

Title:

The Red Sea in Egypt for Scuba Diving

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818

Summary:

The Red Sea in Egypt, one of the most exotic scuba diving destinations in the world. Combined with the ancient sites of Egypt, a trip to the Red Sea is truly a dream trip for any scuba diver.

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Article Body:

For many Europeans, traveling to the Red Sea for scuba diving is like many North Americans going to the Caribbean. For a scuba diver based in North America or anywhere else outside of Europe or Africa, a journey to the Red Sea is considered one of the more exotic scuba diving trips. Like other overseas travel, getting to the final destination is the hardest thing. The Red Sea can be dived from ports in both Egypt and Israel but most international scuba divers do so from the Egyptian side. There are two major scuba diving areas in Egypt, Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada. Sharm El Sheikh at the northern part of the Red Sea is the more established center having been a popular vacation resort area as both Egyptians and Europeans have been vacationing here for many years. The local scuba dive industry grew along with the overall steady growth of classy resorts, shops and other tourist services in Sharm El Sheikh. Hurghada, once just a sleepy fishing village along the west side of the Red Sea, is starting to grow as scuba divers discover this alternative to Sharm El Sheikh.

More than likely, travelers going to either Sharm El Sheikh or Hurghada will have to fly to Cairo before connecting with Egypt Air or taking a bus to their final destination. Many scuba divers turn their Red Sea diving trip into a major extended holiday in order to both dive and see the many wonderful ancient Egyptian sites such as the pyramids. There are many things to see and do in Egypt in addition to the ancient ruins including museums, markets and Nile river cruises. So it is highly recommended to do some research and plan accordingly for any trip to Egypt as one would not want to run into the situation where not enough time was allocated to see everything one wants to see there in addition to scuba diving.

Many of the scuba operators in Sharm El Sheikh are affiliated or close by to a hotel resort. Most of the dive shops are actually owned and staffed by Europeans working in Egypt. This is similar to the situation in the Caribbean where many of the scuba operators there are American owned. The Red Sea has a higher salt content than Caribbean waters so it is recommended to add 4 to 5 more pounds to the amount of weight divers usually use. Like most European diving, the scuba community here in Egypt uses the metric system so weights will be in kilos while air pressure will be in bars. Most dive computers should be able to display both metric and imperial systems.

Many scuba operators in Sharm El Sheikh use a very interesting system for scuba tanks. Rather than using their own tanks, their dive boats go to a common central barge anchored in the harbor. This is where all the scuba tanks are supplied from and the dive boats collect the number of tanks they need for day's dive trips. At the end of the trips, used tanks are dropped off at the same barge before heading back to port.

The majority of the dives in the Red Sea are semi drift dives where the dive boats drop off divers at the dive sites and then pick them up afterwards. One very different aspect of the Red Sea compared to other dive destinations in the world is that the coral reefs here can extend up to very shallow depths. As a result, the standard safety stops at 15 feet are done drifting among many of these sloping reefs along with the accompanying marine life. Therefore, these are some of the most scenic safety stops scuba divers will ever do. This is certainly different from the usual bland safety stop in the Caribbean. One thing to note is that the maximum allowable depth for recreational scuba divers in Egypt is 30 meters which is about 90 feet.

As expected, the marine life in the Red Sea is spectacular. There are many species of fish, crustaceans and marine plant life here that are not found in the Caribbean. In fact, many of them are indigenous to the Red Sea only. While lionfish can be extremely rare sightings elsewhere, they are quite abundant in the Red Sea which is a real treat for scuba divers. It is also not unusual to jump in the water to be among a large school of tuna or other fish. Many night divers will see coral reefs here to be more spectacular than in the Caribbean.

For many scuba divers, the Red Sea is one of those 'must dive at least once in a lifetime' destinations. It is a very unique place to dive especially with the desert background visible from the dive boats. The excellent diving with the many awesome sights of Egypt make the Red Sea a dream dive trip for any scuba diver.