HOME

Egypt is the home destination for lots of European divers that got enough from the cold waters in their country. The Red Sea has tropical fish, clear blue water and the temperatures are generally warmer, from 18C/65F in January till 30C/86F in July and august. The best time to go is in May or by the end of the year in October or November. The water is still warm and there are lesser tourists.

Egypt used to be The African Hotspot for sunseekers. Now, in this political climate, people are afraid to go. Don’t be scared! Go instead! First, it’s cheaper and second, there will be more place for you as all the rest stays away. I’d go back this second if I could.

Diving in Egypt is divided in three areas: The Sinai Peninsula, with Sharm El Sheikh, Dahab and Taba, the north of the mainland with El Gouna, Hurghada and Safaga, and the south with Marsa Alam and El Quesir. Apart from this, there are also two liveaboard routes that visit The Brothers and then north to Ras Mohamed and the Thislegorm wreck, or go south to Elphinstone and Daedalus Reef.

DAHAB

Dahab is a town on the Sinai Peninsula, at the Gulf of Aqaba. It is famous for its technical diving and the Blue Hole! You can stay in Dahab, or you can do a day trip from Sharm El Sheikh.

Blue Holes are big diving attractions. There are only three in the world: Dahab, the Bahamas and Belize. This one, however, has a bad reputation as being the deadliest dive site in the world. It has The Diver’s Cemetery as a nickname, and yes, next to the place of entry, there is a wall with all the names of the drowned divers. They get stuck in the tunnel, called ‘The Arch’ and goes from the Blue Hole to the Red Sea, died of narcosis or panic attacks… It is a deep swim through so you shouldn’t just attempt it, if you don’t have the right level and gear.

I wasn’t a big fan of the Blue Hole. There was nothing to see, except a hole that goes 120 meters/400 feet deep. But it is a signature dive so you have to do it one day, no?

Another known dive in Dahab is The Bells. People like to start in The Bells and come up in the Blue Hole. As it is on the outer side, you have to watch out for the current.

Water temperatures change between a chilly 20C/68F in winter and a nice 28C/82F in summer. Take the right wetsuit!

EL GOUNA

El Gouna is my favourite in Egypt! I have been diving there several times, with family and alone.  
The reason why I like this town so much, is that it has more or less all dives you do from Hurghada but it’s lots easier and safer to go for a walk or for dinner. As a woman alone, I kinda like that. I always call El Gouna the Disneyland of Egypt as it is a created city. It has lots of islands and lagoons, all connected to each other and looks like a little Venice in the desert. It is very fake but it is enjoyable. When you come in into town, your car or bus will be fully checked at a check-point and only lately, people started living there full time.

El Gouna is part of the Red Sea Riviera and is located 25km/15.5 miles north of Hurghada. This part of Egypt can have strong winds so waves can be funny. The water temperature goes from 16C/60F in winter till 30C/86F in summer.

There are 4 recreational wrecks on an outer reef, 2 hours away from El Gouna. Those ones you won’t go to if you’re diving from Hurghada! Because winds can be tricky and the site is rather far away, they won’t always be dived on. The history behind these sunken boats is interesting and will nicely be explained.

Another interesting site is Dolphin House on Shaab El Erg. If you don’t see dolphins during the dive, you will probably meet them on your way to there.

From El Gouna, you can book little diving trips for 1 or 2 nights up to Ras Mohamed and the Rosalie Moller and Thistlegorm wreck next to the Sinai Peninsula. These wrecks are famous and worth going if you have the time. You do have to have your advanced level and preferably nitrox too.

I always dived with Easy Diver Academy (EDA) when I was in El Gouna. They have their dive center in the hotel Three Corners Rihanna. If you’re not staying in this hotel, they come and pick you up in yours. EDA has great instructors and guides. The manager, Serge, will always try to make your diving wishes come true. Some of my family members did their courses with EDA and I was happy with that.

EL QUESIR

El Quesir is an old town on the east coast of mainland Egypt. It is located around 100km/62 miles north of Marsa Alam, so you fly on this city when you come in. Only recently it became a tourist town so it is still very relaxed.

El Quesir has different kind of dive sites, like reefs and wrecks, even some caves for the more experienced diver. The South of Egypt has a bigger chance for seeing the Oceanic White tips, mantas and whale sharks! If you are really lucky, then maybe you can even see a dugong.   
Water temperatures go from 20C/68F in winter till 28C/82F in summer. Currents can vary between almost none and strong. The visibility is good, around 25m/82feet.

HURGHADA

Hurghada is a big city on the East Coast of Egypt. It’s the second biggest tourist and dive location, after Sharm El Sheikh. The city is still growing and expanding, putting in more and more hotels and dive centers. I’d rather go to El Gouna 25km/15.5 miles up north.

Because of being such a big tourist city, there are lots of people coming to do their Open Water or Advanced Course. On some popular dive sites, there can be heaps of boats and divers. I suggest you go in May or October/November to avoid the big crowds. Choose your wetsuit well as the water temperatures go from 18C/65F in winter to 30C/86F in summer. Hurghada is in a windy part of Egypt. Kitesurfing and other windy watersports are also very popular here. Make sure you have a good sweater during the boat trips. Seas can also by rocking and sea sickness pills can be a great relief!  
Currents can change between very gentle at the training sites around Giftun, to stronger on the outer reefs. The visibility is good all year round.

There are 4 wrecks on Abu Nuhas Reef, 2.5h to the North. Because of this distance and the strong winds, they aren’t that much dived on from Hurghada. You have a better chance to go from El Gouna.

Lots of the Red Sea Safari Liveaboards leave from Hurghada. They go up north to Ras Mohamed and the Thistlegorm wreck or to the South, sometimes all the way to the Sudanese border. I really recommend these trips to the more experienced divers!

MARSA ALAM

Marsa Alam, and the whole Southeast of Egypt, are an upcoming tourist and diving destination! Since the international airport opened in 2001, more and more divers find their way and underwater exploration became booming business. Most sites are not for beginners but for the more experienced diver, although everybody can dive house reefs. Marsa Alam also has one of the best dive sites of Egypt, Elphinstone reef, where you maybe can spot Silky Sharks, Hammerheads or an Oceanic White Tip! Another great dive site is Dolphin House. I think the name gives the creature away here…  
Everywhere in the South of Egypt, there is more change to spot the big stuff like Mantas (May to August), Whale Sharks (May and June) or the rare Dugong.

The dive season in Marsa Alam goes the whole year round but as July and August are high season, I recommend October. The water temperature is still warm and there are lesser divers. The temperatures are chilly in January/February (23C/F) and lots nicer in July/August (30C/86F). Currents can be quite strong so a reef hook and SMB are recommended if you dive without guide. Visibility is always good, with sometimes even more than 50m/160 feet. Winds can be stronger in winter. If so, the not-protected dive sites may be impossible to do.

Some liveaboards leave from Marsa Alam/Port Ghalib to visit the southern dive areas of Egypt, until the border with Sudan. The Brothers, Elphinestone, Daedulus reef and St Johns will be included. Save the money and go. This is one of the best liveaboard routes in the world!

SHARM EL SHEIKH

Sharm El Sheikh is a big city, located on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, just at the beginning of the Gulf of Aqaba. It is the biggest and most popular tourist and dive destination of Egypt. So… avoid it unless you go in autumn or spring.

Sharm used to be this little cute town until mass-tourism found its way. Now, the city is so big, it has two big harbours to locate all the (dive)boats. You are never diving alone. Sometimes it looks like diving in a jacuzzi and the bubbles from the divers underneath you, make you float up and the safety stops become difficult. It’s diving zoo galore!  
Lately, with this weird political climate and terrorism threats, it should be calmer. People are afraid to go after ISIS shut down a Russian airplane in October 2015. Sharm El Sheikh always has been high on the radar for terrorist attacks. It is the biggest tourist city after all.

In 2010, a series of shark attacks made people scared too. I wasn’t surprised about those attacks. It is known that snorkel and dive operators feed the fish and sharks in Sharm. I have seen it happen with the big napoleon wrasse, living on Yolanda Reef. That fish became upset if you didn’t have eggs with you, so used it was to be being fed by dive guides. The worst was when the government just killed a random shark, saying that one was the culprit so people would shut up.

The dive sites are separated in 3 areas. The Straits of Tiran are up north, Ras Mohamed Marine Park is down south and then there are some dive sites just in front of the city. A special trip to the world-famous wreck of the Thistlegorm can be arranged too.  
Ras Mohamed has become too famous and during high season it is packed with day people coming from Sharm El Sheikh. You’d be better of with staying in a dive camp and have the lonely hours to yourself to dive.

You can dive the whole year in Sharm. Water temperatures are around 21C/70F in winter to a nice 30C/86F in summer. Currents depend on where you are diving, going from gentle to a good medium. Visibility is always good in the Red Sea.

SAFAGA

Safaga is a town on the East Coast of Egypt, 55km/33mi under Hurghada. It is part of the Red Sea Riviera and is becoming more and more popular for water sports. It has stronger winds so wind surfers and kite surfers feel at home. It is also a good and still relaxed diving area.

One of the most popular dive sites is the MV Salem Express wreck, a burial ground for almost 500 people. Some people claim the ship was overcrowded when it sank and more than 1500 people died. The ferry ran into a reef during a nightly comeback from Jeddah. Lots of pilgrims were aboard, coming back from the Hadj and many couldn’t swim. Most of the bodies have been recovered but stories go there are still some people inside.  
If you swim around the wreck, you can find plates, transistor radios, suitcases… lying down in the sand. At the stern, at 30m/100ft, there is a big hole where you can enter. Cars and luggage are still there. At this point, I don’t know if you are allowed (and if it’s possible) to enter the rest of the ship. Different reports go around: are the holes welded together, yes or no? Does the government let you enter, yes or no? When I was there, in 2008, we were not allowed to go in. In my opinion, you shouldn’t enter anyway as this is a grave for lots of people.

My other favourite dives were Middle Reef, with beautiful coral gardens, and the Seven Pillars.  
We dived with Nemo Dive Club, a Dutch/Belgian run dive center. They were very welcome to fulfil our diving wishes. They also own a small divers’ hotel. If you aren’t staying with them, they come and pick you up at your hotel.

Water temperatures change between 22C/72F in winter and 30C/86F in summer. The currents depend on where you are diving. Some sites are protected, other ones can be considered as a drift dive. The best months to visit are May/June and October/early November.

TABA

Taba is a city on the Sinai Peninsula, at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, on the border with Israel. Taba Heights lies 20km/12.5mi more to the south. They are newer tourist destinations so dive sites will be more enjoyable and not overcrowded like Sharm El Sheikh.

Taba is a good spot to start your Open Water course. The currents are very gentle in different spots. Visibility is always good in the Red Sea. Water temperatures go from 20C/68F in winter till 30C/86F in summer.

Pharaoh island is a popular small dive island with 5 sites around. It is in a lagoon and completely protected from waves and currents. Another interesting place are the dive sites in The Fjord.

RED SEA LIVEABOARD

Liveaboards on the Red Sea have some of best trip itineraries in the world. It doesn’t matter which trip you choose. Depending on where you want to go and what you want to see, you can choose your boat, port of embarkation -Hurghada, Port Ghalib, Sharm El Sheikh, and trip direction.

A popular trip is visiting the wrecks of the North and then go to the Brother Islands. The Thistelgorm, the 4 wrecks of Abu Nuhas, the two Brothers and other dive sites are included.

The Brothers, Little Brother and Big Brother, are two islands east of El Quesir. You can only reach them on liveaboards so they are still virginal. It’s great diving: Steep drop-offs, an abundance of soft and hard coral, two wrecks, predator fish like barracudas and mackerel, and the fiery sharks. Currents can be strong, so be ready to do negative entries. Because these dive sites are not that easy, you must be an experienced diver with at least 50 dives. It also is a Marine Park, so some extra fees will be included and you have to follow the strict guide lines.

You can also visit the Brothers on a southern trip. Then you combine the islands with Elphinstone and Daedalus Reef, two famous dive spots in front of Marsa Alam.

The closer you get to Sudan, the more pristine the dive sites are and the more chance to see Oceanic White tips, Hammerheads, Whale Sharks or Mantas. Saint Johns, Fury Shoals and Zabargad are great dive areas but only for the more experienced divers!

You can do liveaboard trips the whole year round. Of course, the trips are subject to weather conditions. In winter time water will be colder, around 20C/68F. The summer has nice temperatures around 30C/86F. Visibility in the Red Sea is always good. Be aware of the strong currents. An SMB and reef hook are not a bad thing to bring.

Don’t forget to take your camera!