

SSI's 50-Year Anniversary



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50-Years-of-SSI

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50 Years of SSI

The Start of SSI



Image © Alamy Stock Foto/MARKA

The Beginning

To understand the history and development of SSI, you must first have a clear vision of the diving industry before SSI began.

The industry was exciting in the late sixties. Its heart began to throb as the instructors, manufacturers, and store owners molded order into an unregulated industry that had very little direction and the reputation of being more on the radical fringe than a mainstream family activity.

In 1967, a small group of store owners, led by John Gaffney, formed NASDS, the National Association of Scuba Diving Schools.

What takes place in the years that follow is the stuff of legends, and the people involved are the real heroes of the industry.

This is the story of SSI—how it was founded, how it grew, and the people who were a part of it all.

– Written by Bob Clark, co-founder of SSI –

SSI Fun Fact: As of 2020, SSI has trained more than 20 million people!

The Seventies

SSI is Born

In 1970, the NASDS board elected John Schuck as its new president and gave total control of NASDS to John Gaffney. As a result of this meeting, several board members resigned, including me (Bob Clark), Ed Brawley, Jim Brown, Chuck Nicklin, and Bud Smith, owner of *DIVE Magazine*. These men, who had poured their hearts and souls into NASDS and its business concepts for so long, found themselves without a certifying body. We would later see that this was the night SSI was born.

After several hours of soul searching and considering the alternatives, this group collectively decided to start an association of their own based on the materials developed for NASDS by Ed Brawley and myself. Bud Smith would run the association from Dive Magazine's headquarters in Long Beach, and we would build the membership from NASDS members who shared our same feelings.

The name Scuba Schools International was registered the next day, and two weeks later cards were ready. With an initial membership of about fifty stores, SSI was underway.



Bob Clark



Ed Brawley

The Founders' Vision

We had a vision of what could be. Retailers wanted an agency that really understood them, one who knew how many days they worked each week and how long those days were. SSI wanted to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

The Early Years

By 1971 it became clear that if it were to have any validity, SSI had to do something to make its presence known. The industry was growing but in an unorganized way. With a wave of new manufacturers and dealers, I had the idea to assemble all of the key players at that time in one room and see where it led.

To this end, the Denver Dealer and Manufacturer Conference was born. During the meeting, it was agreed that all industry entities had to work together and that a dealer group should be organized. The result of this historic meeting culminated in the eventual organization of the Diving Equipment Manufacturer's Association (DEMA).

The Move to Colorado

From its inception in 1970, Bud Smith ran SSI out of the Dive Magazine office in Long Beach, California. In 1973, several members of SSI came to me and asked that, as the president, I take over the operation of SSI. So, in the spring of 1973, I traveled to Long Beach and brought all of the materials back to Fort Collins, Colorado.

The Early Struggle

Sometimes you just have to believe in guardian angels; whether it was luck, fate, or a miracle, someone or something was watching over me in 1973. Had I not had the chance to work with Jeppesen-Sanderson that fated year, who knows what would have become of the dream that my dealers and I called SSI.

The Bob Clark - Jeppesen Connection

It was 1973 when the Jeppesen-Sanderson company in Denver, Colorado wanted to talk about a new student textbook for scuba diving. Jeppesen was best known for its in-flight and approach charts for private and commercial airline pilots and their pilot training courses through the Sanderson group.

What took place next would change the way people learned to dive. I was assigned to staff writer John Lawson who was slated to write the training book while I did the technical editing. What ended up happening was that John and I laid out an entirely new concept for Jeppesen.

During the writing of the book, it became clear to both of us that, to make the book more effective, it needed three components: a workbook, an instructor's guide, and audiovisuals—in short, a comprehensive educational system.

For the first time in diving education, the student could read the book, see the audiovisuals, and then reinforce the material with the workbook. If there were questions, they were answered and reinforced further by the instructor working from the instructor guide.

Now for the first time, the concept of SSI seemed possible. Jeppesen had opened the door by letting me create a teaching system that was a direct reflection of the SSI Philosophy; all I had left to do was meld it into a total teaching system by completing that one critical component—the instructor manual.

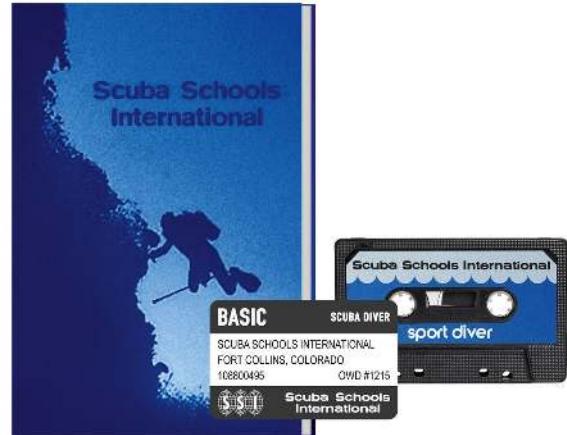


Image © SSI

1974/1975

In 1974, while working with Jeppesen on the student text, workbook, and slide presentations, it became increasingly clear that the instructor may not know how to use these new materials properly. SSI instructors needed to know how to incorporate the Jeppesen materials with SSI standards.

This culminated in the production of the first SSI Instructor Manual. Unfortunately, a project of this magnitude posed a tremendous financial strain on SSI. Without the help of friends, family, neighbors, and the understanding and support of the Citizen Printing Company in Fort Collins, the instructor manual probably would not have been produced.

The concept and philosophy of instruction that was developed in the early seventies has remained intact and is still the heart and soul of the SSI Education System.



Image © SSI

The Jump to Six Open Water Dives

For me, the desire to create a program of instruction that generated the highest possible quality of students was paramount. I learned an important lesson early on from training my son. After several hundred hours of actual dive experience, would he be "ready" to dive with other buddies beside me?

This inspired the philosophy that every SSI student was someone's son or daughter and had the right to expect the same level of training and achievement as my son.

Armed with these unbreakable criteria, in 1975 I decided that SSI's entry-level scuba program would require six open water dives for certification. We would call it the Advanced Open Water Diver course. I strongly felt that all of the other agencies would follow suit within two years; however, the reality was that it didn't happen until 1984, eleven years later.

This seemed to be the niche that SSI was looking for; a small but elite company that competed not on being the first or the biggest, but on doing the best job they could do.

SSI Begins to Grow

The Initial Growth Period

When a business begins to grow, there are usually two main problems: "how to grow" and "getting the right people to help make it happen." Fortunately, in 1976 when SSI really started to grow, there were a large number of new stores opening. So, between these new stores and the old ones who were ready to move from their current agency, there were more than enough stores to meet the growth capabilities of SSI.

SSI Plays Catch-Up with Products

In December 1977, SSI moved into their permanent home; a 3000-square foot office building built just for them. It is hard to say whether this move allowed SSI to grow or forced it to, but either way, the move represented a big commitment to SSI, kicking new product growth into high gear.

As SSI began the catch-up process, the SSI staff and a core group of SSI members collectively decided that products would be developed only when there was a specific need. The products that began to emerge, such as a simple logbook system and cue cards for instructors, were not very exciting but certainly practical.

As the product mix began to grow, more dealers recognized the quality of what SSI was doing and began to join our growing ranks. This in turn gave SSI more funds to accelerate the development process. This cycle continued into the mid-1980s, allowing SSI to fill in many of the holes they initially saw in the educational system.

Through their vision and growth, SSI provided most of the products that members needed to run successful dive businesses. It was now time for the next step, to begin developing SSI-specific programs and to refine those that were already introduced.

The best was yet to come. Bringing Ed Christini and other new staff members on board in the mid-eighties allowed SSI to begin working toward its dream.

The Eighties

In 1981, SSI received a letter from Lim Hau Peng in Singapore stating that he would like to provide SSI certifications for his students. He also indicated an interest in setting up other dealers in the region surrounding Singapore, training their instructors to issue SSI certifications as well.

Since this was before the magic age of email, it took nearly two years of correspondence by letter to work out all of the details. Based on the concept of mutual trust, the first SSI Regional Center was established in 1983.

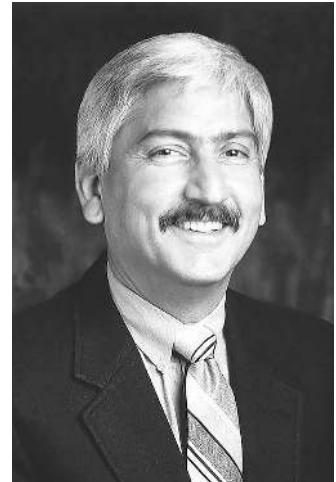
The Ed Christini Era

Without question, the greatest period of growth for SSI began in 1984 when Ed Christini moved to Fort Collins and joined the team. With his extensive background in retail and years as an SSI field representative, he understood the system well. However, what really made the difference was Ed himself.

Ed brought with him an incredible work ethic. From day one he worked tirelessly to make SSI the best it could be. Ed treated SSI as though it were his own. Over the years, Ed rose from Director of Membership to Executive Director, and, finally, to President of SSI, acquiring some ownership of the company over this time.

SSI Tackles Full-Motion Video

SSI made the financial commitment in the mid-eighties to develop videos to support their written materials. We knew that video was the key to the future, and we could be the first agency to develop full-motion videos to support our programs.



Ed Christini

The Development of the Open Water Diver Program

The Open Water Diver program, like the instructor manual, is more than just a product—these two programs create the foundation of the SSI teaching system. In 1988, the Jeppesen company approached SSI with an offer to sell the Jeppesen products, turning them over to SSI. At this point, the entire SSI staff was called together where each and every person, without hesitation, voted to create our own program.

They believed that one way or another, they could get it done by the DEMA show. By some miracle, the products were ready for shipment in January 1990. The incredible teamwork of the SSI staff and the many dealers that helped with technical editing and practical application of the materials made it all possible.

The program was the talk of the 1990 DEMA show and met with more success than we could have dreamed. SSI now had the most up-to-date teaching system on the market. It was the only complete training system that incorporated a full-motion video with the other components, such as the text, workbook, and instructor manual.

SSI was now the leader in training material production. We were finally ready to make a difference and become established as one of the leading certification agencies in the United States and the world.

The Nineties

SSI Product Development

Product development has been a big part of SSI's success. After all, what is a certification agency but a supplier of education materials?

While the development of the Open Water Diver program was just the beginning of many outstanding products, many of us believe that it was a "defining moment" in the evolution of SSI itself. Once we introduced this program, we set out to complete the SSI teaching system, translating it into several different languages.

Staying true to the original policy from 1977, SSI has since introduced new programs such as the Ecology Specialty programs, the Diver Stress and Rescue Program, and the Assistant Instructor



Image © SSI

program, including supporting materials that continue to set SSI apart. These products never went on the market until they were reviewed by a group of SSI dealers and instructors who would use them.

Using this test and review process is what allowed our products to be practical, useful, marketable, and some of the best on the market!



1993: SSI holds the First Annual Platinum Pro 5000 Diver Awards to honor the world's most elite divers

SSI Fun Fact: Did you know that SSI currently offers forty-four specialty programs? With SSI you can learn about any type of diving.

Changing the Model

In 1999, SSI began thinking of itself in an entirely new way. We believed we could offer more than just diver education, and that we could develop a retail system that used education to increase sales, customer loyalty, and profitability. The catalyst for this groundbreaking concept was the merger between SSI and NASDS, adding Doug McNeese to the SSI Team and starting another important chapter in our history—growth in the international market.

We recognized that our strength would be the seamless integration of SSI's education system and NASDS' retail support expertise. The result was a newly developed business model called the Customer Loyalty Cycle that combined the NASDS Safe Diver's Triangle and SSI's existing education system.

The goal of this four-step structure was to maximize the potential of every diver by making them a customer for life. Based on that same philosophy, SSI designed a revolutionary business support program called SSI Scuba University. Since its inception, Scuba University has inspired thousands of training centers, resorts, and professionals around the world.

The Year 2000

The Open Water Diver revision was one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by SSI Product Development. The goal was to change the open water program from a "soft sell" to a "customer-driven" approach. We had to merge the NASDS and SSI programs while still satisfying our retailers, instructors, and international regional centers. The black and white textbook-style materials had to be upgraded to full-color manuals and we had to produce the industry's first training DVD.

Accomplishing this revision was a huge step forward in SSI's educational standards, and within the industry at large. Confirmation that we were leading the way in diver education came when SSI earned the American Council on Education (ACE) approval for four programs, validating the quality of SSI instructional design methodology and educational materials.

From now on I will hand it over to the current CEO of SSI, Guido Waetzig, to tell you about the milestones of the past 18 years. Thanks for your support.

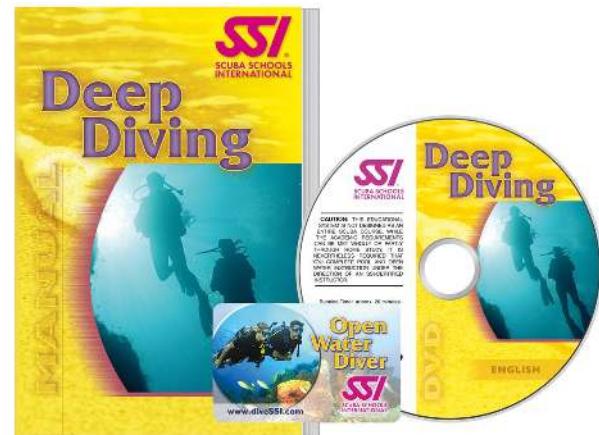


Image © SSI

- Yours, Bob Clark -

The New Millennium

The Millennium

Letter from the CEO

During the nineties and into the new millennium, the growth of the diving industry was exciting! Diving opportunities rapidly opened all over the world, and the demand for SSI was at an all-time high.



Image © Mares

Up to this point, SSI mainly focused on the needs of the retail market and lost a bit of focus on the resort market. It was the right time for a team of three passionate and entrepreneurial guys to become the guiding force behind SSI—Doug McNeese, Robert Stoss, and myself, Guido Waetzig. Doug had already spent more than thirty-five years in the diving industry developing a proven business and education model for dive retail. For twenty-five years, Robert had been developing, perfecting, and manufacturing the products that dive retailers sell, and I had worked for ten years in resorts, dive education, equipment sales, and product development.



Doug McNeese



Robert Stoss



Guido Waetzig

Our combined seventy years led the future direction of SSI, not by looking in the rearview mirror, but rather looking ahead at the changes that needed to be made to perpetuate the health and growth of SSI and the industry we loved!

– Written by Guido Waetzig, CEO of Scuba Schools International –

SSI Fun Fact: Diving is a sport for everyone—age does not matter: Our oldest active male diver is 98 and female diver is 95!

2001 to 2010

2002

With a new team in place, we immediately began examining potential resort business needs and started to develop programs we felt this new customer base required. We believed from the beginning that a strong training center and resort network, paired with a strategic, major equipment manufacturer alliance, was a successful recipe for the future.

2003

We focused on creating a strong partnership with the leading dive magazines to raise SSI's visibility in dive media all over the world. In that same year, we founded the Master Diver Challenge for the US market and DIVETROPY for the European market.



Image © Unterwasser

Today both the Master Diver Challenge and DIVETROPHY are the world's largest diver challenge programs, with more than 120,000 participants, close to two million points collected, and prizes valued at more than 500,000 Euros.

www.divetrophy.de

2005

To better serve resort destinations and to grow our business in these areas, SSI created both the Scuba Diver and the Advanced Adventurer programs. It was only then that global resort operator Werner Lau Dive Centers discovered the true benefits of SSI and crossed over. This paved the way for exponential SSI growth in the resort market with companies like Extra Divers, Aggressor Fleet, Orca Dive Clubs, Robinson, AIDA, and many others.

2006

When manufacturers started creating more diver-friendly, yet technically sophisticated equipment, diver training also needed to evolve. SSI took this as a signal to get involved in technical diving education, creating a new division called Extended Range.

2007

One of the most significant developments in SSI's history is ODIN—Online Divers information Network—known today as MySSI. This system represented a new generation. An online system that integrated every aspect of SSI training and education with SSI divers, professionals, training centers, and SSI Service Centers around the world through the internet, becoming a virtual global headquarters for any SSI-affiliated user. This development launched SSI into the future, placing Scuba Schools International as a truly global entity.

2008

In 2008, Robert Stoss, Doug McNeese, and Guido Waetzig purchased all remaining SSI shares from Bob Clark and his family and split the company into two international offices—Fort Collins, Colorado in the United States and Wendelstein in Germany, setting the stage for a substantial period of growth. Within a short period of time, SSI grew to more than thirty international Service Centers with training materials translated into more than twenty languages.

2009

The global financial crisis was in full swing and the entire dive market was in a state of flux. Customers became more demanding than ever before. Diving was also competing with a lot of other activities.

So, we asked ourselves how we could deal with these new challenges in the most effective way?

The answer was obvious: provide services that our competition did not. Our new objective was to identify how we could get a customer to walk into a Training Center or resort and sign up for a scuba class. The result set SSI up as the first agency in the industry to create a powerful acquisition tool and launched SSI Online Training for everyone!

2010

SSI's 40th Anniversary was another record year of development and accomplishments.

In 2010, with the same kind of "out of the box" thinking, SSI became an industry trendsetter by launching two non-scuba programs: SSI Freediving and Swim Schools International.

Both freediving and swim quickly became their own success stories, attracting two completely new consumer groups. Today, SSI Freediving has become the leader in Freediving around the world. Both swim and freediving have seen phenomenal growth and international notoriety.

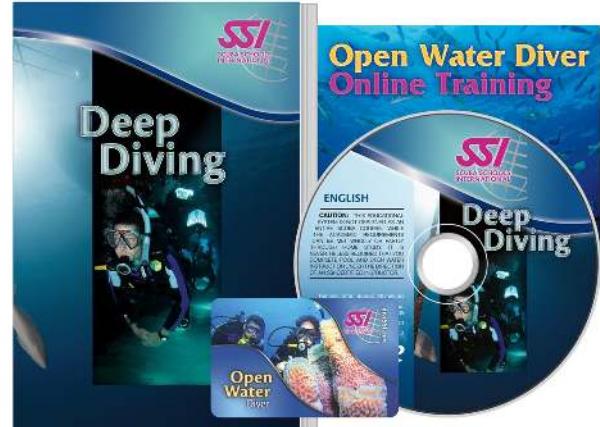


Image © SSI



Image © Mares

SSI qualified for the European Standards for first time in 2005, which was the foundation for the future Global ISO certification, with five diver and two professional programs. 2010 was the start of the Global ISO certification, certifying SSI as one of the first scuba training agencies to provide SSI divers and professional members with an outstanding quality label.

2011 to 2015

2011

Ocean ecology and environmental conservation have always been at the heart of the diving industry. At SSI, we strongly feel it is every company's fiduciary responsibility to bring attention to the daily impact we have on the environment.

Because of our passion for conservation, we created Mission Deep Blue, in cooperation with Shark Project, to create a greater awareness of the devastation sharks are facing and how they play an important role in maintaining our ecosystem.

2012

Everybody likes recognition, especially when it is free. SSI has always had a strong recognition system, but in 2012 we decided to increase our focus on specialty training—the more training you do, the more recognition you receive.

Divers would automatically receive free recognition cards after taking a certain number of specialties and logging a certain number of dives. These free cards could be earned for Specialty Diver, Advanced Open Water Diver, Master Diver, and Divemaster, some of the most elite diver ratings in the industry.

SSI went one step further, allowing certifications from other agencies to be recognized by training centers and credited towards the recognition cards, as long as fifty percent of the certifications were with SSI.

We always strive to be customer-centric and an industry “team player” by honoring dive customers’ accomplishments made with other training agencies. We feel it is important to make their past diving experiences count, plus, it provides for an easy and smooth crossover option.

2013/2014



Image © SSI

It is said: “What you believe you can achieve!” For years SSI had the long-term strategic vision to bring together the three most important pillars of the diving industry—training, equipment, and travel. Having these three products would allow us to give our training centers, resorts, and professionals the tools needed to further shape and drive the dive market around the world.

In 2013, and culminating in 2014, this strategic vision became a reality. On January 1, 2014, HEAD Sports acquired SSI. While HEAD is best known for top-of-the-line tennis and ski equipment, they also own a highly respected dive equipment division known as Mares.

Mares is recognized by its peers as a leader in diving equipment manufacturing and is now the second pillar of our strategic vision. This transaction resulted in SSI becoming the most innovative and fastest-growing training agency in the world.

To solidify our long-term and continued success, with this acquisition SSI added a new member to the management team, Jean-Claude Monachon, Vice President of Sales & Marketing. Jean-Claude is not new to the diving industry and his years of experience are rooted in the dive agency business. With his knowledge and networking strength, he has proven to be an enormous asset to the SSI team.

2015

With the same kind of creative thinking that led to other landmark accomplishments, SSI successfully introduced its digital revolution by launching the debut of the newly written Open Water Diver program. SSI's new Total Teaching System masters the use of technology to strengthen the learning experience, using a purely digital platform including high-definition videos, animations, graphics, photos, personal notes, and bookmarks. Training can now take place on any device or operating system, anywhere around the world.

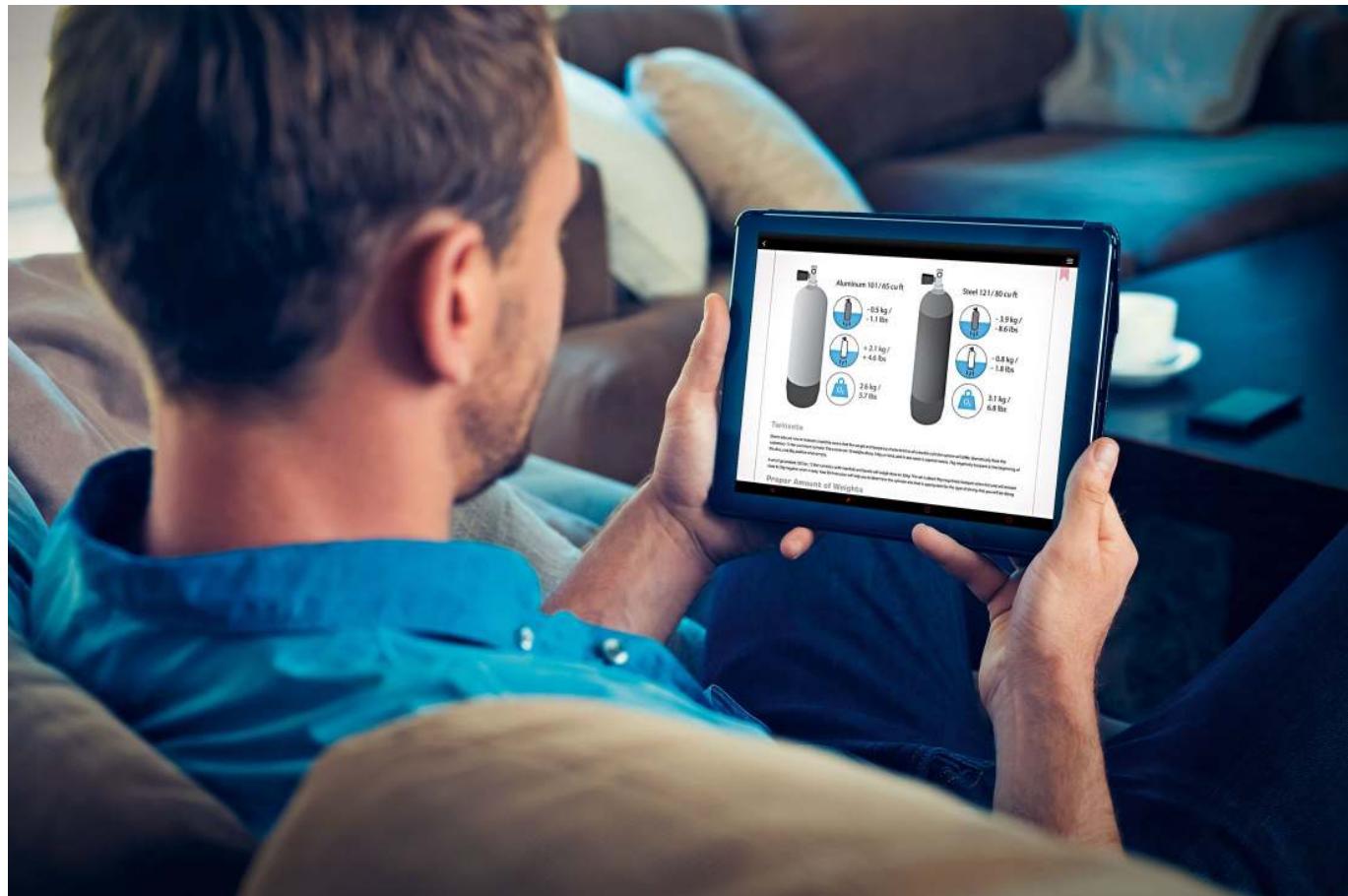


Image © iStock/courtneyk

Between the digital Total Teaching System and the MySSI app, SSI has created a new standard in the diving industry. Our education model includes digital training materials, a digital logbook, and digital certification all for one price. The MySSI app is free and available for both iOS and Android systems.

<https://www.divessi.com/de-IC/freeonlinetraining/>

SSI Fun Fact: Over 1.6 million downloads of SSI training materials in 2019 shows us that the world loves digital!

2016 to 2019

2016

The SSI Digital Revolution continued, and over the next two years we digitized all SSI programs in all languages. From the initial point of development, translation and launch speed have tripled, transitioning SSI from a paper-based company to an innovator in digital education.

2017

The quality of program content produced at SSI has always been our strongest driver. Our next step was to renew all of SSI's professional programs such as Dive Guide, Assistant Instructor, the Instructor Training Course, Instructor Evaluation, and ultimately the Instructor Trainer Seminar. These professional programs offer a comprehensive approach to create future SSI Professionals with the same strong focus on quality educational materials.



Image © SSI

SSI Fun Fact: SSI offers 175 certification cards for a wide range of programs.

Newly designed professional programs, however, were not enough. SSI also launched the SSI Pro Rewards program this same year. SSI Pro Rewards allows SSI professionals to earn real money for every certification issued that can later be redeemed during membership renewal.

The creative juices continued to flow as the SSI team came up with the idea of creating a limited quantity of SSI professionally branded Mares equipment items that would be available for purchase once a year, thus creating the SSI Renewal Plus Program.

2018

SSI is constantly striving to improve our suite of products and services for the entire watersports community. This type of approach is seemingly limitless. In 2018, we released two new programs to the world, Mermaid and Lifeguard. These new programs expanded our product offerings, and brought our training centers a new potential consumer base to strengthen their businesses.

2019



Image © iStock/DKart

In an effort to broaden our conservation mission and sharpen our environmental message, Mission Deep Blue became Blue Oceans. Blue Oceans is a free program, accessible to anyone through MySSI. Our goal is to create environmental awareness and desire to protect our oceans. Blue Oceans is a synonym for role model behavior and sustainable diving practices for all SSI Professionals and their students.

www.blueoceans.world

SSI Fun Fact: The topic of environmental protection is becoming increasingly important. It is not surprising that nearly 5000 people have already completed the free Blue Oceans educational program at over 500 SSI Training Centers! Thank you for your support!

SSI Today

SSI Celebrates its 50th Anniversary



Image © SSI

Today SSI is the world's largest business-based training agency, with 50+ years of business experience, servicing more than 3,300 SSI Training Centers worldwide. SSI offers more than sixty programs in forty languages, including Scuba Diving, Extended Range programs like Rebreather and Overhead Environment, Freediving, Mermaid, Swim, and Lifeguard. This broad range of training programs provides water sports enthusiasts the opportunity to choose what they really want.

SSI Fun Fact: Mermaiding is becoming increasingly popular. In fact, SSI has already trained 500 male mermaids!

One of SSI's most notable accomplishments is the launch of MyDiveGuide on the diveSSI.com website. MyDiveGuide is the world's largest dive site database, designed to provide divers with easy to access online dive travel options as well as connecting thousands of dive sites and wildlife encounters to SSI Training Centers around the globe.



Image © iStock/RomoloTavani

MyDiveGuide gives you the ability to search for the best dive sites and the most thrilling wildlife encounters the world over. MyDiveGuide is an online resource that the entire SSI community can be a part of by simply logging their dives through the MySSI app. MyDiveGuide is one of SSI's most strategic projects in our fifty year history. Try it out. We think you will be amazed!

<https://www.divessi.com/de-IC/mydiveguide/>



**Scuba Schools
International**

1970



1974



SCUBA SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL

1990



1994



2010



2014

Image © SSI

Closing Thoughts

There you have it, fifty years of dedication wrapped up in a few short pages. Everyone at SSI who reads this is amazed at what we have accomplished. The emphasis is on the WE because our motivation to constantly improve is YOU—swimmers, snorkelers, freedivers, scuba divers, professionals, and training centers that have all become true friends over the last five decades.

At SSI we listen to you. This has always been—and still is—our driving force and recipe for success. We strive to match your requests and needs, always willing to question ourselves and change, if needed, to provide our customers with the best possible services and products to explore the underwater world we all love.

Thank you in the name of everyone that made this journey possible, past and present. The entire SSI Team is looking forward to serving you in the years ahead and continuing to be your trustworthy partner whenever you need us!

Thank you for your loyalty, trust, and ongoing support. We appreciate each and every one of you. Now, help us celebrate by wishing SSI a “Happy 50th Anniversary”!

– Yours, Guido Waetzig, CEO of Scuba Schools International –

Food for Thought:

Founded by five passionate divers and destined to become the world's largest training center-based diving organization, what comes next for SSI?



Industry Perspectives

21st Century Diving



Image © iStock/swissmediavision

A New Way To Travel

Dive travel moves boldly into the 21st century with divers at the helm.

Dive planning behavior has shifted dramatically online in the past few years, with modern divers expecting to find answers to all their dive questions online.

The dive industry and online dive community have responded by providing a wealth of easily-accessible information at your fingertips.

You no longer need to leave home to discover equipment recommendations, digital logbooks, idyllic destinations, and digital training options.

Once training centers were the only option for dive training advice and courses, but now you are the expert on your dive education.

With the rise of travel blogs, online booking platforms, and apps, it is easier than ever before to research and plan your dive adventures. Long gone are the days when full weekends were spent in a travel agent's office to discover new diving hotspots.

Thanks to the increase in social media and forum use, you can find new buddies online and connect with divers around the world, making it easy to answer any of your dive travel queries.

The online global community of divers is quick to share local tips, hidden gems, and up-to-date dive site health via forums and online reviews, helping you get the most out of your travel by discovering which destinations are right for your experience level and dive type preferences.

Read on for our roundup of 2019's dive travel trends and the newest dive areas for you to explore in 2020.

Industry Perspectives

Trends In Travel

Egypt

Award-winning Egypt is on the rise once more!

Egypt's dive scene is recovering since the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) lifted travel restrictions to Sharm el Sheikh in October 2019.

While Hurghada and Marsa Alam were attracting divers during the four year travel ban, it was difficult to access Sharm el Sheikh's classic dive areas, Tiran and Ras Mohammed National Park.

With direct flights to Sharm el Sheikh now a possibility from most of Europe, divers can enjoy Sharm el Sheikh diving again with ease, immersing themselves in the incredibly colorful reefs found there.

As European divers have always known, Egypt offers some of the most affordable and finest diving in the world.

Egypt was ranked second among the world's 10 best diving destinations by *DIVE UK Magazine's* 2019 DIVE Travel Awards. A global voting process selected the finalists and Egypt received nearly double the votes it secured in 2018, when it ranked third place. This accolade will no doubt boost Egypt's dive travel industry even further as we head into 2020.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-red-sea>

Australia



Image © Mares



Image © AdobeStock/The Ocean Agency

The Great Barrier Reef—is it still worth diving?

The Great Barrier Reef came under scrutiny in 2019, featured in international media amid concerns about the impacts of climate change on the reef.

In April 2019, a report published in the *Journal of Nature* confirmed coral reproduction on parts of the reef had declined by 89 percent after repeated coral bleaching events.

That report and other media coverage saw a rise in divers asking if the Great Barrier Reef is still worth diving.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Great Barrier Reef is well-known among divers. It stretches along the Queensland coast for over 2300km and is made up of over 2900 individual reefs.

While some of these individual reefs have been affected by coral bleaching and severe weather events, there are still plenty of healthy reefs to explore. Great Barrier Reef diving safaris are still more than worthwhile and should be on every diver's bucket list.

The Ribbon Reefs system has numerous sites still in good condition, with an abundant reef shark population patrolling at night, diver-sized potato cod, and pinnacles surrounded by fish.

Rarely-visited, the far Northern Reefs are well off the tourist trail and have some of the Great Barrier Reef's best remote coral wall dives.

Go diving off Raine Island during sea turtle breeding season (November onwards), and you will get to dive amongst some of the 60,000 or so turtles that migrate there each year.

The Coral Sea reefs are the place to be if you are a fan of pelagic action. Bougainville Reef has plenty of

big fish, while Osprey Reef is famous for being home to hundreds of sharks.

<http://go.divessi.com/GreatBarrierReef>

Searching for Whale Sharks

Madagascar

Discover new whale shark hotspots and emerging dive destinations.

As the dive industry continues to expand, new destinations are discovered every day, and existing ones continue to grow.

Madagascar is the world's newest whale shark hotspot, featured on BBC News and other international media outlets. In addition to the healthy whale shark population, Madagascar offers white sand beaches, idyllic island diving, and healthy reefs.

Djibouti, in East Africa, is gaining in popularity amongst divers and snorkelers alike, as they have discovered this region as a second relatively new whale shark hotspot. You can also find pristine Red Sea coral reefs without the diving crowds.

Oman is also one to watch in 2020. Tucked away off the southeastern coast of Oman, the barren Hallaniyat Islands are far removed from the tourist crowds and offer fantastic diving. One of the newest destinations for adventurous divers, you can dive amongst manta rays, humpback whales, Mobula rays, zebra sharks, dolphins, and even sperm whales.

The Philippines

The Philippines continues to see growth as a popular dive destination as well, particularly for liveaboard diving. For those that have already been, it comes as no surprise, especially when you consider such dives as Monad Shoal, the world's only reliable thresher shark dive, the wreck diving mecca Coron, and the world-famous sardine run at Bohol.

Mexico

Last but not least, Mexico continues to thrive as a dive destination, welcoming divers from around the world to its turquoise waters. Jacques Cousteau named these waters 'the world's aquarium,' and for good reason. Mexico offers some of the best and most varied diving in the entire world. Where else can you dive with innumerable whales, great white sharks, whale sharks, reef sharks, dolphins, sea lions, Giant Pacific manta rays, healthy kelp forests, and thriving coral reefs, all in a single country?

– This content was written by divers and writers at LiveAboard.com –

Want more information on these and thousands more fascinating dive destinations? Then check out MyDiveGuide and plan your next dive adventure now.

<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/mydiveguide/>

Industry Perspectives

Find New Adventures



Image © iStock/mihtiander

Inside SSI Freediving

"Freediving is one of the fastest-growing aquatic sports in the world and has been for the last two decades. The introduction of proper education and equipment for freediving has made this brilliant activity a sport for the masses, rather than an activity for a few talented people."

– An interview with SSI Freediving International Training Director, Mehmet“Memo”Arikok –

Briefly describe how the sport of freediving evolved from its beginning to today.

Freediving is indeed not a recent passion for mankind. At the very beginning, it was not for fun or to challenge the physical limits of man but it was for survival, gathering food or goods to trade. The known history of freediving goes back 8000 years to Chinchorian, an ancient Chilean civilization. However, throughout history, freediving shows itself over and over again. For example, it is said that Alexander the Great used freedivers to dismantle underwater barricades that were preventing his ships from entering harbors.

Modern-day freediving marks its official start with the name Raimondo Bucher who dove to 30 meters

in 1949. Today, competitive freediving is constantly showing healthy growth and in large championships, dives over 100 meters are considered normal.

What brought you to freediving? What fascinates you (personally) about the sport?

Freediving is the ultimate sport that combines the adventure of discovering the underwater world with the capabilities of the human body. Initially, almost everyone is drawn by the wonders of the blue underwater world, but the unique challenge of breath-holding also inspires the freediver to develop themselves physically.

For many enthusiasts, including myself, discovering the limits of your own body while freediving eventually becomes the ultimate fun and challenge. The opportunity to progress is endless and there is always a new adventure waiting whenever I get into the water. I love it and it will never get boring.

What skills or equipment are needed to begin freediving?

The real equipment in freediving is your body. Everything starts with a knowledge of how to use your body and capabilities to adapt to the underwater environment. The first skill needed in the development of a freediver is breath-holding. It is the fundamental skill required by all freedivers no matter what their level.

Skills like finning, streamlining, how to start a dive, and how to establish proper buoyancy let the freediver move effortlessly. Freedivers are introduced to safety skills at the very early stages of their training for a safe, strong foundation. Whenever a freediver is in the water, it is essential to feel comfortable and safe.

Inside SSI Freediving

Do you have heroes/role models in this field?

My role model is Jacques Mayol. He became the first freediver to introduce the importance of relaxation in freediving. The era of "Relaxed Apnea" started with him, which produced deeper and better world records. A significant step in the evolution of freediving, I think. Mayol became the first man to break the 100m mark. He pioneered the importance of relaxation and influenced some of the greatest freedivers in history.

What innovations in equipment/training/science helped evolve the sport?

Without a doubt, the most significant jump in the evolution of freediving happened with the introduction of formal training. The development of a freediver became faster, and more people started to see this sport as an "everyday activity" rather than an "extreme adventure."

What is the state of the sport today?

Today, freediving is the fastest growing water sport in the world. Recreational freediving is fast becoming the best way to explore the world's oceans in ultimate silence and freedom. It represents a new lifestyle of healthy, environmentally conscious, and happy divers.

What made you decide to start this sport with SSI?

Since 1970, SSI has been one of the major players of the diving industry. A tremendous amount of experience has been gained in the development of diving programs by SSI in the last 50 years. Starting from the very beginning of freediving programs, SSI has been using this experience to create extremely efficient and successful programs. For me, the perfect base to start with this fascinating sport.

Why should someone consider participating in this sport today?

Freediving is for everyone. Whoever likes nature and athletic activities should start with this sport. The only requirement to participate in freediving courses is to know how to swim. Freediving is your ticket to a silent and blue world full of surprises. Discovering the beauty of the underwater world and the dolphin within yourself will give you unforgettable moments and a lifestyle in which you will continue for life.

What do you feel when you do your sport?

Observing the nature around us usually falls into second place. As said by the famous freediver Umberto Pelizzari,

"The scuba diver dives to look around. The freediver dives to look inside."

The challenge of breath-holding, equalization at greater depths, the feeling of water rushing towards your body, and moving in the water effortlessly like a fish are just some of the feelings I get to experience during a dive. Every dive gives me a chance to focus on a new sensation. Any time the location, depth, or duration of the dive changes, I find myself in a river of feelings again. This makes freediving an endless journey full of surprises and achievements.

<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/highlights/freediving/>

Industry Perspectives

Find New Adventures



Image © Mares, AdobeStock/elovich

Inside SSI Extended Range (XR)

“Driven by the spirit of adventure, the desire to teach, to train, and to educate is just something I simply cannot hold back!”

– An interview with SSI XR International Training Director, Cat Braun –

Describe how the sport got its start.

It is tough to try and pinpoint precisely when XR diving, formally known as technical diving, really began. XR diving covers such a range of underwater disciplines: rebreather diving, overhead environment diving, and mixed gas diving, just to name a few. Each of these emerged at different points in time. For example, as early as the late 19th century, the concept and first design of oxygen rebreathers were being developed. Still, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century when diving in an overhead environment first really got started, and it was not until the latter part of the 20th century when trimix diving gained in stature. You could say that mainstream XR diving has been around for the last 30 – 40 years.

What brought you to XR diving? Why XR for you personally?

It was around the year 2000; I was just a regular recreational dive guide in Egypt, guiding scuba divers around the dive sites of the Red Sea. If the guests had any issues with their equipment, skills, or dive planning, I could help them, but slowly, we started seeing more divers joining the boat with either twinsets, semi-closed rebreathers, or closed-circuit rebreathers.

I honestly had no idea about these equipment configurations. They could be assembling their twinset upside down, and I would not know the difference! This lack of knowledge made me very wary and conscious of the fact that I could not help, and so, in those early years, I decided to take my first XR program and began to increase my knowledge.

What personally fascinates you about the sport?

In life, I feel there is always a fascination with the unknown. As divers, we are curious as to what is "over the drop off" or what is "beyond the reef's edge." Being trained in XR diving has opened the door to allow for exploration outside the realm of traditional recreational diving limits. During my initial XR training, I came to respect and enjoy the discipline, procedures, and structure that came with XR diving. It was not only about making deep dives.

This training has allowed me to experience exploration opportunities resulting in some of the most amazing dives I have ever done. There is no question that XR diving has more rigidity than its no-decompression counterpart, but I guess my personality type suits the formal side of XR diving. Generally, in life, I like being prepared, having a plan, having a clear insight of expectations, and so the style and nature of XR diving suit me perfectly.

SSI Fun Fact: We go further with Extended Range: The deepest dive logged was 100 meters in 2019!

Inside SSI Extended Range

Have you had any challenges within the sport?

I will admit, my early years developing as an XR diver were not easy. There was very much a "boys school/military" approach. If you could not do a ten kilometer run with your twinset on your back while carrying two aluminum 80s, then you were not part of the team. Well, maybe not quite like that, but do not get me wrong, it was not made easy for females. The expectation was that if you could not carry your kit, then you do not dive.

Not one to be defeated, I hit the gym to show that I could keep up with the best of them. Thankfully, over the years, this macho attitude has all but disappeared, and attitudes have changed. There are now equipment options for the smaller female stature, smaller cylinder sizes are available, and the concept of teamwork to move gear has developed. I love to see that in today's XR community, the sport is gaining a reputation as being available for everybody.

What made you decide to start this sport with SSI?

I guess there were two main reasons why I looked at SSI to continue my development in XR diving. Firstly, I loved the fact that SSI was embracing digital learning and technology. SSI made it very clear that they no longer wanted to be a book printing company; they were going digital. This proved to be such a financial benefit to me and my SSI Training Center in Egypt.

We had so many different nationalities coming through the Red Sea, it was simply too expensive to keep buying training manuals in all languages. To have the ability to provide digital materials in the languages I needed for my customers was huge. The second reason for working with SSI to develop XR is partly because of the challenges that I experienced when progressing in XR diving.

SSI is proactive in looking for ways to breakdown the stigma and barriers between "recreational" and "technical" diving to provide a platform where XR diving promotes itself as being available to everyone. How could I not want to be part of that?

What most excites you about what the sport is/could be?

I am blessed to be involved in XR diving in this day and age, where tremendous efforts are being made to recognize and promote that the sport of scuba diving is infinite. Training no longer ends just because you reach the no-decompression limit or because you reach the dark part of a cave. Increased theoretically understanding, more in-depth focused physiological studies, modern-day dive computers, and reliable equipment, to name a few, have all helped to provide the platform for the safe conduct of deeper and longer dives.

On top of this, more dive professionals are gaining qualifications to teach XR programs, and these programs are gaining a reputation for being challenging, exciting, and very rewarding. Exploration of our underwater world has never been as great as it is today. I am sure the next 30 – 40 years are going to be just as impressive as these past years.

<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/highlights/extended-range/>

Finding Inspiration Shaping the Industry

Whether rescuing people, helping divers, aiding the environment, or busy preserving historical artifacts, the work of these inspirational divers has been essential in improving and serving the dive community and inspiring hundreds of people all around the world. All of these divers have something in common; not only do they have a passion for diving and helping others, but they make us dream and look at diving differently. Let's take a look at some of these divers whose work is challenging and sometimes near-impossible.



Image © Shutterstock/William Perugini

Dr. Sylvia Earle

To wrap up Sylvia Earle's accomplishments in just a few sentences is nearly impossible. She is a pioneer within the world of marine conservation and deep-sea exploration.

She is a pioneer within the world of marine conservation and deep-sea exploration. Dr. Earle is an active National Geographic explorer-in-residence and was the first female chief scientist for NOAA. In 2000, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame and named "Living Legend" by the United States Library of Congress.

Dr. Earle has spent over 60 years dedicating her life to discovering and protecting the mysteries of our oceans. She inspires countless other ocean advocates to do the same year after year.

Thai Rescue Team

This team of divers had a near-impossible mission: to rescue twelve boys and their soccer coach, who were stranded three kilometers inside a cave in Thailand. These boys had no swimming skills, food, or water to survive.

This was a hazardous mission. The low visibility and strong currents cost the life of Thai Navy SEAL Saman Kunan. Thai Navy SEALs, police, military, international divers and volunteers, doctors, and people from all over the world came together and, after days of hard work, successfully rescued the entire soccer team.

Edd Sorenson

Edd Sorenson is known for being the world's most successful cave rescue diver. He is willing to go where nobody else is, and he doesn't give up. Cave diving rescues are extremely rare, but he has been involved with at least six of them. One of the rescues he remembers was a woman who was in a cave with her father and brother; he and his crew rushed to rescue her just in time. All of his work is without compensation; he desires to help first responders who do not have his same level of experience. He has rescued dozens of people and is a founding member of the International Underwater Cave Rescue and Recovery.

Dave Conlin

Dave Conlin is an underwater archaeologist inspired by the work of the National Park Service's Submerged Resources Center (SRC). He has done a vital job in helping to preserve historical underwater artifacts, such as the USS Arizona and USS Utah shipwrecks in Pearl Harbor, plus multiple other wrecks from around the world. Dave has been with the SRC since 2000, and part of his commitment is to help preserve these valuable resources.

Chantelle Newman

Chantelle Newman's passion for diving and helping people led her to be one of the most recognized Dive Medics, and a leader in the industry. After realizing not many divers knew how to deal with accidents, she developed a Diver Medic Technician (DMT) course. Chantelle is part of the Women Divers Hall of Fame and is actively working on helping improve safety conditions for all divers.

Lad Akins

It has been almost 38 years since this recognized Marine Conservationist first got certified. Lad Akins was the Founding Executive Director of the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) in 1990 and has been with the organization ever since. He has dramatically helped the environment through the control of lionfish populations in South Florida. His work has been a cornerstone of lionfish eradication as he has helped marine parks to create management plans and to teach dive centers about the control of this invasive species.

Jim Elliott

Founder of Diveheart, a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to build confidence and independence in people with disabilities through scuba diving, Jim Elliott has helped facilitate disabled dive programs all around the world. He is passionate about using the benefits of scuba diving to help people. His work has been vital in assisting researchers in studying the medical benefits of scuba diving and zero-gravity therapy.

Jesse Lu

Jesse Lu is a freediver with a Ph.D. in Pharmacology and Pharmacogenetics. She also ranks third for the longest breath-hold record in the world. Jesse Lu enjoys pushing her mental and physical capabilities and also being able to use her diving and scientific knowledge to push research boundaries. Her career as a researcher and diving instructor is fundamental for the development of

training methodologies in the industry.

Brenda Lanzendorf

Brenda's work was instrumental in the establishment of Diving With a Purpose (DWP), a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting and researching underwater archaeological projects. This organization also collaborates with marine sanctuaries to assist with vital projects. Brenda helped preserve and protect important underwater historical artifacts and resources, and, through the DWP, hundreds of women are now certified through their training program.

Dr. Adel Mohamed Taher

Inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame in 2019, Dr. Taher is considered one of the world's leading experts in hyperbaric medicine and is the long-time Medical Director of the Hyperbaric Medical Centers in both Sharm el Sheikh and Dahab, Egypt. Over the years, he has done much to increase diving safety in the Red Sea region of Egypt by helping to create DAN Egypt, managing countless dive emergencies in the area, and opening the first recompression chamber in Sharm el Sheikh. As a product of his efforts to increase diving safety throughout Egypt, he has played a vital role in bringing more divers to the Red Sea, making it a popular dive destination today.

Not all heroes wear a cape. These inspirational divers wear scuba and freediving gear, and their work is a constant source of motivation for everyone. Thank you for your valuable work!

An Inside Look at SSI The SSI Website



Image © iStock/gradyreese

Website Feature Talk

– An interview with DiveSSI.com –

Interviewer: "Today we have a very important guest in our SSI Feature Talk. He represents SSI and gives the world quick, important information about the company and its programs with just a few clicks. Welcome to the SSI website: Divessi.com (www.divessi.com)"

SSI Website: "It's nice to be here. Many thanks for the invitation."

Interviewer: "Can you explain how you represent SSI around the world?"

SSI Website: "SSI offers programs in many different categories. I offer all people worldwide the most important information about individual SSI programs. Whether you want more information about Open Water Diver, Freediving Level 1, Mermaid Course, or an SSI Professional career, you can find them all. To make the search for information as easy as possible, I have divided the page into individual categories and sorted them from beginner to professional level courses."

Interviewer:"Before anyone starts their training, they want to know what they will learn from the program. Is the information so detailed that all questions are answered?"

SSI Website:"Of course. I provide a special feature that lets you look into the theory part of a course to get a good overview of all course topics. Also, on my page, you will learn all the important prerequisites required to take the course like minimum age, certification prerequisites, maximum training depth, etc."

Interviewer:"That sounds great. Is there anything else a visitor can find and experience on your site?"

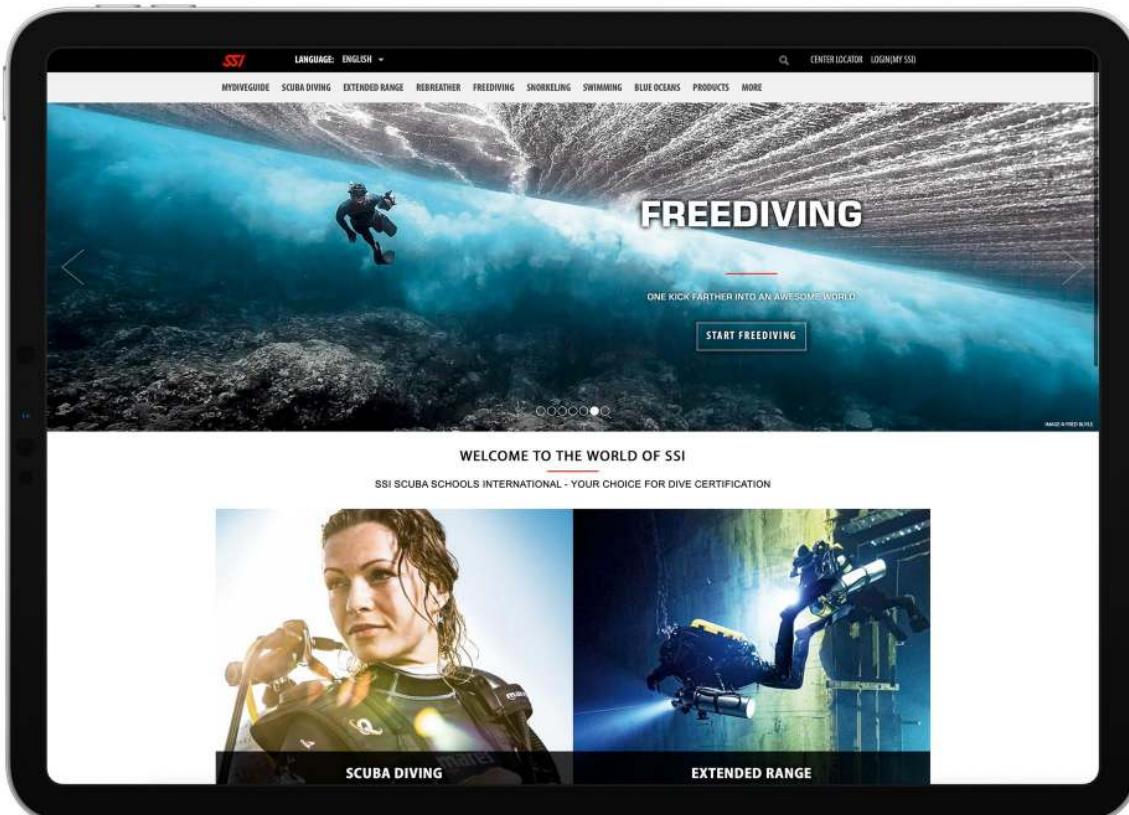
SSI Website:"Yes! They can find information about the company itself and job opportunities all of the the world. I am also the "gateway" to other great SSI sites that cross-link with me.

- Explore the Center Locator: <https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/dealer-locator/>
- Explore MyDiveGuide: <http://www.divessi.com/mydiveguide>
- Explore the Blue Oceans webpage: www.blueoceans.world
- Read exciting and informative blog posts about diving, marine life, the environment, or the diving industry at the SSI Blog: <https://blog.divessi.com>

You can access your private SSI account from my homepage as well. Also, my site is available in 17 languages. If my content does not answer your question, in the footer menu you can find the "More" option and then the "Contact" link where all SSI Service Centers are listed (<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/myssi/contact/>) and can be contacted directly. Help is easily found just a button click away.

Interviewer:"Perfect, thank you for being here and for all the information."

SSI Website:"It was a pleasure. I am always happy to help"



SSI Fun Fact: We had 50 million web page views in 2019—and this number is growing!

SSI Center Locator

SSI Fun Fact: We want to be there for you—worldwide. With over 300 SSI Service Center colleagues, we are just that!

At SSI, we have a long history of making dive Training Centers the core of our business model. The Center Locator was revised and re-launched in 2019, adding a more significant focus on our Training Centers, making them the core of our online presence at divessi.com. The new Center Locator makes it easy to find a Training Center nearby or anywhere in the world. Choose from over 3000 SSI Training Centers around the globe!

Today divers are looking online for specific information related to their interest in diving and diving education. The Center Locator provides answers to these searches as well as assisting Training Centers to increase their visibility worldwide. It is a great tool and modern online concept aimed at providing knowledge and content with added value in a user-friendly, transparent, and sustainable way.

How is this accomplished?

By connecting Training Centers, dive sites, courses, and events all in one place, any diver, anywhere around the world, will be able to access nearly any dive-related information from a single website.

Every SSI Training Center is accessible via a detailed information page where visitors to the site can find pertinent information such as affiliated dive sites, contact details, and upcoming training, courses, and events.

The new filter options allow for a better and more detailed search for courses. Search for a specific program (i.e., scuba) in combination with your training level (i.e., beginner), and you will get accurate results based on your current location. This search results in a list of all Training Centers performing training that a) meets the set criteria AND b) takes place within the next six months.

After selecting a preferred Training Center from the results list, you will land on that Training Center's details page. This page will display the Training Center's general information and a list of upcoming courses and events, sorted by date. Contact the Training Center directly via a one-click email feature to get further information on the course or event that interests you. It's that simple!

The SSI Center Locator at a Glance

- Integration of your course and event calendar directly from your Training Center's MySSI account
- List of dive sites your Training Center has affiliated with
- Simplified and intuitive filter with various search options (i.e., programs, diving level, or services) as well as auto-suggest and date-picker features
- Badges to identify type of Training Center at first sight (i.e. Dive Center, Freediving Center, Blue Oceans Center, Instructor Training Center, etc.)
- Improved display on mobile devices

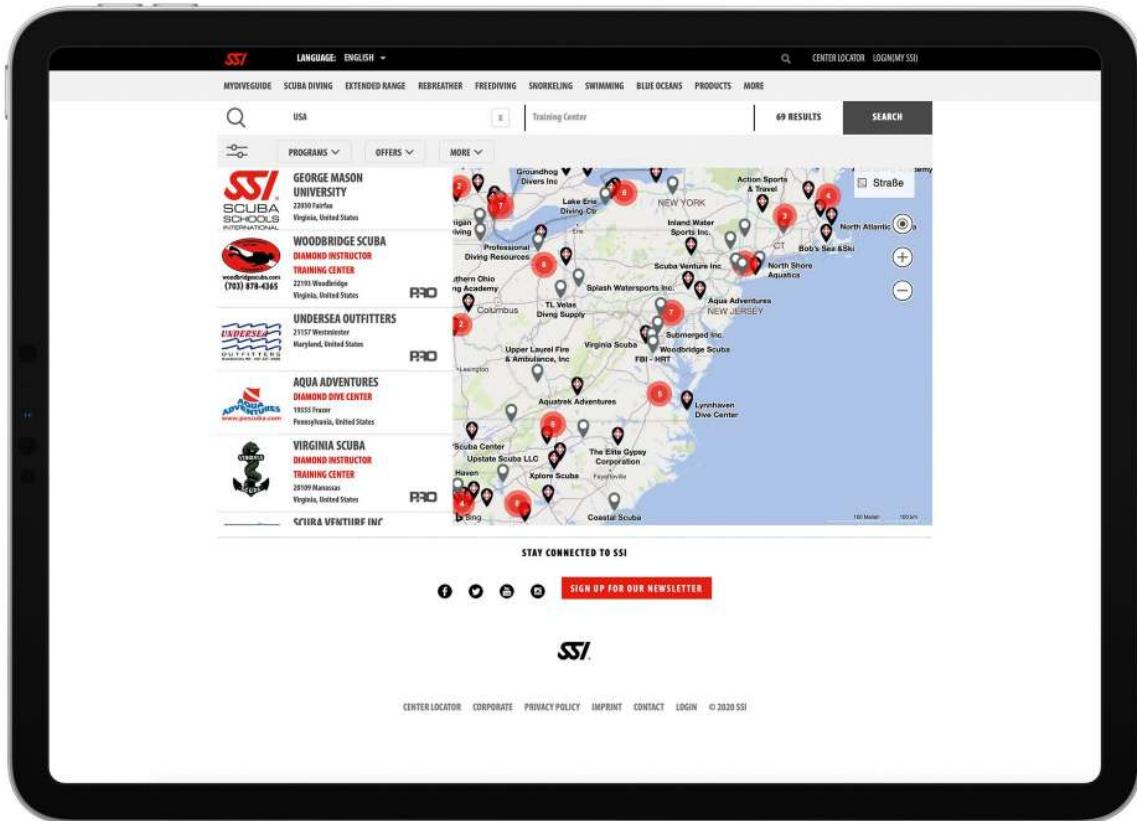


Image © SSI

<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/dealer-locator/>

Here at SSI we are always about serving at the next level. So, we are taking promoting our SSI Training Centers to the next level by integrating them with our new MyDiveGuide website. The Center Locator, in conjunction with MyDiveGuide helps you and your customers plan your next diving adventure. Read more in the next chapter, "MyDiveGuide powered by SSI!"

MyDiveGuide Powered by SSI

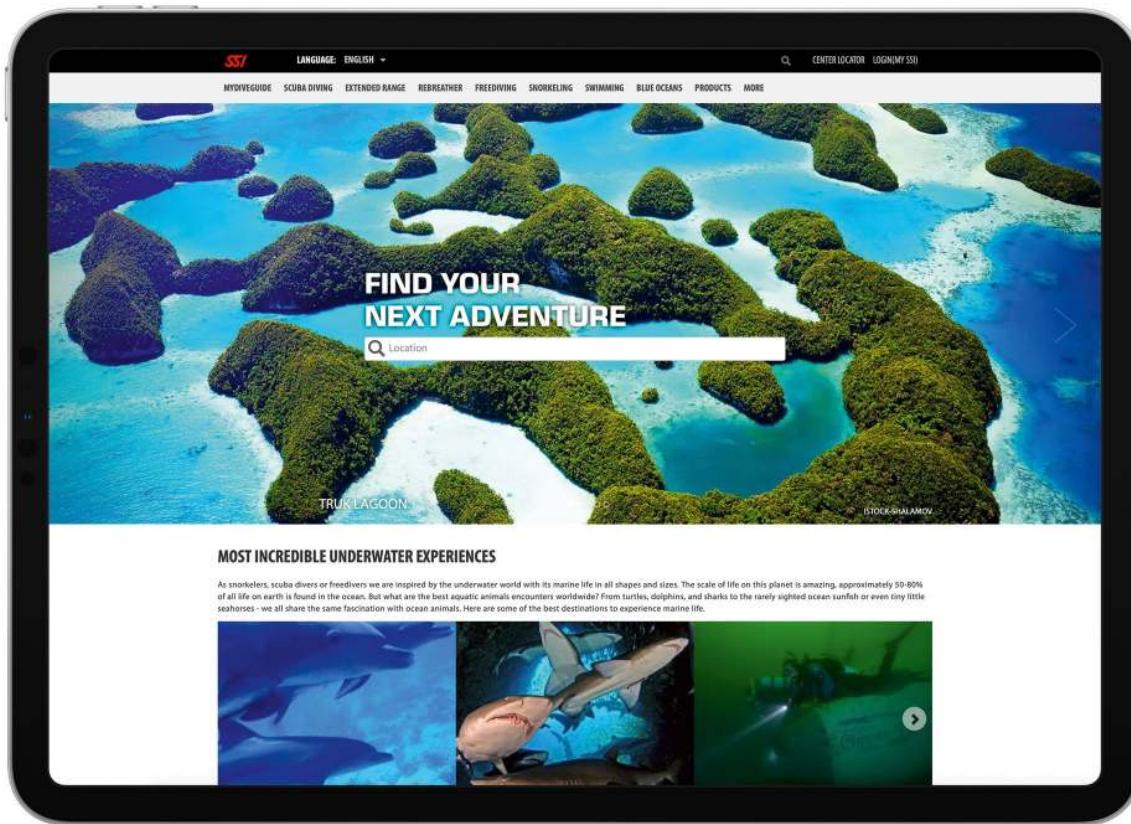


Image © SSI

One tool to rule them all, MyDiveGuide, was designed for dive enthusiasts around the world. Never before has there been such a comprehensive and authoritative way to find the most magnificent dive sites around the globe, packed with useful features, functionality, and more information than you can imagine.

Diving has always been intrinsically linked to travel, and SSI's new online platform, MyDiveGuide, encourages this connection by displaying thousands of dive sites around the world with detailed information and potential animal sightings according to seasons. Each site is also connected to one or more SSI Training Centers offering dives to that site, as well as giving users access to courses and events associated with those Training Centers. Dive Enthusiasts will discover the world's most amazing dive adventures and, ultimately, plan their next dive travel destination according to their experience and wish list.

Key Features of MyDiveGuide

- 3000+ dive sites listing potential wildlife encounters and detailed information such as visibility, water temperature, accessibility, site type, level, sport, body of water, currents, depth range, and more (with a potential to reach 12,000+ dive sites globally over time)
- 100+ Wildlife pages and 700+ country and region pages with dive-specific information
- 3300+ SSI Training Centers worldwide connected to the dive sites, including their program and event calendars

- Worldwide diving community and network supported by the MySSI app

SSI Fun Fact: Based on digitally logged dives, over one million cylinders were used in 2019 by SSI divers!

Anyone Can Participate

Absolutely everyone can fill MyDiveGuide with “life,” regardless of association or experience. The dive site information comes directly from data logged into the MySSI app, the SSI digital logbook that works for everyone. All you need to do is sign up for a (free) MySSI account. MyDiveGuide is part of divessi.com and is fully accessible to anyone.

How does logging information work?

Here’s the basic step-by-step system in which you get your dive information loaded into the MyDiveGuide database. As an example, we will say you are on an amazing dive in the Maldives and are thrilled because you saw your first manta ray ever. You can now log this “wildlife sighting” digitally using your SSI digital logbook in the MySSI app.

- Open your MySSI app and login
- From the menu on the upper righthand side choose “logbook”
- From this page, click on the menu in the lower lefthand side and then select the type of dive from the list at the top (Scuba, XR, or Freediving)
- Then press the round red button on the bottom right of the screen and choose how you want to log your dive (manual input, scan dive QR code, or import from dive computer)
- Now you can add or import all of your dive information including the awesome manta ray sighting under the “wildlife” section, plus any other of the 160 currently listed animal species you can possibly see in that region of the world
- You can even contribute a description of the dive site and/or upload your own picture

SSI Training Centers and SSI Professionals also have access to adding information about dive sites and wildlife sightings in order to keep the data of “their” dive regions and sites up to date.

Where does the journey go?

Wherever our passion for diving is taking us! MyDiveGuide will soon be available in several languages and there are several expansion stages planned with the ultimate goal of being the number one online platform to finding your next dive travel adventure.

<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/mydiveguide/>

Food for Thought:

Scuba travel is moving boldly into the 21st century. What novelties await us?



An Inside Look at SSI MySSI Accounts

MySSI User Login

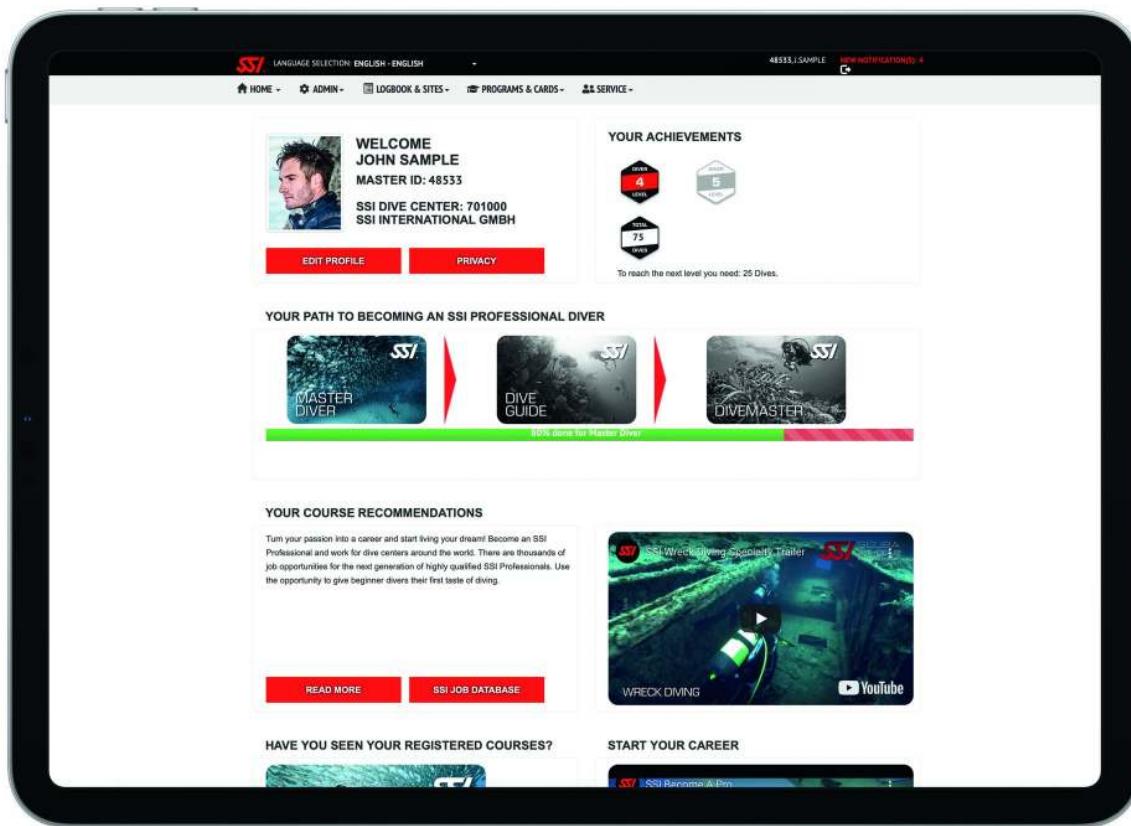


Image © SSI

In 2019, SSI completely revised and restructured the login pages for divers and professionals, giving the pages a whole new look. Two of our SSI employees will introduce to you the latest features:

Dear SSI family and friends,

I am Franziska, a Marketing Assistant for SSI International and an SSI diver since 2014. I worked with the old login page for a few years and am glad that SSI is keeping up with the times by renewing this "rusty" page. It is nice to now be able to log in and see how far you are in your diving career. The new login area shows your current diver status and what you can now do to go one step further. My awards are also displayed, such as my longest and deepest dive, which motivates me to gain even more dive experience. It is great to see that I am currently a Master Diver and only need a few more dive training sessions to become a Dive Guide.

The page is easy to navigate. Thanks to the different boxes, such as Registered Courses, News, My Achievements, and Profile Section, you can quickly find the information you are looking for.

In my opinion, the best thing about the new page is that it synchronizes with the MySSI app allowing me to see my current level, awards, and number of dives all in the app as well.

When I have time, I can easily click through the other sites and tools that are offered to me. There are always interesting posts on the SSI Blog, and, with the help of the new MyDiveGuide, I am always planning my next dive trip.

Give it a try yourself.

<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/mydiveguide/>

-Yours, Franziska -

MySSI Professional Login

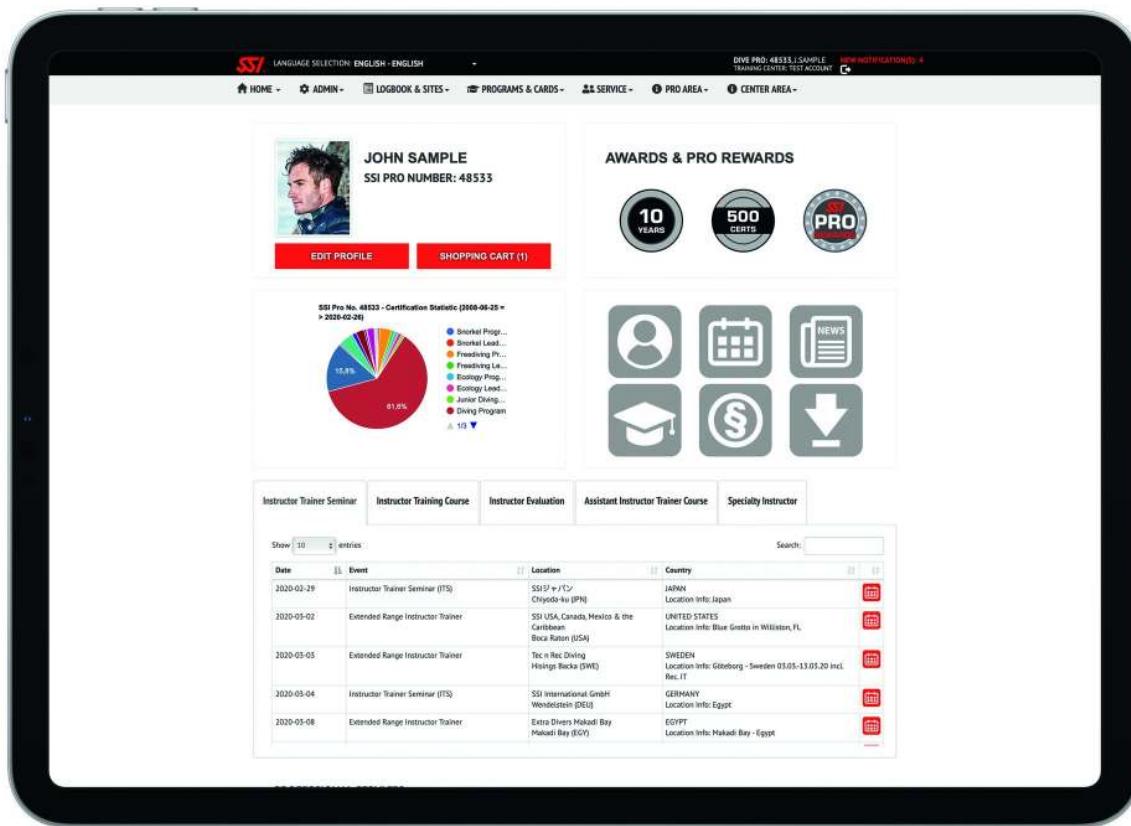


Image © SSI

Dear all,

I am Stephan, an active diver since 2005 and an employee of SSI for over ten years. A diving instructor since 2007, I love looking at the enthusiastic faces of my students after their first dive. It is so much fun teaching future divers the most important skills.

Due to my years of experience as a diving instructor, I was part of the project team for the new Pro Login page and am happy to briefly introduce the new features and elements of the site. After you log in to your SSI Professional account, you will have quick access to key features via icons such as an overview of your Pro Rewards and direct links to the upgrade page and SSI Standards page. You can see how many ProRewards you have collected and have already used, which upgrades are available for your training level, and quickly search for any questions within the SSI standards.

Like Franziska already discussed, you can also see in the pro login area which professional ratings you already have and what you can do to achieve your next, higher rating.

The most interesting feature for me is the presentation of my professional statistics. Here I can see who I have already trained this year and whether I have improved compared to previous years - a perfect incentive for me to stay in-tune with my training and continue to work.

The new login page is much easier to use, and the simplified menu structure makes it easier for me to find my way around. I hope you feel the same way.

- Yours, Stephan -

An Inside Look at SSI The SSI Blog

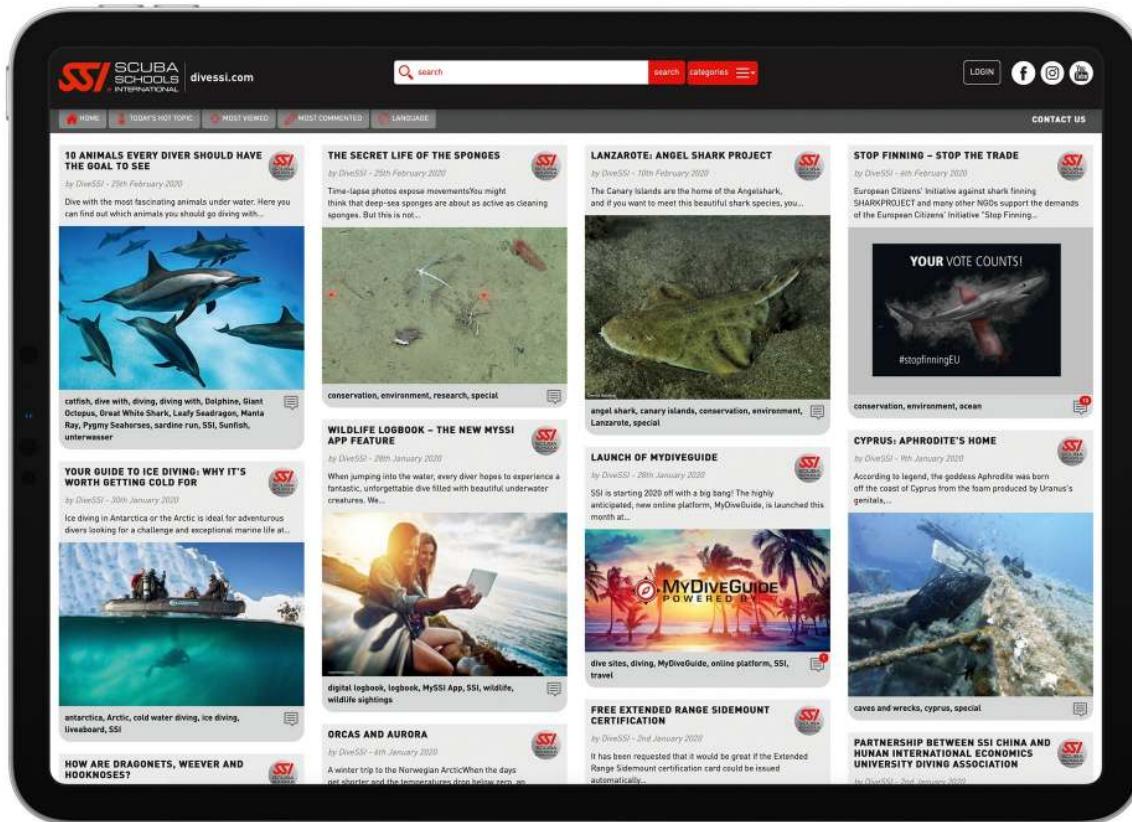


Image © SSI

Blog Feature Talk

- An interview with the SSI Blog at DiveSSI.com -

Interviewer: "Today we would like to introduce a very special guest on our SSI Feature Talk. He is often times forgotten, but has been around for about four years as a feature on our SSI website - the SSI Blog. Welcome SSI Blog to our SSI FeatureTalk!"

SSI Blog: "Hello, and many thanks for the invitation. I am very happy to introduce myself and tell the entire SSI family what I am all about."

Interviewer: "Please explain to our readers what, exactly, it is that you do?"

SSI Blog: "SSI developed me, "the Blog," as a platform for people worldwide to provide exciting news and information in the diving industry. There is something for everyone, including recreational divers, freedivers, technical divers, and even children and families."

Interviewer: "Can you tell us more about what dive enthusiasts can read about?"

SSI Blog: "SSI offers more than just scuba diving; we offer freediving, swimming, mermaid, lifeguard, and technical diving - a 360° underwater experience. I cover all of these topics in my posts, giving you valuable and interesting information about appropriate equipment, experience reports from other divers, news in the diving industry, etc. You can also find engaging blog posts about many different species of marine flora and fauna, news about current marine protection, reports about must-dive destinations, and tips on dive sites that are family-friendly. Visit my blog site now and browse through all the interesting topics in the diving world."

Interviewer: "Wow, we can really learn a lot from you. But what about the different languages? SSI is represented worldwide. Many people of different nationalities want to read your blog posts."

SSI Blog: "No problem. SSI has integrated a feature that makes it possible to translate all blog posts into your desired language. Just open the blog, select your desired language, and Google Translate automatically translates all the texts into your native language."

Interviewer: "Sounds great, but now you have to tell us, where can we find you?"

SSI Blog: "Yes, of course. You can find me at: <https://blog.divessi.com>. You can also visit the SSI Facebook page and find interesting posts shared from my platform. Lastly, since January 2020 you can find all of my blog posts on the SSI MyDiveGuide."

Interviewer: "Thank you for your time. We wish you many great and exciting posts in the future."

SSI Blog: "It was a pleasure! I am always excited about every new article, especially from new writers. If you are interested in writing an SSI blog, feel free to contact me at marketing@divessi.com."

<https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/mydiveguide/>

An Inside Look at SSI

The MySSI App

App Feature Talk

Interviewer: "Wow, you look great! Why don't you introduce yourself?"

MySSI app: "Hi, I am SSI's app and yes, thanks, I do feel great! I have come a long way in order to become what I am today. And it is not just my looks but my functionality, as well!"

Interviewer: "Agreed. I have been following your career and am amazed at the effort you and your developers have put into your development. What are you proud of most?"

MySSI app: "Oh, this is a tough one. Well, I have a variety of features; everything you need to dive in the palm of your hand. I am proud of the fact that you can easily access your Digital Learning materials both on and offline, allowing you to study on the go or even on a remote beach anywhere around the world"

Interviewer: "Your progress is even automatically synchronized when connecting to the internet again!"

MySSI app: "Yes, and besides that, I hold all of your certifications, as well as your accident, travel, and dive professional liability insurances all in one place! Plus, when logging dives and completing training requirements, you will earn free recognition cards. It is so rewarding to reach those milestones and collect SSI Awards."

Interviewer: "Everything in one place. That is so handy! Especially for me since I have my whole life organized on my smartphone!"

MySSI app: "When you log dives and complete training requirements, you can even earn free recognition cards. It is fun and rewarding to reach different milestones and collect SSI Awards."

Logging Dives

SSI Fun Fact: Approximately 3 million dives have been logged with the MySSI app.

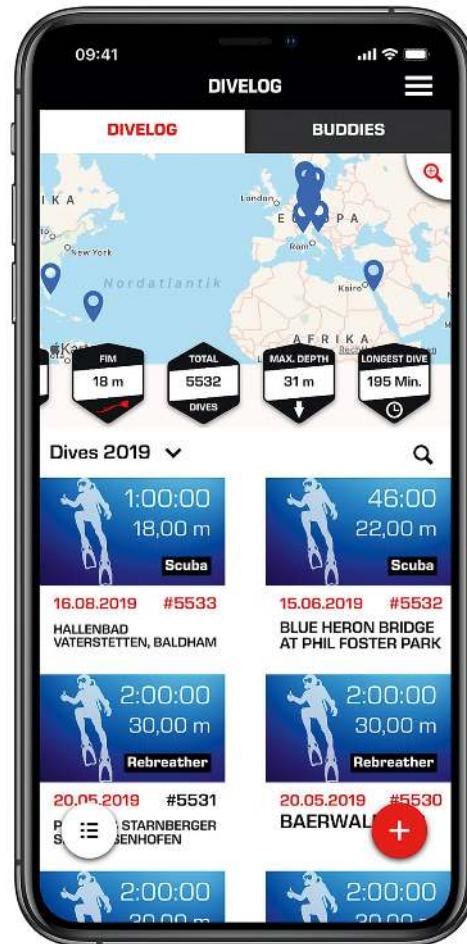


Image © SSI

Interviewer:"Speaking of logging dives..."

MySSI app:"You can log dives for Scuba, Freediving, Extended Range, or rebreathers from SSI's Dive Site database or add new dives with your device's built-in GPS. Share or confirm your dives with a QR code.

Download your dive from selected dive computers (currently available from MARES Smart - Smart Apnea - Smart Air - Puck Pro - Puck Pro Plus - Quad - Quad Air and GENIUS). You can then share the logbook entry with your dive buddy by scanning the QR Code within the app."

Interviewer:"Sounds fantastic! And you even speak 40+ languages!"

MySSI app:"Sure do, I work with dive enthusiasts around the globe and everybody feels a little more connected in their native language"

Interviewer:"Is there anything else you would like to add? Where do you see your journey taking you in the coming years?"

MySSI app:"Well, besides the main features I spoke about, I have 360° videos, as well as connect you to the SSI network with access to the latest industry news and updates on events and trainings in your area.

For the future, we are already speeding ahead. As we spoke about earlier, SSI's Dive Site Database is very unique and continues to grow with my help, as all information about a dive is logged in my logbook. The newly launched MyDiveGuide connects with SSI's extensive Training Center database, known as the SSI Center Locator. Here dive enthusiasts will find any information related to their next dive adventure, including possible wildlife encounters, recommended or required training level, and Training Centers in that area.

Soon I will also be receiving a design upgrade to make navigating my functions more straightforward. Since so many powerful and useful features have been added over time, my team will adjust my design to keep me easy to use."

Bug Reporting

SSI Fun Fact: With all of our programs going digital, we have over 150 million words in our online training!

Interviewer:"I am so glad I have you on my smartphone and tablet already! Being up to date with my training, logged dives, and dive site information has never been so easy and joyful! And if something does not work as it should, how we address this issue?"

MySSI app:"We differentiate between general feedback and reporting issues from within a training program. There are two ways to do that. Here, I will show you: Video How to leave feedback through the app

Interviewer:"Noted! Now tell me, how else can we support you and where can we find you?"

MySSI app:"I am available on both iOS and Android, so you can download me in the app and Google Play Stores. Giving me a 5-star-rating in the stores is how you could really help me out.

This allows me to be more visible in the digital jungle and shows the SSI team you appreciate all the great work they have done with me. If you do have an issue, please use the feedback functions I mentioned earlier. Your message can be received by my team who will figure out a solution, fix me if necessary, and help me becoming a better version of myself every day. Thanks so much for supporting me!"

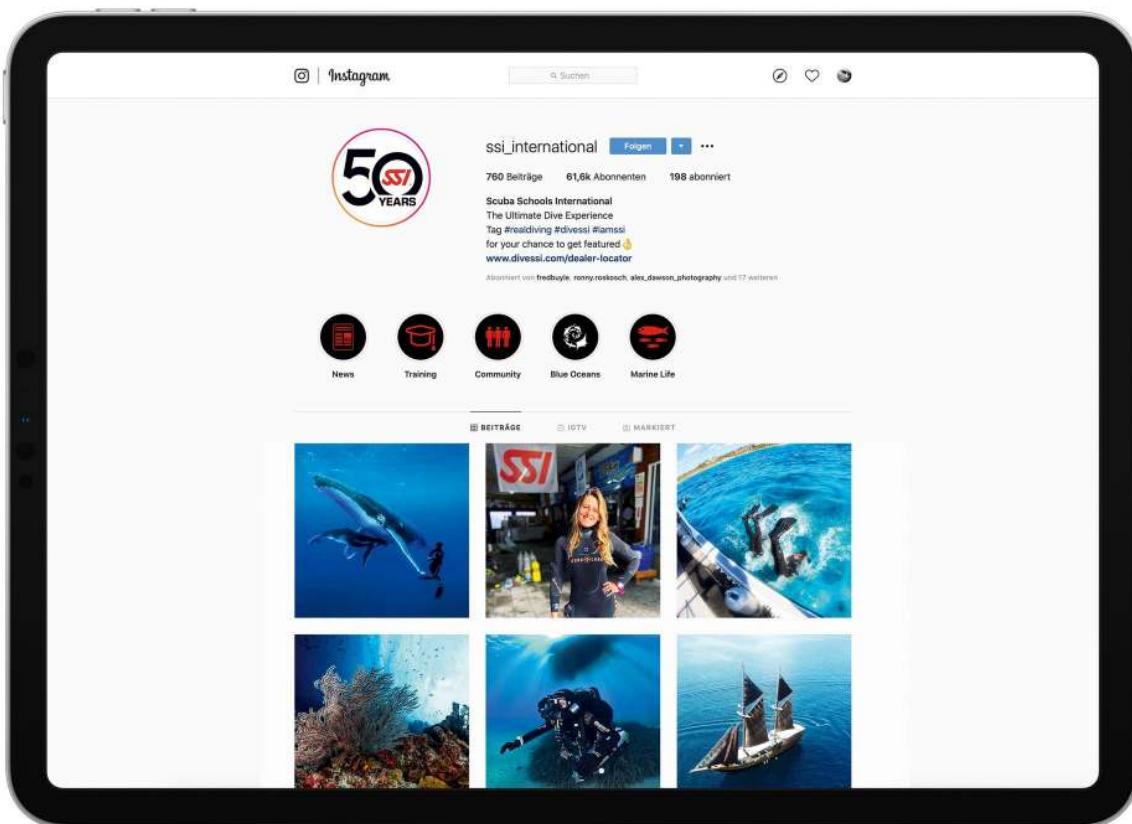
Food for Thought:

Generation Z no longer knows a life without smartphones. How important will apps be in the future?



Social Media Presence

Social Media, Social What?



Social media.

The phrase conjures up the image of continually refreshing feeds, endless “likes,” and plenty of emojis. According to brandwatch.com,* the total worldwide population is 7.8 billion as of December 2019, 4.5 billion of which use the internet, and 3.7 billion of those are active social media users. This number grew by 328 million between October 2018 and October 2019.

<https://www.facebook.com/divessi>

Today, 81% of medium and small businesses use social media platforms as part of their advertising. SSI focuses on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, but we also have LinkedIn and Twitter accounts where stories are shared regularly.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ssi-scuba-schools-international/>

So, precisely how did social media become something that a few college kids spent their time with to an entity that millions of people use every single day? Here we will take a closer look at the rise of social media and the intricate role it now plays in the modern diver's life.

The Rise of Social Media

Ten years ago, the most popular social media platforms used today were still in their infancy. Over the past decade, these platforms have changed significantly. Facebook went from being a college-only, exclusive online "hang-out" to something that connects people of all ages from around the world, every single day.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/divessi1>

YouTube went from a place where people uploaded movie clips and the occasional original content to a source of millions of different videos, many of which are made by "YouTubers," making a living creating original videos on a weekly or, even, daily basis. Instagram went from an Apple-exclusive photo-sharing app to an internationally famous digital record of people's lives, interests, and more.

Social Media's Role Today

Social media has transformed from an occasional hobby into something that is part of our daily lives. We check Instagram feeds in the morning ("oh look, John spotted a whale shark!"), watch the latest YouTube videos during our lunch break, and update our Facebook at the end of the night to check in with family and friends ("Hey guys, just wanted to share what I saw on my afternoon dive today...").

<https://twitter.com/divessi>

Social media is about more than taking and sharing photos or videos, however. It is about connection. Modern society uses social media as a way to connect with the world; whether you are a content creator connecting with viewers by creating videos about your passion for diving, an Instagram lover who takes stylized photos of your latest dive course, or simply a reader/viewer who likes to look at pictures, comment on videos, and supports creators by sharing their posts.

https://www.instagram.com/ssi_international/

Benefits of Social Media

There are many benefits to social media's presence in our modern lives. One of the most obvious benefits is the ability to connect and communicate with millions of people from around the world with a few swipes of your phone. This increase in communication leads to a sense of community and a greater cultural understanding.

Only time will tell where social media will go from here, but one thing is for sure: it will continue to play an important role in our modern lives. Let's keep sharing our passion for diving with the world through social media.

Have interesting stories to share? Tag @divessi, @iamssi, and @ssi_international in your posts or send an email at socialmedia@divessi.com to get featured.

Food for Thought:

The total worldwide population is 7.8 billion as of December 2019 and 3.7 billion people are active social media users. How important is social media for the future?



*Source: <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts/>

Bucket List Destinations For New Divers

Introduction

Whether you're a new or seasoned diver, lover of wrecks, sharks, freediving, or tech diving, a visitor of remote destinations or stunning coral reefs, we've got you covered with our choice of the 50 best dive destinations.

SSI Fun Fact: You are never too old to start diving! Our oldest female Open Water Diver student is 92 of age, the oldest male Open Water Diver student is 94!

Tiger Beach, Bahamas



Image © Alamy Stock Foto/Fiona Ayerst

If you are a new diver who loves sharks, you have to check out Tiger Beach in the Bahamas. This easy-going dive spot offers calm dive conditions and shallow shark dives full of curious tiger sharks, Caribbean reef sharks, lemon sharks, and more.

Kneel on the sandy bottom around eight meters deep and watch sharks glide by to your heart's content.

October to January are the best months to visit for numerous sharks. Plus, you are almost guaranteed an encounter with the resident pod of Atlantic spotted dolphins while you are there.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-tiger-beach>

Red Sea, Egypt



Image © iStock/lanaChyryva

Egypt's Red Sea is a classic dive destination that new divers should not miss. As well as being budget-friendly, there are numerous easy shore dives, exceptional house reefs, and many liveaboards to choose from.

Diving here will immerse you in a world of vivid soft corals, easy drift dives, and protected National Parks with desert backdrops and azure blue waters.

The waters of the Red Sea are teeming with reef fish, with an excellent chance to spot reef sharks, mantas rays, and plenty of lionfish.

Sharm el Sheikh's reefs are ideal for new divers or head to Marsa Alam to go swimming with resident spinner dolphins and dugongs.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-red-sea>

The Maldives

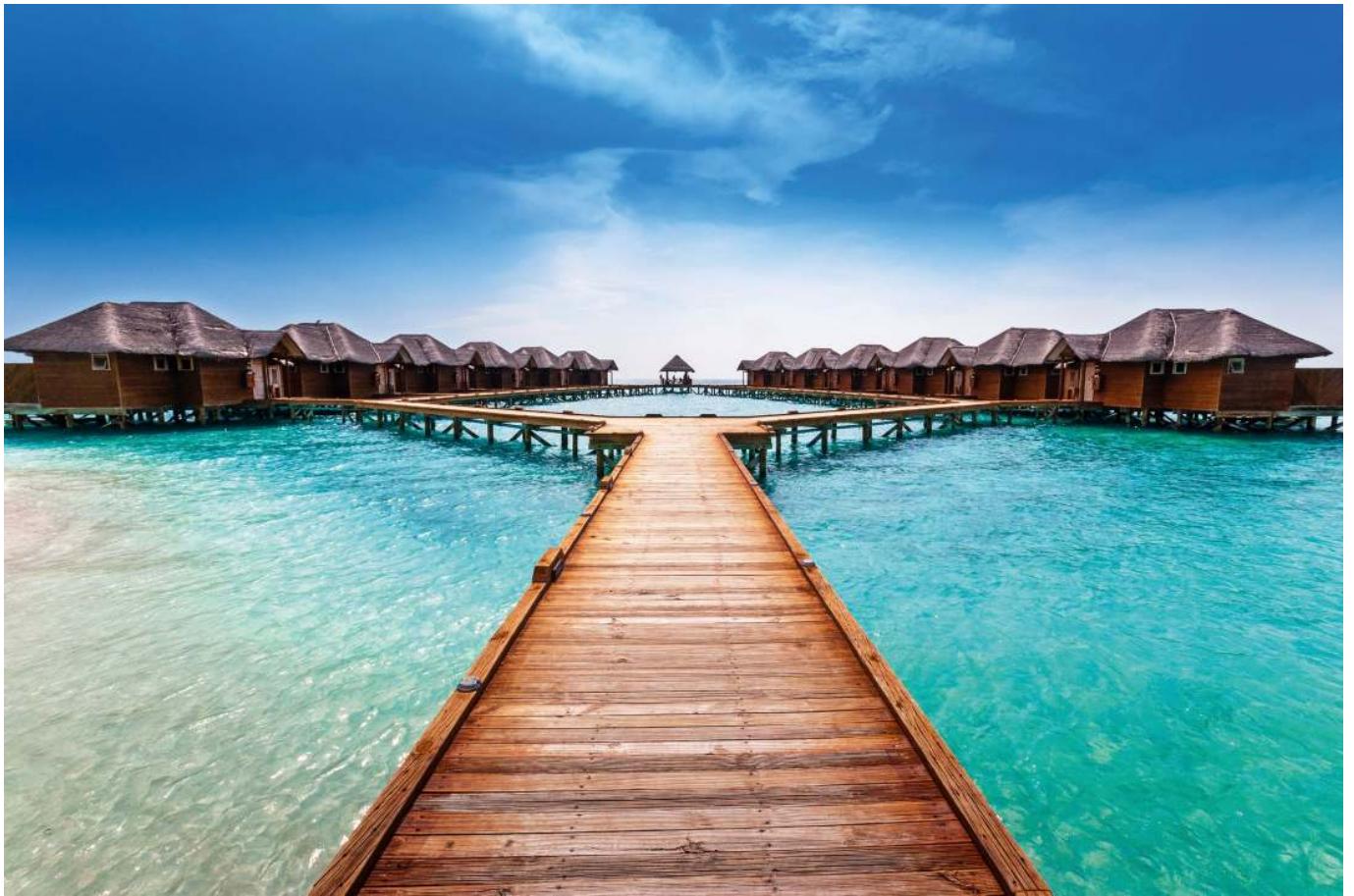


Image © iStock/mahos

While Maldives scuba diving offers exciting channel and current dives for advanced divers, there are plenty of atolls suitable for beginners as well. You just have to know where to go.

Swim with hundreds of feeding mantas at world-famous Baa Atoll's Hanifaru Bay from May to November each year. North Ari Atoll is another excellent spot for year-round manta action.

If you are a fan of smaller critters, take a trip to peaceful Laamu Atoll and try your hand at underwater photography.

For diving with numerous Mobula rays and exploring a beautiful barrier reef, don't miss Meemu Atoll.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-maldives>

South Andaman Sea, Thailand



Image © iStock/Mustang_79

Thailand is one of the world's most popular destinations to earn a dive certification, thanks to being affordable, bathed in sunshine, and offering abundant marine life.

While some Thailand dive sites are best suited for advanced divers, the South Andaman Sea has plenty of options for new divers.

Surround yourself with gorgeous soft sand beaches and Thailand's rich culture top-side, then dive underwater to discover Koh Phi Phi's spectacular coral gardens and limestone slopes teeming with life.

If you want to try liveaboard diving, there are plenty of short safaris departing from Phuket that give you the chance to try liveaboard diving without committing to a week or more at sea.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-thailand>

Australia's Great Barrier Reef & Ningaloo Reef



Image © iStock/4FR

Stretching for over 2300km along the rainforest-draped Queensland coast, the Great Barrier Reef is one of the most famous dive destinations in the world and is especially great for new divers.

Most likely, you will not have the time to dive all 2900 reefs found here, but wherever you dive, you will have the chance to spot schooling pelagic fish, colorful reef fish, and plenty of reef sharks. Visit the Great Barrier Reef in August, and you might even get to see humpback whales.

Head west to Ningaloo Reef to find few dive crowds and pristine reefs that are equally as impressive as the Great Barrier Reef.

As well as humpback whales, Ningaloo hosts hundreds of whale sharks starting in March each year, plus manta rays, sea turtles, and plenty of vibrant reef life.

<http://go.divessi.com/GreatBarrierReef>

Wakatobi, Indonesia



Image © Shutterstock/krisbiantoandy

Mention Wakatobi to any diver, and they are sure to get a dreamy look in their eyes. This world-famous conservation success story is one of the most idyllic destinations for divers.

As well as white-sand beaches and untouched reefs, Wakatobi has a wealth of snorkeling and easy dive sites teeming with life.

Walk a few paces off the shore, and you'll find numerous sea turtle hatchlings munching on seagrass beds, accessible reefs full of coral triangle fish, and prized critters.

To be honest, you don't even need to go scuba diving to make the most of Wakatobi. Just grab your snorkel and enjoy.

<http://go.divessi.com/Indonesia>

Bucket List Destinations For Advanced Divers

Rowley Shoals, Australia



Image © iStock/mevans

Australia's best-kept secret dive destination, Rowley Shoals, is 300 km off the northwest coast of Australia and offers outstanding diving.

Consisting of three pear-shaped atolls rising from 400 meters deep in the Indian Ocean, and sitting on the edge of a continental shelf, the shoals are a haven for reef and pelagic life.

With a five-meter tidal range, you can enjoy thrilling drift dives through coral-covered reef channels.

A variety of walls host mackerel, tuna, trevally, and sharks. The outer reefs host reef sharks, huge gorgonians, sailfish, and even humpback whales.

You will need to plan well in advance, as the dive season only lasts from September to December (or earlier) every year, with the Odyssey as one of the only liveaboards that cruises there.

<http://go.divessi.com/Australia>

Raja Ampat & Komodo, Indonesia



Image © iStock/MariusLtu

Two of the most-loved Indonesia dive destinations, both Raja Ampat and Komodo, offer exceptional Coral Triangle biodiversity and thriving reefs teeming with reef fish and bizarre-looking critters.

Shark fans will enjoy swimming with epaulette sharks and wobbegongs at Raja Ampat. Or you can take a cruise to Cenderawasih Bay to meet their famously-friendly whale sharks.

Some believe that Raja Ampat's reefs are resistant to the effects of coral bleaching, allowing you to discover coral reefs that are nearly pristine.

You can enjoy numerous graceful manta rays and thrilling current dives at either destination, with the bonus of being able to walk with Komodo dragons in Komodo.

<http://go.divessi.com/RajaAmpat>

Kimbe Bay, Papua New Guinea



Image © Shutterstock/Milen Stiliyanov

Ranked as one of the world's best coral reefs by National Geographic, Kimbe Bay has over 200 dive sites.

Colorful corals drape reef walls and overhangs, and there are numerous vibrant critters to find. Being sheltered from the open ocean by the Willaumez Peninsula volcano chain, currents are minimal, which has allowed the coral and barrel sponges growing here to reach enormous proportions.

If you're a fan of sharks, you won't know which way to look. Scalloped hammerhead, grey, and whitetip reef sharks are abundant here.

Dive North Emma Reef, and you will see a coral bridge covered in a forest of gorgonian sea fans and staghorn coral.

Burma Banks, Myanmar



Image © Shutterstock/shutter_o

Closed to tourists until recent years, Myanmar has many undiscovered dive sites, offering a glimpse into a southeast Asian country where tourism is still in its infancy.

If you can get on a liveaboard safari visiting Burma Banks, don't miss it. Rarely visited, this dive area is wild and remote, offering huge flat-top seamounts plunging over 300 meters deep.

The underwater environment at Burma Banks is like nowhere else on earth. The reefs host enormous table corals, black corals, plenty of reef fish, and numerous sharks.

Being in the open ocean, you are likely to see plenty of pelagic action at Burma Banks. But be warned, the currents are very strong.

<http://go.divessi.com/BurmaBanks>

The Galapagos Islands, Ecuador



Image © iStock/mantaphoto

Often featured on dive-related bucket lists, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is a paradise for nature fans and experienced divers.

In the nutrient-rich waters surrounding the Galapagos, you will find large schools of hammerheads, silky, and Galapagos sharks, especially around Wolf Island and Darwin Island. Also, keep an eye out for passing dolphins, mantas, and eagle rays.

One reason the Galapagos is for advanced divers only is the need to perform a negative entry on occasion if the current is strong.

Cape Douglas offers the unique opportunity to watch feeding marine iguanas and penguins zoom by underwater, while Cabo Marshall offers numerous rays, including mobulas, cow-nose, and giant manta rays.

While you are there, don't forget going to visit the Galapagos Islands' famous giant tortoises.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-galapagos>

Cocos Island, Costa Rica



Image © Shutterstock/Michael Bogner

Another spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site filled with sharks, Cocos Island is renowned for large schools of scalloped hammerhead sharks, whale sharks, reef sharks, and over 20 impressive dive sites.

If you can take your eyes off the shark action, you will also see numerous mobula and manta rays, plus huge schools of pelagic fish swimming in the blue.

Be sure to look under ledges at Manuelita Deep for groups of sleeping whitetip reef sharks and enjoy some of Costa Rica's best coral gardens and reef fish at Manuelita Garden.

If you visit during January, you might even see humpback and pilot whales passing by.

<http://go.divessi.com/CocosIsland>

Somosomo Strait, Fiji

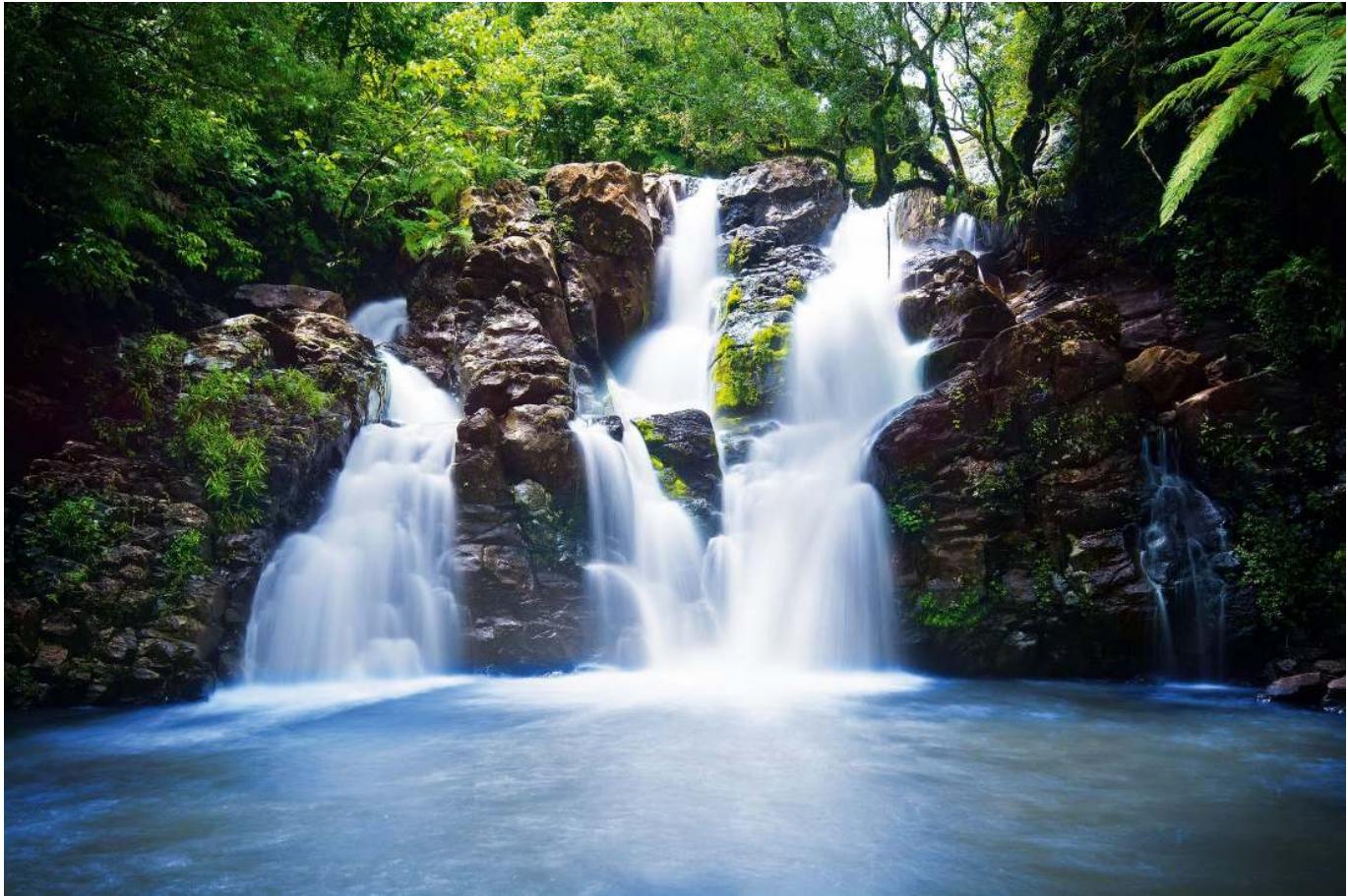


Image © iStock/joebelanger

If you love wall diving, be sure to put Fiji's Somosomo Strait on your bucket list. It may not be on many wall diving wish lists, but it should be.

Strong currents wash over the vertical walls of the Somosomo Strait. These walls are well known for their colorful soft coral with large bushes of white, brown, pink, and orange appearing when the current is strong.

Purple Wall is true to its name, covered in purple soft coral, whip coral, and sea fans.

The Great White Wall is one of Fiji's most famous dives. This wall and drift dive has a large concentration of white soft coral that gives the appearance of a wall of snow.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-somosomo>

Socorro Islands, Mexico



Image © Shutterstock/Martin Prochazkacz

This remote destination is one of Mexico's premier dive spots, world-renowned for incredible megafauna diving.

You will not find coral reefs here; however, you can dive with the Socorro Islands' renowned friendly Giant Pacific manta rays.

As well as resident bottlenose dolphins that mimic the mantas (and divers') movements, there are also seasonal humpback whales, schooling hammerheads, silky, and Galapagos sharks.

Underwater pinnacles are bustling with schools of tuna and jacks, and the caves are full of reef sharks. If that's not enough excitement, you can also find sea turtles, silvertip sharks, and possibly a passing orca or two.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-socorro>

Antarctica



Image © Shutterstock/Wim Hoek

For the ultimate in adventurous diving, join an Antarctic liveaboard diving expedition.

You will need to pack plenty of layers and bring your best cold water diving gear with you. You can go ice diving around the Antarctic Peninsula and the Weddell Sea, or explore iconic destinations such as the Falkland and South Shetland Islands.

If you want to explore areas that have never been dived, join an expedition in South Georgia and the Sandwich Islands.

Wherever you choose to go, you will likely see numerous seals, penguins, a diverse array of bird life, and up to 15 different whale species.

With incredible ice and shore diving, bright blue underwater landscapes, kelp forests, and awe-inspiring icebergs, you will be so amazed that you will not even mind the cold.

SSI Fun Fact: Many love to dive in cold water: The coldest dive in 2019 was at -4 degrees Celsius.

Tubbataha National Park, Philippines



Image © iStock/Freeartist

It is no surprise Tubbataha is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The thriving reef spans nearly 100,000 hectares. There are numerous dive sites to explore full of marine life.

You will find hundreds of vibrant coral and fish species, 13 types of whales, and numerous shark species, as well as large schools of fish, sea turtles, mantas, eagle rays, and more.

It is also an excellent destination for macro-loving divers, but make sure you book early – the dive season is short, only from March to June each year.

<http://go.divessi.com/Tubbataha>

Bucket List Destinations

Family-Friendly Destinations

The Seychelles



Image © AdobeStock/eyetronic

Covered in soft white sand beaches and lush mountains draped in cloud forests, 115 small islands in the western Indian Ocean make up the Seychelles. These islands, and the warm waters surrounding them, are so unique that they are home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, plus numerous spectacular dive sites.

Mahé, the main hub for tourism and culture, has plenty to keep families entertained and a diverse array of granite underwater landscapes.

As well as numerous reef fish, sea turtles, and reef sharks, your family can find whale sharks off the island's south side in October and November.

The Seychelles is also a great place to hop on a modern yacht or traditional schooner and enjoy a mix of island-hopping, sailing, diving, and other water sports.

<http://go.divessi.com/Seychelles>

Cayman Islands



Image © iStock/RomoloTavani

This classic winter getaway is famous for its year-round sunshine and crystal clear, warm waters with over 350 named dive sites.

There are plenty of attractions to keep families busy in the Cayman Islands, plus a wealth of both easy and more challenging dives, plus snorkeling options for the non-divers in your family.

A wall diving mecca, you can enjoy one of the world's most scenic wall dives at Bloody Bay Wall or hover over the sheer drop-offs of North Wall. Either way, you are likely to see sharks, groupers, jacks, and turtles swimming by.

Do not forget to visit Stingray City and hang out with numerous friendly stingrays.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-caymans>

Bonaire



Image © Shutterstock/John A. Anderson

Bonaire, the shore diving capital of the world, has more than 60 dive sites, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, wrecks, and mangroves. Bonaire is the perfect destination for diving at your own pace and fitting in with your family's needs.

Rent your cylinders and equipment at one of the local training centers, throw them in your rental truck, and go exploring with your family.

Take a few paces off nearly any beach, and you will soon be diving with hundreds of different fish species, seahorses, frogfish, nudibranchs, and other amazing marine life.

The coral reefs here are very healthy, and you can often see eagle rays, dolphins, and sea turtles passing by.

[**http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-bonaire**](http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-bonaire)

Belize



Image © iStock/Mlenny

Whether you choose day boat, shore, or liveaboard diving, in Belize, you can explore the second largest barrier reef in the world.

A popular tourist destination, Belize has a variety of resorts and other accommodation options that are great for families. Most of the diving is clear, calm, and easy, perfect for all levels of divers in your family.

Children can enjoy splashing around with fish in the shallows while you enjoy a variety of dives from the iconic Blue Hole to the Elbow's massive schools of jacks and snappers, and even Gladden Spit's whale sharks.

Make sure you leave time to snorkel Shark Ray Alley, where you'll be in the company of numerous nurse sharks and stingrays.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-belize>

Turks and Caicos



Image © Shutterstock/TravnikovStudio

One of the best Caribbean destinations for families, the Turks and Caicos are easily accessible and have multiple resorts with pretty reefs just offshore.

Your family can explore the islands and caves, enjoy easy shore diving, and discover a variety of snorkeling spots with the younger children.

Providenciales has plunging walls covered in diverse black coral, and Grace Bay's deep canyons are great for more adventurous dives. Head to West Caicos if your family likes large pelagic action.

Wherever you dive, you are likely to encounter laidback nurse sharks, reef sharks, and sea turtles. There is also a possibility to see tiger sharks, hammerheads, manta rays, and bottlenose dolphins.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-caribbean>

Italy



Image © iStock/RudyBalasko

As well as being a great dive destination, Italy has plenty of snorkeling options, endless culture, delicious food, tons of shopping, and ancient history you can enjoy with your family.

Elba Island, in the Tuscan Archipelago National Park, has a large number of Italy's best-known dive sites. You will find large marine life, including barracuda, conger eels, dolphins, and whales.

The wreck of the Elvisscott, off the southwest coast of Elba, is a shallow wreck dive at 12m deep with numerous shoals of fish and moray eels.

Don't miss the Underwater Archaeology Park of Baiae near Naples, where you can explore the remains of ancient villas, mosaics, and other Roman artifacts. Some of the fantastic dive and snorkel sites to explore include the Sunken Nymphaeum (a collection of Roman statues), spas, paved roads, fallen columns, and more.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-italy>

Bucket List Destinations

Epic Wreck Diving Destinations

Red Sea, Egypt



Image © Tobias Friedrich

If the beautiful reefs are not reason enough to visit Egypt's Red Sea, the wreck diving is outstanding. Both new and experienced divers can enjoy the world-famous SS Thistlegorm, an excellent wreck offering accessible exterior exploration and easy wreck penetration. This wreck is popular, so make sure you choose a boat charter that arrives early to avoid dive crowds.

Abu Nuhas, the 'Ship Graveyard' of Egypt, is famous for its plentiful shipwrecks, like the Giannis D, Kimon M, Chrisoula K, and Rosalie Moller. It is also home to the oldest shipwreck available to divers in the Red Sea, the 1869 Carnatic.

Most Red Sea wrecks are covered in corals and surrounded by marine life, making this area ideal for underwater photography.

SSI Fun Fact: Experience, equipment, and knowledge enable us to dive longer: The longest recreational scuba dive in 2019 was 128 minutes.

<http://go.divessi.com/Thistlegorm>

Micronesia

Made up of more than 2000 wide-spread islands and with numerous World War II wrecks, Micronesia diving is perfect for rust fans.

A Japanese naval base during WWII, Truk (or Chuuk) Lagoon, was attacked in 1944 by the United States during Operation Hailstone, during which more than 60 ships and 200 airplanes sunk.

Probably considered the most famous wreck diving destination in the world, there are now more than 48 wreck dive sites here to enjoy, including tanks, submarines, and torpedoes.

If you are looking for a great mix of wreck diving and reefs, Palau is the destination for you. You will find it all from the famous 143 meters long Iro Maru wreck, to soaring manta rays, and thriving reefs. Topside exploration is just as thrilling with the famous Jellyfish Lake and incredible cave systems full of stalactites.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-micronesia>

SS Yongala, Australia

Sitting just off the Queensland coast in the center of the Great Barrier Reef lies one of the world's most well-preserved wrecks, the SS Yongala.

The SS Yongala sank in 1911 and is in excellent condition, protected by the Historic Shipwrecks Act, which prevents anyone from penetrating the wreck.

The interior is virtually untouched, and the wreck is teeming with marine life, including abundant coral and fish. Bull rays and bull sharks are also prevalent in the surrounding waters.

This wreck offers far more to see than is possible in a single dive, so take your time and enjoy it.

<http://go.divessi.com/SSYongala>

Iron Bottom Sound, Solomon Islands

The unspoiled Solomon Islands might be known for their pristine coral reefs, but they are also home to some epic wreck diving opportunities.

Iron Bottom Sound in the Florida Island area has over 200 ships and 690 aircraft, all sunk during the battle of Guadalcanal in the 1940s.

Dive amongst Japanese and American military relics, including minesweepers, destroyers, submarines, planes, and troop carriers.

As well as challenging wrecks for experienced divers, there are easier options for newer wreck divers. The wrecks are often visited by sharks, mantas, and pelagic fish.

White Beach, Russell Islands

Another Solomon Islands wreck diving gem, White Beach, was a munition and equipment dump during WWII.

The seabed is now littered with trucks, jeeps, munitions, and thriving artificial reef structures.

You will find plenty of macro life tucked away among the wrecks, including ghost pipefish, vibrant mandarin fish, and more.

While you are here, be sure to dive Custom Cave's halocline for incredibly clear water.

You can spot pygmy seahorses at Mirror Pond's sea fan wall and enjoy the pelagic action at Kaukau and Koemurun.

The Cayman Islands

The USS Kittiwake, an impressive US submarine rescue vessel, is one of the Cayman Islands best-known wreck dives and is not to be missed, if not only for its sheer size and presence.

Sitting in crystal-clear waters, USS Kittiwake has spacious corridors for easy navigation and is a great night dive.

Other exciting wreck-night dives include the Balboa and Ore Verde wrecks.

The Keith Tibbetts wreck is an excellent choice for those wanting to do penetration dives.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-caymans>

Coron, Philippines

Coron is well off the beaten path and is fast gaining a reputation as one of the best places in the world for wreck diving. There is a fleet of WWII Japanese supply shipwrecks to discover around Coron's islands.

There are a wide variety of vessels ranging from small gunboats to tenders and large tankers.

Many of the wrecks are still intact with equipment onboard. Diving them truly brings history to life.

Coron also offers shallow wrecks for newer divers like the imposing Olympia Maru freighter and the Irako.

The Irako, a Japanese refrigeration ship, is thought to be one of the best wrecks in the Philippines. Don't miss it.

<http://go.divessi.com/CoronIsland>

Scapa Flow, Scotland

Scapa Flow, a natural harbor and former chief base of the Royal Navy, lies amongst Scotland's Orkney Islands.

At the end of World War One, the German High Seas Fleet was held there, and the German Commander, fearing the allies would take the vessels, scuttled the entire fleet.

Fifty-two of the seventy-four vessels sank and remain there today, creating a wreck diving mecca that people flock to from around the world.

The wrecks lie at various depths, some as shallow as 10m. You can enjoy everything from easy wreck dives to challenging adventures in the deep.

Visit in December to March for the clearest water and be sure to bring a thick wetsuit, or even dry suit, with you.

<http://go.divessi.com/ScapaFlow>

Bucket List Destinations

Incredible Wildlife Destinations

Norway



Image © AdobeStock/Dmitry Kokh

The Arctic is long known for its outstanding wildlife watching and dramatic landscapes, but the real highlight is snorkeling with orcas in the middle of the Arctic winter.

Hundreds of orcas gather in the waters off Troms, Norway, each winter, following the migration of their primary food source, Norwegian spring-spawning herring.

These large predators are mesmerizing to watch and often travel in family groups, allowing you the opportunity to see adults with their young.

You can snorkel or freedive with the orcas from the Sula liveaboard during three and six-night orca safaris. Watching the Northern Lights color the night sky in magnificent luges of green and pink, and spotting passing humpback whales are two more great reasons visit here.

Great Barrier Reef, Australia

Few people seem to realize that the Great Barrier Reef is home to one of the best whale encounters in the world.

From June to September, tens of thousands of whales migrate from Antarctica to the Great Barrier

Reef in Australia, including the dwarf minke whale.

These friendly whales are known to actively seek out human interactions. You can join dedicated minke whale safaris with the Spoilsport liveaboard.

Each whale has a distinctive color pattern, making it easy to identify individuals. They are also known to closely approach snorkelers making this an exciting family adventure.

The largest pod seen during a minke whale safari consisted of 28 whales, and the longest encounter lasted 10 hours!

<http://go.divessi.com/GreatBarrierReef>

Monad Shoal, Philippines

The only place in the world where you can reliably dive with the elusive thresher shark, Monad Shoal in the Philippines is unique.

The thresher sharks are seen almost daily at cleaning stations, with dawn being the best time to dive with them.

While you are here, be sure to visit Kimud Shoal between March and April, where you will not only see thresher sharks but hammerhead sharks as well.

<http://go.divessi.com/MonadShoal>

Guadalupe, Mexico

As the premier great white shark dive destination in the world, Guadalupe Island is well-known, frequently featured on Discovery Channel's Shark Week.

Unlike other cage diving destinations, Guadalupe's waters are crystal-clear and relatively warm at 19 to 22 °C, meaning you can spend plenty of time in the shark-cage without getting cold.

Most Guadalupe liveaboard operators have an "open deck" policy, giving you ten to fifteen hours to enjoy time in the surface cage during your trip.

Qualified scuba divers can also dive in submersible cages at Guadalupe, allowing you to more closely encounter great white sharks as they cruise their natural environment.

Put aside your fears and enjoy meeting these magnificent sharks. These intelligent predators are full of personality and will leave you ready to go back for more.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-guadalupe>

Tonga

There may be a handful of destinations around the world to encounter humpback whales, but Tonga is the best for getting to swim in warm water alongside these ocean giants.

Tonga also features a diverse underwater environment with exciting dive sites that include drop-offs, caves, wrecks, and drift dives.

The diving may be great, but the whales are Tonga's real highlight. Hop on the Nai'i liveaboard, and you can spend a week swimming with humpbacks far from the day-boat crowds.

Baja California, Mexico

Mexico's waters are well known for being home to a wide array of different whale species.

Diving off Baja California offers a good chance of spotting gray whales, humpbacks, and even enormous blue whales.

February to March is the best time to see blue whales. Visiting between January and mid-March gives you the best chance of meeting Baja's famously friendly grey whales.

Baja California also hosts plenty of sperm whales during November and again from February to March.

The best time to encounter humpback whales is from December to mid-March.

This amazing destination also hosts impossibly large schools of mobula rays. It is common to find them both in the northern Sea of Cortez and near Cabo Pulmo.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-baja>

Dominica

Dominica is the only country in the world where you can see sperm whales all year, with sightings most common from November to March.

Dominica is also the most popular destination to swim with sperm whales.

You can join expeditions to swim, snorkel, or free dive with these enormous whales.

It is best to book your travel here well in advance as dive groups are kept small, and permits are expensive.

Bat Islands, Costa Rica

While Costa Rica is most known for its hammerhead shark dives at Cocos Island, the Bat Islands offer exciting dives with resident bull sharks.

Dive with numerous bull sharks at the aptly-named Big Scare. At this site, you can also spot whales, dolphins, manta rays, and a large variety of reef fish. The healthy coral cover adds to the appeal of these islands, plus the night diving is amazing.

Looking for another top bull shark destination? Try the Bahamas' Tiger Beach during February and March, Playa del Carmen in Mexico or Fiji's famous bull shark dive at Pacific Harbour.

French Polynesia

Ever been diving with a wall of sharks? French Polynesia's idyllic Rangiroa and Fakarava atolls are teeming with hundreds of grey reef sharks.

French Polynesia also offers beautiful, healthy reefs busy with soaring manta rays and bottlenose dolphins.

You can swim with humpback whales off Moorea from August to October, or hang out in shallow lagoons with friendly stingrays and baby reef sharks. Take a day boat offshore from Moorea, and you can even swim with tiger sharks.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-fr-polynesia>

Nusa Penida, Indonesia

Not every incredible wildlife encounter comes with adrenaline thrills. Growing up to 3m long and weighing over 1000 kg, swimming with the fantastic Mola mola (or ocean sunfish) is an experience not to be missed.

You can dive with these bizarre-looking fish at many places around the world, but Nusa Penida's Crystal Bay is one of the best warm-water locations to find them.

This renowned cleaning station attracts Mola mola from surrounding trenches.

The water visibility can reach a staggering 45m.

As well as Mola mola, Nusa Penida offers 20 dive sites where you can find bamboo sharks, wobbegongs, nurse sharks, and manta rays.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-nusa-penida>

Bucket List Destinations

Extend Your Range

Dahab, Egypt



Image © Mares

Perhaps the most iconic tech diving destination, thanks to the infamous Blue Hole, Dahab is home to several thrilling technical dive sites.

The Blue Hole has an arch that connects it to the Red Sea, starting at 55 meters deep, which then plummets even further, beyond the reef walls, to over 1000 meters.

The Blue Hole requires proper technical training as some inexperienced divers have lost their lives attempting to dive through the arch. It is, however, an excellent site for technical diver training, with minimal currents and plenty of deep dive options.

The Canyon, a natural crack in the reef, descends to 54 meters and has walls 15 to 20 meters high. Neptune's Chair dive site is also worth exploring, sitting below the Canyon at 70 to 80 meters deep.

Many of Dahab's dives can be accessed from the shore, though liveaboard safaris with tech support also service the area.

<http://go.divessi.com/Dahab>

Truk Lagoon, Micronesia

Truk Lagoon is not only a wreck diving mecca but has a variety of deep technical dives as well.

There are approximately 15 wrecks between 40 to 60 meters deep, including the well-known San Francisco Maru.

You will find the San Francisco Maru filled with ammunition, trucks, mines, bombs, and tanks.

The Katsuragisan Maru is another thrilling technical wreck to explore, sitting at 58 to 70m.

The SS Thorfinn is a popular liveaboard that caters specifically to tech divers and offers special tech diving packages.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-truk-lagoon>

Puerto Galera, Philippines

Sitting in the Coral Triangle, Puerto Galera offers abundant marine life and a variety of dive areas to explore.

It is a prime destination for "muck diving" and an excellent choice for both experienced and newer tech divers. Small muck diving critters to look out for include frogfish, seahorses, Bobbitt worms, the mimic octopus, and sea moths.

The Verde Island passage has several deep dive sites to explore full of wrecks, walls, and drop-offs.

Covered in coral, the Pinnacle dive site on the eastern side of Verde Island descends to 60 meters deep and is home to cruising, large pelagics.

The Wall dive site drops to over 70 meters and has giant gorgonian fans, colorful coral, and large schools of reef fish.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-puerto-galera>

Gili Trawangan, Indonesia

Gili Trawangan, or Gili T, is well known for technical diving and a great place to learn this exciting sport.

You can learn on the island, practice in the shallows, and then head out to explore the deeper sites. Reef sharks patrol the reefs, as well as manta rays and the occasional Mola mola.

Shark Point is one of the deeper dive sites off the island, where you can find reef sharks and stingrays whilst exploring deep canyons up to 50 meters deep.

Deep Turbo is a seamount with a coral garden on top and a variety of canyons, overhangs and outcrops. The currents can be very challenging at Deep Turbo and the maximum dive depth is 32 meters.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-gili>

Bay Islands, Honduras

The scenic Bay Islands are fast gaining a reputation for offering technical diver training and thrilling deep dives. The north side of Utila has deep walls and caves to explore at 45 to 80 meters deep.

Some of the deeper caves on the north side have amazing stalactites and waters teeming with barracuda, marlin, and dolphins.

The south side of Utila is home to a large fringing reef, making it more sheltered. It is home to many shallow water dive sites, perfect for recreational divers.

The east and south sides of Utila have spectacular seamounts and pinnacles rising from 40 to 80 meters deep. Be sure to have advanced training, however, as currents here can make these seamounts challenging to dive.

Roatan's Cayman Trench also provides dramatic walls and crevices to explore at depths of up to 60 meters. The trench is well known for its rare black coral and whale shark encounters.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-honduras>

Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands

Love tech-wreck diving?

Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands could be just the place for you. Bikini Atoll is famous for the United States nuclear bomb testing done here in the 1940s and 1950s, which included dropping a 15 megaton TNT hydrogen atomic bomb on a US mock naval fleet in Bikini Atoll.

This massive bomb, one thousand times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, left a crater two kilometers wide and 74 meters deep, creating numerous shipwrecks.

Now open for diving, Bikini Atoll is an idyllic liveaboard diving destination for experienced tech-wreck divers only.

The majority of dive sites here lie beyond the recreational diving limit. With proper technical training, you can join the elite group of divers who have had the privilege to dive these wreck-filled waters teeming with marine life.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-bikini-atoll>

Bucket List Destinations

Top Freediving Destinations

Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico



Breath-taking cenotes dot the landscape of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Exceptionally clear water fills these limestone sinkholes, which offer stunning views of sunlight streaming in from overhead—there's no better place to freedive, immersing yourself in total peace.

Hiring a local guide along the Yucatán Peninsula's Riviera Maya is the best way to go cenote freediving, as most cenotes are on privately owned land.

The Azul cenote offers depths up to 70m and has a wide opening, perfect for freediving training.

There are nearly 30,000 cenotes throughout the peninsula, giving you plenty of options and diving diversity to enjoy.

<http://go.divessi.com/YucatanPeninsula>

Kona, Hawaii

Two Step in Kona, Hawaii is well-known on the freediving scene, offering waters that plummet into the deep. You can dive amongst schooling fish, eagle rays, dolphins, reef sharks, and more.

In addition to the amazing marine life, you will dive over impressive volcanic landscapes, with the opportunity to night diving with soaring manta rays - the perfect destination for your next freediving vacation.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-kona>

Bahamas

The Bahamas affords an array of dive sites for freedivers to choose from, including the iconic Dean's Blue Hole, and many other sites teeming with sharks and shipwrecks.

Dean's Blue Hole is the world's deepest blue hole, reaching depths of over 200m. A perfect site for freediving within its calm waters, getting ever darker as you descend.

Multiple records have been set here, and you can enroll in many freediving programs offered in the area.

Nowhere quite compares for discovering the appeal of freediving. Try it yourself or sit back and be amazed at the depths other people go.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-bahamas>

Jardines de la Reina, Cuba

Jardines de la Reina is one of the most successful conservation stories in the Caribbean.

Established as a marine reserve in the 1990s, and a national park in 2010, Jardines de la Reina aims to protect Cuba's southern coastal islands, mangroves, and seagrass habitats. Thanks to its governmental protection and ongoing efforts, these waters thrive with marine life.

You can freedive along walls covered in vibrant sponges, explore deep drop-offs, and swim through channels full of colorful fish.

These islands are home to nearly 100 different shark species, including lemon, nurse, bull, silky, and Caribbean reef sharks. You can also spot sea turtles, eagle rays, diverse coral formations, and even crocodiles.

<http://tiny.cc/mydiveguide-jardines>

– This section was written by divers and writers at LiveAboard.com –

Go Pro

10 Reasons to Become an SSI Professional

Why SSI?

You may already know that SSI is the fastest growing training agency in the world, but do you know the "why" of it all? Why become an instructor in the first place? Why leave your boring but stable nine-to-five job to teach others? Why SSI?

Flexibility

Countless professionals have quit their desk jobs for the freedom that teaching others to dive offers. As an SSI Professional, you gain flexibility in your schedule, where you get to work, and who you get to work with. With SSI, you can choose to teach in many different areas, including recreational scuba, freediving, Extended Range, and swim.

Connection

They say that we are connected now more than ever. Schedules are organized on a calendar app, you regularly communicate via text or email, and check-in daily with friends and family by scrolling through your favorite social media app. In an age where life sits in the palm of your hands, we less frequently connect with other people on an actual, physically present level. SSI makes it easy for the educational component of your training to fit into your digital lifestyle, but nothing is more rewarding than spending quality one-on-one time with others, teaching them how to do something you personally love.

Passion

Having the freedom to teach what you love fuels your passion. Some people dive because they have a passion to explore. Some dive because they have a passion for our oceans. Some people dive just because they love diving! Whatever you are passionate about, getting to share it as a career keeps it alive and creates avenues for you to explore new passions.

Freedom

Nothing will make you feel freer than ending a workday exhausted. Not because you sat behind a computer all day but because you spent the day on a dive boat managing equipment, guiding divers through crystal-clear water, and answering questions about the underwater world; your face sun-kissed, hair wind-whipped, and salt still stuck to your body. With SSI's entirely digital system of education, that means less paperwork for you, less time in the classroom for your students, and more time focused on enjoying the freedom that being an SSI Professional is all about.

Adventure

How many professions can take you exploring around the world? Teaching diving is a diverse, unique endeavor you can take with you practically anywhere. Introduce tourists to the wonders of a thriving coral reef in Bora Bora. Teach the technical skills of cave diving to archaeologists in Mexico. Lead scientists around icebergs as a safety diver in the Arctic. Or live the ultimate, untethered lifestyle of an instructor or dive guide on a liveaboard in Indonesia. The adventures you can experience as an SSI Professional are almost limitless.



Image © SSI/Tom Huckert

Expand Your World

Opportunity

People often get stuck in a job that has limited opportunity for professional growth. That is not the case when you become an SSI Professional! There's a seemingly endless path to follow with various career opportunities where you are only limited by your imagination. Work your way up and become an expert as an SSI Instructor Trainer, become a diversified instructor by teaching SSI Specialty programs, share your knowledge and experience with other industry professionals by managing an SSI Training Center, or take your passion and training into the industry and start your own company or non-profit organization.

Community

Though the world is vast, the dive industry is small. Join a growing, tight-knit community of like-minded professionals who all share the same underlying goal: to share our love of diving with the world. With SSI's newly released MyDiveGuide website, travel lovers from around the world will be able to connect with you through the site's 12,000+ named dive sites and wildlife maps, fast becoming the largest dive travel database in the world.

Start Your Career



Image © SSI

Money

Let's face it, money is a necessary commodity in life. But if you are lucky enough to make it while doing something you love, then you are more fortunate than most. You may not get rich teaching diving, but you can make a living doing it full-time if you are organized, efficient, and motivated. SSI's free acquisition programs like Try Scuba, Try Freediving, Try Mermaid, and Snorkel Diver are powerful tools you can use to draw in new business. With the support of 30+ SSI Service Centers around the world, you can easily get the help you need. And with the SSI "Cash Back" program, every dollar you make goes even further as each certification you issue is money credited toward your annual instructor renewal.

Personal Growth

Learning how to teach someone to dive will push your personal limits. You will develop skills in communication, patience, global awareness, compassion, and so much more. Teaching others to dive can be a challenge at times. Still, the rewards of watching a person grow more comfortable in the water to be completely independent are so rewarding. Who knew teaching someone to swim underwater would lead you to become a better person?

Purpose

Many people spend a lifetime searching for a deeper purpose or meaning in their lives. Becoming an SSI Professional can ignite a deep passion and a sense of purpose to protect the beautiful underwater environment that you get to see every day. SSI created Blue Oceans with this exact sense of purpose in mind. Engage your students with dynamic materials and share your sense of purpose to create awareness and protect the oceans with them using the free Blue Oceans program.

Whatever reason appeals to you the most, making a choice to become an SSI Professional is always a win. A win for you and a win for our oceans. Ready to take the plunge? Contact an SSI Instructor Training Center near you or your SSI Service Center:

[**https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/myssi/contact/**](https://www.divessi.com/en-IC/myssi/contact/)

