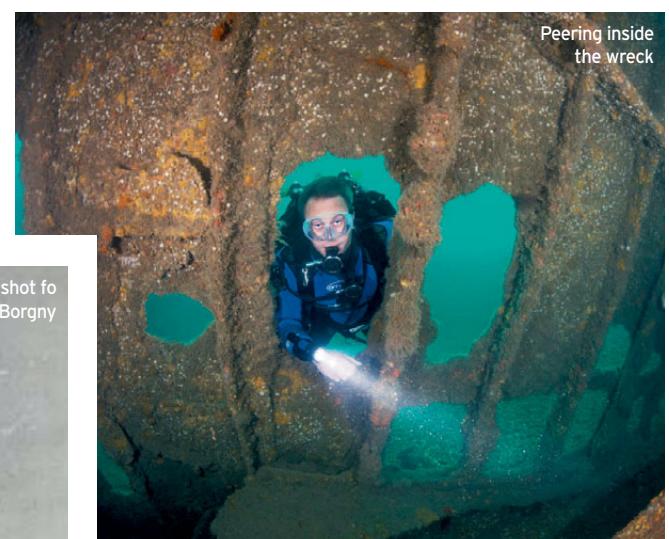
We had filled up with a Nitrox mix which would give us a few extra minutes of no deco time. The plan was to start at the prop and then work our way forwards to the bow stopping as and when to take more



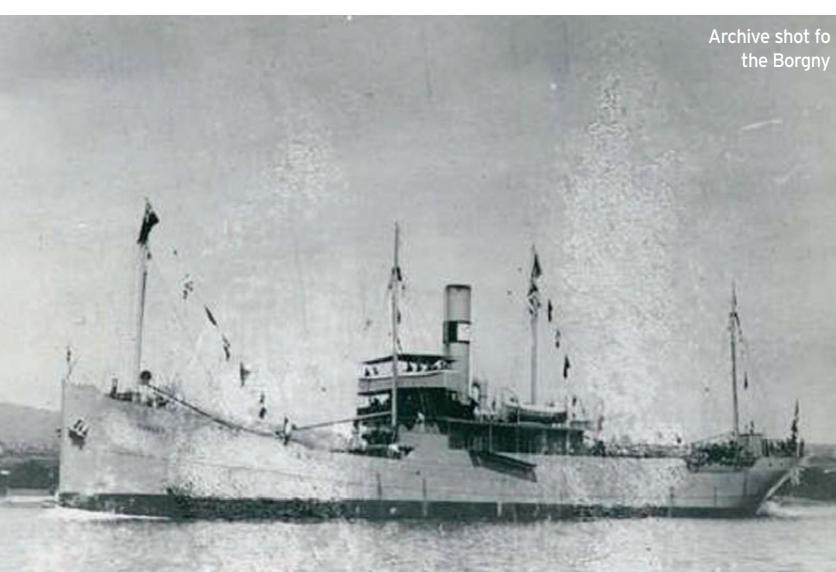
There is plenty to shoot on the wreck



Peering inside the wreck



Archive shot fo the Borgny



**"I started taking pictures from every angle I could think of making use of the available light. This worked out to be more than 30 pictures in all, so basically I absolutely hammered it!"**



Alongside the wreck

pictures. Even though I had been on the wreck half a dozen times before I couldn't remember her best features and, to be honest, most of my previous dives had been in low visibility/ambient light conditions.

I asked Martin, the boat skipper, to try and put the shotline line as close as possible to the prop so we wouldn't waste any valuable time searching about. When we reached the wreck I could see that the visibility had reduced significantly from my earlier-in-the-week Firth Fisher dive but, at a guess, I would say there was still a good eight to ten metres to work with. Martin had managed to drop the shot just a few metres from the prop so we were definitely game on! I saw that the fishing net was still entangled around the two blades but this didn't detract too much from the overall composition. In fact, I think it makes the shots look more interesting. There were also a few patches of plumose anemones and dead man's fingers which added a splash of contrast. I started taking pictures from every angle I could think of making use of the available light, which was pretty good considering the depth. This worked out to be more than 30 pictures in all, so basically I absolutely hammered it!

Satisfied that I had taken as many prop shots as possible, we began to explore the rest of the wreck. The hull stands approximately seven metres proud of the seabed. Although the superstructure is well broken up there are still a few interesting overhead areas to explore. I went inside the upturned stern to get a shot of Bryan on the outside looking in through a large rectangular hole which must have once been covered with steel plates. We carried on through a nice overhead section which had plenty of light entering from above. When I looked back over my pictures later I wished that I had spent more time in this area. The silhouette of the wreck really worked well with Bryan posing in the foreground.

Bryan found and picked up a large edible crab. This would normally have ended up inside a goody bag but on this occasion we had to focus on the job in hand - taking pictures! The next section was pretty much flattened. I saw multiple lobster antennae sticking out from underneath the debris field. The temptation to forage was becoming difficult to control. There were so many good-sized lobster! We swam through concentrated shoals of pollock and pouting. They didn't seem at all bothered by my presence and just closed ranks behind us. The twisted prop shaft led to the remains of an 111nhp (nominal horse power) triple-expansion engine, the pistons and rods easily recognisable. The large cylindrical boiler loomed in front of us. There was a strange-looking array of tubes stacked in front. Maybe this had once been the donkey boiler but I really couldn't tell from the remains. We stopped to take pictures at a number of winches on our way to the bow. By the base of a broken mast I found a winch that had toppled upside down. This had two congers peering out.

Unfortunately my prop-hogging exploits had reduced our overall

"The SS Borgny has always been one of my favourite South Coast wrecks. I think the maximum depth is a big factor for me"

Brian with the prop of the Borgny



wreck exploration time. I had a quick scan around the bow but didn't see anything particularly photogenic. I guess the mine/torpedo explosion had ripped everything apart. In my haste I didn't spot the bow anchor which would have made a nice shot. With deco time looming we doubled back to the shotline, fighting against a mild current. I passed over the collapsed aft cargo hold, which still had lumps of coal inside. Again my brain failed to register so I missed another great picture opportunity. I had a last look around the stern section and decided to fire off three shots of Bryan looking through a hole in the rudder before letting off the delayed SMB.

A few days later the weather changed for the worse and so did the water clarity. I didn't get another chance to dive on the wreck during the 2015 season so was relieved that I had taken advantage of the awesome conditions. The SS Borgny has always been one of my favourite South Coast wrecks. I think the maximum depth is a big factor for me. When I'm taking photos I don't like wearing bulky twin sets unless I have to and on the Borgny I can get away with wearing a single 12-litre and still have plenty of spare gas left over. Considering I was wrestling with UK conditions, the shots haven't come out too badly. What do you think? Ending on a positive note, I'm sure that the prop is made of iron and not bronze, otherwise it would have been salvaged a long time ago. This is great news for UK divers and underwater photographers as the Borgny's most-endearing feature will be left undisturbed for years to come. So who will be the next prop shot challenger? Think you can do any better? I dare you! ■

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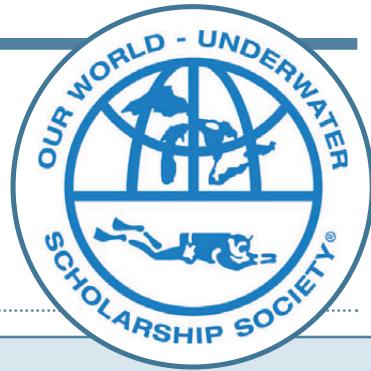
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## THE SILENT WORLD OF AMBIENT PRESSURE DIVING

By Felix Butschek

My most-recent adventures as the European Rolex Scholar have revolved around closed circuit rebreathers, specifically the AP Inspiration XPD. Closed circuit rebreathers (CCR) incorporate advanced technology to remove carbon dioxide from the exhaled air and add oxygen to provide the best nitrox mix to the diver at any depth. This almost sounds like the rebreather does the thinking for you, allowing the diver to sit back, relax and enjoy the bubble-free and silent world underwater. I learned very quickly that the opposite is the case.

As a matter of fact, my first rebreather dive was the most-difficult underwater experience I have ever had. On open circuit scuba, the lungs play a significant role in buoyancy regulation: inhaling deeply is often enough to establish positive buoyancy and avoid contact with the bottom. When I was descending on my first CCR dive, I took a deep breath to slow my descent and crashed into the bottom. On a rebreather, the lungs become part of the breathing loop, which is at ambient pressure - so breathing makes no difference to the position in the water column. While in theory, I was very aware of this from the beginning, my subconscious muscle memory took some time to learn, resist the urge to inhale and replace this reflex action with controlled use of the buoyancy compensator.

I did the TDI Air Diluent CCR course with Mark Powell at NDAC Chepstow and Vobster Quay. It was only through Mark's outstanding instruction and patience that I got to grips with buoyancy control on the rebreather. Skills like deploying a DSMB that are easy on open circuit were a lot more difficult with the added task load of monitoring the partial pressure of oxygen and maintaining minimum volume of the breathing loop. The TDI Air Diluent rebreather training with Mark was certainly the most-challenging yet also the most-rewarding course I have ever done and I enjoyed every minute of it. Mark's enthusiasm and dedication to technical diver training was inspirational and his instructor skills are second to none. As the celebrated author of Deco for Divers, he has made complex content accessible to every diver, which is reflected in his teaching methods ensuring that his students at Dive-Tech UK are prepared for the diving they want to do.

After the course, I wanted to do as much diving as possible to gain further confidence on the rebreather. Thanks to Divetech Grand Cayman, I had the great opportunity to visit the Cayman Islands and dive with them from Lighthouse Point, West Bay. With a variety of rebreathers and CCR supplies on site as well as a team of rebreather instructors, Divetech Grand Cayman is the ideal place to learn and expand rebreather diving skills. For myself, this was the chance to do my first dives on coral reefs and to further practise a multitude of skills and build hours on the CCR unit. Given my UK wreck diving experience where I had never seen an entire shipwreck because of the limited visibility, I was in awe when I first dived the ex-USS Kittiwake in crystal-clear visibility, allowing me to take in the construction of the entire ship. Overall this Caribbean experience went far beyond my expectations, with regular encounters of nurse sharks, green sea turtles, southern eagle rays, moray eels and other phenomenal wildlife making this trip truly unforgettable.

Ambient Pressure Diving has developed and evolved Inspiration rebreathers based on a tremendous amount of expertise in manufacturing sports, technical and military diving equipment. I am over the moon with the performance of their unit, its breathing comfort and reliability underwater, and I am already very excited for my next closed-circuit diving trip. ■

Felix Butschek



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**STUART PHILPOTT** heads for Roatan in Honduras's Bay Islands, a popular hotspot for US divers, but relatively off the beaten track for Europeans

Photographs by STUART PHILPOTT





# CAREFREE CARIBBEAN



**C**huck Norris's appearance at Roatan airport had got a few heads turning. Maybe the legendary action hero was taking a diving holiday? I had ventured off the beaten track into unchartered territory - well, at least for the average European diver. The sweltering heat topped 30 degrees C and with 80-90 percent humidity levels, it felt more like 40 degrees C. I could feel the sweat trickling down my back and squelching in my underpants - yuk! I was very close to ripping of my T-shirt, grabbing a machete and hacking my way through the dense tropical jungle in search of an ice-cold beer, or crate. Who would I see next? Jason Statham? Sylvester Stallone?

Roatan is located roughly 65km off the coast of Honduras and is the largest of the Bay Islands (Utila and Guanaja make up the three main islands in the archipelago). Part of the coastline had been designated as a marine protected reserve, which made it a perfect haven for scuba divers. Sitting next to the largest barrier reef in the Caribbean was an additional bonus. With such a promising pedigree, I couldn't wait to get stuck in.

I had booked into Anthony's Key Resort ([www.anthonyskey.com](http://www.anthonyskey.com)) located at Sandy Bay near the west end of the island. This was about a 15-minute bus ride from the airport. The resort opened in the late-1960s offering just ten rooms and was mainly used as a stopover for sailboats. This had now expanded to a total of 61 en-suite rooms and been kept 'rustic' by guest request. My hillside key standard bungalow reminded me of a treehouse connected by a series of raised wooden walkways and stairways. Most of the accommodation had been built on a picturesque little island located a few hundred metres from the main reception area, bar and restaurant. This was accessible via a 24-hour shuttle boat service. There was a huge swimming pool at the centre of the complex with a bar, BBQ area and sunbeds. Sandy beach frontage was limited. The best beach was on nearby Baileys Key.

Roatan is an extremely popular destination for the US market, so I thought this would be an ideal opportunity to conduct my own Presidential Election survey. I spoke with groups, couples and families from different states and the overwhelming favourite seemed to be Donald Trump.

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Glassfish scatter around a diver



Loading up the dive boats

The grouper proved quite friendly



**"Water temps hovered around the 28–29 degree C mark, so I had ditched my 3mm shortie wetsuit and opted for rash vest and shorts"**

God bless America! Everybody was sociable, especially during happy hour evenings. I think the boozy cocktails and the live music helped keep the vibe.

The wooden-decked quayside reminded me of the setup at Stuart Cove's on Grand Bahama. There were separate wooden buildings for the PADI training centre, underwater photography and video studio, snack shop, locker room, kit and compressor room and the all-important dive centre complete with a row of chalk boards telling everybody which boat they had been assigned to. The latest addition was a huge air-conditioned shop selling T-shirts, beachwear, local products, etc, with a new toilet block attached.

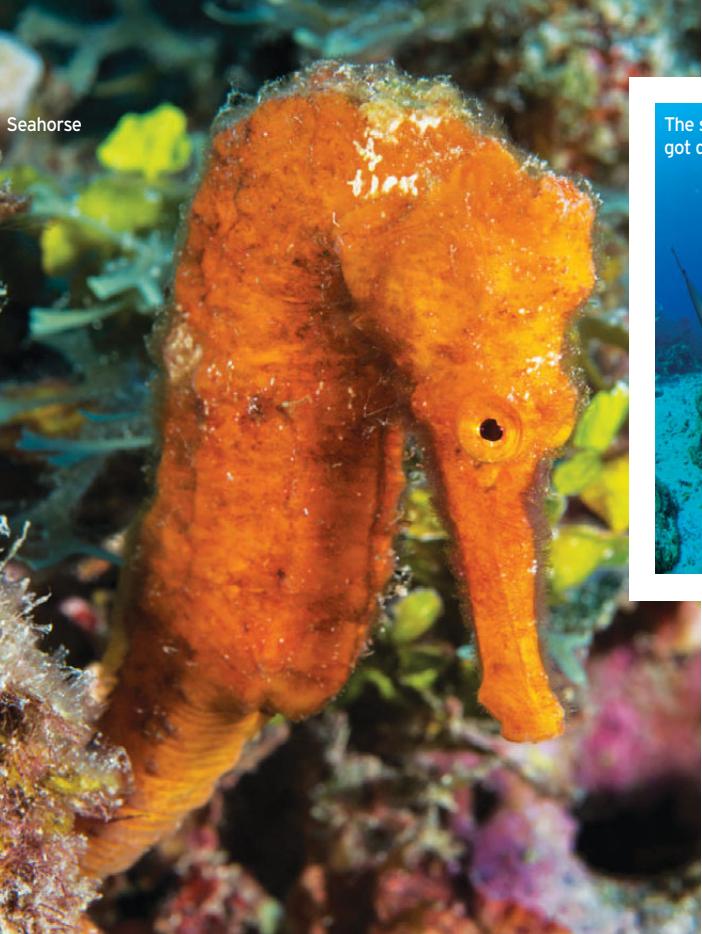
Anthony's Key Resort turned out to be a well-oiled diving machine. More than six dive boats went out every day. Diving manager Kevin said he was so busy organising logistics that he hadn't been diving for nearly two years! There were at least three big groups visiting from Colorado, California and Georgia, as well as individual couples from other Caribbean islands and mainland Honduras, not forgetting the single Brit customer that had appeared on the scene. They offered three daily dives starting at 8.30am, returning to the quayside for a half-hour break, followed by a second dive finishing sometime around 11.30am. After a leisurely lunch and a short siesta, the boat for the third dive left at 2pm and returned around 4pm. Night dives were also offered regularly.

My first dive was at a site called Green Out House Wall. Dive guide

David showed me a picture of a bright yellow frogfish the size of my little finger and another smaller white froggie that he had found at one of the pinnacles. It didn't take long for David to find the yellow froggie at the dive site. After the other divers had taken a look I spent a good five minutes getting acquainted. Unfortunately, the white froggie was nowhere to be seen so for the rest of the dive I focused on the other reef inhabitants, including French angels, green morays, barracuda, grouper, parrots and Creole wrasse.

The day was turning into a complete macro fest. At the second dive site, Key Hole, David spotted three seahorses on top of the wall. He said it was the first time he had found three in one dive. They were well camouflaged and not easy to photograph, but I persisted and got at least one passable shot.

All the dive boats stopped off for lunch at Maya Key. The island, owned by Anthony's Key, had been turned into a mini zoo-come-beach retreat for tourists. Roatan had as many as five cruise ships coming in and out of port every day. This brought more than 600 visitors over to Maya Key. Once a week, the dive resort got to explore the island and have a poolside BBQ. I spoke with Bruce Plunkett who managed the marine mammal complex. Bruce said they had rescued a number of nurse sharks, stingrays, sea lions and turtles from various defunct aquaria and marine parks. The green turtle had been found in a restaurant kitchen. Bruce was convinced it would have been served up on the



menu if they hadn't intervened. I joined Bruce on the shark experience snorkel inside the pen. This was mainly offered to visiting cruise ship customers and gave them an opportunity to get their feet wet. The visibility was a little murky but we did get quite close to a number of sharks and rays, so the customers were happy. The cost is US\$35 for about an hour long tour.

On the afternoon dive at Herbie's Fantasy, I saw four hawksbill turtles munching on coral. They were all relaxed and unphased by the group of divers. Unfortunately, I was using my macro lens so couldn't take full advantage.

I was constantly hopping from one dive boat to another trying to get the most out of my brief stay. The dive staff were all extremely accommodating and the other divers didn't seem to mind me chopping and changing. Dive guide Sherwin jokingly said in Roatan the locals would call my camera and housing a new car! Water temps hovered around the 28-29 degree C mark, so I had ditched my 3mm shortie wetsuit and opted for rash vest and shorts.

At Spooky Channel, David guided us to a deep canyon full of glassfish. I went ahead and found a spot where I could take pictures of the divers passing through the shoal. There was a grouper waiting for us back at the wall. I'm sure there had been some sneaky lionfish feeding going on in the past, especially when a large green moray appeared next to the grouper. I tried to get a shot of them both swimming together but it just didn't work out. When we got back to the boat mooring two more grouper were waiting for us. They definitely



weren't camera shy, and I was happy with my wide-angle results.

Julio Galindo acquired Anthony's Key Resort in the early 1980s and had developed it into a top dive resort. Even though his son Samir is now running the business, I could see that Julio was still very much an active participant. He had set up the resort to be totally self-sufficient, providing everything from bus transfers to an in-house laundry service. There was even a medical clinic and a hyperbaric chamber (the resort asks for a minimum US\$12 donation from each diving guest to help maintain the only chamber facility on the island). Julio told me that 80 percent of their business was repeaters. He said: "Some guests come back so often, they start telling me how to do my job!"

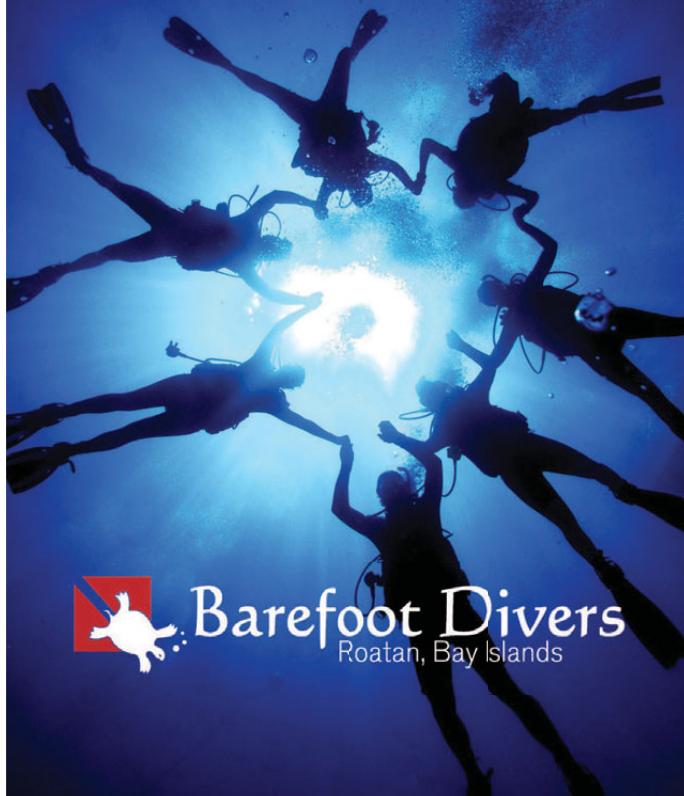
Anthony's Key don't offer their own shark feed dive. Instead they use Roatan Marine Life Dive Centre. Divers are normally picked up by boat from Anthony's Key and taken to the centre. The dive is run nearly every day and there seemed to be no shortage of interest. Owner Sergio Tritt wasn't around during my visit, but I managed to speak with Divemaster Robert, who said that the sharks come in very close, i.e. touching distance, so I had to take my housing apart and change to a 16mm fisheye at breakneck speed.

After the briefing there was a short boat ride out to a 20m-deep site called Casa a Casa, located close to Maya Key. The feed attracted around 20 reef sharks and a number of grouper. Robert said that they sometimes see hammerheads. Chuck Norris would definitely have been proud. I had positioned myself literally on top of the fish bucket so was right in the thick of the action and yes, the sharks did get close! I know that shark feeds are a controversial subject, but they do guarantee 'intimate' encounters. The dive costs US\$100 per person and lasts for about 40 minutes.

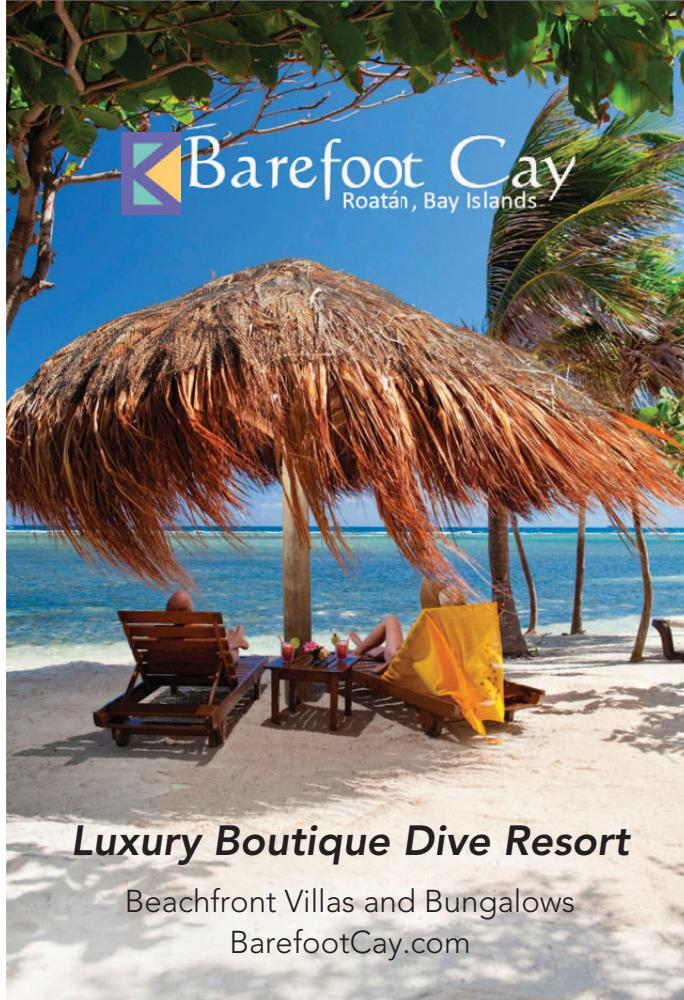
My stay at Anthony's Key turned out to have more action-packed moments than an entire Expendables movie! The resort was 100 percent geared up for divers and could easily handle large groups. They offered a broad range of dives from standard reefs and walls to wrecks, macro, sharks and dolphins. I had booked the seven-night dive package which basically included everything except drinks. Samir said: "In 2017 we are offering a 2-for-1 price on all dive packages", which is a huge saving. I thought the food was a very good standard. There was the usual selection of eggs, cereals, etc, for breakfast with a fixed menu for lunch and dinner, which included a different meat, fish and vegetarian option. I especially liked the soups and the Mexican dishes. My only real bug bear was the bugs! The sand flies and mosquitos were definitely military-grade. I was constantly spraying myself morning and evening to keep the bites away, so make sure you are prepared. ■

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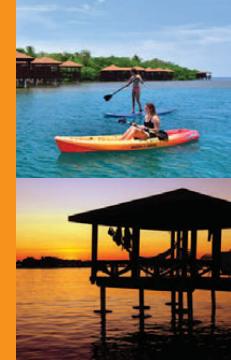
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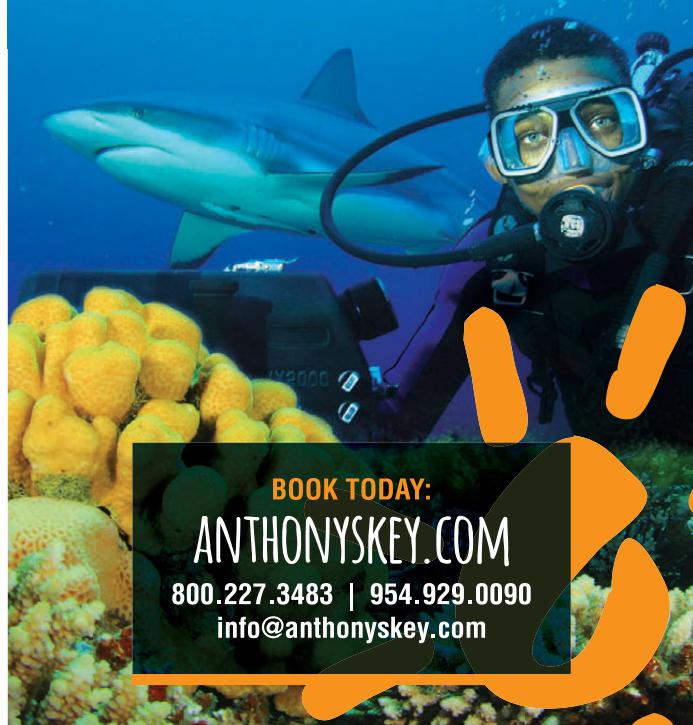
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# 100 DIVES TO DO BEFORE YOU DIE

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We all have a bucket-list of dives that we want to complete before we draw a line under our diving exploits, and to give you further food for thought, the **SPORT DIVER TEAM** has compiled a list of 100 dives that should be on your 'must-dive' list. In no particular order, here is another batch of ten...

Photographs by **MARK EVANS, WILL HARRISON, JEREMY CUFF, DAVID JONES, TONY BASKEYFIELD, PAUL WINKWORTH, STUART PHILPOTT AND GAVIN ANDERSON**



## SIPADAN, MALAYSIA

The island of Sipadan is widely regarded as one of the finest wall diving destinations on the planet, and for very good reason. What makes this tiny island off the northeast coast of Borneo so special is that, unlike nearby islands such as Mabul and Si-Amil, which slope off to relatively shallow depths, the waters off Sipadan drop to 600m. As such, all manner of pelagic marine life can be found marauding the water column, from manta rays to hammerhead sharks. In among the many turtles (both hawksbill and green) and the shoals of barracuda, divers also have the chance of seeing whale-sharks.

Once home to numerous dive centres, the island is now protected and only accessible by dayboat - and with a limited number of spots available. As such the reef has, in the years since the change, benefited hugely - it is now healthier than ever.

Most dive centres run two or three dives on the Sipadan walls during a day, with lunch spent on the island itself, with sheltered benches and palm-tree-lined beaches making for a lovely setting to off-gas and chat through the great diving with your fellow guests. It is a special day out.

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## FALKLAND ISLANDS, UK

The Falklands have been well documented thanks to the remote archipelago being fought over by British and Argentine troops in the 1982 war, but as a diving destination, they are largely unknown. If you ever manage to reach these windswept isles, the diving is an experience to behold, thanks to an enthusiastic population of Commerson's and Peale's dolphins, sei, fin and killer whales, penguins and playful sea lions. Apart from all the larger animals, it is the invertebrate life which is the main draw – giant predatory starfish, great fields of edible sea urchins, and painted shrimp can be seen on almost every dive. However, captured on camera only once, was the bizarre spectacle of thousands of lobster krill in every direction as far as the eye could see, all advancing as one in the same direction. Where they were heading is unclear, but this behaviour is believed to be caught on camera nowhere else.



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## ZENOIA, CYPRUS

Cyprus is home to one of the largest wrecks in the Mediterranean, the 172-metre Swedish roll-on, roll-off ferry Zenobia. This monstrous vessel sank just outside Larnaca Harbour in 1980 after its computer-controlled ballast system went haywire. She was carrying a cargo that included no less than 108 trucks and articulated lorries, and these now lie where they fell when she settled on the bottom on her port side.

While this was a genuine shipwrecking, she couldn't have gone down any better for divers - the seabed is at 42m, and the highest point on the hull is 16m, meaning divers of all levels can experience a dive on her. The sheer size of the ship is daunting, and the penetration dives available are infinite, making this a must-dive for true wreckies.





## RAS MOHAMMED, EGYPT

At the tip of the Sinai, where the Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba meet, Ras Mohammed is regarded as one of the world's most-exciting diving areas, even being named in Jacques-Yves Cousteau's top ten dives.

Strong currents sweep down from both gulfs, bring nutrient-rich waters with them, which feeds spectacular displays of hard and soft corals, which in turn attracts massive shoals of fish. Huge schools of snapper, jacks, unicornfish, batfish and barracuda congregate in their thousands through the summer months, providing a visual spectacle unmatched anywhere in the world.

When Ras Mohammed is 'running' - the name given for when it is reaching the peak of the action in the summer - the fish can be so thick it can be impossible to see through them. From well below recreational diving depths to the surface, in every direction, are masses and masses of fish - and this can bring in the larger predators, such as giant trevally and various sharks, including blacktips, which will hunt in the midst of the barracuda.

There are several individual dive sites in the Ras Mohammed Marine Park, but the classic dive revolves around two reefs - Shark and Yolanda - which sit right on the edge of a sheer abyss at the very tip of the peninsula. You will drop in near Shark Reef and then drift around the vertical drop, across the saddle and up to Yolanda Reef, ending your dive on the remnants of the cargo from Cypriot freighter Jolande, which ran aground and sank in 1980. Bathtubs, sinks and toilets litter the seabed and have become home to a multitude of marine life, including scorpionfish and crocodilefish.

Depending on the current, you will either have a leisurely drift around the front of Shark and across the saddle, or you will be fired round at a rate of knots, making for an exciting ride. This sometimes extremely strong current is what gives the wall and the saddle its lush smothering of soft corals.

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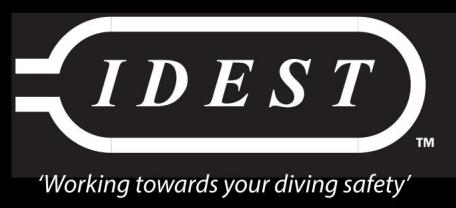
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## RED SNAPPER SPAWNING, PALAU

Unlike most popular diving destination, this one is still relatively unknown to divers and promises one of the ocean's greatest shows. During a scientific study of marine biology, a mass spawning-aggregation was discovered in Palau. This natural phenomenon sees between 5,000-10,000 red snapper come together at full moon and aggregate for up to five days. Around the new moon, bumphead parrotfish also aggregate in large numbers. This is a firework of sexual activity. You may call it 'fish-porn' and it can last for an hour, right in front of the spectator's eyes.

You will see bull sharks and oceanic blacktips moving in and out of the schooling fish, looking for an easy meal. When the time is right and they strike, it is an amazing spectacle to witness. It is high adrenaline diving, and a certain level of experience is required.

In addition to the regular monthly 'meetings', there are a number of species that aggregate only once or twice a year. Species such as the sea bream or sailfin snapper, the orange spine unicornfish and the Moorish idol, come together in their thousands for only a few days.

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## MALDIVES VICTORY, MALDIVES

Friday 13 September 1981 turned out to be fateful for the Maldives Victory when it struck the southern tip of Hulule with a cargo of supplies for the Maldives' tourist industry. The damage was relatively slight, but with a lack of water-tight bulkheads, the ship sank in only an hour. All the crew was rescued. Today, the 110-metre-long cargo freighter lies upright with its main mast coming within 12m of the surface, its deck at 25m and the seabed at 35m. The open holds are accessible, as well as the accommodation block and bridge. More than a quarter of a century underwater has allowed for a profusion of hard and soft corals to take hold on the superstructure, while schools of fusiliers and jacks patrol the shallower sections. Care should be taken on the ascent and descent as currents can be strong.



## SPEYSIDE, TOBAGO

Cozumel might be the undisputed king of the Caribbean drift-diving scene for US divers, but the tiny island of Tobago has held the title among European divers for many years. This Windward Isle, located near the coast of Venezuela, is buffeted by strong currents, which disperse rich nutrients from the Orinoco River throughout the coastal reefs, making them a Mecca for pelagic filter feeders such as manta rays, a regular sight at choice locations.

There are numerous sites, but among the most-legendary are Kelleston Drain, an exhilarating dive which blasts you along the reef and over one of the largest brain corals in the world; Picker, a storming drift which sends you hurtling along at an impressive rate of knots; and Aquarium, which moves from a gentle drift to one of the most mind-blowing, hang-on-to-your-fins rides you will ever endure as you enter the so-called African Express.



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## SARDINE RUN, SOUTH AFRICA

Between June and July each year, as the cold fronts of winter begin to blow, an army of the ocean's top predators, of unprecedented size, assemble off the east coast of Africa, awaiting the arrival of literally billions of sardines.

Imagine 25,000 common dolphins, 8,000 bottlenose dolphins, humpback and southern right whales, Zambezi and copper sharks again in their thousands.

Throw in a sprinkling of the mythical great hammerhead and great white shark, add the odd orca and you have a formidable force awaiting them on their journey up the Agulhas Current, thus creating 1,800km of the greatest adrenaline-rush dive opportunities the oceans of this planet have to offer. Battling through heavy surf in robust RIBs, divers will seek out baitballs of sardines as they are assaulted from all sides, before entering the water to get into the midst of the chaos and see the action unfold firsthand. It is fast, frenetic and in your face.

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## WHITE SEA, RUSSIA

For the ultimate in extreme diving, how about ice diving? Not only is it bloody cold once you get in the water, but the pre-dive preparations are exhausting in themselves - not only have you got a long haul to get to the dive site in the first place, but you've also got to saw a hole in the ice to get in! Some people might question your sanity if you go ice diving, but what you get for your efforts is one of the most-amazing experiences in the diving world – crystal-clear visibility, weird shapes and formations in the ice, and the knowledge that you are one of only relatively free people who have ventured below an ice flow.

The White Sea, in Russia, just south of the Arctic Circle, offers some of the best ice diving. Just getting there is an expedition in itself - after flying into Moscow, you will have to endure a 28-hour train journey, followed by some serious offroading to get to the diving area - but this all adds to the sense of adventure.

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## BELL ISLAND, CANADA

At the onset of World War Two, the small bell island nestled in the heart of Conception Bay in Newfoundland was still a British colonial island, rather than being part of Canada. In what was North America's only conflict of the war with the Germans, U-boat U-513 slipped into the bay on 4 September 1942 under the cover of darkness. The following morning, U-513 launched torpedoes at the SS Saganaga and the Lord Strathcona, sinking both with 29 lives lost.

Two months later, on 2 November, U-518 entered Conception Bay after dark, and torpedoed the Rose Castle and PLM27. Another 40 lives were lost in the second wave of attacks, yet the British government claimed all lives were lost at sea and not at mooring. The historical aspect of Bell Island makes the prospect a very enticing one to UK divers in particular – today, all four wrecks lie upright in 30-50m. The SS Saganaga is the most beautiful and is covered in soft corals and anemones.

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This popular snorkel from IST features a flexible lower section which allows the mouthpiece to sit away from the user's mouth when not in use so it doesn't interfere with the regulator. It utilises a standard silicone regulator mouthpiece which is easy to replace and incorporates a purge valve for easy water clearance and a splash guard to channel incoming water away from the internal air passage. For divers who like to be colour-coordinated, the Flexible Snorkel is available in a range of eight colours.

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# SCUBALAB GEAR GUIDE

Each month, the Sport Diver test team assembles to rate and review a selection of diving equipment from a range of manufacturers. This issue:  
**BACK-UP DIVE KNIVES/CUTTERS**

**A cut above the rest:** Dive knives are an essential part of all divers' kit, from raw novices to hardened veterans. In fact, you should have more than one as all too often, when the proverbial hits the fan, it is good to know that you have a selection close at hand.

Compact knives, also known as BCD knives, have recently been supplemented by a range of cutting tools, such as line cutters, and pairing a small knife with a line cutter is the perfect 'double header', giving you redundancy and tools that between them cover a myriad of jobs. If you really want to play safe, then you can also get a larger primary knife (see next month for that group test) and team that up with a compact knife and line cutter.

To test the knives and line cutters, we rated how easy they were to deploy and return to their sheath, and then how easily they cut through a variety of ropes, cords and lines.

## THE TEST TEAM



### MARK EVANS

- Sport Diver editor
- PADI Divemaster
- 30 years of diving experience



### MATT GRIFFITHS

- Sport Diver art director
- PADI MSD
- 3 years of diving experience



### WILL HARRISON

- Sport Diver deputy editor
- PADI TEC 50
- 6 years of diving experience



### BARRY HENDERSON

- Rope access specialist
- NAUI OW Diver
- 5 years of diving experience

## ON TEST

### MODELS

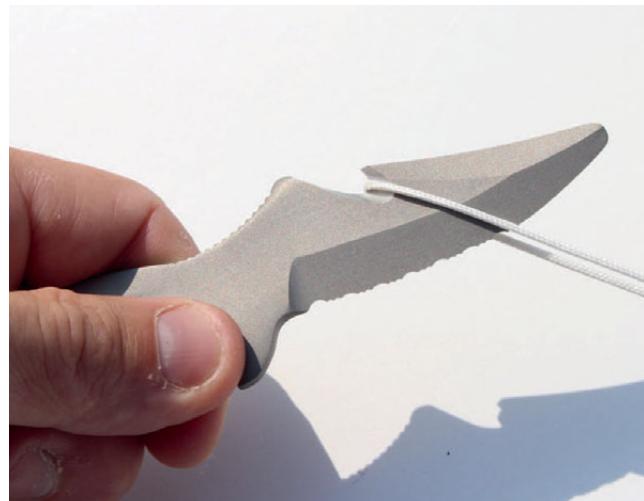
- Aqualung Wenoka
- Dive Rite line cutter
- Ezycut Trilobite
- IST BCD knife
- Scubapro X-Cut
- Seac Sub BC-Jack
- Underwater Kinetics Remora

**DATE TESTED:** 20/7/16

**WATER TEMP:** N/A

### LOCATION OF TEST:

In this instance, the knives were tested for cutting effectiveness in the SD offices. In-water testing is conducted at Vivian Dive Centre, Llanberis.  
[www.viviandivecentre.co.uk](http://www.viviandivecentre.co.uk)



**SAFE AND SECURE:** Whether you go for a dive knife or a cutting tool, you want to make sure that the sheath which it is stored in holds it nice and secure, as there is nothing worse than reaching for your knife in a moment of need only to find an empty sheath! Make sure your tool of choice has a decent locking mechanism or a big slab of Velcro to hold it in place.



## AQUALUNG WENOKA | £25 (€30)



### PRODUCT OVERVIEW

The Aqualung Wenoka series of knives has been on the market for several years, and it is a solid performer with a proven heritage. The compact knife can be purchased with a selection of three-inch 304-series stainless steel blades - tanto, stiletto and blunt-tip (we were supplied with the latter for the test).

All the styles have the same hilt, which features the patented SqueezeLock technology, which holds it securely in the sheath when not in use, but allows for easy removal when needed. It comes complete with barnacle nuts and bolts for installation on BCDs featuring knife grommets, as well as the attachments for fastening it on to webbing and BCD low-pressure hose. It also has slots for the optional rubber leg straps.

#### WE LIKE

Price, performance, SqueezeLock system, size

It comes in charcoal, blue, red, yellow and purple, so can be colour-co-ordinated to your kit. A titanium version is also available, priced £85.

#### TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Test Team has always been impressed with the Wenoka knife, and again, it scored highly for ease of use - even with thick gloves on, the SqueezeLock mechanism was simple to operate. The blunt tip - in our opinion the best of the bunch - has a sharp cutting edge, a serrated edge for thicker ropes, and a line cutter for monofilament. Great knife at a good price.

#### SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

## DIVE RITE LINE CUTTER | £20.79 (€25)



### PRODUCT OVERVIEW

There are several cutting tools on the market, which incorporate a razor-sharp blade safely housed in a robust plastic body, and the Dive Rite version is one of the better ones.

Much sharper than a standard dive knife, the liner cutter uses a 420 surgical-grade stainless steel blade that can easily slice through braided line, monofilament, etc. It is housed in a heavy-duty fibre-reinforced nylon body, and the blade can be easily removed for cleaning and replacement. The line cutter fits securely into a 11.4cm by 6.4cm nylon pouch and uses a Velcro lanyard to prevent accidental deployment. The pouch is equipped with two Velcro straps, allowing it to be mounted horizontally or vertically on webbing up to 5cm wide. Spare blades are also included.

### TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Test Team are big fans of line cutters, which give you all the advantages of a dive knife but without the chance of slicing yourself in the process of actually using the thing!

The Dive Rite line cutter is well priced and robustly constructed. It is simple to deploy even with thick gloves on, and the webbing strap and handy 'hole' in the body mean you can grip it with ease despite its relatively compact size. It sliced through everything we could throw at it, and in our opinion, every diver should have a line cutter of one style or another in their kit bag.

#### SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

#### WE LIKE

Price, size, performance

#### WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning



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**CHOOSE A GOOD ATTACHMENT POINT:** Picking where to attach your dive knife is all down to personal preference, but make sure that it is easily accessible, ideally with either hand. Waistband webbing is a good location, as is a BCD or wing shoulder strap or low-pressure hose, but many people favour a wrist-mount option as well.

## EEZYCUT TRILOBITE | £24.95 (€30)



### PRODUCT OVERVIEW

The Eezycut Trilobite is the line cutter everyone else is competing against. It is strongly made, comprising high-strength plastic and specifically hardened stainless steel blades, and is dual-sided, so there is in-built redundancy should one side become blunt or broken.

The Trilobite is rated to cut line up to 8mm thick, but can cut up to 12mm, and will whip through webbing of any thickness.

It comes complete with a storage pouch, which is available in various styles, that can be mounted on webbing straps, computer straps, etc.

A webbing strap attached to the hilt of the Trilobite fastens to the pouch with Velcro to keep it in place, and also aids with deploying it. The large hole in the body means you can thread a fore-

finger through for a tight grip, or you can hold it in a more conventional way.

It also comes with two spare blades.

### TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Test Team was impressed with the Trilobite when we saw it a few years ago for the first time, and it was equally impressive this time around. It is easy to deploy, easy to use, and it will slice through pretty much anything. We like the webbing pouch that goes on your computer strap, meaning the Trilobite is right there on your wrist when you need it. Solid safety product.

### SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

### WE LIKE

Price, performance, size, dual-blade design

### WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning

## IST BCD KNIFE | £14.95 (€18)



### PRODUCT OVERVIEW

IST has been making well-priced, well-made diving equipment for many years, and the BCD Knife represents fantastic value for money for an essential tool. At under £15, it is a steal, and for your money, you get a blunt-tip 420-grade stainless steel bladed compact knife, which has a hard plastic 'handle' moulded on to the steel, providing a good grip for bare or gloved hands. The blade has a sharp cutting edge, a serrated section and a line cutter. It comes with a durable nylon sheath, which can be mounted on a BCD shoulder strap or stored in BCD pockets.

this country or abroad. It is small enough to be left sitting on your webbing waist strap or a shoulder strap until you need it. Mark Evans said: "You can never have too many cutting tools in my opinion, and at under £15 you can afford to get one of these, fasten it to your kit and then essentially forget about it - till you need it in an emergency, and then you will be glad you had it!"

The blade cut through a variety of lines with ease, and it was easy to hold with thick gloves on. Bargain-basement dive knife, which is a great piece of kit.

### SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

### WE LIKE

Price, performance, size

### WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning



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**AFTER THE DIVING DAY IS DONE:** Dive knives and cutting tools are great pieces of safety equipment, but they are only effective if they are looked after - you do not want to pull out your knife when you are trapped in monofilament to discover it is all dull-edged and rusty from being left coated in saltwater residue. Always rinse your knife/cutter in freshwater and air dry.

## SCUBAPRO X-CUT | £61 (€73)



**SportDiver  
CHOICE**

### PRODUCT OVERVIEW

Scubapro is a well-established company with a strong heritage in unique dive knives, and the X-Cut continues this in style. Made from hardened titanium, which is immensely strong and handily does not rust in saltwater, the X-Cut has a contoured handle 'cut' into the titanium which incorporates indents, a finger guard and a thumb stop for a firm, non-slip grip with bare hands or wearing thick gloves.

The blade is specially designed and shaped to maintain a highly durable cutting edge for a long life of corrosion-free performance. It has a short sharp section, a serrated edge, and a line cutter. It has an eyelet for a lanyard drilled through the titanium, if you wish to secure it further. The X-Cut comes with a webbing sheath, with a large Velcro pad

holding it securely in place, which is designed to slot on to a webbing waistband.

### TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The X-Cut is a stylish knife that immediately caught the attention of the Test Team. However, it is not all show and no go, as it performs just as good as it looks. The dull titanium finish sets off the unique shape perfectly, and it went through all the test ropes and lines with ease. And while £61 is not 'cheap' for a compact BCD knife, for a titanium product of this quality, it is a bargain.

### SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

### WE LIKE

Performance, price, size, titanium construction

### WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning

## SEAC SUB BC-JACK | £29.90 (€36)



### PRODUCT OVERVIEW

Seac Sub has a range of dive knives, and the BC-Jack is a small, compact knife that is perfect as a back-up to a larger primary tool. The BC-Jack knife has a stainless steel blade with a blunt tip, that can also double-up as a screwdriver. It is equipped with a sharp cutting edge, a serrated section and a line cutter. The plastic sheath has a unique locking mechanism which releases the knife when you put a little pressure on two levers with your thumb and fore-finger. It comes with attachment kits to fasten it to your jacket or low-pressure hose.

### TEST TEAM COMMENTS

Seac Sub is an Italian company that has made big strides into the UK in recent months. The company has been established for

many years, and the knife is a useful tool in their armoury. The Test Team found it was a solid little knife, with all the cutting edges and slots being highly efficient at slicing through various test ropes and pieces of monofilament.

The locking mechanism works well, and is easy to disengage even with thick gloves on. The chunky plastic handle is also nice to grip with gloved or bare hands.

### SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

### WE LIKE

Price, performance, size

### WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning



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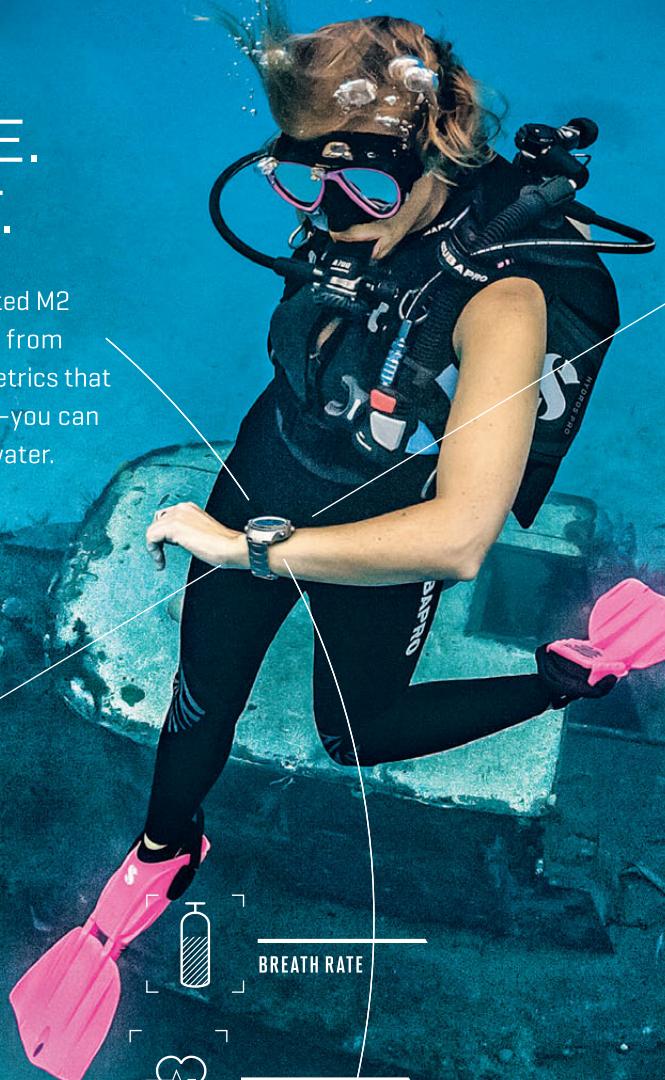
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**AFTER THE DIVING DAY IS DONE:** Once your knife/line cutter is dry, ensure you store it back in its sheath. Not only will this protect other elements of your dive kit collection from being accidentally sliced or punctured, but you will know that your cutting tool is where it should be and ready to go on your next diving adventure.

## UK REMORA | £59.95 (€72)



### PRODUCT OVERVIEW

Underwater Kinetics are better known for their wide range of dive lights, but they are also past masters when it comes to knives too.

The long-available Remora is the ideal BCD knife, which comes with attachments to fasten it to your BCD or a low-pressure hose.

The chunky three-inch blade has a large serrated edge and a blunt drop-tip. The blade is made from Hydralloy, which is Underwater Kinetics' unique blend of metal alloys and proprietary finishing techniques, providing a knife with the strength of 420 stainless steel, but with corrosion resistance exceeding 316 stainless steel.

Available in black and yellow.

### TEST TEAM COMMENTS

The Underwater Kinetics Remora has always faired well in any test of compact dive knives, and it put in a good showing again this time around.

At nearly £60, it is one of the more-expensive knives on test, but you do get the Hydralloy blade, which will last longer with constant saltwater submersion. The big serrated edge easily cut through all the test ropes and lines with little effort, and the dumpy handle sat nicely in a naked or gloved hand.

### SPORT DIVER VERDICT

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

### WE LIKE

Size, performance, Hydralloy blade

### WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning



**CONCLUSION.** All seven of the dive knives and line cutters in this test did their job extremely well. None of them were fazed by even the thicker cords, and monofilament - the nasty, almost-invisible-underwater stuff most often encountered by divers - was despatched with ease. Equally, all of them were simple to deploy and, just as importantly, return to their sheath, both with naked hands and while wearing a selection of thick neoprene gloves.

The IST BCD Knife was a clear winner in the Best Value category - coming in at under £15, it represented astonishing value for money and was a serviceable little knife to boot.

The Choice award went to the Scubapro X-Cut titanium dive knife, which not only looked the coolest on test, but was also well-designed, had a fantastic performance and still came in at a decent price despite being made of an expensive metal.

The two line cutters on test, the Dive Rite and the Ezycut Trilobite, also got Choice awards, as the Test Team are all of the same mindset that all divers should have a line cutter in their equipment stash, as they work well, don't take up a lot of room, and are the perfect accompaniment to dive knives large and small.

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# SCUBALAB TEST EXTRA

AQUALUNG EXPLORER ROLLER | £123 (€147)



**Mark Evans:** Aqualung has just released a whole new range of dive bags, and we will be testing them over the coming months. First up is the staple of any diver's bag collection, a large and sturdy roller bag with a 140-litre capacity that can take all your dive kit and a couple of weeks' worth of clothes and see you off on your next adventure. And weighing in at a respectable 4kg, it isn't going to eat into your precious luggage allowance too much either.

The Explorer Roller has an ultra-durable 1680D polyester PVC coating to take on the abuse dished out by airport baggage handlers - we've all seen bags getting slung about as they come off the plane conveyor! - and extra-wear areas are further reinforced with thick abrasion-resistant tarpaulin.

The cavernous main compartment is easily accessed by a large U-shaped flap secured with corrosion-resistant zippers with extended pullers, and there are two large fin pockets on either side. I took my Force Fins to Indonesia and as they are an odd shape, they wouldn't fit into these pockets, but most standard fins will go in - and even if you elect not to use them for fins, they are perfect for sticking shorts,

T-shirts, flip-flops and your undies!

There are also two rows of webbing anchor loops stitched down either side of the main compartment flap, and these can be used to attach water bottles or hand luggage with karabiners, or you can even secure it to the deck of the boat during particularly stormy crossings.

There is a retractable top handle to make towing the bag a doddle, and the rollers are robust and designed to take a beating.

It survived my trip out to Manado in Indonesia, only showing a few minor surface scrapes and scratches as its first battle scars from the experience. The main compartment was more than big enough for a 3mm full-suit, travel wing, fins, mask, regulator, booties, camera arms, camera housing, and two weeks worth of T-shirts, shorts, underwear and swimming trunks, though the odd bit did get tucked into the fin pockets. It was nice to roll around, and with grab handles top and bottom, it was easy to hoick it on and off detector and luggage conveyors, and in and out of minibuses. It looks smart, and the subtle logos identify you as a diver without screaming 'I contain expensive kit, steal me!'. [www.aqualung.co.uk](http://www.aqualung.co.uk)

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# SCUBALAB LONG TERM

## AQUALUNG ARGONAUT



NEW ARRIVAL

The Argonaut dive knife is designed to be one of the toughest knives on the planet. The butt, handle, hilt and blade are all fashioned out of one piece of 4mm thick titanium, which is then coated in black EDP, sharpened and then laser etched. The handle is then wrapped, twice, in 5mm paracord and tied off with a 12cm leash. 2mm thick Kydex plastic is then heated and thermoformed around the knife to make the sheath. Grommets are inserted and the excess material trimmed with a heat knife.

The blade is available in two styles - the Spartan (on test here) and the Blunt. The Spartan comes to a spear head point, the Blunt comes to a chisel-like tip.

The handles are wrapped 12mm from the hilt to provide a spot for the forefinger and extra grip for the sheath. The butt features a shark tactical tool as well.

Mark Evans,  
[www.aqualung.com/uk](http://www.aqualung.com/uk)

### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	JULY 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£104
NUMBER OF DIVES	0
TIME IN WATER	0 HRS 0 MINS

## BIGBLUE AL1100NP

The AL1100NP has arrived in the mail, but we haven't had chance to get it wet yet. However, this down-time has meant we can get used to its functions. Everything is controlled by one push button - four power settings, and SOS mode. Also, around the button is a battery level indicator, which goes from blue to green to red, then flashing red when the battery needs charging.

Mark Evans,  
[www.liquidsports.co.uk](http://www.liquidsports.co.uk)



### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	JUNE 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£125
NUMBER OF DIVES	0
TIME IN WATER	0 HRS 0 MINS

## APEKS FUSION KVR1



The last time I used a Fusion drysuit, I paired it up with some 5mm neoprene booties. These worked okay, but if I am using a drysuit without built-in boots, I prefer using Rockboots, and this KVR1 came complete with the Apeks version. These beasts look very special-forces, which teams up nicely with the Kevlar finish of the suit itself. They are extremely robust, built more like a high-tech walking boot than a diving boot, with lots of support and stiff sole.

### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	MAY 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£1,600
NUMBER OF DIVES	2
TIME IN WATER	2 HRS 10 MINS

Mark Evans,  
[www.apeksdiving.com/uk](http://www.apeksdiving.com/uk)

## SCUBAPRO MANTIS M2



The Mantis M2 performed brilliantly on my assignment to Manado in Indonesia. As well as the Long Term Test Perdix, I also took along my trusty Galileo Sol, and mounted this on my wrist alongside the Mantis M2. Both use the same algorithm, and because of the compact size of the M2, they make a great pair as a primary and back-up computer. They were bang on with their depth, dive time and NDL readings, and the multiple repetitive dives meant I got a few more dives in the log.

### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	APRIL 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£799
NUMBER OF DIVES	9
TIME IN WATER	10 HRS 45 MINS

Mark Evans,  
[www.scubapro.co.uk](http://www.scubapro.co.uk)



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## SEAC SUB F1 S



The F1 S fins are still putting in a solid performance during their run with the Long Term Test squad, and the one thing that everyone is commenting on are those bungee heel straps and the monster finger loop on the back. It makes them so easy to get on and off.

Mark Evans,  
[www.seacsub.com.co.uk](http://www.seacsub.com.co.uk)

### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	JANUARY 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£125
NUMBER OF DIVES	12
TIME IN WATER	11 HRS 10 MINS

## OTTER BRITANNIC MKII



A few more dives logged in the Britannic MKII and it is starting to feel like a second skin, it is that comfortable. It has been so well cut and tailored in the made-to-measure department that there is no real hindrance to movement (over the normal 'feel' of a drysuit, obviously) so it is a dream to dive in.

I am also taken with the chest pocket, mounted on the front of the braces, which is handily placed so you can access it by just opening up the zipper 30cm or so.

Perfect for getting your car keys at the end of the dive!

Mark Evans,  
[www.drysuits.co.uk](http://www.drysuits.co.uk)

### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	FEBRUARY 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£1,445
NUMBER OF DIVES	13
TIME IN WATER	12 HRS 10 MINS

## SHEARWATER RESEARCH PERDIX



The Shearwater Research Perdix got its first taste of warm water diving when it accompanied me to the Lembeh Strait in Indonesia. It performed faultlessly during my time there, and I was able to explore more of its functions during my three daily dives.

One thing I was particularly impressed with was that while the general screen display is nice and crisp, with a white and blue combo that works well together, when it needs to let you know an important bit of info - in this case, only a couple of minutes remaining of no-stop time - the digit in question turns orange. This meant that even during a brief glance at the screen, my eyes were drawn to the one orange display on the entire screen. Simple but effective.

### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	MARCH 2016
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£636
NUMBER OF DIVES	12
TIME IN WATER	10 HRS 55 MINS

END OF TERM



## URSUIT FIR VEST

The Ursuit FIR Vest has reached the end of its stint in the Long Term test stable, and it has been an invaluable addition through the cooler winter months, mainly because it stopped Test Team member Barry Henderson endlessly whining about being cold. True testament to the effectiveness of this heated vest came when we dived in 4-5 degrees C water for an extended period of time and there wasn't one word of Liverpudlian abuse aimed in my direction. Hmm, what am I going to do this winter?

Mark Evans,  
[www.liquidsports.co.uk](http://www.liquidsports.co.uk)

### INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	DECEMBER 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£300
NUMBER OF DIVES	26
TIME IN WATER	26 HRS 40 MINS



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Diver inspecting a huge barrel sponge for critters in the Togian Islands, Indonesia



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# GET MORE FROM YOUR UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

## CRITTER HUNTING: *Sponges*

Sponges are more than just antiquated bath loofahs. **RICHARD SMITH** discovers the animals that live on them throughout the world's coral reefs

By Dr Richard Smith | [www.OceanRealmImages.com](http://www.OceanRealmImages.com)

Sponges are one of the most ancient animal groups on the planet today. They date back 650 million years, long before the appearance of the first arthropods, echinoderms and 100's of millions of years before the dinosaurs. Today they are a unique and varied group that have a prominent place in many aquatic ecosystems. They are filter feeders that draw water in through their walls using tiny, internal whip-like appendages called flagella. On large sponges you can sometimes see or feel the outflow of water through the main exit hole, called an osculum. Sponges have been important commercially for several thousand years; Plato and Homer both mention using sponges to bathe. In the 1950's sponges were the source of the first marine-derived anti-cancer drug.

Some of the largest sponges in the Caribbean are believed to be over 2,000 years old, making them amongst the world's oldest living creatures. Their complex network of structural mineralised rods, as well as an array of toxins, makes them unpalatable to most predators. Which of course also makes them a great place for critter hunting. The perfect combination of few predators and longevity, are two of the most important traits in providing a good home to critters.



### THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME IS CALLING

The trip runs from 26 November to 3 December, starting and finishing in Nassau, and is priced at US\$2,995 per person. This includes seven night's accommodation, six days of diving (that's 26 dives in total!), port and park fees, airport transfers, all food and drink, and the photo workshops with Stuart and Mark. There are only 18 spaces up for grabs, which promise to sell out fast, so book your spot now!

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Giant moray eel hiding in a barrel sponge, shot using the rear curtain sync and slow shutter speed technique

their gaudy colours. Either way, they are simply trying to blend in so that they can trick hapless fishes to within striking range. Their mouths open so large and so fast that their prey simply gets dragged in before they have time to react.

**Where to look** | Some coral reefs seem to have more frogfishes than others, but you can almost guarantee them on a good muck dive. If there's a sponge outcrop in an otherwise barren sandy area, this is a good place to scrutinise every last sponge for eyes. It might just be a well camouflaged frogfish. Sometimes the frogfish is a fractionally slightly different shade, or you might be able to distinguish its outline.

**How to photograph** | It's important to have the eye in focus and preferably looking at you. This helps draw the attention of the viewer to the animal; otherwise they might just think they're looking at a sponge! If you can pull it off, it's also nice to make the most of the amazing camouflage and show how similar the frogfish is to its local habitat. The lures are also very interesting, and vary between species so it makes a nice behaviour shot too if you can get them casting their lure.

**Nudibranchs** | Length – from 1 to 15 cm | There are many species of nudibranch that feed on sponges. Some rely on camouflage against their predators, whilst others sequester toxins from their prey to make themselves unpalatable. Some have such astounding camouflage that it's almost impossible to distinguish them from their prey.

**Where to look** | For many species, simply knowing the kind of sponge they eat allows you to find them very easily. Over the years I have been making a note of where I find certain nudibranchs and now I know that if I look on a specific pale grey encrusting sponge I'll can find *Sagaminopteron psychedelicum*, a maroon plate-like sponge often yields *Glossodoris stellatus* and recently I discovered that a red cigar sized sponge appears to be the favoured food of a certain undescribed *Aegires* sp.

## COMMON SPONGE-ASSOCIATED ANIMALS

**Hairy Squat Lobster** | Length - 1.5 cm | Probably the most well known sponge-living animal is the hairy squat lobster. They are very small and difficult to find initially, but make stunningly beautiful photographic subjects putting them high on the critter hunter's wishlist. Amazingly, they were only discovered in 1994, despite being relatively common throughout the Coral Triangle. They live on large barrel sponges where they feed on detritus trapped by the sponge. The bodies of these tiny crustaceans (squat lobsters are in fact more closely related to hermit crabs than lobsters) are a bright purple/pink and covered in long transparent hairs. The eyes are scarlet red and crowned with similarly coloured hairy tufts.

**Where to look** | The hairy squat lobster lives only on a specific species of large brown barrel sponge. They tend to be found around deep fissures in the sponge's body that are present between the external ridges of the sponge. Look towards the base of the sponge, rather than around the rim.

**How to photograph** | The most challenging part of photographing the hairy squat lobster is lighting. The sponge's external ridges make it quite difficult to illuminate the subject without casting severe shadows across your image. The best idea is to locate your strobes adjacent to your port or camera, facing in towards the subject. Like all such animals, with a little patience it is unnecessary to manipulate them to get your shot and this should always be avoided.

**Frogfish** | Length - to 45 cm | Frogfishes don't exclusively mimic sponges, but when they do they're fantastic at it. Some perfectly match the colour and texture of a sponge and then stick to it like glue. Others, usually the giant frogfish, try to look like an entire sponge and sit prominently on the reef showing off

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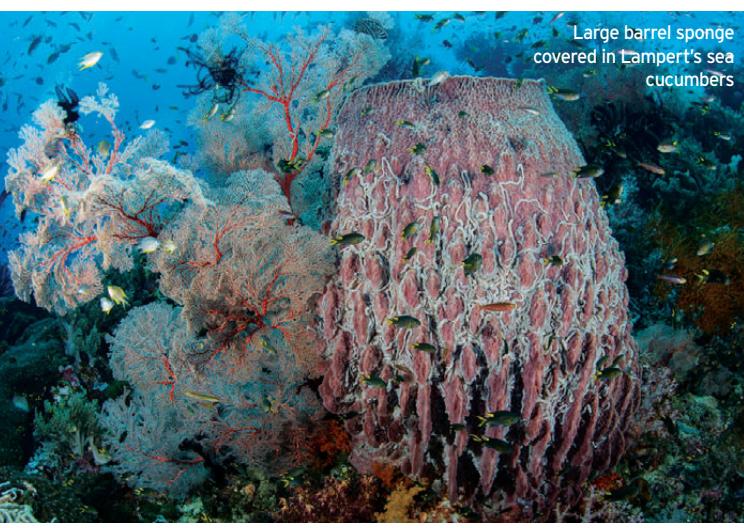


It's easy to find the nudibranch *Glossodoris stellatus* if you know its food source

## BIOGRAPHY

**Richard Smith**, a British underwater photographer and writer, aspires to promote an appreciation for the ocean's inhabitants and raise awareness of marine conservation issues through his images. A marine biologist by training, Richard's pioneering research on the biology and conservation of pygmy seahorses, led to the first PhD on these enigmatic fishes. Over the past decade, Richard's photographs and marine life focused features have appeared in a wide variety of publications around the world. Richard leads marine life expeditions where the aim is for participants to get more from their diving and photography by learning about the marine environment:

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Large barrel sponge covered in Lampert's sea cucumbers



An undescribed barrel sponge porcelain crab

**How to photograph** | As always when photographing well-camouflaged animals, focus is key. I like to use a shallow depth of field with pin-sharp focus on the rhinophores (nudibranch's pair of sensory organs), and a blurred background to reduce clutter in the image. Some of these nudibranchs can be particularly small, so it might be worth investing in a diopter to get a better shot. If not, then use their stunning habitat to your advantage and locate them thoughtfully in the frame.

## NOTEWORTHY FINDS

**Lampert's Sea Cucumber** | Length - 10 cm | Have you ever wondered what the whitish 'worms' covering sponges were? Well, they're actually a species of sea cucumber. If you look closely at the feeding end, you'll see the sticky filaments around the mouth collecting the detritus. They often form huge aggregations on large barrel sponges, where they feed on detritus trapped by the sponge.

**Velvet Ghostpipefish** | Length - 8 cm | The velvet ghostpipefish hasn't yet been scientifically described. There is a lot of research needed on the genetics of the ghostpipefishes before that'll be possible. I distinguish these rarest members of the group, by their sponge-like skin texture, bobbing movement whilst hovering and a whitish tip to tail. They are usually found around sponges and their colour perfectly matches their nearest host.

**Sponge Carrier Crab** | Length – to 20 cm | Sponge carrier crabs use their sponge for camouflage, which may also help the sponge through water movement aiding its filter-feeding ability. Some sponge carriers can be huge, and presumably grow in unison with their resident sponge that they carry around like a backpack.

**Cryptic Sponge Shrimp** | Length – 2.5 cm | One of my favourite critters is the cryptic sponge shrimp. However, if I'm leading a trip to a muck dive area I'll always make sure I show my guests an image before trying to point one out. They blend extremely well into their surroundings, matching the base colour of the sponge and covered in tiny black dots to really refine their camouflage.

## Photographing sponge-associated fauna

The main difficulty when photographing some of the smaller barrel sponge-associated critters, such as hairy squat lobster and several species of undescribed porcelain crabs, is that they prefer to hide between the external ridges of their host. It is probably best to get practice with the less skittish squat lobster before attempting to photograph the latter. As I said, it's largely a matter of perfecting your lighting and ensuring that your strobes are correctly angled to illuminate the subject.

Unusually for camouflaged critters, there are a few sponge-associated species that are large enough to shoot with wide-angle lenses. Next time you're shooting frogfish, moray eels or scorpionfishes, why not try a different technique? Try using a wide-angle zoom lens and a slow shutter speed. Set your camera to 'Rear Curtain Sync' in the flash options, which triggers the flash at the end of the exposure. Then, in manual mode set a slow shutter speed and zoom the lens during the exposure. This technique adds a little energy and uniqueness to the frame. ■



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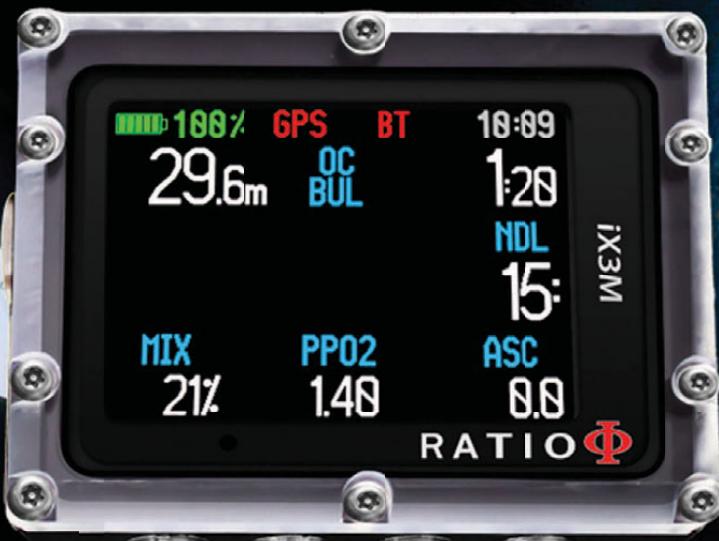
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# BACK TO BASICS: MACRO AND CLOSE-UP REEF BACKGROUNDS

Martin discusses different approaches to photography, and explains how to 'work' a subject and its background

Photographs by MARTIN EDGE

Over the last two months, we have looked at close-up and macro underwater photography, in particular the technique of ensuring that your subject is situated on a plain and simple seawater background, either green water for more temperate areas or blue water for a more tropical feel. (See Sport Diver August 2016 edition).

For those of you who are beginners and just starting out with an underwater camera and flashgun, my advice to you is to enjoy the experience, shoot for memories of a special dive site and all the colourful life it has to offer, but try not to become too disillusioned when you see the work of other more-experienced underwater photographers who are shooting to take the best possible photographs they can.

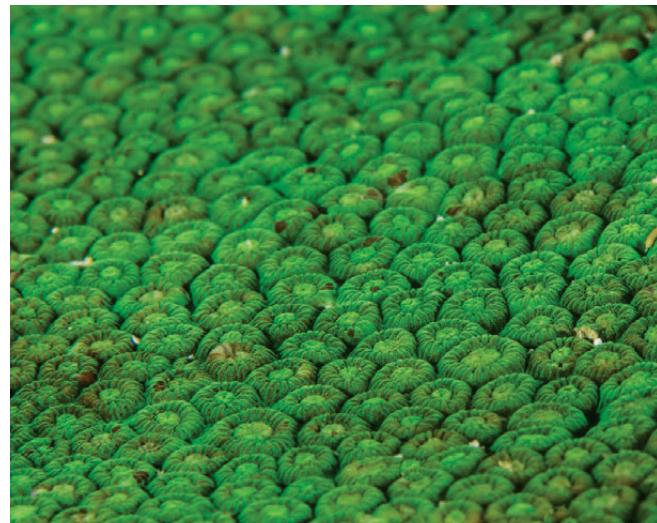
The mindset between these two approaches differ, and it has little to do with the make of camera or number of dives.

You may be in the same group with the same dive guide swimming along the reef at the same pace, but here is perhaps where the two approaches to underwater photography tend to metaphorically go in different directions. Which group do you tend to gravitate to? The group attempting to take a picture of every critter they see on the dive, or the other half of the group, which are more selective with what they shoot, taking more time with one particular subject and passing over other subjects which are not so photogenic. It's the latter approach which will be much more rewarding photographically.

## TECHNIQUE

This month I want to turn our attentions away from shooting at an angle in order to capture the colour of the water column. Instead I want you to think about photographing a subject which is occupying the reef. There are a multitude of opportunities to shoot photogenic possibilities, which are situated on other corals, whips or even just the sand itself. However, I'm talking about photogenic backgrounds, which could contrast well with the subject itself.

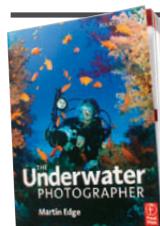
When I'm shooting close-up or macro, I'm not looking for specific subjects, I'm looking for sympathetic backgrounds, which harbour photogenic opportunities no matter what species it may be. A particular patch of colourful coral or some colour contrast might attract my eye. Soft corals spring to mind, sea whips or a colourful skirt of an anemone. Lembeh, Indonesia, is popular for macro subjects because the sand is



very dark, which in turn provides an outstanding backdrop to shoot just about any critter you may find. One such background example, which I avoid if possible, is the ultra-white reflective corals, which abound in the Red Sea. These corals are so reflective it's like shooting an electric light bulb at close range.

This month's image was taken in Indonesia on a dedicated macro dive. I was using a Nikon 60mm lens on a Nikon 7200 Dx camera. Around 7m deep, I swam close to the reef and noticed a patch of colourful green hard corals and in one corner a hawkfish. I stopped to observe its fleeting nature all around the corals. There was no doubt that I was going to stay and work this particular opportunity. I had in my mind's eye a particular composition of the fish facing me straight on with both eyes directed towards my lens. I tried this approach for a good ten minutes but just couldn't achieve what I had in my mind's eye. I then choose to opt for a three-quarter-view portrait, with a good single, right eye contact. I spent 15 minutes with this opportunity before I moved on.

Nauticam housing, with two Itron 220 flashguns each placed behind and to the side of my housing, level with my eyes, close to the viewfinder. Settings were f19 at 250th second, ISO 200. ■



## SIGNED BY THE AUTHOR

The fourth edition of Martin's book, *The Underwater Photographer*, is considered the bible book on underwater photography worldwide. For a signed copy, phone 01202 887611 or email: [martin@edgeunderwaterphotography.com](mailto:martin@edgeunderwaterphotography.com)

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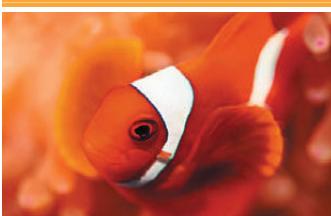
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SERVICES: Air To 200 Bar. Stingray City and ex-USS Kittiwake Adventures. PADI 5H IDC. EH, ESI, EA, Acc, FCF, AT (with packages), AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCE, CAOS. Nitrox (with packages). Full-Service dive operations located at Sunset House. Recreational boat dives. Incredible shore diving. Nitrox. Cathy Church. U/W photo centre. 50 Rooms for accommodations. Bar, restaurant onsite. Stepping out of my room, catching that breath of fragrant tropical breeze, gazing into the alluring blue water "I found the essence of Sunset House.



### CYPRUS ALPHA DIVERS

2 Pyla Gardens, Dhekelia Road,  
Larnaca, Pyla Tourist Area,  
7081, Cyprus  
+357 24647519  
+357 99866383  
[info@alpha-divers.com](mailto:info@alpha-divers.com)  
[www.alpha-divers.com](http://www.alpha-divers.com)



SERVICES: 5 Star IDC, Tec Rec & Seamanship Centre who love what we do & understand what a privileged it is to serve you, ensuring everything is perfect from initial contact, diving, accommodation to whatever your holiday needs may be. Come, Dive and Live The Difference.

### CYPRUS CYDIVE DIVE CYPRUS

Marina Court 44-46, Poseidonos 1  
Paphos 8042, Cyprus  
00 357 26 934271  
[info@cydive.com](http://www.cydive.com)  
[www.cydive.com](http://www.cydive.com)



SERVICES: PADI 5 star Instructor Development centre, Excellent location, New Modern facility. The First PADI 5H Career Development Centre & Centre of Excellence in Cyprus. CAOS, EH, CH, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, ESI's, EA's, BH, AYRD, UWP, OW's, NDCE. Fantastic Location, an exciting programme with 2 Boat Dives & Daytrips Daily. Instructor programmes 4 times a year.



### CYPRUS LARNACA DIVE-IN

HTTC Ltd (Hyperbaric Therapy Treatment

Ctr) Poseidonia Medical

Centre, 47a E  
Aradippou, Larnaca,  
CYPRUS 7102  
00357 24 252501/24 hr  
Emergency Diver Help  
Line 99 518837  
Fax: 00357 24 252502  
[info@hbocyprus.com](mailto:info@hbocyprus.com)  
[www.hbocyprus.com](http://www.hbocyprus.com)  
OPENING HOURS: 9-5 Mon -Sat.



SERVICES: 24/7 Emergency Diver Response. Air to 232 Bar. If you are concerned or feel that you have unusual signs or symptoms after a dive please always get it checked. We have a 24/7, 365 days service with a full Hyperbaric Medical team on standby at our 14 man fully computerized, HAUX 2200 Starmed Unit. We are the Preferred Provider for IDAN, UK Armed Forces, US Armed Forces, NATO and many more. We offer Direct Insurance billing for all treatments. Also Dry Dives to 40 metres, PADI Chamber Specialty Courses, DAN In-Chamber Tender Courses, DAN Chamber Operator Courses, DAN Consumer an Instructor Courses to all Levels.

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC PRO DIVE INTERNATIONAL

Main office: Carreterra  
Federal, Parcels 4 MZA  
293 Late 2 Local 5-6,  
Ejido Norte, Edificio  
Matiz, Quintana Roo, 77712, Mexico  
+52 1 984 745 0763  
[info@prodiveinternational.com](mailto:info@prodiveinternational.com)  
[www.prodiveinternational.com](http://www.prodiveinternational.com)



OPENING HOURS: Daily 08-17.00, incl. public holidays

SERVICES: EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCE, CAOS, Nitrox, PADI 5★ CDC. World-class diving/snorkeling adventures Bayahibe, Saona & Catalina islands, caves and caverns, wrecks, walls, whale watching, Silver Bank live-aboards, stay & dive packages, courses & more!

### EGYPT LIVEABOARD



Egypt, Sharm El Sheikh

**VIP One**

[www.vipone.com](http://www.vipone.com)

Passengers .....	16	Elec .....	220
Cabins .....	8	Courses .....	Y
En-suite .....	Y	Aircon .....	Y
Length .....	29M	Nitrox .....	Y
Hull .....	WOOD	CCR .....	N

### EGYPT EMPEROR DIVERS

15 New Kawthar,  
Airport Road,  
Hurghada,  
Egypt



(+20) 122 234 0995

[info@emperordivers.com](mailto:info@emperordivers.com)

[www.emperordivers.com](http://www.emperordivers.com)

OPENING HOURS: See website.

SERVICES: EH, LB, ESI, TD, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCE, Nitrox, PADI 5H Year-round diving: the Maldives and Red Sea: El Gouna, Marsa Alam, Hamata and Sharm El Sheikh and Emperor liveaboards. Day diving, dive courses, resort packages.

### EGYPT ELITE DIVING'S DIVERS

UNITED

Uni Sharm Hotel,

Sharm Elysees St,

Um El Sid Hill,

Hadaba,

Sharm El Sheikh

0020 1224 308 780

[info@elite-diving.com](mailto:info@elite-diving.com)

[www.elite-diving.com](http://www.elite-diving.com)

OPENING HOURS: 8.00am to 19.00pm.

SERVICES: Air to 220 Bar. Divers United PADI 5 Resort. Elite Diving. BSAC Diver Training Center. EH, LB, ESI, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCE, CAOS, NITROX, ATOL Bonded through UK Tour operator. British Owner managers, offering Daily Boat Diving on some of the best reefs in the world, House reef, PADI & BSAC courses, Liveaboards, Special excursions.



### EGYPT OCEAN COLLEGE

Naama Bay Hotel, Naama Bay,

Sharm El Sheikh,



Egypt

0020 1228075516

[info@ocean-college.com](mailto:info@ocean-college.com)

[www.ocean-college.com](http://www.ocean-college.com)

OPENING HOURS: 8am - 6pm Every Day

SERVICES: Air to 300 Bar. EH, EA, FCF, AYRD, BH, NDCE, CAOS, PADI 5★ IDC Nitrox. Our 5★ PADI dive centre is located at the Sensatori resort. A wide range of dive services can be prebooked online including special offers.

### EGYPT RED SEA DIVING COLLEGE

Sultana Building, Naama Bay, South Sinai, Naama Bay, South Sinai, Egypt



0020 69 3600145

[info@redseacollege.com](mailto:info@redseacollege.com)

[www.redseacollege.com](http://www.redseacollege.com)

OPENING HOURS: 8am - 9pm.

SERVICES: Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCE, CAOS. Nitrox, National Geographic. PADI 5H CDC. Multi Award winning centre offering all courses from entry level to professional. Conducted from a stunning beach-front location, boasting the best facilities in Sharm.

### EGYPT SHARKS BAY UMBI DIVING CENTRE

P O Box 275, Sharks Bay,

Sharm el Sheikh,

South Sinai, Egypt

+20 122 714 2029

+20 69 3600942

[info@sharksbay.com](mailto:info@sharksbay.com)

[www.sharksbay.com](http://www.sharksbay.com)

OPENING HOURS: 8am to 6pm Mon - Sun.

SERVICES: Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCE, CAOS. Nitrox, PADI 5H and SSI Dive Centre. Sharks Bay Umbi Diving Village combines Bedouin style, warm hospitality and modern facilities. You really will come as a guest but leave as a friend.



## Egypt Sinai College - Diving Centre

Sharm Inn Amarin,  
Hadaba, Sharm El  
Sheikh, South Sinai  
60907, Egypt  
+201154055100  
info@sinai-college.com  
[www.sinai-college.com](http://www.sinai-college.com)



OPENING HOURS: 7.30am till 7pm every day of the year.  
SERVICES: Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDGF, COAS. Nitrox, PADI Dive Centre. We are an European run and managed dive center based in Sharm El Sheikh with a friendly and professional atmosphere. We provide daily diving, mini safaris and liveabards.



## Fuerteventura Deep Blue Diving S.L.

Barcelo el Castillo,  
Caleta de Fuste,  
Fuerteventura, 35610  
+34 606 275 468  
+34 928 163172  
info@deep-blue-diving.com  
[www.deep-blue-diving.com](http://www.deep-blue-diving.com) Facebook:  
Deep.Blue.Diving.Fuerteventura  
OPENING HOURS: All year 9am-5pm.  
SERVICES: Air to 200. PADI 5H GOLD PALM IDC CENTRE & IE LOCATION. EH, ESI, AIP, ACC, FCF, AYRD, UWP, NDGF, CAOS. WIFI, Equipment Washing and Storage Rooms. Discover Scuba to Instructor. All year round, water front location, small groups, 20-25m visibility. Exclusive dive sites, after dive sector.



## GRAN CANARIAS BLUE WATER DIVING

Holiday Club Puerto Calma, Avenida Joaquin Blanco  
Torrent 2, City:  
Puerto Rico, Mogan State, Las Palmas, 35130, Spain  
+34602080208 / +34633963248  
info@divinggrancanaria.com  
[www.divinggrancanaria.com](http://www.divinggrancanaria.com)  
OPENING HOURS: 9am until 6pm Monday - Sunday.  
SERVICES: Air to 200 bar. EH, ESI, Acc, AYRD, NDGF, CAOS. PADI 5H Dive Centre. All year round diving, boat and shore dives. Ideal for all level of divers. Special offers for groups, families and dive packages. Dive master internships available.



## Greece Nero-Sport Diving Center

Limni Keri, Machairado, Zakynthos, 29092  
0030 269 502 8481  
0030 698 566 6645  
dennis@nero-sport.de  
[www.nero-sport.de](http://www.nero-sport.de)  
OPENING HOURS: Open 9-18 (all year except 15.01.2017 - 28.02.2017).  
SERVICES: Air to 200 Bar. PADI DIVE CENTRE, IAC 5H EH, ESI, Acc, AT, FCF, AYRD, UWP, NDGF, CAOS. Free childcare. 2-5 trips a day. Day trips. Night diving. Own accommodation. Snack bar. Great family offers. Special group offers. Diving all year round. We are SSI Dive Center too. It's our 30 year anniversary in 2016.



## Greece Diving Center Turtle Beach

Limni Keri, Zakynthos, Greece  
0030 6944 375597  
0030 26950 49424  
info@keritravel@gmail.com  
[www.diving-center-turtle-beach.com](http://www.diving-center-turtle-beach.com)  
SERVICES: PADI DIVE CENTRE, CMAS, SSI, ACC, BH, CAOS, EH, ESI, FCF, NCDF. Nitrox. Dive packages. Special offers for groups and families. Great accommodation and diving packages.



## Honduras Utila Dive Centre/ Mango Inn

Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras  
(504) 24253327  
(504) 24253327  
info@utiladivecentre.com  
[www.goponutila.com](http://www.goponutila.com)  
OPENING HOURS: 7am to 7pm  
SERVICES: Air to 220 Bar. PADI Career Development Centre and IANTD facility. Nitrox, Trimix, Rebreather friendly. National Geographic Facility. EH, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CAOS. PADI certification courses from beginner to Instructor (monthly PADI IDC's) with diving packages and accommodation. The island of Utila offers spectacular Caribbean diving and Whale sharks.



## Indonesia Big Bubble Dive

Turtle Beach, Gili Trawangan, Lombok NTB, Indonesia 83233  
+623706125020  
+62811390969  
info@bigbubblediving.com  
[www.bigbubblediving.com](http://www.bigbubblediving.com)  
OPENING HOURS: 8am to 7pm daily all year round  
SERVICES: Established in 2001 by UK Owner Anna Walker, The crystal clear waters (up to 40m visibility) will ensure you see the very best of the aquatic life that diving in Indonesia has to offer.



## Indonesia Dive Into Lembeh

RT 08 Lingkungan III, Kasawari, Bitung, North Sulawesi, 95528, Indonesia  
+62 8114347718  
steve@diveintolembeh.com  
[www.diveintolembeh.com](http://www.diveintolembeh.com)  
OPENING HOURS: Always open from April 1st 2016.  
SERVICES: Lembeh's newest purpose built dive resort. Great location in a macro photographers paradise with 9 deluxe sea view bungalows, all with private Japanese style onsen. Air to 200 Bar Nitrox. PADI 5H. Full range of non tekkie PADI courses available.EH, ESI, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDGF, CAOS



## Lanzarote Manta Diving Lanzarote

Juan Carlos 1, No.6, Local 5, Puerto del Carmen (0034) 928 516815 Mobile: (0034) 649 121142 info@manta-diving-lanzarote.com manta-diving-lanzarote-val@hotmail.com www.manta-diving-lanzarote.com Skype: manta-dive-centre OPENING HOURS: Mon-Sat 8.30-5.30pm all year round. SERVICES: Air to 200 Bar. PADI IRRA RESORT CENTRE, BSAC RESORT CENTRE. OSS, ACC, AT, AYRD, BH, CAOS, CH, NDGF, EA, EH, UWP, ESI, FCF. PADI. Courses & Specialties, Discover Scuba & Snorkeling. Fully equipped, spacious centre, 150mtrs from best sites in Lanzarote. Group Rates All level of divers welcome. NITROX.



## Lanzarote Safari Diving Lanzarote

Playa de la Barrilla 4, Playa Chica Puerto Del Carmen 0034 928511992 or 0034 646752512 enquiry@safaridiving.com www.safaridiving.com SERVICES: PADI, PADI 5H Centre, BSAC, PADI Premier Centre, NAUI, SAA, ACC, AT, LB, ESI, EAs, BH, AYRD, UWP, OWS, NDGF, ATOL, TD, CAOS, EH, CH, AIP, FCF, SSI & RYA. We are a PADI dive centre. BSAC Premier Centre and Seamanship Centre. SSI Diver Training Centre. British owned, beach based diving centre, established for over 18 years. Spectacular Ocean diving all year round which include reefs, drop offs, wrecks etc to suit all levels of diver and the complete beginner! Special offers available for dive packages for shore, night and boat dives.



## Maldives Diving & Sailing Pvt. Ltd

Vivanta by Taj Coral Reef Resort, Hembadhu, North Male Atoll, 00960 7487511 diving.vivanta@gmail.com www.blueinmaldives.com OPENING HOURS: 08.30 - 12.30, 14.00 - 18.00. SERVICES: EH, ESI, EA, AYRD, UWP, BH. PADI 5H Gold Palm Resort. The major appeal of our Dive Centre is the wreck, which was sunk in 1988, to attract marine life.



## Indonesia Liveaboard



### Wicked Diving, Indonesia Jaya

[www.wickeddiving.com](http://www.wickeddiving.com)

Passengers .....	14	Elec .....	220
Cabins .....	6	Courses .....	Y
En-suite .....	NO	Aircon .....	Y
Length .....	25M	Nitrox .....	N
Hull .....	WOOD	CCR .....	N



## Maldives Emperor Divers

15 New Kawthar, Airport Road, Hurghada, Egypt (+20) 122 234 0995 info@emperordivers.com www.emperordivers.com OPENING HOURS: See website. SERVICES: EH, LB, ESI, TD, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDGF. Nitrox, PADI 5H Year-round diving: the Maldives and Red Sea: El Gouna, Marsa Alam, Hamata and Sharm El Sheikh and Emperor liveaboards. Day diving, dive courses, resort packages.



## Advertising Sales Team

Sam Wren: sam.wren@sportdiver.co.uk  
+44 (0) 118 974 2502 / www.sportdiver.co.uk

### MALDIVES SUB AQUA DIVECENTER

**Sub Aqua Dive Center - Thailand/Oman/Maldives, Angaga, Thuhagiri & Furaveri +498938476959 info@subqua-divecenter.com www.subqua-divecenter.com**  
OPENING HOURS: 08.00 - 19.00 EVERYDAY.  
SERVICES: PADI 5H SSI, EH, LB, ESI, EA, FCF, AYRD, UWP, BH NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox. Located in Phuket (Thailand), Salalah (Oman) and Maldives. Thailand liveaboard experts. Quality services and full range of diving courses and facilities. Multi-lingual diving Instructor teams.



### MALTA GOZO AQUA SPORTS

Rubat Road, Marsalforn, Gozo, Malta, MFN 9014  
00356 21563037  
dive@gozoquasports.com  
www.gozoquasports.com  
OPENING HOURS: 7 Days a week 08:00 - 18:00.  
SERVICES: Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5H IDC - DSAT TECREC centre & BSAC Resort, ESI, TD, Acc, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox and Trimix Available. Technical & Rebreather Diver Support. Free WI-FI, Free Tea/Coffee/Water, Rinsing/Drying/Storage facilities, Wreck, Boat, Cavern, Digital Photography, Drysuit, Enriched Air, Equipment Specialist, Multilevel, Naturalist, Navigation, Night, PBP, Oxygen Provider, Search & Recovery, Project AWARE Fish ID Specialties.



### MALTA ADVENTURE DIVING MALTA

Triq il Luzzu, Qawra,  
Bugibba, Malta  
SPB1981  
00 356 215 74526  
adventure.diving.malta@gmail.com  
www.adventuredivingmalta.com  
OPENING HOURS: 8am till 6pm.  
SERVICES: Air to 220 Bar PADI 5H Nitrox EH, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS. We also have mixing station for Nitrox/Trimix, Family orientated, rebreather friendly on site private pool, toilets and showers(Hot),sun deck, tec/tec side mount.



### MALTA DIVE DEEP BLUE MALTA

9/11 Annanija Street, Bugibba,  
St Paul Bay, Malta  
SPB 1320  
00 356 21 583946  
Mob: 00 356 99 868957  
dive@divedeepblue.com  
www.divedeepblue.com  
OPENING HOURS: 8am till 6pm.  
SERVICES: PADI 5H IDC. EH ESI TD EA AIP Acc FCF AT AYRD UWP CH BH NDCF CAOS. Nitrox / Trimix. Facilities include: Dive Shop, Private parking, swimming pool, sun deck, gas filling/blending station, equipment rental/sales, drying and storage areas, toilets/ showers, A/C class rooms, technical facility, CCR support.



### MALTA DIVESHACK SCUBA SCHOOL

14a, Qui Si Sana, Seafront,  
Siema, SLM3111,  
Malta  
00 356 2133 8558 00  
356 9999 3483  
info@divemalta.com  
www.divemalta.com  
OPENING HOURS: 7 Days a week from 08.00 till 18.00 (17.00 in winter).  
SERVICES: PADI 5H IDC, National Geographic and TecRec Facility. Seafront Location. Resident Course Director: All PADI Courses Taught. Rebreather Friendly. Escorted Dives from Shore/Boat round Malta, Gozo and Comino. Fully Stocked Shop. Operating from Comino May to Oct. Nitrox, Trimix, National Geographic. Speciality side mount and Tec side mount. Acc, AIP, AT, AYRD, BH, BS, CAOS, CH, EA, EH, ESI, FCF, NDCF, OSS + OWS, OST, TD, UWP,



### MALTA PARADISE DIVING

Paradise Bay Resort Hotel,  
Cirkewwa, MLH9068,  
Malta  
0035621574116  
0035621524363  
alison@paradisediving.com  
www.paradisediving.com  
OPENING HOURS: May to October 08.30-17.00 Daily.  
November to April by advance reservation.  
SERVICES: Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5H RESORT. EH, ESI, EA, ACC, FCF, AT AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF CAOS, Nitrox. Three summer boat dives daily, Malta, Gozo, Comino. No boat surcharge! Private beach location, Cirkewwa. PADI courses. Free group places. Free transport, Mellieha, Bugibba, Qawra.



### MALTA SEA SHELL DIVE COVE

Marfa Road, Mellieha,  
Malta  
+356/21522595  
+356/21521062  
Fax: +356 2152 1062  
info@seashell-divecove.com  
www.seashell-divecove.com  
SERVICES: EH, Nitrox, ESI, TD, CAOS, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF. Family run dive centre. Technical diving & courses. Escorted dives from shore/boat Malta, Gozo, Comino. Wreck dive specialist. Latest equipment for hire & for sale.



### MEXICO PRO DIVE INTERNATIONAL MEXICO

Main office: Carretera Federal, Parcela 4 MZA +52 1 984 745 0763  
info@prodiveinternational.com  
www.prodiveinternational.com  
SERVICES: EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox, PADI 5★ CDC, World-class diving/snorkeling adventures Riviera Maya & Cozumel, cenotes, wrecks, bull sharks, whale shark & sailfish safaris, Guadalupe/Socorro live-aboards, stay&dive packages, courses, FREE Nitrox & more!



### MALTA DIVEWISE

Westin Dragonara Resort,  
Malta  
(+356) 21 356 441  
info@divewise.com.mt  
www.divewise.com.mt  
OPENING HOURS: 7 days a week. from 9am till finish  
SERVICES: Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5H CDC Centre. Nitrox, Trimix. Boat Diving. Day trips. EH, ESI, TD, EA, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS. PADI's No1 centre in Malta offering all courses but specialising in Technical diving & Instructor level.



### MEXICO LIVEABOARD

### MEXICO LIVEABOARD



**Mexico**  
**Nautilus Explorer**  
www.nautilusexplorer.com

Passengers .....	25	Elec .....	120
Cabins .....	13	Courses .....	N
En-suite .....	Y	Aircon .....	Y
Length .....	35M	Nitrox .....	Y
Hull .....	STEEL	CCR .....	Y

### PHILIPPINES LIVEABOARD



**Philippines**  
**Discovery Palawan**  
www.discoveryfleet.com

Passengers .....	32	Elec .....	240
Cabins .....	16	Courses .....	Y
En-suite .....	Y	Aircon .....	Y
Length .....	49M	Nitrox .....	Y
Hull .....	STEEL	CCR .....	N

### THAILAND SIMILAN DIVING SAFARIS CO LTD

13/19 Moo 7, Khao Lak, Khuk Khak, Takuapa, Phang Nga, 82190, Thailand  
+66 (0)76 485 470  
info@similan-diving-safaris.com  
www.similan-diving-safaris.com  
OPENING HOURS: Monday-Sunday, 9:00 - 21:00, mid Oct - mid May.  
SERVICES: Air to 200 bar. EH, LB, ESI, EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, ATF, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. PADI 5 Star Dive Centre. Liveaboard specialist, PADI courses, Nitrox aboard our boat. Eco-friendly toiletries. Similan, Surin, Islands. Myanmar (Burma). Mergui Archipelago. Day trips, diving, snorkeling, European, established for 15 years.



### TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS DIVE PROVO

Ports of Call, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands  
001 649 946 5040 (shop) Fax: 001 649 946 5936  
diving@diveprovo.com  
www.diveprovo.com  
OPENING HOURS: Hours: 8am-5pm daily.  
SERVICES: Air to 200 Bar. EST. Hotel/dive packages to suit every taste. PADI 5H Resort, SSI Resort. OSS, EH, ESI, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox 32%. Daily 2 tank dives to all areas around Provo; West Caicos, French Cay, N.W. Point, Grace Bay, Pine Cay. Air, Nitrox, instruction and dedicated snorkel trips. British owners Alan and Clare Jardine. 1990 - 2010: Celebrating 20 years of diving as it should be!



### PALAU LIVEABOARD



**Palau**  
**Ocean Hunter Palau**  
www.oceanhunter.com

Passengers .....	18	Elec .....	240
Cabins .....	9	Courses .....	Y
En-suite .....	Y	Aircon .....	Y
Length .....	31M	Nitrox .....	Y
Hull .....	STEEL	CCR .....	Y

### PHILIPPINES THRESHER SHARK DIVERS

Malapascua Island, Logon, Daanbantayan, Cebu 6000 Philippines  
00639177959433  
dive@thresherdivers.com  
www.malapascua-diving.com  
OPENING HOURS: 4am to midnight Every day of the year.  
SERVICES: Air to 200 bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox. PADI 5H CDC. The premier dive center on Malapascua Island, the only place in the world you can see the magnificent thresher shark every day!



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Overnight & Faster Service Available  
Phone us for a quote  
web - [www.puffin.org.uk](http://www.puffin.org.uk)  
email - [info@puffin.org.uk](mailto:info@puffin.org.uk)  
Phone - 01631 566088

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9 Waterloo Court, Waterloo Road  
Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 2AU  
[www.gybe.co.uk](http://www.gybe.co.uk)  
Tel: 0161 304 8471  
email: [repairs@gybe.co.uk](mailto:repairs@gybe.co.uk)

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- Occupational Health Medicals
- HSE commercial diving medicals £110
- Oil and Gas UK Offshore Medicals £100

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For appointments call 0780 2850 084 or email: [mclamp@doctors.org.uk](mailto:mclamp@doctors.org.uk)

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# PAUL ROSE

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## IT'S CALLED A LIFEJACKET!

I always reckoned that the end for me would be full of testosterone fuelled drama. You know the kind of thing: bitten in half by a great white shark, eaten by a polar bear (this actually came a little too close for comfort last year on Baffin Island), lost in a spectacular avalanche, flattened by an iceberg (this has also been too close for comfort), frozen to death on an icecap, cooked to death in a desert or bitten by a terrible creepy crawlly in a jungle. Failing any of these spectacular ends then I would happily settle for being asleep with Joelle under a palm tree and have two big coconuts land on our heads. Basically anything except laying in a hospital bed with a tube up my bottom.

One thing I haven't given much thought to was drowning. Until a particularly cold and windy day on Lake Windermere, that is. I found a lovely little Corribee sailboat called Figitus abandoned in a farmyard in Aberystwyth, fell in love with her, paid a bit too much, towed her to Windermere, launched her at Ferry Nab and she promptly went directly to the bottom.

I spent a lot more money, gave her an unlimited amount of time

In an instant I found myself at 3m, standing bolt upright, knee-deep in fine silt, my throat locked in spasm due to inhaling water and in a major panic. For a millisecond I tried to remove one wellie, but it wouldn't budge so I did the obvious and threw everything I had into an enormous flail for the surface. I got to the surface but knew that I couldn't stay there and remember stupidly trying to dump the tools from my pocket before I went under again. Another thrash and I was back up, Figitus swung round and I took a big hit on my temple from the rudder. She swung back and I grabbed the rudder. I have always loved boats with fine lines and in particular sterns with an elegant projecting overhang. But at this moment I cursed it because I was faced with an impossible overhang to climb. I'd done a good job with the boom tent and there was absolutely nothing hanging around to pull on. But with another ugly battle I flipped off a bungee, shoved one boot through the gap between the tent and the rail, hung there for a minute to catch my breath and finally hauled myself onboard. I found the broken grabrail on the shore and it sits on top of my toilet as a constant reminder of

**"In an instant I found myself at 3m, standing bolt upright, knee-deep in fine silt, my throat locked in spasm due to inhaling water and in a major panic"**

and love, she lived happily on my mooring in White Cross Bay, I sailed her regularly and even used her as an inspirational base to write a book.

A few years ago the wind was very gusty as I came back into the bay and I had a hell of a time sailing back and tying onto my buoy. I rigged the boom tent over the cockpit, which involves nipping around the rail to secure the sides with short bungee cords. The toe rail is small and so I have to get a good grip on the coach roof grabrails, lean over and fix the bungees. On this great day the grabrail snapped off (I knew they were a bit rotten, but never did get round to replacing them) and in I went.

I was wearing my favourite steel-toe-capped wellies, baggy waterproof pants over jeans, a fleece jacket, a heavy insulated goretex jacket with one pocket full of rusty spanners, a hat and no lifejacket.

how close I came to dying in shallow water on Windermere. I was reminded of this today as I've just had a terrific day with the RNLI at Exmouth where I joined in on a training exercise onboard their beautiful Shannon class boat. As you can imagine she is an outstanding resource and at the hands of the expert crew can handle anything. She's twice as fast as their previous boat which means, in bald terms, that when they reach someone in distress it's now more than likely a rescue operation than a body recovery. I loved working with the Exmouth team - you can't help but be blown away by the skill sets, professionalism and sheer commitment of these volunteer RNLI crews. I asked Steve, the skipper, to name one of his biggest challenges. He said: "Getting people to wear lifejackets."

Got it!

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