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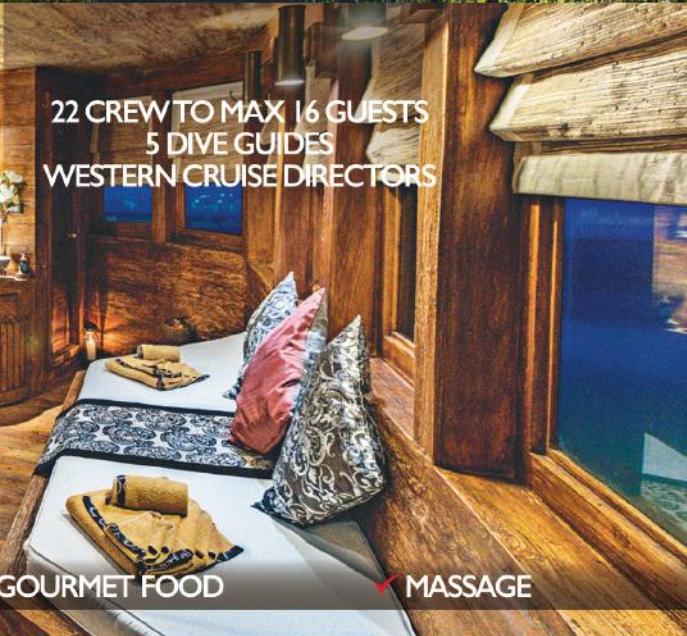
Q&A: ANNIE CRAWLEY, PT I ► RAJA AMPAT ► AKR COLUMN



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Wisdom in Seeking Local Knowledge

With my decades of diving experience, some might think that I don't require any guidance on the diving at any location in my travels. That assumption couldn't be further from the truth. Even in cases where I have been to a specific destination more than a few times, I will generally refrain from saying that 'I really know it'.

Case in point - last summer's trips put me back on the island of Roatan in the Honduran Bay Islands. While it would be my fourth visit to Roatan, I was on a photographic mission to capture the spawning activity of indigo hamlets. To my good fortune, during my stay at Coco View Resort on the south side of Roatan, the resort's resident photo pro, Mickey Charteris, made himself available to help me accomplish my mission. Being a long-time resident, Mickey was able to advise me not only on where and when to look for what I was after, but also provided valuable tips on capturing images of the hamlets — proving that it pays to seek, as well as heed, local knowledge.

In addition to my story about Coco View Resort, for a little more exotic fare, we have a piece on diving Batanta Island, considered the 'wild side of Raja Ampat' — remote, raw, and remarkably untouched. The journey abroad doesn't end there. We also pay a visit to an offshoot of the Red Sea - the Gulf of Aqaba in Jordan - where desert meets the sea in one of the region's most-surprising dive destinations. In addition to this region's lesser-known diving, you will also be taken on a side tour of Wadi Rum and Petra. Carved 2,000 years ago into the rose-colored cliffs of a canyon, the ancient city of Petra is one of the New Seven Wonders of the World and a favored backdrop for films like Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.

In this issue's Q&A, we will hear from underwater photographer Annie Crawley, who is also an award-winning producer, author, and motivational speaker on diving. Swinging back around to home is Part Three of the Great American Dive, focusing this time on regions along the east and west coasts of the continental US for diving with giant octopus, Goliath grouper, and sharks. To whet the interest of our tech diving readers, Mike Dudas takes us on a tour of the Andrea Doria — a wreck so deep, so storied, and so technically demanding that completing the dive has become a benchmark of achievement in the wreck diving community. Mike traces her story from tragic demise to present-day diving.

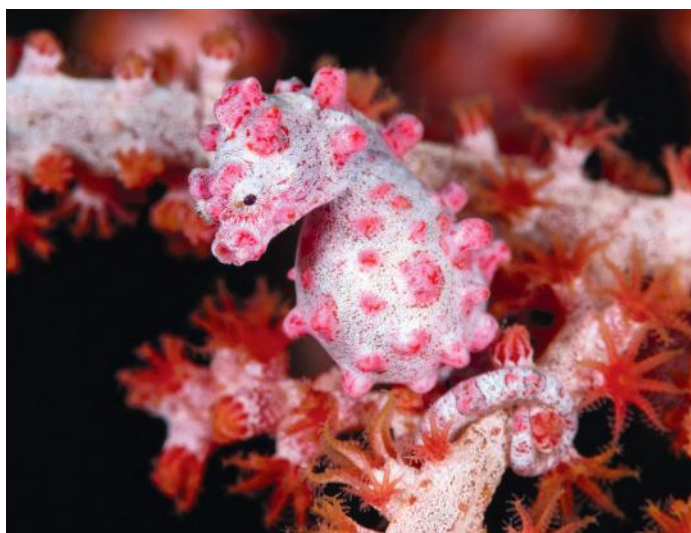
So, there you have it — another issue built on the belief that the best diving, like the best advice, comes from those who know the water best. Enjoy!

Walt Stearns, Editor (North America)



"This is the best diving I have ever done in 30 years of diving. All of the staff are the most helpful and gracious I have ever met in 50 years of traveling. The staff are as magnificent as the reef!"

~ Russell Graham, Dec 2025

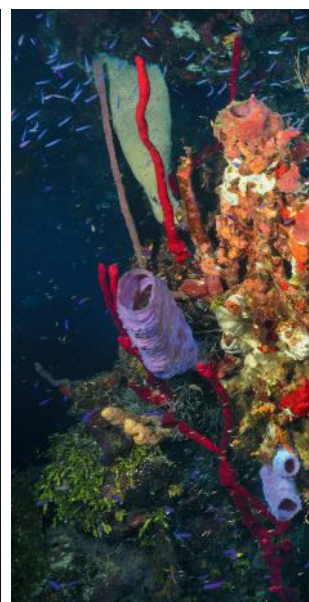
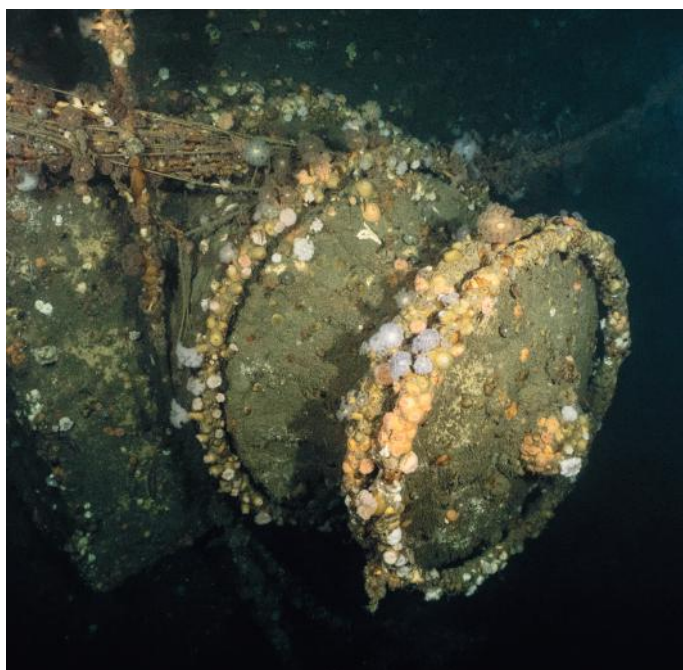


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Don Silcock explores the diving opportunities that lie in the waters off Batanta, a lesser-known area of hotspot Raja Ampat.

54 TECH: Andrea Doria

70 years ago, a modern maritime tragedy occurred - the Swedish passenger liner Stockholm collided with the Italian ocean liner Andrea Doria, sending it to the bottom several

hours later and claiming 51 lives. The Doria became known as 'The Mount Everest of Wreck Diving' due to its location in deep, treacherous waters – Mike Dudas takes a closer look at the iconic wreck, and how the legend built up around it.

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57 Aggressor Adventures— and Counting!





Photo by Stephen Jorgensen

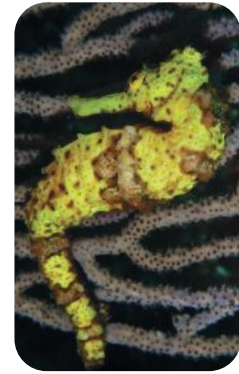


Photo by Stephen Jorgensen

Aggressor Addict, Stephen Jorgensen, has found amazing adventures on 57 Aggressors and counting.

Why does he keep coming back? Well, he says it best:

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Stephen Jorgensen, Missouri, USA

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Each month, we bring together the latest regional industry news, as well as all over our water planet. To find out the most up-to-date news and views, check out the website or follow us on our various social media channels @divernetuk www.divernet.com/news



DIVERS ALERT NETWORK ANNOUNCES 2026 INTERNS

Divers Alert Network (DAN) has introduced its 2026 interns – Trystan Cavitt, Jacqueline Keleher, Juliana McKenna, and Alexa Rand.

DAN launched its internship program in 1999 to give qualified candidates valuable experience in dive safety research. While the three-month program remains rooted in research, its scope has expanded to include projects that support other aspects of DAN's mission to help divers in need and to promote dive safety through education. Today, DAN interns participate in a range of activities, including field work, communications, and training program development.



Trystan Cavitt, Dr. Glen H. Egstrom DAN/OWUSS Divers' Health and Safety Research Intern

Trystan Cavitt is a senior at the University of South Florida pursuing a degree in cell and molecular biology, with plans to continue his education at the graduate level. He is currently completing his Divemaster certification and has spent the past two years gaining experience through an internship with a local dive shop.

He plans to pursue a future in hyperbaric medicine and education and looks forward to supporting diver health and safety during his time at DAN.

Jacqueline Keleher, DAN/OWUSS Divers' Safety Intern

Jackie Keleher is a scientific diver and Divemaster with a focus on accessibility and inclusion in the diving community. She earned Bachelor of Science degrees in marine fisheries and marine biology from Texas A&M University and a Master's degree in biology from Appalachian State University, where her research focused on species-specific nutrient processing by Caribbean sponges.

She has worked as a dive programme aide at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma, Washington, engaging with the public through dive shows and leading kelp habitat surveys. She is excited to support safe diving practices grounded in science while at DAN this summer.

Juliana McKenna, Michael Menduno DAN Outreach Intern

Juliana McKenna is a recent graduate of Eckerd College, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in environmental studies with minors in marketing and biology, focusing on marine ecosystems. She recently completed her Divemaster certification in Bali, Indonesia, through an internship, where she contributed to coral restoration and green turtle research. Juliana has also participated in shark research expeditions in the Bahamas and Florida and in coral research in Costa Rica. She looks forward to using marketing and communications tools to promote dive safety and ocean stewardship as a DAN intern.

Alexa Rand, DAN Research Intern

Alexa Rand is a medical student at Indiana University School of Medicine. She previously received a Bachelor of Science in biology, along with minors in French and chemistry and a certificate in underwater resource management, from Indiana University. A scientific diver, she previously worked as a Divemaster for the university's academic diving program and as a research associate with its Center for Underwater Science. She hopes to combine her passion for diving and medicine in her future career and is excited to further her education in scientific research during this internship.

INDUSTRY NEWS

GHOST-DIVERS CAPTURE FIRST MED U/W WHITE SHARK FOOTAGE



Technical divers clearing ghost-fishing gear from a shipwreck have documented what they believe to be the first-ever underwater footage of an adult great white shark in its natural habitat in the Mediterranean Sea.

The unexpected encounter took place during a mission to remove nets that had been trapping marine life on and around a wreck between Sicily and Tunisia.

The operation had been organised by the Healthy Seas foundation, which is dedicated to removing ghost-fishing gear and marine litter through strategic partnerships.

Divers from the Ghost Diving group carried out the underwater recovery operations while another Healthy Seas project partner, the Society for Documentation of Submerged Sites (SDSS), contributed historical shipwreck expertise and underwater documentation.

The Strait of Sicily, where the divers were working, is described by Healthy Seas as one of the most heavily fished parts of the Mediterranean. There had been only occasional surface sightings of what were taken to be white sharks there in the past.

Previous dives at the site, the exact location of which has been kept secret, had documented marine animals trapped in fishing net, including several endangered loggerhead sea turtles and large fish.

The wreck lies at a maximum depth of 170ft with its top at around 130ft, which was where the divers saw the shark as they descended.

Volunteer Derk Remmers of Ghost Diving Germany captured the video footage. "Statistically, it is way more likely to win the lotto jackpot than to meet such an iconic animal under water," he said. "You spend decades diving wrecks and removing ghost-nets, but nothing prepares you for a moment like this.

"An offshore underwater shark encounter in the Mediterranean is insane, yet we also went on with our diving plan to remove nets from the wreck."

"Most of our knowledge on the white sharks in the Mediterranean Sea comes from records of dead specimens caught by fishing operations," pointed out Dr Carlo Cattano, a researcher at the Sicily Marine Centre of the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn.

"Observations like this are extremely valuable for improving our understanding of the distribution, habits and behavior of this critically endangered species."

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AGGRESSOR ADVENTURES ANNOUNCES THE RETURN OF DEMO WEEKS WITH MARES

Aggressor Adventures has announced the return of its very popular Demo Weeks, kicking off with a special Mares Demo Week aboard the Bahamas Aggressor II from 23-30 January 2027. This unique seven-night experience gives scuba divers the opportunity to test the latest innovations in dive equipment while enjoying world-class diving in the Bahamas. Guests will have access to a full range of Mares gear, including BCDs, regulators, dive computers, masks, and fins – all available to demo throughout the week.

Mares became the exclusive supplier and brand of diving equipment for Aggressor Adventures in 2024, making this collaboration a natural extension of the partnership.

“We are very excited to bring back the Demo Weeks. These charters are a great way for our guests to experience the latest in dive technology firsthand,” said Cole Watkins, Director of Marketing and Advertising for Aggressor Adventures. “Partnering with Mares allows us to combine top-tier equipment with one of the most iconic dive destinations in the world.”

Joining the charter will be Megan Ehrenberg, North American HEAD Watersports Marketing Manager, and Pamela Mycroft, Southwest District Sales Manager, who will be onboard to share insights into the research, development, and engineering behind the company's newest products. Guests can also look forward to



presentations, hand's-on demonstrations, and opportunities to learn directly from the experts.

In addition to exceptional diving and gear testing, the week will include daily giveaways and a fun, interactive atmosphere designed to enhance the overall experience.

Set against the backdrop of the Bahamas' renowned clear waters and vibrant marine life, Mares Demo Week offers a perfect combination of exploration, education, and excitement. Space is limited for this special event, and early booking is encouraged.

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WE'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER BOAT...

North Wales is perhaps not the first place you'd think of when it comes to climbing aboard an amazingly accurate replica of the fishing boat from iconic movie *Jaws*, but thanks to one man's determination, Conwy Marina is now home to the world's only full-size Orca – Mark Evans had to check it out first-hand



The Orca II, as the vessel is known, started life as a Grand Banks fishing boat. It was built in Singapore in 1959 and sailed to California, then later in life it was moved overland to the east coast of the US, and from there it was sailed across the Atlantic to Brighton, which is where lifelong *Jaws* fan Jon Fieldhouse found it and brought it up to Conwy on the back of a truck.

Jon said: "I think I was nine years old when I went to see *Jaws* at the cinema. My parents wouldn't let me see it but the parents of my best friend snuck me in and, of course, I was traumatised! But from seeing *Jaws II* onwards, I wanted to get in the water and see sharks and do my bit to protect them – they are fabulous creatures." Jon used to import lifesize replica dinosaurs from SE Asia and operate pop-up dinosaur experiences, and one day he got the construction team to make him a shark. This, combined with his lifelong fascination with *Jaws*, set him on his path to creating a faithful replica of the famous on-screen boat, or what he describes as 'the world's smallest theme park'.

The boatbuilder has devoted the last few years to hunting down and making items for the boat that would look as close as possible to 'the real thing'. This includes the bright yellow floatation barrels, the fishing chair fashioned from a Boston barber's chair, the shark cage, speargun, rifle, and other smaller, but equally important for die-hard fans, bits and pieces such as Pipit's dog collar, Brody's police badge, Quint's cap, Hooper's dive mask, Campbell's soup cans, a bottle of Old Spice, and a Penn Senator reel for the big-game rod.

Jon even imported Narragansett beer cans, which were hand-crushed in the movie by Capt Quint (Robert Shaw). But the item he is most proud of is the 1960s gas stove – he was looking for an authentic stove to put in the boat, and he believes that he has managed to get his hands on the actual prop from the movie itself. This is where Roy Schneider's character Chief Brody says the famed line 'we're gonna need a bigger boat'.

The attention to detail throughout the boat is astonishing – it really feels like you are stepping onto the movie set back

in 1975. There are so many little things to spot, and here and there he has added the odd still print from the film so you can see how close the Orca II is to the original.

He's also got some little extras on board which tie into the whole *Jaws* theme. There is a signed copy of *Jaws* by author Peter Benchley, and he also has a book about the sinking of the USS Indianapolis that has been signed by several survivors of that tragic incident – there is also a photograph of those ill-fated marines attached to the bridge.

Jon decided to keep some of the character elements of the donor boat, and said he has done a sympathetic restoration to turn her into a homage of the Orca. He explained: "I've got a nice mixture of the two, the original boat and the boat from *Jaws* – it would be hard to tell the slight differences between the two".

He was resolute in his belief that people would travel to see the Orca II, but even he has been overwhelmed by the response so far. He has been inundated with requests for more information from as far afield as Japan, and has already had visitors from the USA who made the journey across to the UK specifically to visit the boat. He has had people propose on the boat, and has even been asked if the Orca II can be used for a marriage ceremony.

He has been contacted by the team of a certain Tom Cruise, who is apparently keen to see the Orca II next time he is in the country, and he has been assured that director Steven Spielberg, star Richard Dreyfuss and Ian Shaw, son of Robert Shaw (and who recently played his father in stage show *The Shark Is Broken*) also want to visit the boat.

The Orca II is moored at Conwy Marina in North Wales, and you can book a tour for four people for £95 (approx. \$127). This gives the group a whole hour on the boat, where they can take videos and photographs, recite all those famous lines, and much more. Jon has an insane knowledge of *Jaws*, and he makes the whole visit a memorable experience and a must for fans of the legendary movie. A portion of ticket prices goes to several shark conservation charities, so you are doing your 'bit' for sharks too.

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Jordan, or more specifically, the city of Aqaba, sits at the very top of the Red Sea, at the end of the appropriately named Gulf of Aqaba. With the country only having a 17 mile stretch of coastline, it factors as one of the hidden gems of Middle East diving thanks to the pioneering efforts of King Abdullah II, and his late-father, King Hussein I, who were both keen scuba divers, and fierce advocates for the protection of the underwater world.

Thanks to this royal leadership, Jordan's reefs have remained in excellent condition, with mooring balls installed to prevent anchoring, and a prolific artificial reef program that has seen numerous shipwrecks, airplanes and military vehicles sunk over the last few decades to help take pressure off the natural coral reefs. Speaking of coral reefs, nowhere else in the world do reef-forming corals grow as far north as on Jordan's coast, which is due on the one hand to the sheltered, almost fjord-like location, and on the other to the relatively flat relief of the seabed.

Due to these peculiarities, the water temperature in winter never drops below the survival limit, which is 64 or 66 degrees F for most stony corals. And because water temperatures remain moderate even in summer, coral

bleaching, which has also severely affected several reefs in the central Red Sea in recent years, is not an issue. Against the backdrop of constantly rising sea temperatures, the Gulf of Aqaba could indeed be home to the healthiest coral populations in the Red Sea in the medium term.

The Gulf of Aqaba is home to around 500 species of fish, 127 species of stony corals and 300 species of soft corals – more diversity than can be found in the entire Caribbean. In and around Aqaba, part of the coral reefs were placed under nature conservation as early as the mid-1990s. This was followed in 1997 by the marine park, which covers a four-mile-long coastal strip and more than 20 dive sites.

Many of Aqaba's reef dives tend to be coral gardens, coral bommies and seagrass beds teeming with all of the usual reef dwellers, but the furthest dive-site to the north in Jordanian waters, Power Station (so named as it lies just offshore from a power plant) is a full-on wall dive, which in parts drops sheer into the abyssal depths.

The massive scale of the hard coral growth on the wall – gigantic plate-corals cover vast areas – and the general topography of the dive make it one for the logbook, but because of the nature of the site, with its close proximity to deep water, ▶

“ The Underwater Military Museum is a truly unique artificial reef, and the military vehicles are perfect as a back drop for photographers wanting something a little different underwater, but they will also be of huge interest to any diver ”

A vibrant underwater photograph showing ancient stone ruins partially covered in coral and marine life. Numerous colorful fish, including orange and blue species, swim around the structures. In the background, a diver is visible swimming near a large, dark, horizontal object, possibly a shipwreck. The water is clear and blue.

The land of **ADVENTURE**

Ancient ruins, spectacular natural scenery, pristine coral reefs and unique sunken features are just some of the attractions that draw visitors to Jordan. Mark Evans and Daniel Brinckmann have made multiple trips between them, and still hanker for more

Photographs by Mark Evans
and Daniel Brinckmann

this is one of the locations where there are many sightings of bigger creatures, including eagle rays, various shark species, turtles and more. However, the jewel in the crown of Jordan diving is undoubtedly the veritable fleet of sunken manmade attractions that lie in their warm, clear waters.

The Cedar Pride

This 242-foot, 1,161-tonne cargo vessel was launched in Spain in 1964 under the name Mone Dos. She went through two further name changes – Puerto De Pasajes and San Bruno – before eventually gaining her fourth and final title when purchased by a Lebanese shipping company.

In July 1982, she entered the port of Aqaba and, on 2 August, a fire ripped through the engine room and crew's quarters, with the loss of two lives. She was written off as a total loss, and for the next three years languished as a floating hulk. This was then targeted by then-Prince (now King) Abdullah II, who came up with the plan of sinking it as an artificial reef. For many years, it was the only one in Jordanian waters, and having been down since 1985 it has a healthy coating of marine growth. Hard corals and encrusting algae smother much of the superstructure, while vibrant soft corals decorate the crow's nest, the masts, and under the hull, where a gap in the reef makes for a dramatic swim-through at 85ft.

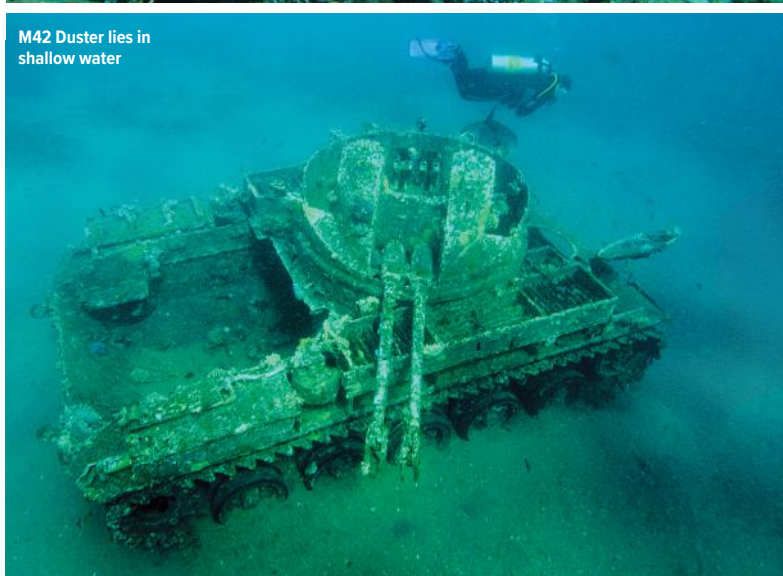
The holds are wide open, allowing for easy penetration, and if you carefully rise up around midships, you will go through a shoal of hatchetfish and find yourself in a large air-pocket. It isn't advisable to breathe this, but it is fun to surface inside the shipwreck at depth.

Lying on its port side, the Cedar Pride is a fantastic dive for any diver, but photographers will particularly love it, because there are many focal points that make great images, such as the crow's nest, the battered propeller, the lifeboat davits, various winches, the impressive bow and the entire stern section, with its sponge-covered railings.

Prop on the Cedar Pride



M42 Duster lies in shallow water



The M42 Duster anti-aircraft vehicle

While it is known as the 'tank', this intriguing little dive-site is actually an M42 Duster tracked anti-aircraft gun, equipped with twin 40mm M2A1 Bofors cannon. It was sunk in September 1999 by the Jordanian Royal Ecological Diving Society in shallow water and is a popular snorkel and try-dive site because of its location in just several feet of water.

Although only small, it's worth checking out at least once, especially for photographers, and, lying a short distance from the Seven Sisters dive site, is ideal for safety-stops.

The C-130 Hercules

Aqaba gained another unusual dive-site in November 2017 when the authorities sank a Lockheed C-130 Hercules four-engined turboprop military transport aircraft that had been donated by the Royal Jordanian Air Force. It initially sat on the seabed in 52ft, with its front wheels just off the bottom, looking as if it was about to take flight.

It was holding up to being submerged in salty water quite well, with just the odd panel and flap on the wings that had detached to sit on the sandy bottom close by, but then a winter storm tore it apart, and it is now more twisted and broken, though it still makes for a fascinating dive.

The L-1011 TriStar

In 2019, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) scuttled a Lockheed TriStar next to the King Abdullah Reef dive site, and adjacent to Aqaba Container Terminal.

Crow's nest on the Cedar Pride



A non-Jordanian commercial that had been out of service and parked at King Hussein International Airport for several years, ASEZA purchased the aircraft to sink it, joining its military aircraft companion, the Hercules C-130. It sits from 49ft-98ft, on a sloping reef, and while smothered in algae growth, is fully intact. You can easily swim through the interior, which is still complete with seats, peer into the cockpit, and venture up and out through the third engine port on the tailfin.

The Underwater Military Museum

The Underwater Military Museum comprises 19 military vehicles and aircraft, namely tracked anti-aircraft guns, light tanks, Khalid heavy battle tanks, Ferret, Samaritan and Ratel armoured cars, Spartan armored medical vehicle, Chieftain armored repair and recovery vehicle, M155 203mm field guns and even two AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters.

Sunk in 2019, they are laid out along a sandy 'road' in 'battle formation', in depths ranging from 60ft down to around 98ft. They are spaced out enough that you can just see the next 'row' as you finish up with your inspection of the vehicles you are on initially.

The Underwater Military Museum is a truly unique artificial reef, and the military vehicles are perfect as a back drop for photographers wanting something a little different underwater, but they will also be of huge interest to any diver wanting to sample something completely different in an underwater environment.

The Taiyong and Al Shorouk

In the early 2000s, two ships – a transport vessel, and a ferry – were both sent down as diver attractions, but they ended up in 60m, thus out of reach of recreational divers, but have become a playground for technical divers. ▶



Armored car in the Underwater Military Museum

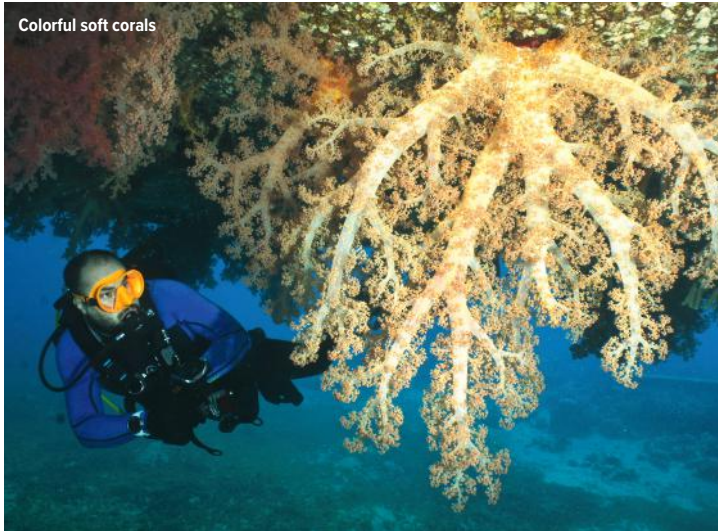


C-130 Hercules



“ However, the jewel in the crown of Jordan diving is undoubtedly the veritable fleet of sunken manmade attractions that lie in their warm, clear waters ”

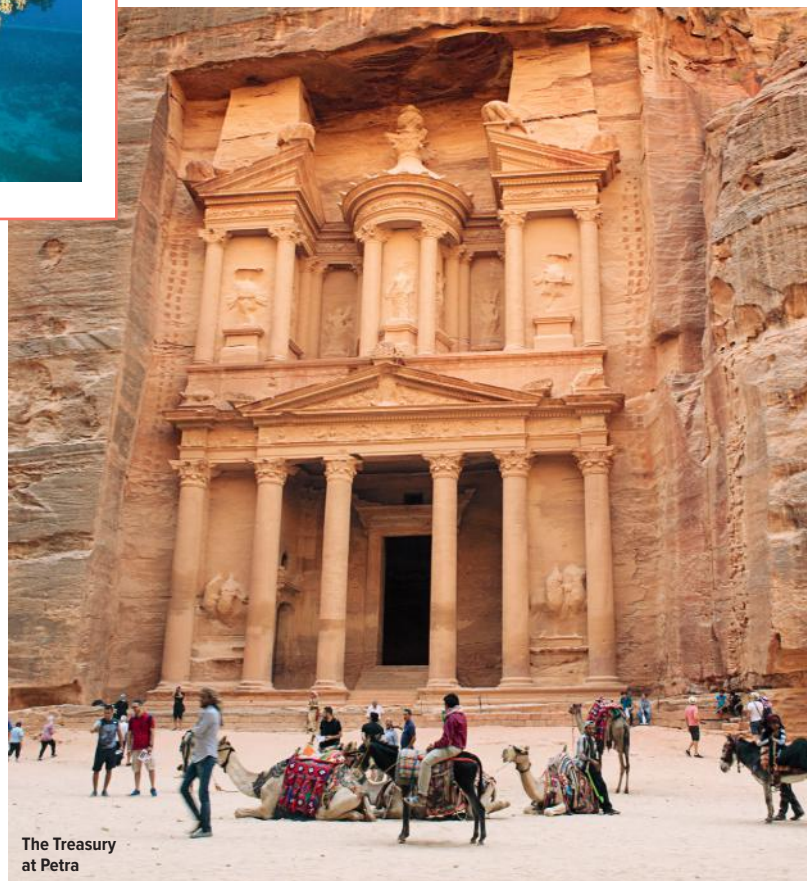
Colorful soft corals



Heavy tank in the Underwater Military Museum



Heading down the Siq to Petra



The Treasury at Petra

On the land

There is far more on offer in Jordan than to 'just' go diving. In fact, you could spend a week or two solely exploring topside and still only scrape the surface of what there is to experience, but two places that absolutely have to be on the 'to-do' list are Wadi Rum and Petra.

The dried-up river valley of Wadi Rum is one of the highest and most-beautiful desert areas on Earth. 'Epic' might be an over-used word, but the scenery in Wadi Rum more than deserves such an accolade.

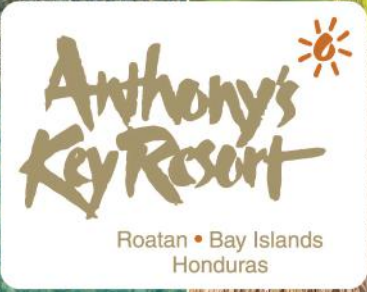
It is simply mind-blowing. Monstrous rocky headlands, cliffs and mountains jut out of the rusty-red sand in every direction as far as the eye can see. It looks amazing just from the main car park and visitor's centre, but to get the most from any trip to Wadi Rum you need to head off on a 4x4 safari that takes you deep into the wonderful landscape.

These open-top tours give you an unfettered 360 degree view of the stunning surroundings. Tours stop and start, allowing you ample time to get out and explore on foot into canyons and on to dramatic viewpoints. In many cases it is only when you are standing next to some of the structures

that you fully appreciate how massive they really are. If Wadi Rum looks familiar, that's because it has provided a natural film-set for a host of Hollywood movies, including The Martian, Transformers, Star Wars and many more. Our guide pointed out a view that he then showed us in a still from The Martian – bizarre to be exactly where Matt Damon had sat in his 'space-suit'.

An overnight stay in a desert camp adds another dimension to any excursion. Sitting by an open fire, drinking Bedouin coffee and marvelling at the twinkling stars in the night sky unsullied by light pollution is simply sublime. This time in the desert will also give you the opportunity for another 'must' in Wadi Rum - a camel ride. Using this authentic mode of transport, with its ungainly, rocking motion, creates a lasting memory.

If Wadi Rum is the pinnacle of natural splendor, then the Rose Red City of Petra is the manmade equivalent. Another destination that has been made famous by Hollywood – most notably in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, and Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen – the enormous reliefs that the Nabataean people carved into the bare

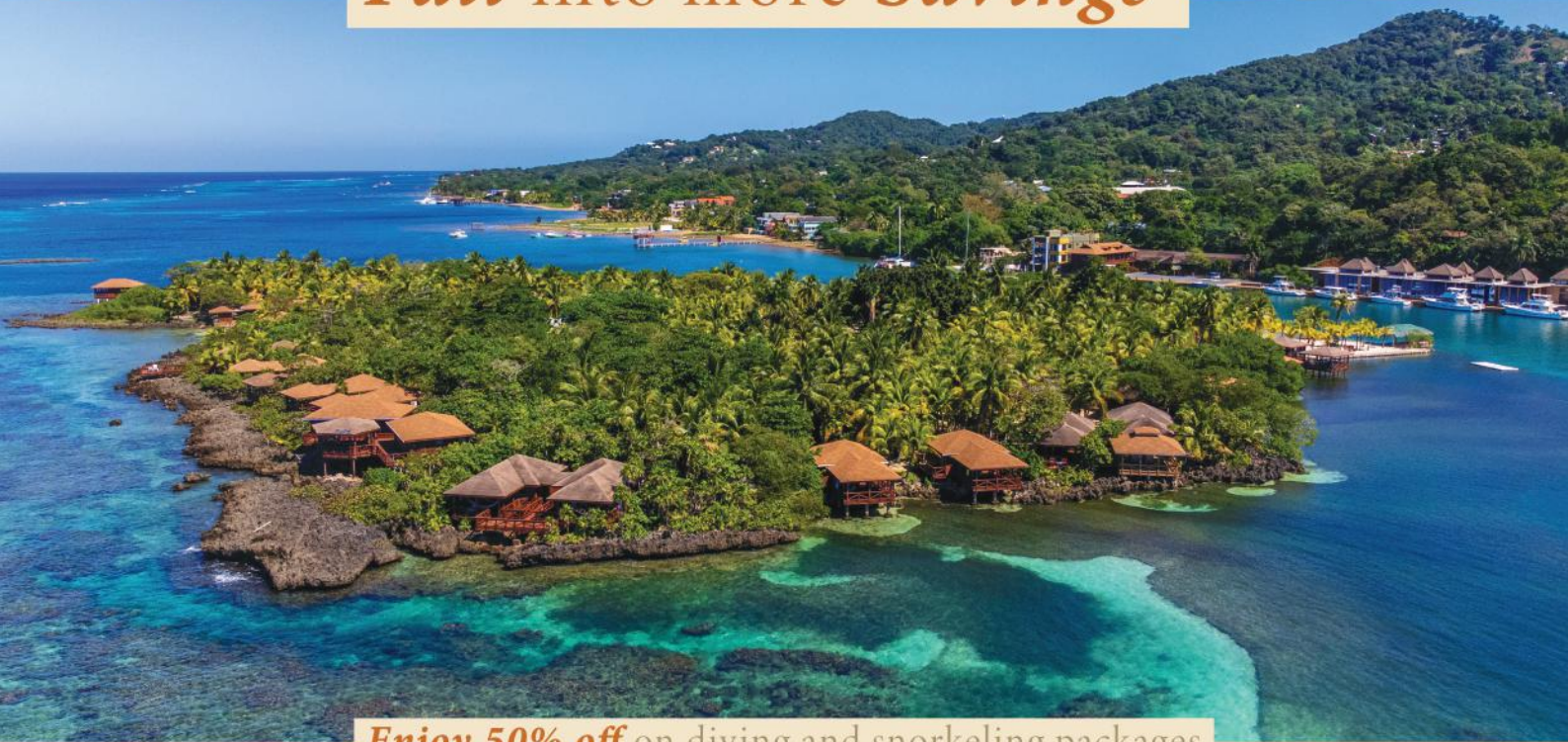


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rock thousands of years ago with the most-primitive means are no less impressive than the buildings of the ancient Egyptians. It is not known precisely when this sprawling city hidden away in the mountains was built, but it began to prosper as the capital of the Nabataean Empire from the 1st century BC, when it grew rich through trade in frankincense, myrrh and spices.

Later annexed to the Roman Empire, Petra continue to flourish until a massive earthquake in 363AD destroyed much of the city. This natural disaster, coupled with changes to the ancient trade-routes, eventually led to its downfall, and it was ultimately abandoned by the Nabataeans. By the middle of the 7th century it was largely deserted and had been lost to all but a few Bedouin tribes in the area.

It was not until 1812 that Petra was 'rediscovered' by Swiss explorer Johannes Burckhardt. Ever since, the beautiful city has become a place to amaze people from around the globe – it is not surprising that it is listed as one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. Even in our group of journalists, which included some well-traveled colleagues, no one really found the right vocabulary to adequately describe this place.

From the fabled Treasury (Al-Khazneh) that awaits you at the end of the winding Siq, a spectacular one-mile natural gorge that was carved by tectonic forces and smoothed by water, and features towering 262-foot-high walls, to the visually stunning Monastery (el-Deir) which sits high in the hills northwest of the city centre, there is so much to see in this sprawling 15 sq mile monument it is hard to know where to look next. The Nabataeans buried their dead in intricate tombs cut into the mountainside, along with temples, a theatre, colonnaded streets and churches. As you walk through the remnants, you get a feel for just how huge this city once was.

In summary

Beautiful coral reefs, photogenic and unique wrecks, excellent macro motifs, the magic of the desert in Wadi Rum, a cultural-historical superlative in Petra, the hustle and bustle of Aqaba, and the dust of the road that we adventurers love so much. Jordan is a small country that can be explored in a cursory fashion in a week, yet sows memories that will stay with you for a lifetime and leave you eager to return for more. ■

Enjoy tea in
the desert



Wadi Rum



Aqaba will be playing host to ABOFA, an event dedicated to the blue economy

Aqaba Blue: Ocean Future in Action

Aqaba Blue: Ocean Future in Action is a new international event in Jordan, scheduled from 9-12 September at the Aqaba International Exhibition Centre, that is dedicated to the blue economy. Organized in partnership with the Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC) Fira Barcelona, Salon Náutico, and PADI, ABOFA is designed to become the regional flagship event and key meeting point for the diving, marine technology and coastal lifestyle industries. The event reflects the growing strategic focus on advancing the diving and marine technology sector, while reinforcing Aqaba's position as an emerging regional hub for the blue economy.

ABOFA will focus on the diving sector and dive equipment, ocean technology and marine sciences, water sports and boating lifestyle, as well as diving destinations, watersports and adventure tourism. The event will bring together leading global brands, innovators, industry experts and global sector personalities from around the world. The exhibition will attract global exhibitors alongside visitors from across the region and beyond and will feature live demonstrations and interactive experiences tailored to both business-to-consumer and business-to-business audiences.

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SCUBA DIVER Q&A

ANNIE CRAWLEY PT I

We chat to acclaimed film-maker, underwater photographer, author and ocean educator about her enduring love affair with the sea, and her mission to protect our blue planet for future generations.

Photographs courtesy of Annie Crawley



Q: As we always do with these Questions and Answer sessions, how did you first get into scuba diving?

A: I often say I got into scuba diving by following the signs of life. Born and raised in Chicago, water was always part of my world. We grew up with a backyard pool, you can only imagine the shenanigans we got into. I competed on swim team, swam in Lake Michigan, and found every possible waterhole when we went camping across the USA. Looking back, it feels like I was always meant to be in the water. But diving itself wasn't in my consciousness.

That changed after college, when I planned a gap year and Australia was the first stop. Within the first two weeks of arriving, I was walking down a sidewalk in Perth when a colorful sign caught my eye: 'Learn to Scuba Dive'. I walked in and signed up for my PADI Open Water course.

A few days later, I entered the pool for the first time. I remember the moment clearly - placing the regulator in my mouth, pausing, and taking that first breath underwater. It wasn't hesitation, but a sense of unknowing - stepping into something my body had never experienced before. Then I breathed in and out, and everything shifted in my life.

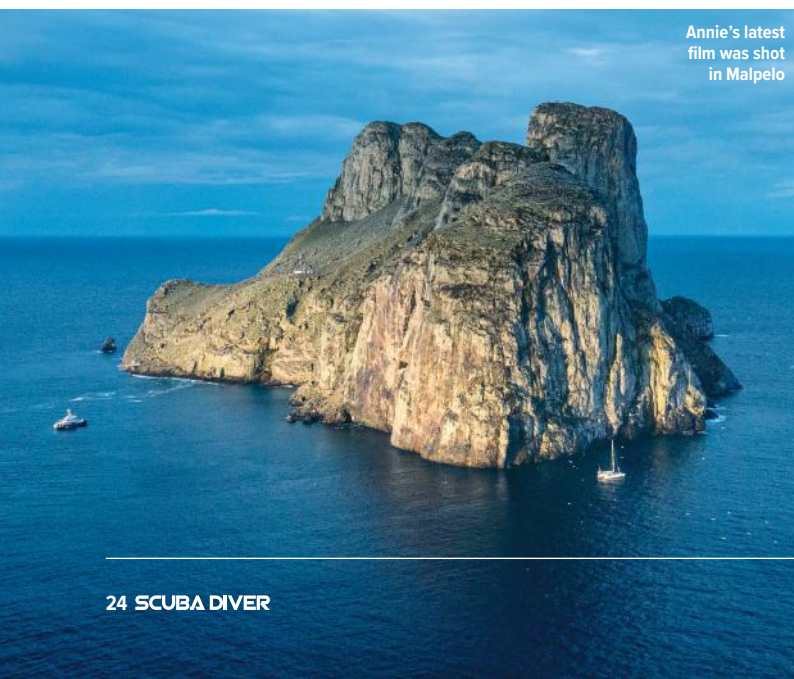
That breath slowed everything down. It brought awareness, presence, and a connection I had never felt before. It wasn't just about learning to dive - it was the beginning of my life. When I went to the ocean a few days later, I knew I found my passion and what would become my vocation and my purpose. Within the year I became a Divemaster; the following year in New Zealand a dive instructor, I then cashed in my ticket home for a one-way ticket to Bali and worked for two years throughout Indonesia as a dive instructor. The ocean became my home. You can say my entire life changed with that first breath underwater.

Annie back from a photo dive



“ Within the first two weeks of arriving, I was walking down a sidewalk in Perth when a colourful sign caught my eye: 'Learn to Scuba Dive' ”

Annie's latest film was shot in Malpelo



Q: You initially worked as a photo and broadcast journalist, but have since carved out a niche as a talented underwater photographer and film-maker – when did you pick up a camera and head underwater?

A: My junior year of college I found photo-journalism at the University of Illinois. I had a fabulous instructor who encouraged me to pursue the path and we had only the second digital photo-lab in the country. Now professor emeritus Brian Johnson brought in Mac computers and Photoshop at a time we were still printing on the press.



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The sad reality of threats to sharks



Anemonefish

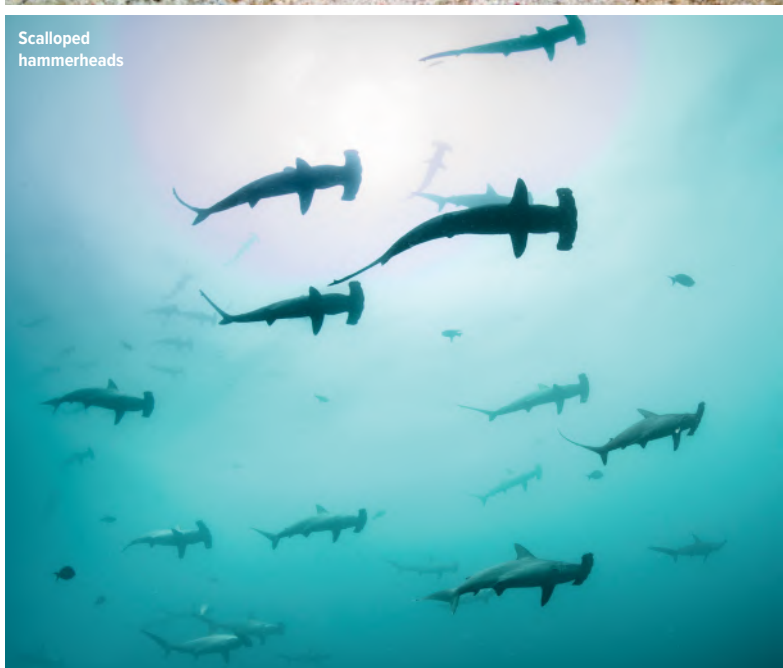
Fast forward to living abroad as a dive instructor, I always had my land camera but could not afford to house it. Remember three plus decades ago we were all using film.

After returning home from my first stint abroad, I moved to California. Here I pursued my career and always returned to the ocean as a part-time dive instructor and crew aboard our local boats. Deep inside of me, I knew I had to follow my dreams of merging photography/video together with what I experienced underwater. I quit my job, sold my car, and bought my underwater camera housings for both photo and video. I took the Undersea Program at what was then Brooks Institute of Photography and then went to work on liveaboard boats all around the world to perfect my skills.

It was 2006 when I founded my company Dive Into Your Imagination and started creating books, productions and more to connect the next generation to the world we all love. The ocean is under-represented in our education system and often misrepresented by the media. The ocean I fell in love with from the very beginning is not what was being broadcast. I wanted to be a part of the sea change.

Q: You have shot documentaries in some challenging environments, most recently out in the waters off the remote Malpelo Island, Colombia. Tell us about some of the difficulties you encounter in these locations.

A: Filming in remote places like Malpelo Island is both logistically demanding and deeply humbling. It's one of the most-isolated marine environments in the world, located within the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor, and simply getting there is a commitment. Once on site, everything becomes more complex. ▶



Scalloped hammerheads



Whale shark



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There is no margin for error. You are far from immediate support, working in open ocean conditions that can change quickly, and every piece of equipment, every battery, every shot matters.

For *The Island of the Shark: Guardians of Malpelo*, the production itself added another layer of challenge. I was essentially a one-woman crew, responsible for topside filming, underwater cinematography, drone work, lighting, and audio. Space on the *Silky* catamaran was limited, so there was no option to bring a team. That meant constantly shifting roles and making decisions in real time, often in physically demanding conditions.

But the greatest challenge wasn’t technical - it was human and relational. This story is built around Erika López, co-founder and executive director of Biodiversity Conservation Colombia, and her team’s mission to protect Malpelo Island fauna and flora sanctuary from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Erika has been operating in relative isolation for years, doing the hard, often unseen work of conservation.

Gaining her trust, and the trust of the crew, required time, presence, and respect. I lived aboard the *Silky* for nearly three months on my first expedition, not just to film, but to listen, to understand, and to let the story reveal itself. ▶



Annie has
many talents



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Danny Fryer (Instructor and Cave Diver)
Perth, Western Australia

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Annie is a strong supporter of the next generation



Huge school of silky sharks



Green turtle chomping on seagrass

At the same time, we were documenting a very real and ongoing threat. Overfishing remains the greatest danger to sharks globally, and at Malpelo, the team is actively confronting that reality every day. The crew maintains near-constant coverage of the island - 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Their presence has allowed them to recover tens of thousands of feet of illegal fishing line and deter hundreds of vessels from entering protected waters. This is conservation in action, not just policy on paper.

There is also an emotional weight that comes with this work. I first witnessed the power of shark migrations in the Galápagos 25 years ago, and even then, I saw the impacts of human activity - fishing line entangled on a hammerhead's cephalofoil. Today, the scale is staggering. We are losing an estimated 200 sharks every minute. That reality stays with you when you are filming, when you are editing, and when you are sharing the story.

Ultimately, the difficulty of working in a place like Malpelo is balanced by its purpose. This film is not just about a remote island; it is about amplifying the voices of the people protecting it and helping others understand what is at stake. The ocean remains underrepresented in our education systems and often misrepresented in media. My role as a filmmaker is to help shift that narrative - to show the beauty, the urgency, and the interconnectedness of it all.

Because in the end, conservation is not something happening somewhere else. It requires all of us. ■



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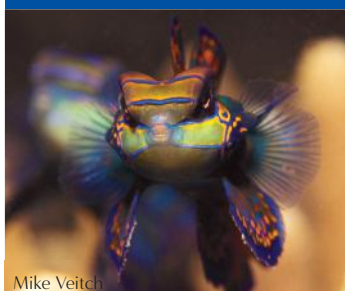
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A Resort Built for Divers

Getting to Roatan from Miami is a 'milk run' - a short two-and-a-half-hour flight to Juan Manuel Gálvez International Airport (RTB). After clearing the baggage terminal, Coco View representatives whisked us away for the eight-mile shuttle to the south coast. Opened in 1982 by Bill and Evelyn Evans, Coco View was modeled as an escape for those who value 'diving freedom'. Stepping onto the grounds feels like a journey back to the golden age of Caribbean dive lodges. The resort features 29 guest rooms perched at the water's edge, purposely omitting TVs to keep the focus on the ocean.

Social life centers on the Clubhouse, where the all-inclusive meal plan is served buffet-style to a hungry crowd. Breakfasts are a highlight, featuring made-to-order omelets alongside staples like pancakes, waffles, and fresh local fruit. Lunch offers a mix of lighter fare, from burgers and soups to traditional Honduran red beans, while dinner provides a rotating selection of hearty entrees - think chicken, beef, pork, and pasta - complemented by a fresh salad bar and a variety of desserts. ▶

The ritual begins every afternoon just before dusk. Near a particular coral head where the reef reaches within 10ft of the surface, a pair of adult indigo hamlets (*Hypoplectrus indigo*) close in on one another. At first, their behavior mimics a territorial dispute; they chase each other in frantic bursts around the coral before coming to a sudden, synchronized halt a foot above the reef.

Then, the magic happens. One fish turns a paler shade of blue while the second bends its body around the first. This intimate embrace lasts only a few seconds before the chase resumes, repeating the cycle until the light fades.

What I was witnessing wasn't a fight, but the complex mating ritual of one of the Caribbean's most-enigmatic residents. Hamlets are simultaneous hermaphrodites, possessing both active male and female organs at once. This strategy allows any mature individual to mate with any other, doubling reproductive success. During these spawning interludes, individuals alternate roles; the fish taking the 'female' role is the one that adopts the lighter, pale blue hue.

Finding the 'right' house reef

Last August, I traveled to the Bay Islands of Honduras with one primary objective - capturing high-quality images of this spawning behavior. To succeed, I needed a resort with easy shore access to a reef system offering a wide range of depths and profiles. After comparing Guanaja, Roatan, and Utila, the choice was clear. Coco View Resort on Roatan's southern shore is famous for its 'Front Yard' - a 24-hour playground featuring two distinct wall sites and a protected, reef-lined cove.

Walt Stearns relishes the diving freedom on offer to divers at the long-established Coco View resort on Roatan

Photographs by Walt Stearns

Did you know?

The Prince Albert wreck is a 140 foot tanker that was sunk intentionally in 1985. Currently sitting upright in 40ft to 80ft of water, sitting in the channel near Newman's Wall and Coco View Resort on the South shore of Roatan.

ROATAN'S 'FRONT YARD'

Diving the legend of Coco View

“ Starting from a shallow seagrass bed, you can explore the Prince Albert, a 140-foot freighter sunk in the mid-1980s that now hosts a lush forest of soft corals ”

About the Event

ABOFA – Aqaba Blue: Ocean Future in Action 2026 is a comprehensive international exhibition & experience platform dedicated to Diving, Marine Technology, Water Sports & Adventure, Tourism & Ocean Lifestyle.

Taking place in the heart of the Red Sea, ABOFA aims to transform Aqaba into the region's leading hub for diving, marine innovation, & coastal adventure industries.

The event brings together global brands, innovators, researchers, divers, investors, & marine professionals to connect, collaborate, showcase technology, conduct demonstrations, & engage in Themed Activities & B2C experiences.



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Themed Activities

Show Summary

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20+

Workshops

50+

Speakers

4000+

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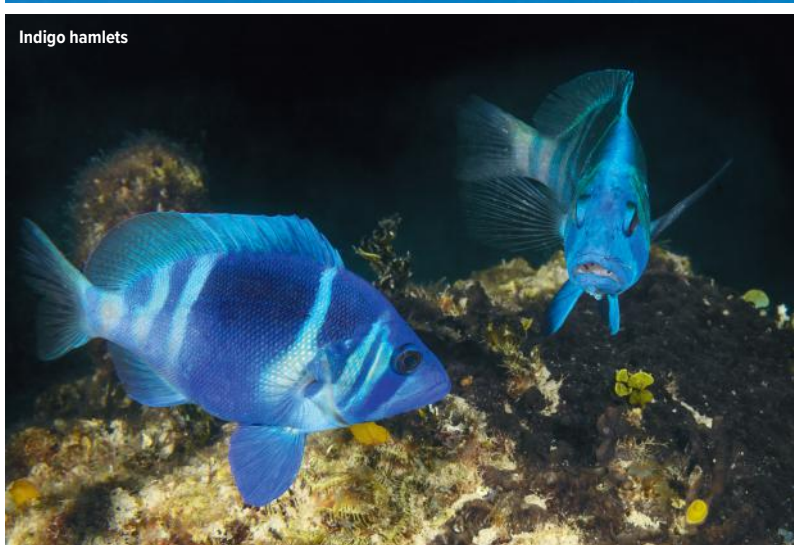
The dive boats lined up at the dock



Colorful sponges adorn the reef



Reef squid



Indigo hamlets

“ When it’s time to depart, the dock echoes with a series of horn blasts - three for a 15-minute warning, two for ten, and one final blast to announce the boat is leaving in five minutes ”

After a day on the water, the Clubhouse bar serves as the evening hub, staying open until 11pm for those looking to trade dive stories over a local beer or a glass of wine.

Coco View’s Fleet

The Dockside Dive Center is a massive, efficient hub with a dedicated camera room and six ‘garage-style’ gear locker rooms - one for each dedicated boat. The fleet itself is unlike anything else in the Caribbean. Averaging 50 feet in length, these vessels resemble vintage navy pier taxis because that’s exactly what they are - MK4 Utility boats built by Willard Marine for the US Navy in the late-1970s.

Bill and Evelyn Evans chose these boats for their robust construction, redesigning the decks to be the ultimate dive platforms. Each features a hardtop roof covering two-thirds of the deck and an aft swim platform with dual ladders. Most unique, however, is the center-keel entry port, allowing divers to exit the water by walking straight up through the middle of the boat. When it’s time to depart, the dock echoes with a series of horn blasts - three for a 15-minute warning, two for ten, and one final blast to announce the boat is leaving in five minutes.

Morning outings are two-tank trips to over 20 named sites, including the world-famous Mary’s Place. Here, an elbow-shaped plateau descends from 30-60ft before plunging vertically to 120ft, where a long, deep crevasse cuts through the reef in dramatic, sponge-draped swim-through.

Shore and More: The Drop-Off

After the first tank of the morning, the second is reserved as a ‘Drop-Off Dive’. This is a signature Coco View experience where the boat ‘drops’ divers on the outer edge of the house reef on the way back to the dock. This allows you to start your dive at the deep end of the wall without burning through your air just to reach it from the shore.

It is a testament to the resort’s culture of ‘diving freedom’. With 150 tanks of air and 32% Nitrox always ready, the diving is truly 24/7. For night dives, the resort uses a clever safety system - divers sign a log and take a numbered brass tag and a strobe. Once at the reef’s edge, the first diver clips the strobe to a safety chain 8ft below the surface. Subsequent divers clip their brass tags to the same chain. When you return, if only your tag and the strobe remain, you are the last one in and bring the strobe back to the board. ▶

Shy hamlet



Arrow blennies



Sharknose goby



As an experienced diver, I found this autonomy refreshing - I was free to dive solo and as leisurely as I liked. Starting from a shallow seagrass bed, you can explore the Prince Albert, a 140-foot freighter sunk in the mid-1980s that now hosts a lush forest of soft corals.

From there, you can head left to the crevasses of Coco View Wall, which bottoms out near 135ft, or right to Newman's Wall with its dramatic sand chutes. The biggest decision of the day is simply where you want the boat to drop you off.

Travel Facts

Getting There: American Airlines offers daily two-and-a-half-hour non-stop flights from Miami (MIA) to Juan Manuel Gálvez International Airport (RTB).

The Package: Most stays are seven-night all-inclusive packages. Rates typically include air-conditioned accommodations, three buffet meals daily, two boat dive trips per day (up to four boat tanks), and unlimited 24/7 shore diving.

Dive Specs: The resort provides 80cf tanks with air or 32% Nitrox. Each guest is assigned a private gear locker just steps from the boats.

Amenities: WiFi is available resort-wide, but rooms are TV-free to encourage social engagement at the Clubhouse.

Entry Requirements: Travelers to Honduras need a passport with at least six months' validity.

Marine-life encrusted shipwreck, the Prince Albert



The Master of Your Own Dive

The 'Front Yard' is a microcosm of Roatan's marine health. Cleaning stations run by sharknose gobies sit mere feet from spotted drums and royal grammas, while shoals of reef squid hover near the wreck. But the true draw remains that late-afternoon window. As the sun dips and the 'Front Yard' takes on a golden hue, you can find yourself alone on a coral head, inches away from a pair of indigo hamlets beginning their dance. At Coco View, you aren't just visiting the reef; for a week, you are part of its rhythm. ■

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In the previous articles, we described some of the great variety of ecosystems and dive environments available in America, and we visited some of the most-iconic and historic shipwrecks in our waters. But for some divers, a great dive is one where an encounter with a unique, special or much-sought-after marine creature takes place. In this article, we take you on some of the dives in America designed to do just that!

Our first stop takes us to the east coast of Florida and the beach community of Jupiter. Just north of West Palm Beach, the waters here are known for strong currents and drift diving is a common practice. But the reefs here are also home to a great variety of marine life. On a hot August morning, we headed from the dock to the site of a wreck known as MG-111, and we began our dive happy to escape the blistering late-summer heat for the cooler Atlantic Ocean water.

Boom! As we drifted towards the designated wreck site, we looked around and wondered, "What the heck was that?" It was a loud thump coming from behind the limit of visibility and striking us in the water column.

Boom! Boom! There it was again.

Suddenly, as we drifted further along in the north-moving Gulf Stream, our eyes began to make out the distant shapes of giants. First one, then several, then an entire troop patrolling the mangled remains of a river barge scattered along the sandy bottom. We had found our quarry - the Goliath grouper of Florida.

Goliath grouper were once plentiful along Florida's east coast, throughout the Caribbean and north to Bermuda. Spearfishing and unchecked fishing seriously reduced their populations until protections were granted in 1990 in the United States, and 1993 in the Caribbean.

These fish are the largest reef fish seen in these waters, measuring up to eight feet in length and weighing in at a massive 800lb. Preferring areas of rock, coral and silty,

muddy bottoms, the Goliath grouper are generally solitary in nature. However, each year, between June and September, they aggregate off the coast of Jupiter, Florida and along the south Florida coast to spawn.

A territorial fish, Goliath grouper do defend their turf and their mates. Open mouth displays and a quivering body may be followed by a low, rumbling bark that can carry great distances through the water. That is what we were hearing as we descended through the water column to the wreck site.

These fish, once hunted to near-extinction, are now coming back. They aggregate along the east coast of Florida. In Jupiter, West Palm Beach, Deerfield Beach and Pompano Beach, there are many sites that are favored by these giants. There are several dive boats that operate out ▶



Did you know?

The sand tiger shark is a large, slow-moving coastal shark famous for its menacing, toothy grin. They frequently surface to gulp and store air in their stomachs. This acts like a natural float, allowing them to hover motionless in the water without sinking to the seafloor.





THE GREAT AMERICAN DIVE TOUR

PART
THREE

This year, the United States of America celebrates its 250th anniversary. For the country this is a milestone year, one that will be marked with celebrations and events throughout the land. For divers, this is an opportunity to explore the best scuba-diving opportunities the country has to offer. This is the third of a four-part series that will introduce you to the wide variety of dives that can be experienced right here in the USA

Photographs by Michael Salvatorezza and Christopher P Weaver

“ And while the guidance is to not touch the sharks, the sharks may have been absent from that particular briefing because, on occasion, they would swim right up to us as if they didn’t even see us or care that we were there ”

of all of these areas, and they can take you to see one of the wonders of the sea... the annual gathering of the giant Goliath grouper. Nearby, on Singer Island, the Blue Heron Bridge has become famous for its outstanding muck diving and macro photography opportunities.

Entering the water directly under the bridge with a shore entry just steps from the parking lot, we swam south to an area filled with large boulders and coral outcroppings. Here we found large cushion sea stars creeping along the sandy bottom in 30ft of water, along with schools of grunts, snapper and an occasional angelfish. Upon closer examination, though, we spied numerous interesting blennies poking their ornately adorned heads out from tiny holes and crevices.

We began to fill our camera’s memory cards with interesting macro subjects. Seahorses, crabs, shrimp and tiny fish were all part of the palette of subjects. And after an extended bottom time due to the shallow waters here, we emerged from the dive with contented smiles and overworked cameras. The Blue Heron Bridge is an ideal addition to your dive itinerary if you are in this part of Florida. For most who drive over this bridge to or from Palm Beach to Singer Island, the bridge is simply a means to an end. For divers, it is the destination!

To the north off the coast of North Carolina lies the Graveyard of the Atlantic. Here, a collection of shipwrecks, many lost in dramatic fashion, litter the sea floor. We explored several of these in our last installment on



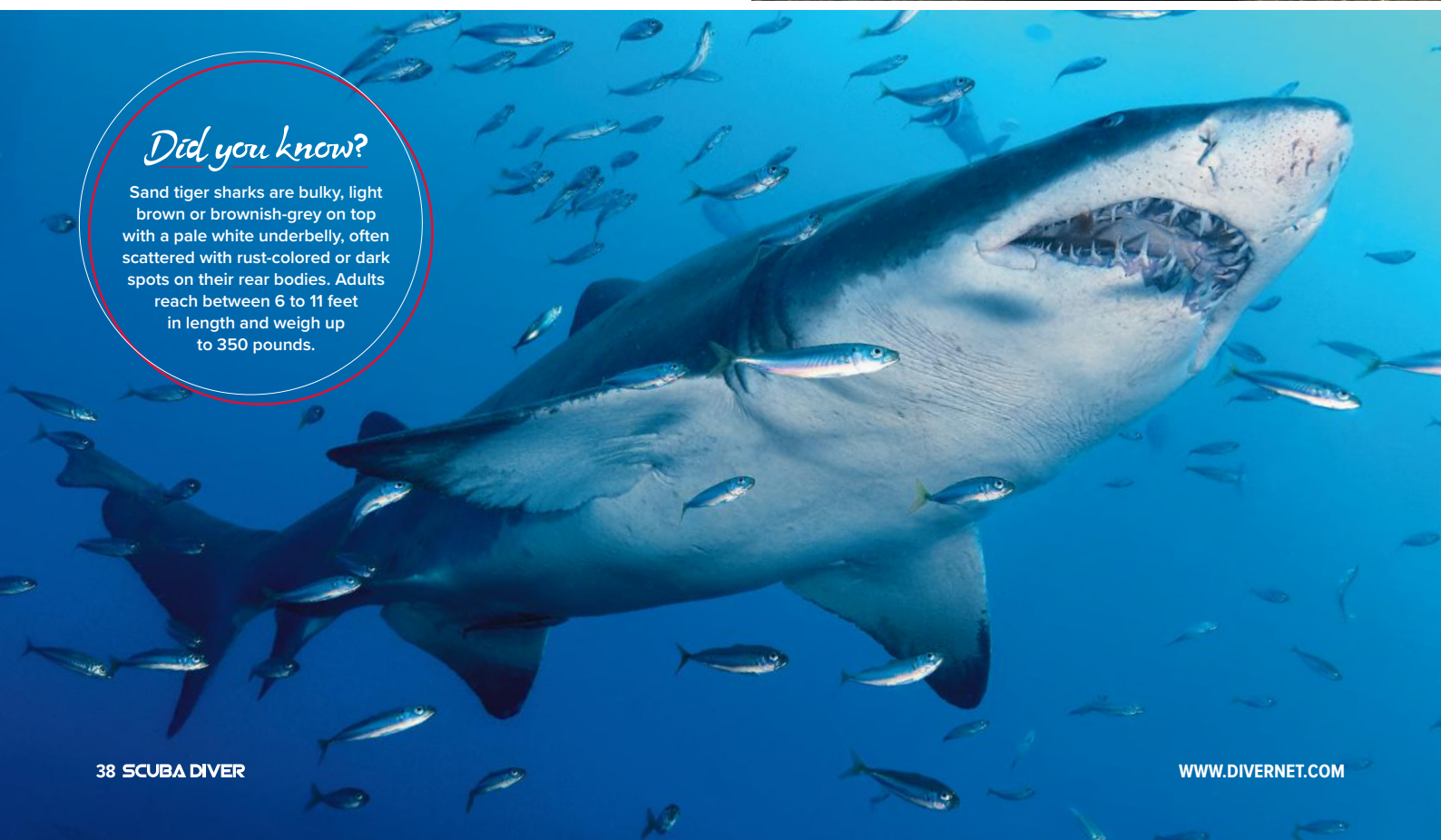
Blue Heron Bridge



Sergeant major

Did you know?

Sand tiger sharks are bulky, light brown or brownish-grey on top with a pale white underbelly, often scattered with rust-colored or dark spots on their rear bodies. Adults reach between 6 to 11 feet in length and weigh up to 350 pounds.





Close encounters
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Business end of a
sand tiger shark



Colorful lobster



Porkfish



shipwreck diving, but there's another reason to visit these wrecks - sharks. Several of these wrecks, including one named the CaribSea, have another treasure besides history to reveal and as we descended the anchor line to this wreck this became immediately apparent. As we gazed down the line, we could see the hulking forms of sand tiger sharks circling above the wreck. In fact, our descent to the wreck went right through them!

Dozens of sand tiger sharks, ranging between six and ten feet in length, seem to have taken up residence here. The sharks are ferocious looking with mouthfuls of raggedy teeth, but they are generally harmless as long as you respect them. Look, make images, but don't touch and you will be fine. Still, watching these sharks languidly swim by, around and towards divers is a real thrill. And while the guidance is to not touch the sharks, the sharks may have been absent from that particular briefing because, on occasion, they would swim right up to us as if they didn't even see us or care that we were there. Divers come from around the world to dive with the sand tiger sharks of North Carolina, one of America's unique big animal encounters.

Sharks are often at the top of the list when divers are asked what they wish to see underwater. In Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and nearby Montauk, New York, dive operators have been specializing in bringing divers face to face with pelagic blue sharks for many years. These dives are conducted inside the safety of a shark cage and are a sure-fire way to satiate your appetite for an adrenaline rush ▶



Ringneck blenny

in the water as the sharks are often drawn to swim very close to the bars of the cage. These dives are done on day boats and you can be assured of being back to the dock after a day of diving in time for dinner... and bragging rights to those who were not on the boat!

There are many species of sharks, and a unique shark encounter experience awaits in Alaska. During the mid-summer months of June and July, for a few weeks salmon sharks are often seen in the waters off Valdez and in a place called Fidalgo Bay. Divers can arrange for a stay at a converted fishing lodge and, with some luck, witness the elusive salmon shark in its native environment. If the sharks don't show, or to include other marine encounters, divers can also run into large smacks of jellyfish or search for the often shy giant Pacific octopus. For many divers, a highlight of this itinerary may include the opportunity to descend a few feet into a raging current and swim with migrating salmon as they rush to journey upstream to spawn. The wild nature of Alaska's underwater wildlife is evident to those who make the journey.

Off the coast of Gloucester, Massachusetts, divers can encounter gray and black-collared harbor seals ▶

“ For many divers, a highlight of this itinerary may include the opportunity to descend a few feet into a raging current and swim with migrating salmon as they rush to journey upstream to spawn ”



Montauk Point lighthouse



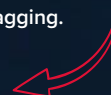
Blue shark



Did you know?

Every manta ray has a completely unique pattern of black spots and blotches on its ventral side (belly).

Much like a human fingerprint, this pattern never changes as the ray ages, allowing scientists and conservationists to easily identify and track individual animals in the wild without the need for invasive tagging.





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In the midst of a salmon run

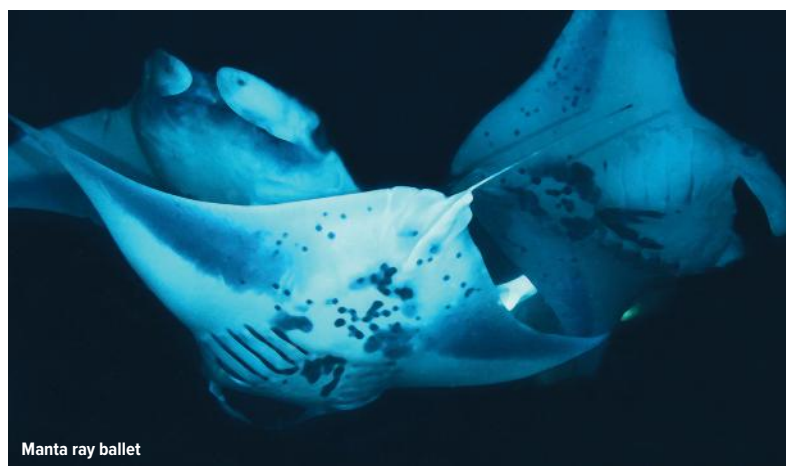
“ Our final stop on this brief overview of some of the many marine life encounter dives in America takes us to the big island of Hawaii where, when the sun goes down, the manta rays come out to play ”

at a place known as the Salvages. The seals find these rocks, which barely break the surface, an ideal spot to haul out. While the surrounding waters are rich in marine life, the rocks provide a platform for resting, warming up and escaping predators.

The dive plan here is straightforward: with the boat anchored 50-60 yards away from the rocks, divers enter the water quietly, and swim underwater towards a submerged area next to the rocky islands. There, in only 10ft of water or less, they patiently wait for the seals to approach. Although the water does reach depths of 60ft or more, there is no reason to dive that deep on this encounter.

It may take a few minutes of waiting but soon enough, the seals will approach from the hazy distance. With luck, these amazing animals will be inches from your cameras. For divers, these waters teem with interesting marine life and amazing dive opportunities. Add this unique dive location to your list... the opportunity to dive with the beguiling gray seals of Gloucester. Our final stop on this brief overview of some of the many marine life encounter dives in America takes us to the big island of Hawaii where, when the sun goes down, the manta rays come out to play.

Dive operators here invented the nighttime manta ray dive. It's an eerie experience at first when you descend into the dark waters illuminated with underwater spotlights. These lights are the key to the dive as plankton and a multitude of marine invertebrates are attracted to the beams, which in turn attracts the manta rays who are looking for an easy meal. With divers positioned solidly on the bottom, the wait is often counted in mere minutes before squadrons of these large animals are circling, swooping, and swimming in and around the divers. Don't be surprised if they brush



Manta ray ballet



Close-up of the gaping mouth

against you or approach rapidly with their mouth agape, only to swerve away at the last moment. It's a full-on sensory experience and one not to be missed. ■

In our next installment of the Great American Dive, we'll visit some of the most-offbeat and unusual dives in America, dives that can only be described as 'uniquely American'.

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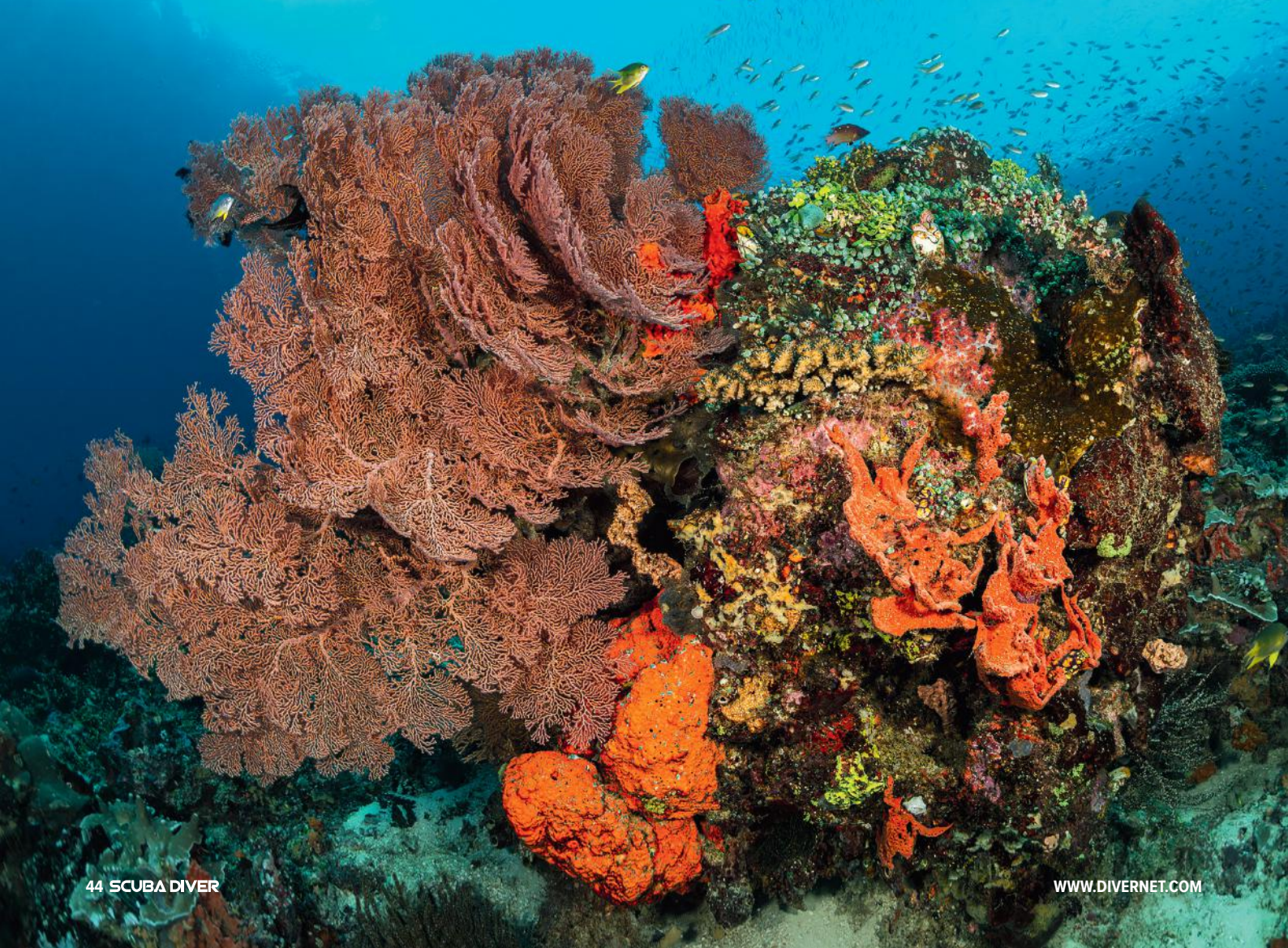
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BATANTA ISLAND

The Wild Side of Raja Ampat

Don Silcock explores the diving opportunities that lie in the waters off Batanta, a lesser-known area of hotspot Raja Ampat

Photographs by Don Silcock



Ly ing in the northeastern reaches of the vast Indonesian archipelago, the Dampier Strait - named after the English explorer William Dampier - is widely regarded as the epicentre of Raja Ampat.

Renowned for its extraordinary biodiversity, dive sites such as Cape Kri, Chicken Reef, Sardine Reef and the village reef at Sauwandarek have become truly iconic and almost household names within the global diving community. There are, broadly speaking, two ways to experience Raja Ampat - by liveaboard, or from a land-based resort. Each has its own advantages. Liveaboards offer range and flexibility, allowing divers to visit a wide variety of sites, while land-based operations focus on those within reach of their day boats.

A useful way to think about the difference is that liveaboards tend to cover many sites, but often without deep familiarity. Land-based operators, by contrast, return to the same locations' day after day, building an intimate knowledge of their rhythms, conditions, and marine life.

Yet despite these differences, most operations - whether floating or shore-based - share a common focus on the celebrated sites on the northern side of the strait. And as exceptional as those sites are, it raises an obvious question: what lies beyond the well-known?

Nature's Supply Chain

The answer begins with the Indonesian Throughflow. This immense movement of water - the largest of its kind on Earth - is driven by the complex interplay of planetary rotation, equatorial currents, and the labyrinth of more than 17,000 islands that make up the Indonesian archipelago.

Which, in simple terms, creates a difference in sea level between the north-western Pacific Ocean and the south-eastern Indian Ocean, resulting in a vast and continuous flow of water through Indonesia. As it moves, it draws up cold, nutrient-rich water from the deep basins and trenches of the archipelago, fuelling marine productivity on an extraordinary scale.

Trace the path of this Throughflow and you will find Indonesia's most-vibrant marine ecosystems - and one of the very first places it surges through is the Dampier Strait.

“ For those willing to look beyond the well-known, Batanta does not just offer different diving - it offers a deeper understanding of what makes Raja Ampat so exceptional ”

The north coast of Batanta and Papua Paradise



The reefs are teeming with fish



Wobbegong

Understanding the Dampier Strait

Like all powerful natural systems, the Throughflow does not distribute its energy evenly. In the Dampier Strait, underwater topography determines where the true biological 'hotspots' occur. Bounded in the north by the large islands of Waigeo and Gam, and to the south by Batanta Island and the mainland of West Papua, the strait stretches for around 49 miles and is about 27 miles wide in the east, narrowing to just 12 miles at its western exit.

Beneath its often-calm surface lies a complex underwater landscape. At its eastern entrance, the seabed drops away to depths approaching 16,000ft. Moving westward, those depths rise to around 1,600ft before rapidly shallowing further to approximately 325ft - creating a powerful venturi effect. It is here that the flow begins to divide. The largest volume is directed north, where the nutrient-rich waters fuel those iconic reefs around Kri and Mansuar Islands. But a significant - and often overlooked - portion of that same flow is deflected south, towards the island of Batanta.

The Secret Place...

It is that southern flow that defines the diving along the north coast of Batanta - and it manifests itself in two distinct ways.

The first lies offshore. Where, as the current flow passes over the 325ft depth contour, the seabed rises rapidly to around 130ft-165ft, where it meets a series of reefs and sandbanks around Pulau Wai, and further west, the seamounts and reefs of Pulau Tapok. ▶

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That nutrient-rich water is forced upward across structure, fueling reefs that, while less celebrated than those of the northern strait, are no less vibrant. Fish life is abundant, currents can be lively, and the sense of energy in the water is unmistakable. The key difference is not quality, but exclusivity as these sites are rarely visited, and it is entirely possible to have them to yourself.

The second expression of this system lies along Batanta's deeply indented north coast. Here, a series of small bays, headlands, and streams carve into the island's steep, and densely forested interior. Periodic rainfall washes organic material down from the mountainous hinterland, delivering a constant supply of nutrients into the sea. As the Throughflow-driven currents are pushed inshore, they mix with this coastal input and create a rich and highly productive environment.

The seabed reflects this. Reefs give way to darker substrates - sand, rubble, and detritus - while visibility becomes more muted. But within this seemingly subdued landscape lies an extraordinary density of life. This is classic Indonesian 'critter' territory, comparable in character to renowned locations such as the Lembeh Strait, Ambon, and the north coast of Bali.



Manta ray

How to Dive Batanta

Like the rest of the Dampier Strait, Batanta can be explored either by liveaboard or from a land-based resort. While some liveaboards include Batanta in their itineraries, time in the area is usually limited. For a more-immersive experience, a land-based stay offers better access to both offshore and inshore sites. Options are limited, with Papua Paradise Eco Resort being one of the few established operators in the area. Located on Birie Island, the resort provides access to Batanta's southern dive sites while still offering excursions to the northern reefs. With a strong focus on conservation and community engagement, it provides a well-positioned base for exploring this lesser-known side of Raja Ampat.



P47-D upside down on the seabed



Soft corals add a splash of color

Offshore – Mantas, Reefs, Seamounts, and an Aircraft Wreck or Two...

There is much to see in this offshore system, but the highlight for many is the presence of manta rays. Reef and oceanic mantas frequent cleaning stations near Pulau Wai, circling patiently above bommies as cleaner fish go to work.

During my own dives there, mantas were consistently present - sometimes arriving moments after descent - offering encounters that felt both intimate and unhurried.

Some of the reefs and seamounts are spectacular, with healthy coral growth and dense fish life. One site in particular lived up to its name, Fish Heaven, with so much activity it was difficult to know where to focus.

Then there are the Royal Australian Air Force P47-D Razorback wreck(s) on the southern tip of Pulau Wai... Ditched after almost running out of fuel at the end of a bombing mission during World War Two, the one most commonly dived is on the reef slope in about 100ft.

The second is close by, but at 120ft, and is rarely visited because of its depth. Both are upside down, largely complete and in remarkably good condition despite eight decades underwater. ▶



Inshore – Atmospheric Muck Diving...

Muck diving is often described as diving where there is no pretty scenery – which (almost...) describes the diving on the inshore areas of Batanta perfectly!

The small bays, narrow inlets, and headlands of northern Batanta are impressive when viewed from afar and incredibly so when navigating through them to one of the many inshore dive sites.

Seen from that perspective, the north coast of Batanta Island feels raw and almost untouched as there are few local settlements and the dense tropical rainforest seems forbidding and impenetrable.

Dived on an incoming tide the inshore sites can seem bright and colorful, but when the tide retreats it brings with it those organic nutrients and the water is dark and filled with particles. But scenic wide-angle photography is not why you dive there – it's the multitude of critters you can find there that is the main attraction.

Your guide is the key to success and mine, Welson from Manado, was incredibly skilled at finding everything from photogenic pygmy seahorses to colourful candy crabs!

Diving Batanta – In Summary...

I first dived the Dampier Strait more than 20 years ago, when only a handful of operations explored its waters.

Today, during the main season from November through March, dozens of liveaboards operate alongside an increasing number of land-based resorts and homestays. Resulting in ever-growing pressure on the iconic northern sites. Batanta offers a compelling alternative and what lies to the south is not simply different - it is essential. Healthy reefs, productive seamounts, reliable manta encounters, and excellent critter diving combine to create a balanced and richly rewarding experience.

Batanta is not the Raja Ampat of postcards and perfect visibility. It is something more fundamental.

It is where the energy of the Indonesian Throughflow is transformed into life, where nutrients become biomass, and where the foundations of the region's extraordinary biodiversity are laid down.

For those willing to look beyond the well-known, Batanta does not just offer different diving - it offers a deeper understanding of what makes Raja Ampat so exceptional. ■



Nudibranch



Ghost pipefish

Don Silcock

Don is an Australian underwater photographer and SEACAM Ambassador based on the island of Bali in Indonesia and his website has extensive location guides, articles and images on some of the best diving locations in the Indo-Pacific region and 'big animal' experiences globally.

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#ASKMARK

#AskMark is our scuba diving Q&A section to answer your scuba diving questions. Have a burning question about buoyancy control, or big dreams of becoming a Divemaster? Mark Newman, a Pro Diver since 2009, is here to answer your questions and share his expert knowledge – no question is too basic or bizarre! **So, gear up, dive in, and let's #AskMark**



@Espensoreide

#AskMark: How would you lift and remove old ghost gear by yourself?

With extreme caution, if at all. Ghost gear is what divers call discarded fishing equipment, such as nets and longlines. Fishing nets and lines are designed to last for long periods in marine environments. They're designed to have strong breaking strengths. Some are made to be hard to see in the water and most importantly, they're designed to catch, tangle and snag on things - divers included. If you find some ghost gear during a dive and you don't have the equipment or expertise to collect it, your best option is to log the location and report it to a local ghost gear dive team who can survey it, collect it and dispose of it properly. By yourself, you run the risk of entanglements, so it's always best to leave it to professionals to remove later.



@JayPatel101

#AskMark: When do you use hose protectors?

Hose protectors are a double-edged sword; they help to prevent the hose from bending in one spot, which can lead to damage. But they can also hold water against the hose in that spot between dives, causing them to rot unless cleaned. If you know that you are fastidious while cleaning your regs, then I have no issue with hose protectors.

When a hose bends, it stretches and compresses the materials inside the hose. And when it bends in the same spot repeatedly, it weakens that area and can lead to failures over time. The main area where this happens is by the metal ferrule fitting, so a strong hose protector will help lengthen the lifespan of your hose, just as long as you clean underneath it between dives.

@murphygreen8484

#AskMark: Do you have recommendations on breathing patterns? I'm a big guy, new diver, and still suck down my cylinder faster than anyone in the group.

Some divers breathe faster than others, and there's zero shame in that. The best advice is usually to stop thinking about your breathing and first look at your weightbelt. New divers often carry too much lead, which leads to more gas in your BCD and more adjusting during the dive. That and streamlining will help to minimise non-essential gas usage. As far as breathing techniques go, low and slow works for most divers. You want to fill your lungs with as much fresh air as possible to flush out as much CO₂ from your system as you can. I was always taught to inhale for three seconds and exhale for three seconds, but I don't spend all of my dives counting to three constantly. Just breathe at your normal rate and embrace your natural breathing rate.



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DIVING WITH DIABETES

The Divers Alert Network team take a closer look at diving with diabetes

Risks, Realities, and Responsible Participation

Diabetes is a common condition that affects the body's ability to regulate blood sugar. Although most people can manage their day-to-day activities without issue, diving can pose serious challenges. Patients with diabetes requiring treatment with insulin have long been encouraged to avoid diving. However, current guidelines encourage a more-individualised approach. While diving with diabetes should always be part of shared decision making with your physician, this article can provide an overview and potential topics for discussion.



Why Diabetes Raises Safety Concerns Underwater

Patients with diabetes may experience low blood sugar known as hypoglycaemia. Exercise, cold water, and increased metabolic demand of diving can all accelerate sugar consumption, exacerbating hypoglycaemia. Symptoms include shakiness, fatigue, confusion, or even loss of consciousness and seizures. When these symptoms occur underwater, they can be extremely dangerous. In addition, these symptoms may mimic conditions such as narcosis or decompression sickness making rapid recognition and treatment difficult.

Patients may also experience episodes of high blood sugar known as hyperglycaemia. While less likely to cause immediate cognitive impairment than hypoglycaemia, sustained high blood sugar levels can lead to dangerous levels of dehydration as increased blood sugar promotes loss of water in the urine. If hyperglycaemia is not managed, complications can quickly arise – a potential concern when diving far from shore or in remote locations.

Fitness to Dive and Reasonable Limits

Major diving medicine organisations — including the Divers Alert Network (DAN) and Undersea & Hyperbaric Medical Society (UHMS) - provide guidelines on which patients may reasonably dive including those who:

- Have annual fitness evaluations with their physician
- Have good long-term glucose control
- Delay diving after start/change medication for:
 - Three months with oral diabetes medications
 - One year after initiation of insulin therapy
- Have no history of hypoglycemic awareness

- Have no episodes of hypoglycaemia requiring third party intervention

Even for divers who are good candidates, a reasonable scope of diving is advised. This is because diving beyond these limits makes monitoring and responding to swings in blood sugar much more difficult. Guidelines suggest avoiding dives to depths greater than 100ft and avoiding dives longer than 60 minutes, with no planned decompression or overhead environments, and any situation that may exacerbate hypoglycaemia.

Best Practices for Safe Diving With Diabetes

Risk mitigation and adequate preparation is the key to safe participation. Monitoring your blood sugar is critically important: A minimum of three pre-dive blood glucose measurements should be collected at 60 minutes, 30 minutes, and right before the dive to assess trends in blood sugar. If your blood sugar is 150 mg/dl and stable or rising, you can enter the water. Delay the dive if your blood sugar is below 150 mg/dl or over 300 mg/dl.

The Bottom Line

Diabetes is no longer an automatic barrier to enjoying the underwater world, but it remains a condition requiring thoughtful preparation and a more conservative approach. With stable glucose control, responsible planning, and transparent communication with dive professionals and buddies, many divers with diabetes continue to explore reefs, wrecks, and marine environments safely.

For more diving health and safety information visit World.DAN.org



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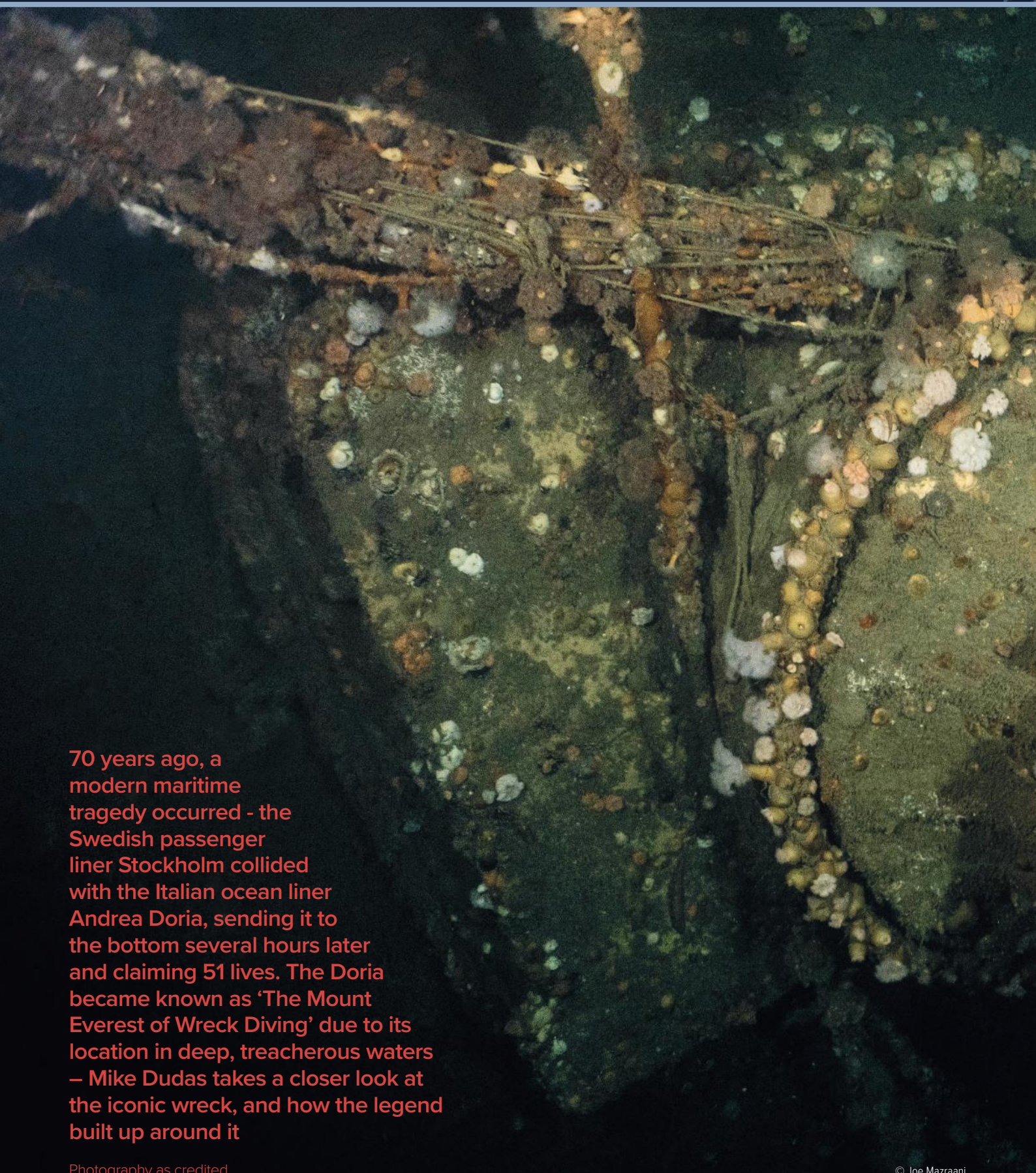
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70 years ago, a modern maritime tragedy occurred - the Swedish passenger liner Stockholm collided with the Italian ocean liner Andrea Doria, sending it to the bottom several hours later and claiming 51 lives. The Doria became known as 'The Mount Everest of Wreck Diving' due to its location in deep, treacherous waters – Mike Dudas takes a closer look at the iconic wreck, and how the legend built up around it

Photography as credited

© Joe Mazraani

The Andrea DORIA

Both ships were sailing in dense fog near the island of Nantucket, off the coast of Massachusetts, when the incident happened. The Andrea Doria was transiting the Atlantic Ocean to New York City and was preparing to arrive with a full complement of passengers. Some 12 hours after the ship was struck, she sank to the bottom, claiming 51 lives.

Immediately after the sinking, the wreck attracted the attention of Peter Gimbel, who dived the wreck with 48 hours of its sinking. At the time, this was a considerable feat considering scuba diving was still a nascent sport in the USA. The shipwreck also lay far offshore, 60 miles to Nantucket Island and 100 miles to the nearest port of embarkation. The Doria also sank in 260ft of water and landed sideways on her starboard side. This meant that the highest point of the wreck was approximately 167ft to the side of the hull - a considerable depth for the skill level and equipment at the time. Gimbel returned two weeks later and photographed the wreck for Life Magazine, creating some of the first color underwater photos ever published.

After the end of World War Two, the process of rebuilding the Italian infrastructure included rebuilding the transportation systems. The construction and launch of the Andrea Doria came to symbolize the pride of Italy. She was not the largest liner at 699 feet long but was built to travel in comfort for three classes of passengers - First, Cabin, and Tourist class. In a new turn for ocean liners, she provided a swimming pool for each class.

The Andrea Doria also became well known as a floating art gallery. She was designed in a sleek Art Deco style, with furniture and styling in the mid-century style and contemporary art that included ceramic panels, tapestries, paintings, and sculptures heavily influenced by Picasso but all in a distinctly Italian style. ▶



The Doria was outfitted with modern technology, including radar, that should have prevented the tragedy that would occur.

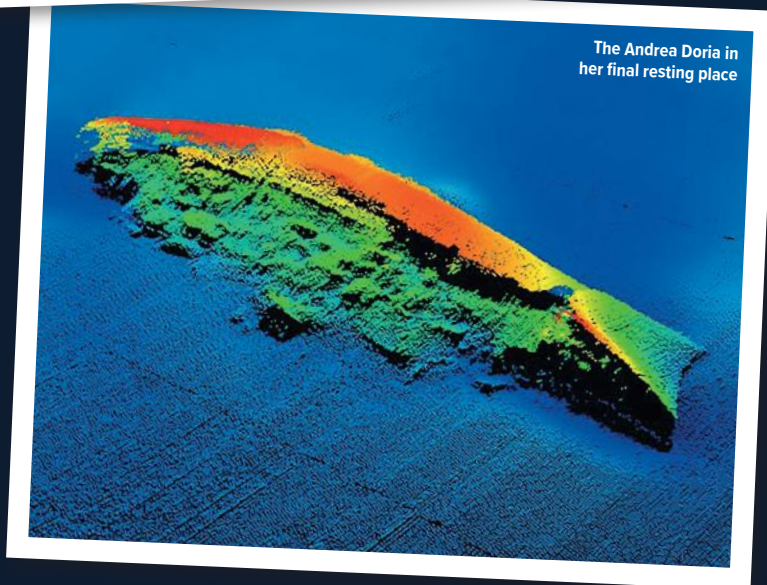
Just a few years after the sinking, the Andrea Doria began to attract salvage interests and sport divers. In the early 1960s, a salvage team led by Dan Turner aboard the vessel Top Cat recovered the bronze statue of the Admiral Doria, the ship's namesake. A few years later, the first group of sport divers dived the wreck in 1966, including John and Evelyn Dudas. John recovered the ship's bridge compass at the time. Over the next few years, Peter Gimbal returned to film some television specials, filmmaker Bruno Vailetti visited to make an Italian documentary film, and sport divers organized a few sporadic expeditions to the wreck.

At this time, the Andrea Doria earned the moniker 'The Mount Everest of Wreck Diving'. It was an achievement that pushed the boundaries of scuba diving both in diving but also in logistical challenges to get to the site to dive it. Besides the challenge of the depth of the wreck, the water is cold on the bottom year-round, ranging from 39-44 degrees F, and visibility is unpredictable and can be quite poor. The wreck also lies near the Nantucket Shoals, an area that is known for very unpredictable currents. Divers have reported cross currents moving in different directions at different depths. Throw in some sharks and the confusion of diving a wreck that is sideways, and that is quite a challenging recipe for divers.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the popularity of diving the Doria took off with the advent of several dive boats regularly visiting the wreck and spending a good bit of the summer months each year taking divers. The discovery of hordes of the decorative ship's china became a sought-after prize and a souvenir of proof that one had 'climbed' the wreck-diving Mount Everest. In 1989, Gary Gentile published what became the quintessential



Poster art of the Andrea Doria



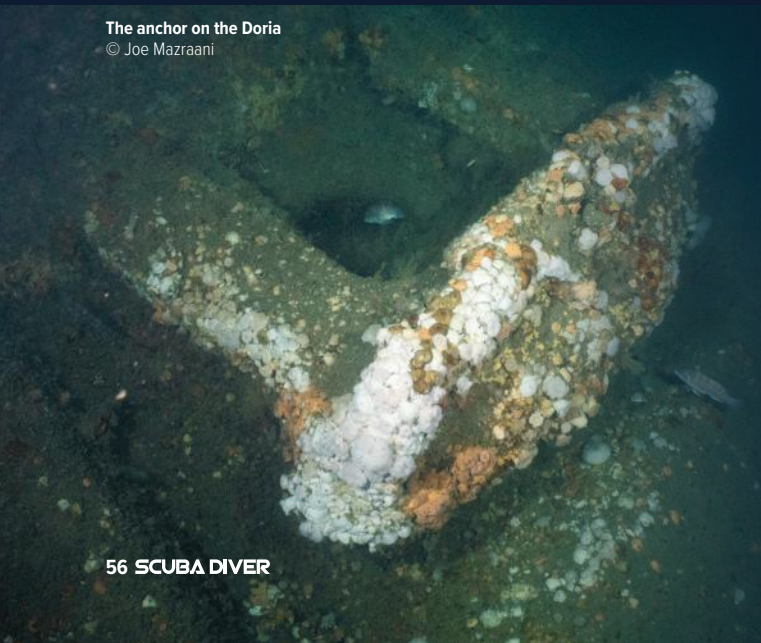
The Andrea Doria in her final resting place

“ The rise in popularity of diving the Andrea Doria in the 1990s coincided with the rise of technical diving as a whole ”

book, Dive to an Era. This propelled the Andrea Doria into the broader interest of the diving community and captured the interest of divers internationally.

The rise in popularity of diving the Andrea Doria in the 1990s coincided with the rise of technical diving as a whole. Techniques and experience were exchanged between cave divers from Florida and wreck divers from the Northeast of the US. Tragically, there was also a rise in accidents and deaths from divers that corresponded to this increase in visits to the wreck. Sadly, the 'Mount Everest of Wreck Diving' also shared this facet of her namesake.

The anchor on the Doria
© Joe Mazraani



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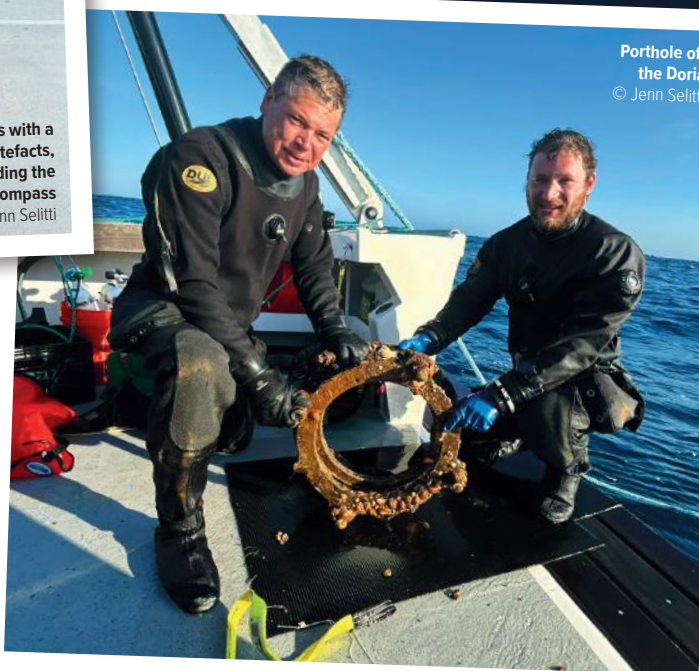


Divers with a haul of artefacts, including the gyrocompass
© Jenn Selitti

Sometime around 2000, the shipwreck started to deteriorate rapidly and changed dramatically. Since then, every year that the wreck is dived, something changes. These changes have led to a significant decline in the number of divers visiting the wreck, with some experienced Doria divers noting that it's not worthwhile to dive the wreck as all of the learned experience and penetrations of the hallways, dining areas, and lounges were now entangled messes or simply gone, crushed as the decks peeled away from the wreck and the hull compressed.

In recent years, a large crack has appeared in the bow and has grown over the years along with the collapse of some of the holds. The stern of the ship has also broken away from the larger hull of the shipwreck and, while the decks at one time used to be nearly vertical, they are now canted at a 45-degree angle, if they are even accessible at all. The propellers, one of the most-notable landmarks and one of the highest points of the wreck, have

“ Mazraani spent several years meticulously stabilizing and preserving the foghorn to a fully functional state, and it can even be sounded today ”



Porthole off the Doria
© Jenn Selitti

now twisted closer to the sand with the lower prop now nearly buried and upper prop at roughly 229ft.

It's been said that the wreck has changed so much that there is no reason to dive as the chances of finding artifacts are reduced or it's simply not as grand a shipwreck as it once was. However, where one door closes, another opens - particular areas of the ship that were difficult to get to are now exposed, notably the ship's pharmacy and medical areas, and the car garage.

But opportunities to find significant artifacts still exist, as proven recently with some spectacular artifact recoveries. Since 2011, the only dive boat that has consistently dived the Andrea Doria has been the D/V Tenacious. In the summer of 2018, Captain Joe Mazraani and team member Tom Zajac recovered the ship's foghorn. It was found while diving the superstructure area that has now collapsed into a large debris field. The foghorn was found near the remains of the crow's nest and mast that was over the bridge of the ship. The large remains of the smokestack are one of the few large landmarks that are in the debris field. The foghorn was entangled in the ladder leading to the crow's nest and required the assistance of the entire dive team to free it and prepare it for recovery. ▶



The bell davit on the Doria
© Joe Mazraani



The foghorn from
the Doria
© Andrew Nagle

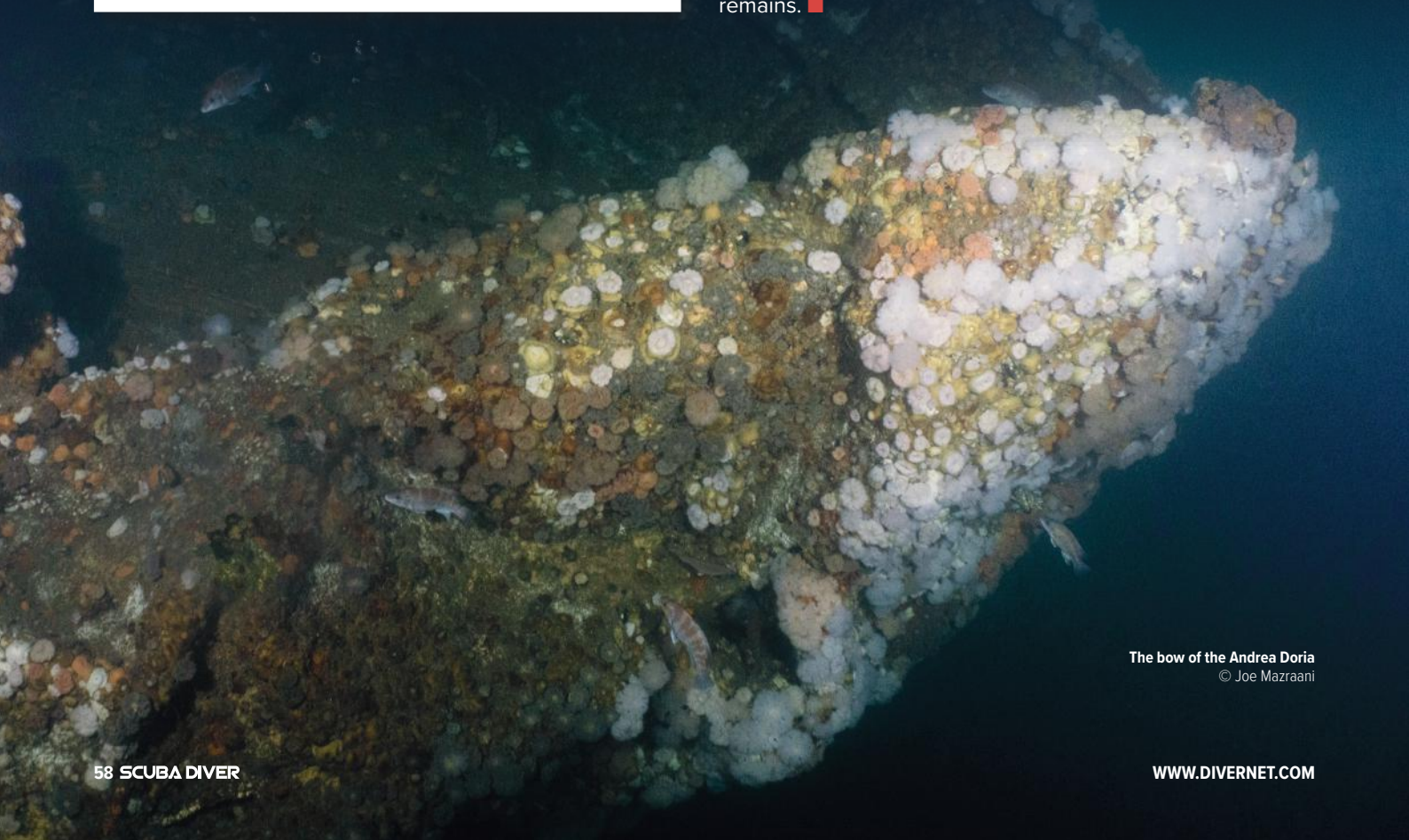
“ While the Andrea Doria is a changed wreck from her glory days of wreck diving, the shipwreck is no less interesting to dive ”

Mazraani spent several years meticulously stabilizing and preserving the foghorn to a fully functional state, and it can even be sounded today.

More recently, in the summer of 2025, the Tenacious crew was diving the bow area of the ship, and even more degradation of the wreck was observed, but the team was able to return to the debris field where the remains of the port bridge wing were found, now collapsed from 167ft to 239ft. In the debris of the bridge wing, Mazraani and team member Chris Ogden both separately located the gyrocompass that was located on the bridge wing.

After considerable effort to excavate debris, they worked together to recover it. The gyrocompass is an interesting artifact as it turns up in a number of stories from the expeditions of the previous 70 years. It was photographed by Peter Gimble for the Life magazine article in 1956. It was mentioned in an article about the Top Cat crew from 1963 as a potential recovery, and lastly the Italian film crew in 1969 attempted to recover it.

While the Andrea Doria is a changed wreck from her glory days of wreck diving, the shipwreck is no less interesting to dive, and it will continue to reveal its secrets to intrepid divers, little by little, as the ocean relentlessly erodes the remains. ■



The bow of the Andrea Doria
© Joe Mazraani


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ERIC'S PINNACLE

Pacific Grove, California

Text & photographs by Bruce Sudweeks

Treefish and diver playing hide and seek

One of the oft-visited dive sites for the Monterey dive charter boats is Eric's Pinnacle. The site is located about 1,600 feet east of the Kissing Rock in Pacific Grove. It is accessible via boat from the Monterey harbor or by kayak from Otter Cove. The charter boats frequent this location because it is often a relatively calm location, is a good option for beginner divers, and is a beautiful locale. There is typically not very much kelp at this site, so tying a kayak off is a bit problematic. Your only option with a kayak is an anchor.

This dive site was found and named in the 1990s by captain Phil Sammet and Eric Minard while looking for a

halibut fishing location. You likely will see halibut in the sandy areas around the pinnacle.

As the name suggests, there is a granite structure in the form of a pinnacle that has a base at about 60ft depth and a top at about 20ft depth. There are many fissures in the rock which are home to greenlings, rockfish, sculpin, wolf eels, and invertebrates. Aside from the main pinnacle there are a few boulders in the general area. These boulders, as well as the pinnacle are covered in invertebrates including anemones, pink coralline algae, cup corals, and rock scallops. The most-prevalent invertebrate is the strawberry anemone (*Corynactis californica*) which is also referred to

as the club-tipped anemone. The strawberry anemone can be found sporting multiple color variants such that the rock structures are blanketed in red, purple, orange, and pink hues. There is also one patch of giant white anemones (*Metridium farcimen*) on the pinnacle.

The dive site resides in the Pacific Grove Marine Gardens State Marine Conservation Area. Fish can be taken in this area, but invertebrates are protected. There is an informal recommendation to abstain from spearfishing in this location, especially the charismatic wolf eels. The FishLegal mobile app can be used to determine the harvesting rules when in doubt.

If you are fortunate you might spot the signature species of this dive site, the wolf eel (*Anarrhichthys ocellatus*). These shy but curious fish (technically not an eel) have a lot of character. Occasionally these fish can be spotted swimming about, but it is much more likely to see just their head sticking out of their cave in the rocks. As I mentioned, they are shy but they are also curious about what the divers are doing. I have found that they are attracted to shiny things (aren't we all). They are monogamous, mate for life, tend to live in the same cave and can live up to 20 years. Mating happens in the fall in winter and both male and female share the duties of protecting the eggs.

During a recent dive I saw a number of nudibranch species including the white dendronotus (*Dendronotus albus*), the noble dorid (*Peltodoris nobilis*), the San Diego dorid (*Diaulula sandiegensis*), the yellow-edged cadlina (*Cadlina luteomarginata*), the Spanish shawl (*Flabellinopsis iodinea*), and the opalescent nudibranch (*Hermisenda opalescens*).

This site is home to many different sculpin species. On a recent dive I saw snubnose sculpins (*Orthonopias triacis*), spotfin sculpins (*Ictilinus tenuis*), and coralline sculpins (*Artedius corallinus*). These little fish make for great macro photography subjects since they are relatively patient, have expressive eyes, colorful scale patterns, and interesting fin structures.

In the late summer and fall when the jellyfish are in the Monterey Bay this is a good location to see brown sea nettle jellies (*Chrysaora fuscescens*), purple-striped jellies (*Chrysaora colorata*), and moon jellies (*Aurelia aurita*). And where there are jellies, there are Pacific sunfish (*Mola mola*) dining on the jellies. And where there are mola mola, there are California sea lions eating the sunfish fins. Since the sunfish eat jellyfish, their flesh becomes very undesirable (i.e.



The opalescent nudibranch in all its glory

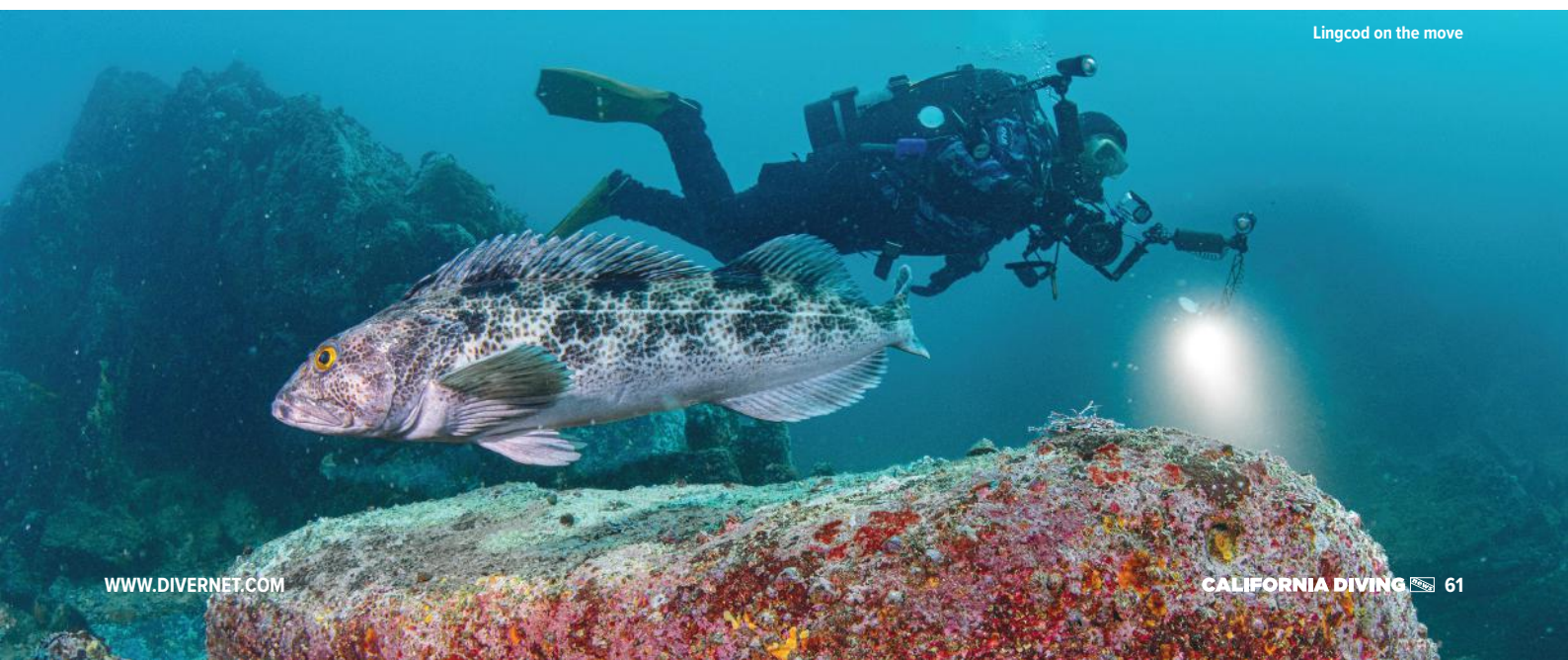
toxic) to eat. However, the sea lions will eat the mola mola fins and leave the sunfish disabled. There have been times in which I have seen dozens of mola mola on the sea floor, their only movement is their eyes. Eventually, a constellation of sea stars will converge and devour the sunfish bodies.

A familiar sight at this site are schools of blue rockfish (*Sebastes mystinus*) hanging out at a depth of about 25ft. The other rockfish that you will likely see will be solitary treefish (*Sebastes serriceps*), kelp rockfish (*Sebastes atrovirens*), copper rockfish (*Sebastes caurinus*), and gopher rockfish (*Sebastes carnatus*). The treefish are a rare sighting and you will likely find them wedged into a rock fissure head-first with only their tail visible. Treefish are one of the largest rockfish species. I have always been surprised at how shy these large fish behave. They are a nocturnal species. Maybe they just want to be left alone during the daylight hours.

Due to the proximity to Otter Cove you may get visited by an extremely cute sea otter. For the most part the otters will not interact with divers. They will likely be on a mission to find a meal of crab, abalone, or urchin. Diving cormorants are also a possibility. They too are on a quest to catch a meal but they are often distracted by shiny objects on your dive kit.

Keep an eye on the sandy regions around the pinnacle. You may spot a thornback ray, bat ray, sea lion, or harbor seal. The sea lions often interact with divers by tugging fins or buzzing by at high speed while executing a corkscrew maneuver.

Even though this is a relatively easy dive, it is often quite rewarding. ■



Lingcod on the move

Trip listings are subject to change.

Please visit the boats' websites for the most current calendars.

You can also find a complete calendar at cadvivingnews.com/dive-trips/.

Date	Duration	Destination	Boat	Boat Location	Charter Group	Phone
7/3/26	3 Days	Anacapa/Santa Cruz	Peace	Ventura	Dolphin Scuba	916-929-8188
7/5/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
7/9/26	5 Days	Private Charter	Peace	Ventura	Private Charter	
7/11/26	2 Days	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
7/18/26	2 Days	Private Charter	Peace	Ventura	Private Charter	
7/19/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
7/24/26	3 Days	Anacapa/Santa Cruz	Peace	Ventura	Pacific Scuba Divers	408-247-7702
7/26/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
7/28/26	1 Day	NOAA — Finding Hal	Peace	Ventura	NOAA	
7/30/26	3 Days	Intermediate to Advanced Freediving Trip	Peace	Ventura	Open Boat	Book Online
8/1/26	2 Days	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
8/2/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
8/2/26	3 Days	3 Day Adventure	Peace	Ventura	High Sierra Divers	530-823-6757
8/7/26	3 Days	Anacapa/Santa Cruz	Peace	Ventura	Dolphin Scuba	916-929-8188
8/9/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
8/15/26	2 Days	San Miguel	Peace	Ventura	Sea Divers	626-221-1119
8/16/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
8/17/26	5 Days	Private Charter	Peace	Ventura	Private Charter	
8/23/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
8/25/26	1 Day	NOAA — Finding Hal	Peace	Ventura	NOAA	
8/28/26	3 Days	Intermediate to Advanced Freediving Trip	Peace	Ventura	Open Boat	Book Online
8/29/26	2 Days	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
8/30/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
9/5/26	3 Days	Anacapa/Santa Cruz	Peace	Ventura	Dolphin Scuba	916-929-8188
9/6/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
9/7/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
9/12/26	2 Days	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
9/12/26	5 Days	Tour of the Islands	Peace	Ventura	High Sierra Divers	530-823-6757
9/13/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
9/18/26	3 Days	Intermediate to Advanced Freediving Trip	Peace	Ventura	Open Boat	Book Online
9/20/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
9/25/26	2 Days	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
9/27/26	1/2 Day	2-Tank Charter	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
9/28/26	5 Days	5 Day Adventure	Peace	Ventura	Odyssey School	
10/3/26	3 Days	Lobster Opener Invitational	Peace	Ventura	Open Boat	Book Online
10/6/26	3 Days	Outer Islands Lobster Hunting	Peace	Ventura	Dolphin Scuba	916-929-8188
10/8/26	1/2 Day	Lobster Night Charter - Advanced	Island Diver	Redondo Beach	Open Charter	310-372-8423
10/9/26	3 Days	3 Day Adventure	Peace	Ventura	High Sierra Divers	530-823-6757
10/10/26	1 Day	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
10/11/26	1 Day	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
10/12/26	3 Days	2 Day Adventure	Peace	Ventura	Sea Divers - Dr Death	626-221-1119
10/14/26	2 Days	Lobster Diving	Peace	Ventura	Open Boat	Book Online
10/17/26	3 Days	3 Day Adventure	Peace	Ventura	CA Scuba Center	
10/20/26	3 Days	Lobstermania	Peace	Ventura	Sea Divers	626-221-1119
10/23/26	3 Days	Outer Islands Lobster Hunting	Peace	Ventura	Dolphin Scuba	916-929-8188
10/25/26	1 Day	Catalina Island	Pacific Star	San Pedro	Scuba Schools of America	909-621-4171
10/26/26	3 Days	Private Charter	Peace	Ventura	Private Charter	

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JULY 7

STAND UP TO TRASH BEACH CLEANUP

📍 Dana Point

🌐 oceaninstitute.org/calendar-new/

JULY 9

BIRCH AQUARIUM**OCEANS AT NIGHT: SHARKS**

📍 La Jolla

Dive into a world of all things shark-related. This 21+ event features live entertainment, interactive games, a Kelp Forest Dive presentation and more! Meet shark experts from Scripps Oceanography, nerd out on all things sharks and enjoy an evening packed with music, games, tasty drinks and more!

🌐 scripps.ucsd.edu/events/all

JULY 11

MBARI OPEN HOUSE

📍 Moss Landing

Learn about MBARI's latest discoveries and technology innovations. Meet members of the science, engineering, marine operations, and communications teams, test your skills building and piloting an underwater robot, make children's crafts, check out our fleet of deep-sea robots, and view the research vessels at the dock.

🌐 mbari.org/about/events/**LA WATERKEEPER****SANTA MONICA BEACH CLEANUP**

📍 Santa Monica

Kickoff Plastic Free July, a global movement started in 2011 that challenges folks to refuse single use plastics for one month, with a beach cleanup. This family-friendly event is a great way to learn new ways to reduce plastic intake, while also helping to create a safer and cleaner marine environment.

🌐 lawaterkeeper.org/events

JULY 13

SCIENCE PUB:**SHARKS BASKING IN ONLINE ATTENTION**

📍 Santa Barbara/Online

Basking sharks were once abundant off the West Coast of North America, but fishing and eradication efforts decimated the population. Using 15 years of social media sightings, Olivia Cleek, P.S.M., provides new insights into the species' current distribution and seasonal patterns.

🌐 sbnature.org/visit/calendar

JULY 16

**MARITIME DISTINGUISHED
SPEAKER SERIES**

📍 Santa Barbara

"A Deep Dive into Island Conservation." The program will explore how restoring island ecosystems helps protect biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience, and improve ocean health worldwide.

🌐 sbmm.org/santa-barbara-events/

JULY 18

ESPLANADE BEACH CLEANUP

📍 Pacifica

🌐 pacificbeachcoalition.org/calendar-2026/**HEAL THE BAY****NOTHIN' BUT SAND BEACH CLEANUP**

📍 Redondo Beach

Every year, millions of plastic bottles, bags, food wrappers, and cigarette butts enter our ocean, harming marine life, contaminating coastal ecosystems, and breaking down into dangerous microplastics. Protect beaches and waterways by removing harmful trash before it reaches the ocean, and discover how small everyday choices can help create a cleaner, healthier, plastic-free future.

🌐 healthebay.org/events**SAVE OUR BEACH****SEAL BEACH CLEANUP**

📍 Seal Beach

🌐 saveourbeach.org/beach-clean-ups/

JULY 19

BEACH CLEANUP AT EAST BEACH

📍 Santa Barbara

🌐 sbnature.org/visit/calendar**SUMMER TIDEPOL BIOBLITZ**

📍 Point Dume State Beach

Document marine life and help create a real-time snapshot of biodiversity along the California coast. Every observation contributes valuable data used by scientists and researchers to better understand local coastal ecology.

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🌐 healthebay.org/events

JULY 25

CSULB SHARKS @ THE BEACH

📍 Long Beach

Tour the Shark Lab, learn about the latest Shark Lab science and technology, interact with live marine animals, participate in Sharks and Crafts, and a Q&A with Dr. Chris Lowe, director of the Shark Lab.

🌐 csulb.edu/shark-lab/event/sharks-the-beach**HARBOR/SURFER'S BEACH CLEANUP**

📍 Half Moon Bay

🌐 pacificbeachcoalition.org/calendar-2026/

AUGUST 1

**CABRILLO MARINE AQUARIUM
BEACH CLEANUP**

📍 San Pedro

🌐 cma.recreation.parks.lacity.gov/index.php/events/



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May 16th – Catalina Island

May 24th–25th – San Clemente Island

May 30th–31st – The Scuba Show,
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June 13th – Catalina Island

June 20th – Catalina Island

June 27th – Anacapa Island 6 poach

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GEAR TEST EXTRA

Each issue, the Scuba Diver test team bring you the latest product and equipment releases from the dive industry. Cannot wait for the next edition? Keep up-to-date with all the latest gear news and reviews by heading over to the Scuba Diver YouTube channel!
www.youtube.com/ScubaDiverMagazine

MARES PLANET 88X TBP | SRP: \$1,179.95

Mark Evans: Mares have been at the forefront of regulator technology for decades, and with the Planet 88X TBP, the Italian company has released their most-innovative scuba regulator yet – engineered to deliver what they call Natural Breathing 2.0 through cutting-edge Airmatic Technology.

For the first time ever, a second stage regulator eliminates traditional springs and replaces them with a purely pneumatic valve, which Mares says offers ‘a breathing experience so effortless, it’s as if the air is simply there’.

At the heart of the Planet 88X TBP is Airmatic Technology – a revolutionary pneumatic system that minimizes mechanical parts and maximizes reliability. Unlike conventional regulators, this second stage is free from wear-prone springs. Instead, it uses intermediate pressure to control airflow, resulting in natural, resistance-free breathing.

Along with Mares’ signature VAD – Vortex Assisted Design – airflow remains powerful, direct, and responsive to the diver’s demand. VAD uses a bypass tube to create a vortex and low-pressure centre, which aids with diaphragm movement for natural breathing at all depths.





All Metal Technology makes it perfect for extreme cold water use, with the nickel-plated brass providing superior heat exchange, resisting icing in cold water and reduced dry mouth. There is a Manual Override button to control the airflow, along with a side-mounted pivoting purge button, and lightweight Superflex hose. The soft-but-firm mouthpiece is comfortable and supportive, and despite the second stage being metal, there was no feeling that you had to 'bite' down to keep it secure in your mouth.

The Planet balanced diaphragm second stage is perfectly paired with the 88X TBP first stage, featuring Mares proven high-performance technologies. The first stage has a metal body with a Pearl Chrome finish, TBP Dry Kit – proprietary twin piston technology, environmentally sealed for better performance on cold water dives, and AST – Auto Sealing Technology that keeps the first stage dry and free from dirt, ensuring reliable performance.

It has Natural DFC on all LP ports to ensure maximum delivery of air to the second stage, four low-pressure ports on a swivel turret, a fifth additional in-line low-pressure port, and an OPV – Overpressure Valve – that ensures uninterrupted regulator functionality in the unlikely event of an increase in intermediate pressure.

There are two symmetrical HP ports with a 10° port angle for perfect HP hose positioning, while the hexagonal DIN wheel ensures a firm grip, extra control and prevents slipping, even in wet conditions or when wearing gloves.

So what is the much-vaunted Airmatic Technology like in use? Well, I have to say that this is one of the smoothest breathing regulators I have ever used. Even when I started breathing extremely heavily on the reg to simulate a panicked diver, or someone having to work hard in a current, for instance, it effortlessly delivered the air to me. The side-mounted pivoting purge is quite ferocious, but given it is on a unique pivot, you can moderate how much you open this with little effort.

The first stage is relatively compact for a swivel turret unit, and the routing off the swivel is spot on, and avoided any odd bends or twists in any of the attached hoses. The reg gives a distinctive 'jet sound' on inhalation which you soon ignore, but this is a very small price to pay for such a high-performance regulator. It is fantastic to see big companies like Mares continuing to innovate, and I think we will be seeing more regulators utilising this technology in the near future.

www.mares.com





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CRESSI Z2 MASK – 80TH ANNIVERSARY | SRP: \$79.95



Mark Evans: Cressi Sub is the oldest diving equipment manufacturing company in the world, and as it celebrates an incredible 80 years in existence, it has released a line of colorful anniversary gear which certainly stands out from the crowd. One of these is the 80th anniversary edition of the Cressi Z2 diving mask. Manufactured through an advanced moulding production process to achieve a state-of-the-art frameless structure, the Z2 is a very lightweight, low-profile single-lens mask, which means it is easy to clear from a flood or partial flood, and offers a fantastic range of vision – the peripheral view is particularly impressive.

Made of high-quality silicone, the soft skirt fit comfortably on my face, and the dual-button buckles were quick and simple to adjust.

The black and yellow color scheme of this 80th anniversary edition really suits the mask, and gives it a nice old-school feel combined with a modern look. The Z2 comes in a padded, zippered case for storage and protection when you are traveling.

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CRESSI THOR EBS FINS - 80TH ANNIVERSARY | SRP: \$149.95

Mark Evans: Another in the 80th anniversary line up are these Thor EBS fins, which as well as having a cool name, are particularly eye-catching in the yellow-and-black special edition color scheme. It really highlights their unique shape and design features.

Cressi claims that 'the special arched profile of the fins, combined with the two central ribs, promotes a significant flow convection effect, known as 'spoon effect', which stabilises and boosts propulsion', and that the 'two lateral holes discharge the negative forces typically associated with this area and at the same time make for enhanced stability'. I have to say that in use, these fins do generate some serious thrust. That flexible section of the blade visibly arches as you fin. I found that with a standard flutter kick, you could get up quite a speed, but I was pleased that the feature also worked when you adopted a frogkick, and I could glide several feet from each kick cycle. While not as short and wide as the current crop of 'tech-style fins'. They are still quite compact, and I was able to adequately back-kick and perform helicopter turns, and so on. The blades are moulded from two different materials for improved reactivity, and the foot pocket, while being relatively pliable, still holds your booted foot securely and comfortably. Non-slip inserts on the bottom of the foot pocket ensure you don't lose traction on steps/boat decks,



etc. The bungee-style heel strap has a large loop that makes it very easy to locate and grab, even wearing thick neoprene gloves in 50 degrees F water.

The fins come in four sizes - XS, S, M and L – and come in an 80th anniversary emblazoned fin bag. They are quite lightweight, so while they worked well with me in a drysuit, I could also see these being a favorite of traveling divers wanting a fin which delivers decent performance without weighing a ton.

www.cressi.com





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HOW TO SPOT (AND AVOID) COMMON MISTAKES BEGINNER SNORKELERS MAKE



Roatan • Bay Islands
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S snorkeling is one of the easiest and most-rewarding ways to explore the underwater world. With minimal equipment and no formal certification requirements, beginners can quickly enjoy colorful marine life, coral reefs, and crystal-clear waters. However, many first-time snorkelers make avoidable mistakes that can impact their safety, comfort, and overall experience. In this guide, we'll cover the most-common beginner snorkeling mistakes, how to recognize them, and practical tips to avoid them so you can enjoy a safer and more memorable adventure.

Using Poorly Fitted Snorkeling Gear

How to Spot the Problem - If your mask constantly leaks, your snorkel fills with water, or your fins feel uncomfortable, your equipment likely doesn't fit properly.

Common signs include water entering your mask repeatedly, jaw soreness from biting the snorkel, blisters from fins, and frequent adjustments while in the water.

How to Avoid It - Before entering the water, test your mask seal on dry land, adjust straps for a snug - not tight - fit, choose fins appropriate for your foot size and experience level, and practice breathing through the snorkel in shallow water first. Well-fitted gear can make the difference between an enjoyable outing and a frustrating one.

Venturing Too Far From Shore

How to Spot the Problem - Excitement often causes beginners to swim farther than intended. Warning signs include difficulty seeing your starting point, feeling tired on the return trip, and stronger currents farther offshore.

How to Avoid It - Start close to shore and gradually build confidence. Best practices include snorkeling with a buddy, staying within designated snorkeling areas, frequently checking your location, and using a brightly colored float if appropriate. Remember that returning to shore usually requires more energy than swimming away from it. Of course, one way to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience is to join an excursion offering snorkeling from dedicated snorkel boats, such as those available at Anthony's Key Resort.

Ignoring Ocean Conditions

How to Spot the Problem - Beginners frequently underestimate wind, waves, currents, and tides. Signs conditions may be unsafe include choppy surface water, strong current, reduced visibility, and large breaking waves.

How to Avoid It - Before snorkeling, check local weather forecasts, review tide and surf conditions, ask local guides



or lifeguards about hazards, and choose calm days for your first outings.

Forgetting Sun Protection

How to Spot the Problem - Many snorkelers don't realize how much sun exposure occurs while floating on the surface. Common consequences include severe sunburn, dehydration, and heat exhaustion.

How to Avoid It - Protect yourself by wearing reef-safe sunscreen, using a rash guard or UV-protective shirt, staying hydrated, and taking breaks in shaded areas. Even cloudy days can result in significant UV exposure.

Panicking When Water Enters the Snorkel

How to Spot the Problem - Water entering the snorkel is extremely common, especially in waves, or if you have been duck-diving below the surface. Many beginners react by standing abruptly, removing the mask, and hyperventilating.

How to Avoid It - Learn how to clear your snorkel, it isn't hard and just requires learning the right technique. Take a small breath, exhale forcefully through the snorkel, and blow the water out through the top opening. Practicing this skill in shallow water helps eliminate panic later.

Final Thoughts

Most beginner snorkeling mistakes stem from inexperience rather than carelessness. By learning how to identify common issues - such as poorly fitted gear, ignoring weather conditions, and swimming too far offshore - you can prevent problems before they occur.

The key to successful snorkeling is preparation, patience, and awareness. Start slowly, practice your skills in calm conditions, and prioritize safety at every stage. With the right approach, you'll spend less time dealing with avoidable mistakes and more time enjoying the incredible underwater world that snorkeling has to offer. ■

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