
SSAC Dive Trip Diary

Southern Red Sea 7- 14 Oct 17



Divers

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Awesome Diving

Saturday 7 Oct

The team assembled at North Terminal at Gatwick Airport – breakfast was enjoyed and banter began in earnest. The flight to Hurghada went smoothly and the airport was surprisingly efficient, stand-fast the usual fiasco of payment for Visas (I'm sure they make it up as they go along) arriving on a pleasantly warm and dark starry evening. We were met in the airport car-park by a cheerful and helpful driver from Pharaoh Diving, who herded us to his van and then drove us for a few hours over to Roots Camp, where we took a short break for a welcome leg stretch and dinner. It was then back into the bus for a further hour or so, south to Port Ghalib in Marsa Alam, where we met our new home for the week, a rather splendid boat 'The Princess Diana'- a 22 berth, which was very well kitted out. After a few admin formalities (Dive Quals, experience, insurance and gas requirements (15L Nitrox)) we were allocated our cabins and a restful night on a 'rock-hard' bunk was had.

Sunday 8 Oct

An early'ish start of 0700 for breakfast. It seemed to take an age for the Port Authority to approve our plan and give permission to sail at 0930. By the time we sailed, it was already 35°C in the shade as we headed out of the harbour with its turquoise sea and the wind slowly began to pick up as we left harbour. We were soon at our first dive sight, we received a brief and did a simple dive (Shaab Abu

Dahab 4) – the sea was clear and 28°C....fantastic. We used this dive to test our kit, get familiarised with the conditions and to deploy our SMBs. A good start. We enjoyed a tasty lunch and after a suitable rest and brief, we moved on to Elphinstone Reef – going in as a group of 6 from the zodiac – a good drift dive – lots of marine life and fantastic visibility, reaching a depth of circa 24 metres. We came up in our dive pairs – using our SMBs to let the zodiac know where to pick us up.

Monday 9 Oct

We had sailed in lumpy seas overnight quite a long way south to Daedalus – a spectacular reef with a lighthouse perched on top – although in the middle of nowhere, we found ourselves amongst a group of 13 other boats in choppy seas. We went out as a group in the zodiac and quickly descended in blue water – Malcolm managed to snag his SMB on the zodiac and struggled to descend – Doug and Ali were quickly in support and helped him untangle. We went in vain to search for Hammerheads descending to 34m; but, nothing seen, so we drifted over to the reef and swam along the wall. Plenty of marine life and great vis. We stayed in situ and after breakfast and a short break we went into the water, this time from the boat, which made things much easier. We stuck together as a group again seeing a great range of marine life including a huge Napoleon wrasse and turtle. As we headed back we caught a glimpse of an oceanic white-tipped shark. Returning to the boat for a tasty lunch, some of us ventured out on a simple trip to the lighthouse – a real tiny desert Island, where a couple of Egyptian blokes live for 2 months at a time – fleecing divers for T-shirts (at €10 a pop) we remained at the Daedalus site and did a final dive on the reef – nothing of particular note for this dive other than after we got out, oceanic white-tipped sharks appeared and were swimming close to others divers from our boat, who were at times oblivious to their presence and splashing on the surface (cue heart attack for Ali!).

Tuesday 10 Oct

After another overnight transit and another disturbed night's sleep, we woke to a stunning desert island of Zabargad, somewhere close to the Sudan border. It was breezy. We were up at around 0600 and had our brief (we also soon discovered that timings for the briefs and dive times were somewhat random) and got in the water for an early dive on the colourful and stunning underwater gardens. We returned for breakfast and then got a zodiac out to the Russian Spy Trawler. Conditions were very choppy and it took quite a while to find the wreck. A good dive; but, rough getting back into the zodiac and back to the mothership. Lunch was welcome and then we had a free dive, which we went out in pairs. Then it was back for a light tea and then back in for a fun night dive - great vis and a good

variety of marine life, including the rare sight of a large moray eel on the move. Thoroughly enjoyed dinner and absolutely knackered by the end of the day.

Wednesday 11 Oct

Another patchy night's sleep - we had stayed at Zabargad overnight and got a 0700 dive in before breakfast. We then sailed a few miles over to 'Rocky Island' where we fitted in a couple of dives. We went out using the zodiac, as a group, and Martin and Ed went down to 40m - we kept together as a group and did a simple drift along a wall. After lunch we approached the reef from the other side and this dive was full of marine life - lots to see and very colourful. We had a long dive and set sail after dinner into heavy seas - we all racked out!

Thursday 12 Oct

Many slept poorly, with the boats motion and noise engines. We were now berthed off Satayah and it was breezy. We got the zodiac out again up to the corner of reef and had a gentle drift dive back towards the boat - but we couldn't quite get back to the Princess Diana and got the zodiac back for last bit. We enjoyed breakfast and moved dive sites, this time to Malahi; this was a great dive, from the back of the boat - lots of swim throughs, currents, surges, loads of marine life - a lot of fun. We enjoyed lunch and moved again - to Shaab Claudia - another fabulous dive and again from the back of the boat, which meant that we could go out in buddy pairs and roam fairly freely. This was a top dive, well worth going back to and a real pity that we only had the one dive here. We didn't hang around, as we slipped and proceeded as soon as we got back to the boat and sailed into heavy seas. This made eating dinner quite challenging and soon we were heading into force 6 seas and the boat cork-screwed in a most uncomfortable manner!

Friday 13 Oct

We berthed at around 0300, which meant things got a bit calmer; but, most people were a little jaded in the morning. We were back at Elphinstone and Ed and Martin took the opportunity to do a 45m dive for Edward's depth progression. We stayed together as a group and enjoyed a simple drift along the wall dive and came up together on Martins DSMB. After breakfast, we then did our final and for many of us our longest dive. We got a zodiac to the edge of the reef, did a quick check that the current was flowing in the right direction and then did a gentle drift dive along the reef. It was teeming with marine life, huge schools of

fish and fabulous colours. It was also fun trying to find our boat, which we found on the third attempt and as we got out of the boat the sharks appeared again....Edward and Martin are still waiting to get their shark cheesy grin shot. That was it....diving over and the boat rolled back to Port Ghalib, where we disembarked and got the bus back to Roots camp - to a bed not made of rock!

Saturday 14 Oct

A constructive day decompressing under the sun by the pool!! After lunch we headed back to Hurghada Airport, where the travel adventure began again. The customs were completely bemused by Martin and Ali's cameras and after Martin forced one of the Custom Officer's to look at all his photographs - they forced him on to the next stage - check in, where the queues seemed to move completely randomly. We then went through another 2 sets of security checks including a full check of hand luggage and by the time we boarded the crammed full flight - we were definitely ready to leave.

A fantastic trip - well worth doing. 17 great dives - Nitrox on 15L, definitely the right way to go.