

QUICK STARTER GUIDE TO
SCUBA DIVING

LAST UPDATE - APRIL 2016

**13 REASONS TO BECOME
A CERTIFIED SCUBA DIVER**

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**EASY-TO-READ DIVING
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SHARKS IN MALPELO**

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Don't dream it. Live it.





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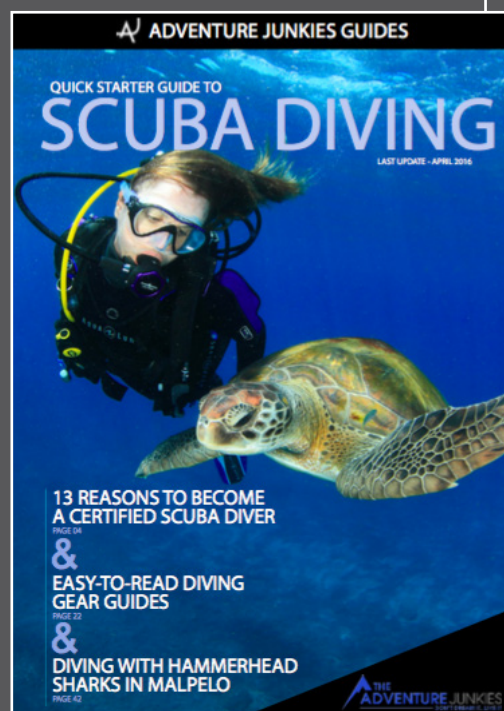
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Malpelo Chapter by Antonio Cala



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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

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Welcome to The Adventure Junkies Scuba Diving Quick Starter Guide!



You've probably found your way to this ebook through our website, or maybe a friend passed it along to you. Either way, we're happy you're here.

We wrote this guide because when we were just starting out scuba diving we couldn't find a single easy to read resource about how to get into the sport. The techie articles from magazines and websites just made us more confused. Also, none of our friends were divers so we had to go ask around to find the answers we needed. The process left us feeling lost and overwhelmed, we don't want that to happen to you.

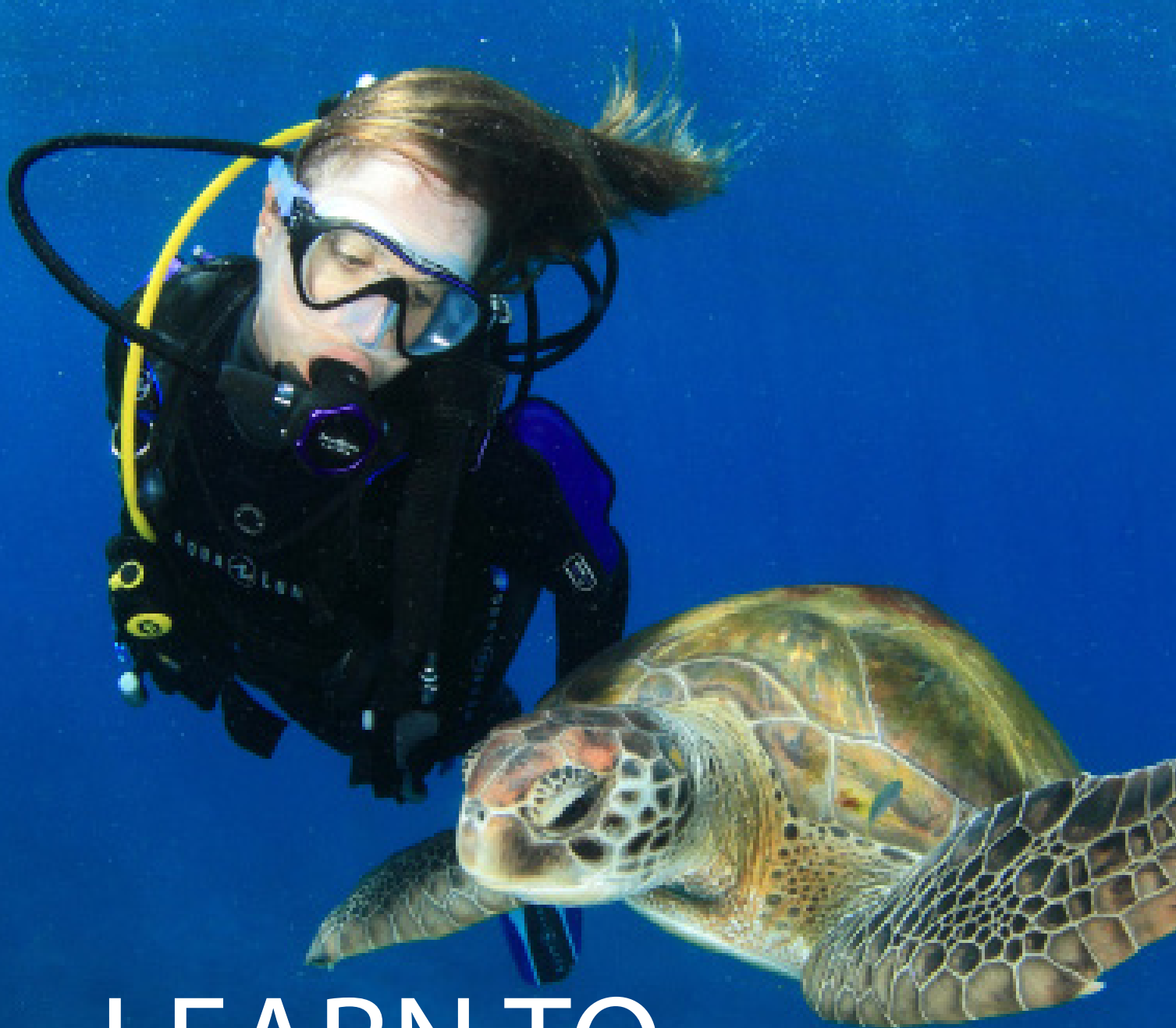
The Adventure Junkies was created to inspire you and give you the right tools to explore the outdoors. We call it the dream it, learn it, live it process. First, you get inspired by others. Then, you learn the basics of the sport. And finally, you do it yourself. We do this by providing you with high quality and practical education, and connecting you with a community of like minded adventures from all over the world. And, because you are reading this right now means you're well on your way to achieving your goal!

This eBook is a quick starter guide, and the purpose of this guide is to do just that - get you started fast. It is not a scuba diving manual and we won't cover every aspect of the sport. It will, however, take you through the basics and give you the tools you need to take the first steps in becoming a scuba diver.

To all of our subscribers, followers and friends out there, thank you for the gift of your support. We only hope that this free guide can begin to repay you for the time you've given us. Here's to you and your many years of diving adventures to come!

Antonio & Amanda





LEARN TO SCUBA DIVE

13 REASONS TO GET CERTIFIED

Do you want to explore the underwater world but still not convinced about all the scuba diving thing? No problem. We are here to help. We've put together these 13 reasons to show you why you should give it a try and become a certified scuba diver today.



1. Explore the Underwater World

The ocean is filled with unique creatures, colorful fish and beautiful marine environments that only scuba diving can allow us to explore. Diving equipment allows us to go beyond our human limitations to have up close experiences with big ocean creatures in their natural environments.

2. Become Part of a Community

Once you become a certified diver a whole network opens up to you as you become part of the diving community. Share stories, favorite dive sites, great holiday locations, and amazing underwater photos with other divers and discover new diving opportunities. Ask around at your local dive shop to see if they have a diving group, often they will plan weekend dive trips and dive vacations.

3. It's a Fun Travel Activity

Whenever you go on vacation you can look for dive shops. Not only will you be experiencing life above land but the local underwater reefs and marine life of the destination as well.

4. Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

We all know breathing underwater is not natural. On top of that you have to wear a bunch of equipment. You have to trust yourself and your instructor. You have to be willing to try new things and push your limits.

5. Learn Something New

Scuba diving is much more than just sticking a regulator in your mouth and breathing underwater. As a diving student you will need to understand dive theory which is strongly concentrated in physics and physiology.

6. It's Easy

The only skills you need to dive are to be able to swim and breathe. Before you begin you will read and watch videos about diving, then your instructor will go back over the important points. The course starts with simple skills and gradually builds on them to build your confidence.

7. It's a World Wide Activity

Scuba diving is accessible in just about any part of the world that is close to oceans, lakes and rivers.

8. Make New Friends from All Over the World

Like any sport or activity, making friends is easy when you share a common interest. People travel from all over the world to visit the top diving locations.

9. It's Peaceful Underwater

The underwater world is very peaceful making diving a relaxing and calming experience. There are no phones to answer, cars honking or air pollution. The only thing you will hear is yourself breathing.

10. Travel to Remote Areas

Want to go to The Maldives, Indonesia, Mozambique or Fiji but not sure what you'll do once you get bored of lying around on the beach? Well all of these destinations offer world class diving, just one more reason to visit these places.

11. Swim Through History

Not only does diving allow us to see the strange underwater world but things more familiar from our own human history. There are thousands of wrecked ships and airplanes that sit at the bottom of the ocean, many of which are from WW2. With a wreck diver specialty you will learn how you can safely swim through them.

12. It's a Life Long Activity

Just because you are growing older doesn't mean you have to stop diving. As long as you have good cardiac and pulmonary health you can continue diving well into your older years. Dive centers even accommodate older divers by giving them extra assistance and attention.

13. Experience Something You've Never Felt Before

Scuba diving allows you to experience many sensations you have most likely never felt before. The key to diving comfortably is call neutral bouyancy, which means that you aren't floating up or sinking down. It's the easiest way to experience weightlessness without going into space. You will also experience breathing underwater, which might sound a bit scary at first but through practice it becomes so natural you don't even think about it.

“MAKING FRIENDS
IS EASY WHEN YOU
SHARE A COMMON
INTEREST”

AMANDA ZEISSET



ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DIVING FAQ

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Do you want to become a scuba diver but have no clue where to start?

No worries, you're in the right place. One of our big goals here at The Adventure Junkies is to inspire you to get out and have new adventures and outdoor experiences. We know getting started is the hardest part so we want to get you all the info you need to get you on your way. That's why we put together some of the top questions about how to become a scuba diver and answered them for you.

Is Scuba Diving Safe? What Are The Risks?

Yes, if you stay within the recreational limits and follow the safety procedures you'll learn in your certification course, scuba diving is a safe sport. However, there are very serious risks involved that you'll need to be aware of. Decompression illnesses such as air embolism and decompression sickness (aka the bends) are among the top risks.

The good news is these risks are easily avoidable with proper training, knowledge and a bit of common sense. Your instructor will teach you about all the risks involved with diving and how to avoid them.

What About Sharks?

While Hollywood and TV love to make sharks out to be raging man

eating beasts, they aren't. I've been diving with hundreds of them and I can tell you all that stuff you see on TV is a load of BS.

You Breathe Through A Tube, Right? What If My Equipment Stops Working?

Modern scuba equipment is put under rigorous testing to ensure only top performers reach the market. On top of that, the way a diving regulator (that tube you put in your mouth to breath air) is designed to be fail safe. So, if the regulator were to fail it wouldn't stop giving you air. Instead, it will flow continuously. You'll learn how to breath from a free flowing regulator in your certification course.



I Don't Live Near The Ocean, Can I Still Learn To Dive?

Great question! Yes you can still learn to dive, even if you live very far from the ocean. The majority of the certification course is spent learning theory and practicing skills in shallow water, normally in a swimming pool. Open water (not confined water of a pool) dives can be done in a lake, quarry or in the ocean.

A great option for people who live far from the ocean is to finish all of their book work and pool skills at home. Then go to a tropical destination like the Bahamas or Roatan to do the certification dives. This is done through a referral system, where one instructor signs off on the knowledge development and pool skills so another instructor can take over and finish off the course.

What If I'm Not A Strong Swimmer, Is Swimming Necessary For Scuba Diving?

Some swimming skills are required to become a scuba diver. PADI will require you to swim 200 meters and float/ tread water for 10 minutes.

If you know how to swim but

aren't a strong swimmer, don't let this discourage you from learning how to dive, just practice these basics before you sign up for a scuba course.

I Don't Have A Lot Of Money, How Much Does It Cost To Get Scuba Certified?

Let's be honest, scuba diving isn't cheap. But that doesn't mean you have to be rich to enjoy this sport either, you just have to make it a priority.

We'll talk a bit more about how much getting into the sport costs so you can budget for it and start your scuba savings fund.

The price of a scuba course varies greatly to where you choose to get certified. To give you a rough idea, Open Water courses range from \$300 to \$500.

Do You Have To Be Certified To Scuba Dive?

No, you don't need to be certified to try scuba diving. But, you do need to be certified to go on dive charters, rent equipment and get air tank fills.

If you want to see if scuba diving is for you before you decide to spend the time and money getting



"IT TYPICALLY TAKES 3-4 DAYS TO COMPLETE THE OPEN WATER SCUBA DIVER COURSE"

AMANDA ZEISSET



“DON’T GET CAUGHT UP ON THE PADI VS SSI DEBATE BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS THE QUALITY OF YOUR COURSE DEPENDS ON THE ATTITUDE AND HABILITY OF THE INSTRUCTOR”

AMANDA ZEISSET

certified, many agencies offer a mini course like PADI's Discover Scuba Diving or SSI's Try Scuba Diving. These last a few hours including a trial dive either in a pool or in the ocean with an instructor by your side the entire time.

If you raise the “do I need to be certified to scuba dive question?” because you want to learn on your own or have a friend who wants teach you, let me stop you there. There are serious risks to scuba diving (death is amongst them), the skills and theory you learn in a course are essential for avoiding these dangers..

How Do I Get A Scuba Diving License? What's The First Step?

The first step to becoming a scuba diver and earning your certification card is to find a dive shop near you (browsing the internet is a good place to start) and ask them about signing up for a course. The beginner course needed for certification is an Open Water scuba diving course.

While there are lots of different agencies out there that offer their own unique course (we'll get to that), all courses teach the same diving theory and

the skills needed to dive safely.

Which Dive Agency Should I Get Certified With?

There are lots of certifying agencies in the world but the two big ones are: PADI & SSI.

Scuba divers love to have heated debates about which agency is the best. But don't get caught up on the PADI vs SSI debate because the truth is the quality of your course greatly depends on the attitude and ability of your instructor.

All agencies deliver courses that meet the standards of the WRSTC (World Recreation Scuba Diving Council). Also, certifications are interchangeable. So, if you decide to do your Open Water course (level 1) with SSI you can always decide to take the PADI Advanced course (level 2) without having to start all over with the PADI system.

Here's a quick run down of the top 2 agencies to give you an idea which is best for you.

PADI requires each student to have their own PADI course book (unless they pay extra for e-learning). PADI Instructors must follow a rigid course.

This is so theoretically the course is the same no matter who your instructor is or where you take the course.

SSI course come with online instruction that you have lifetime access to so there's no need to buy books.

SSI Instructors have more flexibility in how they can teach their students. This can give you a more personalized course.

How PADI and SSI are they the same?

While PADI steals the fame for being the most recognized world-wide, that doesn't mean that a certification from a different agency is valued any less.

Both PADI and SSI have an online system so if you forget your C-card and the dive shop has internet, they will be able to look up your certification.

The Open Water course is practically identical with only some minor variations in the order of the skills.

The simple answer is, at the end of the day you want a certification that allows you to dive all over the world. Instead of getting hung up on the agency, find an instructor you're comfortable learning from and go from there.

How Long Does It Take To Get Scuba Certified?

It typically takes 3 to 4 days to complete the Open Water course. Of course, this is also dependent on your personal schedule. Some people choose to do weekend courses, so it will take a few weeks to complete it.

How Long Will My Certification Be Good For?

Once you get your certification you will have it for life. Having said that, it's good to take a refresher course if you haven't been diving in a while.

How Old Do You Have To Be To Scuba Dive?

The minimum age to learn how to scuba dive is 10 years old. For kids younger than 10, some agencies offer special programs like PADI's bubble maker or SSI's Ranger. There's no maximum age and people in good health can safely enjoy scuba diving well into their later years.

What Gear Do I Need To Become Certified?

The dive center typically will provide you with all the equipment you

need during your course. Be sure to ask before you sign up if you will need to rent or buy any equipment.

After you finish your course, it's a good idea to start looking into buying your own set of gear. You'll feel much more comfortable underwater because it will fit you great and you'll know how to use it.

If you have a limited budget and can only invest in a few pieces of gear at the moment, a dive computer and a scuba mask are two of the most important pieces of kit to own.

What Should Divers Do For Their Own Safety During The Certification Course?

To stay safe during your course, follow your instructor's directions and stay close to the group. If you are on an open water dive, get into the habit of checking your air often and let your instructor know right away if you are getting low. Your certification course will go over all the skills you need to be a safe diver.

How Deep Can You Dive With The Open Water Certification?

The recreational depth limit for scuba divers is 130 feet (40 meters). However, with the Open Water certification it's recommended that you don't dive deeper than 60 feet (18 meters) until you have completed Advanced diver training.

Once I'm Certified, How Much Does It Cost To Go Scuba Diving?

Scuba diving is not an inexpensive hobby so it's good to have an idea of what costs are involved before you invest in learning this sport.

You'll need to buy or rent equipment. Scuba gear is an investment. If you dive a lot, buying your own gear pays for itself in the money you save from rental fees.

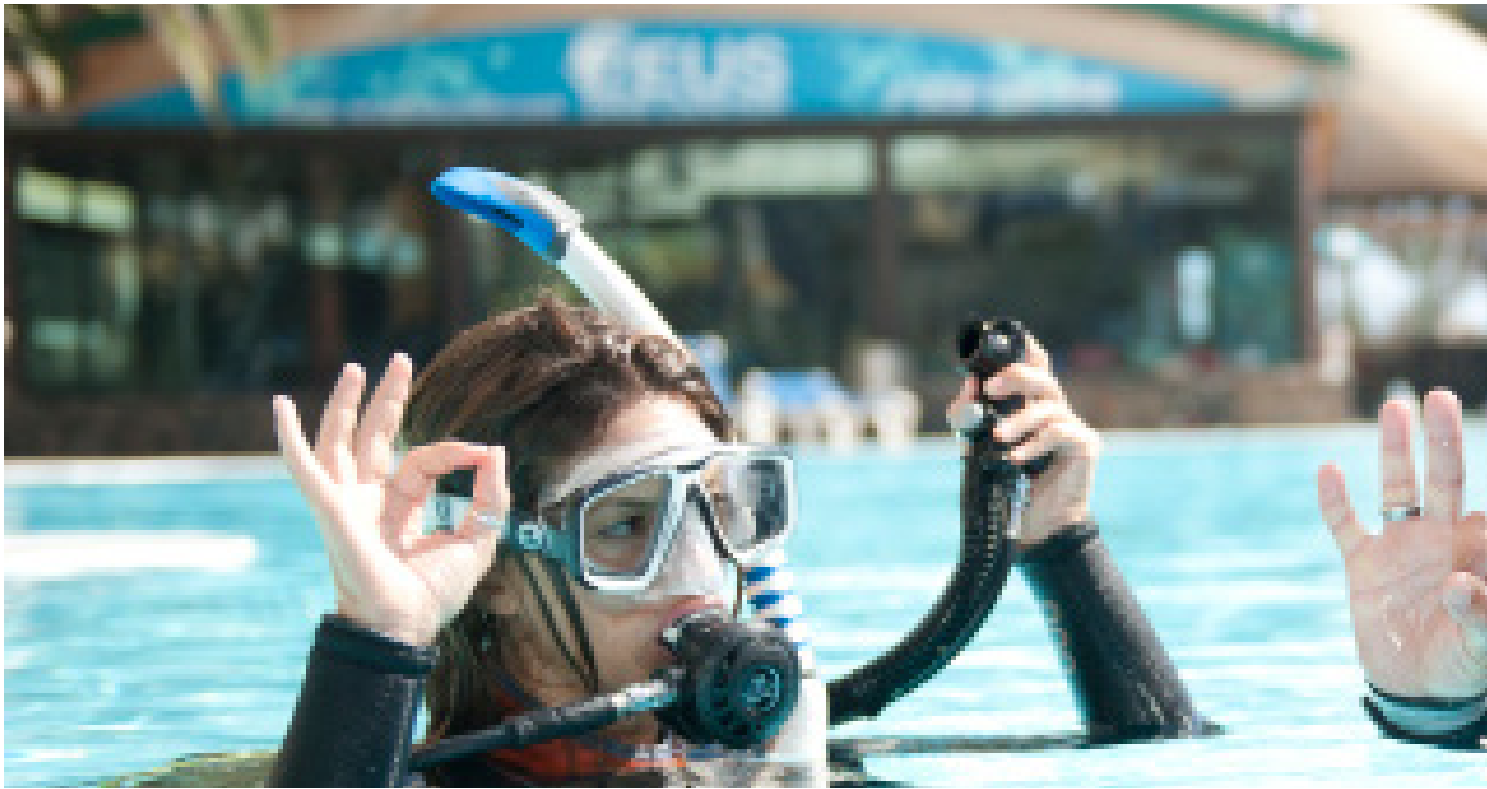
You will also need to go with a diving charter unless you live close to shore dives or have your own boat. The prices for a charter is dependent on where in the world you want to go diving and of course how far is the dive site from land.

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

If you still have more diving questions you would like to get answered, head to The Adventure Junkies Forum and post it there. The supportive TAJ community is always happy to help each other out.

Scuba Diving Forum





LEVEL 1: LEARN TO DIVE

OPEN WATER DIVER

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to learn to dive but don't know where to start?

We're here to help you! This article will teach you all you need to know about the entry level course to the sport of diving. With the Open Water SCUBA Diver Course you will learn the basics, the safety practices and, most of all, it will open a whole new world you never knew before. You will get to experience the underwater world and interact with marine life and in a unique way.

What Agency Should I Do My Course With?

Depending on the diving agency you choose to go with, there can be some variations. But, in contrast to what happens at other levels, the entry level course is very similar whether you choose to do it with. Being said that, every agency calls it differently.

PADI – Open Water Diver. SSI – Open Water Diver. RAID – Open Water 20 / Level 1. BSAC – Ocean Diver and NAUI – Scuba Diver

All the courses mentioned above cover the same diving theory and skills. All of them are also follow the same standards set by the World Recreational SCUBA Diving Council.

In my experience, the quality of the course normally depends on how good the instructor is, rather than the agency. So apart from checking out prices and availability in the area where you want to get certified, I wouldn't get too caught on which agency to choose.

After you complete the course, you will receive a certification that is accepted and recognized all around the world. All the diving agencies recognize and accept each others licenses, so you will be able to dive with any dive operation once you are a certified diver, even if they don't belong to your issuing agency.

Also, you can do level 1 with one agency and level 2 (advanced) with another one. So, this one isn't a biggy. There are other more important factors that we'll discuss in a moment.

What Am I Allowed To Do With This Level Of Certification?

There are 3 things you will be allowed to do once you become a certified diver.

Be able to DIVE INDEPENDENTLY WITH A BUDDY or with a dive opera-



RENT DIVING EQUIPMENT

Get your TANKS FILLED

You will be trained to dive up to 18 meters / 60 feet. With the experience and continuing education and training you will be able to dive deeper.

What's The Structure of the Course?

There are 4 different parts in every open water diver course: theory, water skill assessment, confined sessions and open water dives.

The theory includes reading the chapters of the student manual, watching videos about each of them and taking an exam.

There might be some water skills assessment to pass (depending on the agency) like a 200 meters swim or a 10 minute floating test.

Five confined sessions will take you through all the skills and exercises you need to know when diving in the open ocean. These are normally performed in a swimming pool or in a shallow area of a beach.

You will get a minimum of 4 open water dives where you will have the chance to experience what real diving is about. These dives normally include some skills exercises as well.

How Long Does It Take?

The length of the course is

about 3-4 days. Some agencies like PADI and SSI now offer an e-learning option, which allows you to do all the theory online.

The main advantages of the on-line option is that you can finish the theory from the comfort of your home before going to the local dive center or even traveling to a nice diving destination to finish the practical sessions. Also, you will only need 3 days to finish the rest of the course.

The downside is the cost, as the e-learning option is normally more expensive (around 50-80 USD extra).

How Much Does It Cost?

The cost of the Open Water Diver Course varies greatly depending on the country where it's offered and what is included with it. Regions like South East Asia (i.e. Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia) or Central America (i.e. Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama) are well known for offering the cheapest deals in the world.

The price of the course can be as low as 250-300 USD in some places around the world.

But depending on the dive center offering the course, the deal can include juicy extras or lack some essentials. An extremely cheap course can also mean that some materials and equipment are not



“THE COST OF THE OPEN WATER DIVER COURSE VARIES GREATLY DEPENDING ON THE COUNTRY WHERE IT'S OFFERED”

ANTONIO CALA



"IN MY EXPERIENCE, THE QUALITY
OF THE COURSE DEPENDS ON HOW
GOOD THE INSTRUCTOR IS, RATHER
THAN THE AGENCY"

ANTONIO CALA



included. We recommend you to check out the following considerations to have a better idea of what is the best deal for you, before making any decision.

Find out what materials are included. A course should include the student manual and an RDP table (or an eRDP), unless you're taking the e-learning option.

Ask if the diving gear is included in the price or if you will have to pay the rental separately.

Some places can even include nights of accommodation during the duration of the course. If so, how many nights will you get?

Dive Centers sometimes offer additional dives once you finish the course. Remember that the course includes 4 dives already. Will you get any extra fun dive once you're certified?

Things To Consider When Choosing A Dive Center

When looking at dive centers to do your open water diver course, there are some considerations to take into account in order to find the place that fits your needs best.

We recommend you to pay attention to the following:

Find out how many students will be at the course with you. Most of the diving organizations limit the ratio instructor to student to 1:8, but

the less people in your group, the more personalized attention you will receive.

Try to talk to the instructor that will teach the course. Does he or she speak English properly? Is he or she approachable and listens to your questions and concerns? Would you feel confident with him or her underwater?

Have a look at the condition of the diving gear you will be using during the course. Is it new or well maintained equipment, or you can see clear marks of heavy use on it?

Find out what's the expected duration of the course. Is it going to be a relaxed pace or is the instructor going to try to squeeze everything in as fast as possible?

Where To Do Your Course

Like it happens when learning other activities, you want to find good and easy conditions when diving for the first time. Places with calm seas and warm waters like the Caribbean or South East Asia are probably the easiest ones for beginners.

But if you eventually want to become an dive pro it might be a good idea to find a place with some tough conditions like cold water or poor visibility to start with. This will improve your skills and make you a more diverse diver.

"DIVE CENTERS SOMETIMES OFFER ADDITIONAL DIVES ONCE YOU FINISH THE OPEN WATER DIVER COURSE"

ANTONIO CALA





LEVEL 2: IMPROVE YOUR DIVE SKILLS

ADVANCED OWD

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to improve your diving skills but don't know how?

No worries. This article will show you how you can take your diving skills to the next level with an advanced open water certification course. In the level 2 of scuba diving courses you'll learn new skills, improve existing ones and experience different types of specialty diving for the very first time. This course will help you to feel more confident underwater and explore the different possibilities within the sport of diving.

What Agency Should I Do My Course With?

Depending on the diving agency you choose to go with, there can be some variations. In this article we're going to discuss the courses offered by the 2 main diving agencies: PADI and SSI.

The PADI Advanced Open Water Diver course is composed by 5 adventure dives with corresponding theory part for each. Two of those five dives must be deep and navigation dives, while the other three are up to you. (More about adventure dives in a bit). There's no exam to pass to get this certification, just do the book work and complete the dives with your instructor.

The SSI Advanced Open Water Diver rating is not a course, but a rating. In order to achieve it you must complete 4 SSI specialty courses and have done a total of 24 dives. There's no fee for this rating.

To make things even more complicated to understand, SSI created the Advanced Adventurer program. Which is basically the same as the PADI

Advanced OWD course, where you perform 5 different adventure dives which gives you a taste of several types of diving. This course doesn't give you the SSI Advanced OWD rating.

What Will I Learn With This Level Of Certification?

You will fine tune your existing skills, learn new ones and experience different types of diving conditions within the same course.

You will be trained to dive up to 100 feet (30 meters), to navigate effectively underwater and 3 other skills depending on which adventure dives you choose to do.

What's The Structure of the Course?

Depending on the agency you decide to go with, you'll need to



choose some adventure dives or specialty courses.

The following are the types of adventure dives you can choose from (Note that not every dive center might not offer all of them): Deep, Navigation, Night, Wreck, Enriched Air – NITROX, Search & Recovery, Fish ID, Drift, Underwater Photography, Underwater Videography, Underwater Naturalist, Boat, Multi-level, Dry Suit, Peak Performance Buoyancy, DPV (diving propulsion vehicle).

Which Adventure Dives Are Better?

It all depends on your personal interests but some adventure dives are certainly more useful than others.

Taking the Peak Performance Buoyancy dive is highly recommended as you'll learn how to fine tune your position and buoyancy under the water, which is quite important. We've even seen some dive centers make it a compulsory adventure dive, for a good reason.

Diving at Night is a very special sensation and, even though it's not compulsory, it's highly recommended that you experience it with an instructor for the first time.

Depending on your personal interests, taking the Search & Recovery, Fish ID, Underwater Photography or Videography and Underwater

Naturalist can all be a good option as well.

Other options like Boat, Drift or Multi-level dives are less attractive as these are skills that you can easily learn later on in your diving career.

How Long Does It Take?

You will need a minimum of 2 days to finish the PADI Advanced OWD course.

Alternatively, you can do adventure dives at different locations with different dive centers. If you keep those dives documented, as soon as you log 5 adventure dives within a year (including deep and navigation), the instructor who did your last dive could certify you as PADI Advanced Open Water Diver.

In case of SSI, you'll need to do 4 specialty courses and have a minimum of 24 logged dives, so the duration really depends on you. The SSI Advanced OW Diver is the only rating that combines diving knowledge and experience.

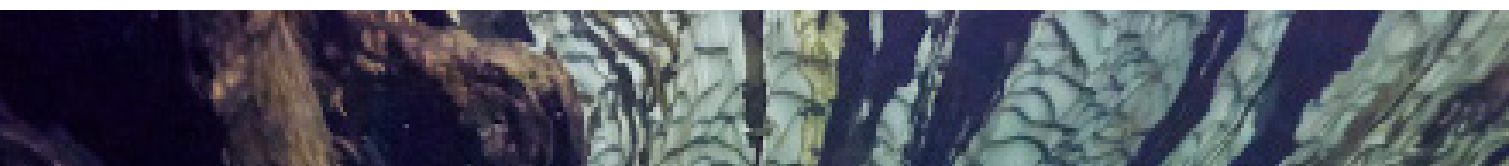
2 Factors To Consider When Choosing A Dive Center

The most important factors to consider when taking the Advanced Open Water course are the following:



“THE PEAK PERFORMANCE BUOYANCY DIVE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED AS YOU WILL FINE TUNE & MASTER YOUR POSITION UNDERWATER”

ANTONIO CALA



"YOU WILL BE TRAINED TO DIVE UP TO 100 FEET (30M), TO NAVIGATE EFFECTIVELY UNDERWATER AND 3 OTHER SKILLS OF YOUR CHOICE"

ANTONIO CALA



1. WHO IS THE INSTRUCTOR who will be teaching the course?

The general guidelines for every adventure dive are quite broad and the instructor has a lot of freedom to provide his input into it. That means that the same adventure dive can vary a lot depending on who is leading the course.

So try to talk to the instructor in advance and ask yourself the following questions:

What's his/her experience teaching?

Is he still motivated or does he look like a bit burnt out?

2. Will the instructor be JUST TEACHING THE ADVENTURE DIVES OR NOT?

In many occasions, the student simply tags along with a group of fun divers. The instructor spends the first 5-10 minutes with you doing some skills and the rest of the time it's just a normal dive.

That's not what we would recommend. Be clear that you want to have an instructor for yourself.

You're paying over \$300 bucks for this course so be sure to get the attention you deserve.

Where To Do Your Course

For some adventure dives (like peak performance buoyancy or deep) the location doesn't really matter; however, for others it's more important and sometimes essential.

It's obvious to think that if you are interested in wreck or altitude dives, you must go somewhere where there's a wreck or an altitude lake to dive at.

Other conditions are not a must but highly recommended. For Underwater Photography & Videography good visibility will make the experience much better.

Regions with great diversity of marine life and corals are best for Fish ID or Underwater Naturalist, while calm and shallow waters are best for your first night dive.

Don't forget to check out the [Scuba Diving Section](#) for more information about courses and continuing education.

“THE GUIDELINES FOR THE ADVENTURE DIVE ARE QUITE BROAD AND THE INSTRUCTOR HAS A LOT OF FREEDOM TO PROVIDE HIS INPUT.”

ANTONIO CALA





LEVEL 3: BE PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES

RESCUE DIVER

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Do you want to want to be prepared for emergencies when you go diving?

We totally understand you. This article will show you how to become a rescue diver. In the level 3 of scuba diving courses you'll learn how to deal with dive emergencies using a variety of techniques and skills. By the end of this course you'll know how to avoid risks and how to respond in case things do go wrong.

What Agency Should I Do My Course With?

When looking at becoming a rescue diver, the main two diving agencies in the world, PADI and SSI, offer the same course with some variations.

The PADI Rescue Diver course prepares you to deal with dive emergencies using a variety of techniques and skills. You will learn what to look for and how to respond in case something happens while diving. PADI considers the Rescue Diver course as the level 3 so you need to be an Advanced Open Water Diver to take this course.

The SSI Stress and Rescue course focuses more in the stress part and how to prevent emergencies situations while PADI goes quicker to the rescue part. SSI also considers the Stress and Rescue course as a specialty course, and it could count as one of the four specialties required to become an Advanced Open Water.

Both agencies require you to be trained in First Aid and CPR as a

prerequisite to be become a Rescue Diver. You can get this training with an independent agency as long as the course meets the standards dictated by PADI and SSI.

If you would like to receive all the training under the same agency PADI offers the Emergency First Responder course and SSI the React Right course.

What Will I Learn With This Level Of Certification?

The rescue diver course will teach you all you need to know in case of emergencies. You will learn how to assess stress situations, prevent them and act accordingly by implementing different rescue techniques.

It's a tough course. You'll be physically working a lot but, with the right instructor and classmates, you can also have a lot of fun on the way.



What's The Structure of the Course?

In general, the course has 3 sections: theory, rescue exercises and open water rescue scenarios.

Depending on the agency you decide to go with, there might be some variations in terms of how many hours are dedicated to each section.

For the THEORY SECTION, the students must watch a video and complete several knowledge development segments, including successfully completing Knowledge Reviews and the Rescue Diver Exam.

The RESCUE EXERCISES will teach you the skills needed to perform any rescue in case of emergencies. These are normally done in a pool or in calm, shallow water.

The RESCUE SCENARIOS are a simulated and realistic emergency situation. They will test your knowledge and skills learned in the previous segments.

How Long Does It Take?

It normally takes a minimum of 2-3 days to finish the Rescue Diver course.

Many dive centers will offer the rescue diver and the First Aid – CPR course combined, so that will make the overall length of the course 1 day longer.

How Much Does The Rescue Diver Course Cost?

The price range for this course is usually around 350-400 USD.

Just like the other certification courses, the cost of the Rescue Diver Course can vary greatly depending on the country where it's offered. Regions like South East Asia (i.e. Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia) or Central America (i.e. Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama) are well known for offering the cheapest deals in the world.

With the First Aid and CPR training courses, the pricing is more varied. The courses offered by PADI and SSI usually cost around 80-120 USD while other non-diving agencies can be above or below that price. We recommend you shop around and see what's offered in your area.

3 Factors To Consider When Choosing A Dive Center

The most important factors to consider when taking the Rescue Diver course are the following:

1. WHAT'S INCLUDED in the course?

Some dive centers offer the First Aid – CPR and the Rescue



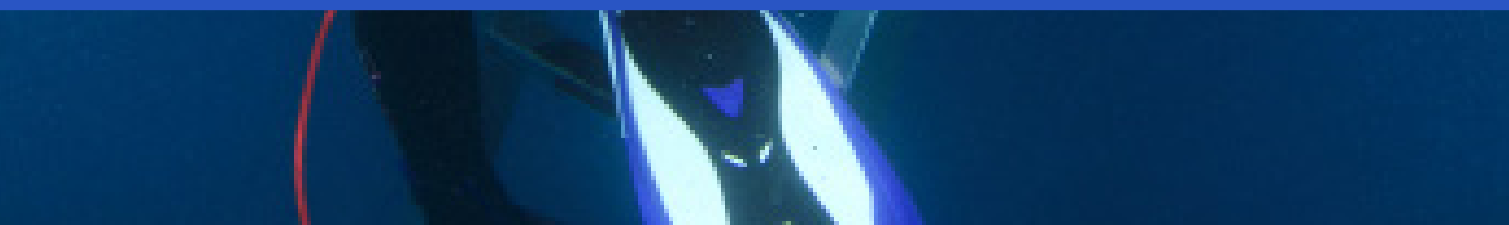
"SOME DIVE CENTERS OFFER THE FIRST AID-CPR AND RESCUE DIVER TOGETHER IN ONE COURSE"

ANTONIO CALA



"YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO ASSES STRESS
SITUATIONS, PREVENT THEM AND ACT
ACCORDINGLY BY IMPLEMENTING
DIFFERENT RESCUE TECHNIQUES"

ANTONIO CALA



Diver course together in the same package while others offer them separately. Ask what you'll get for the price quoted.

2. WHO'S THE INSTRUCTOR teaching the course?

The general guidelines for the rescue course set concrete minimum requirements. How much above those standards you go totally depends on the instructor. That means that the same course can vary a lot depending on who is leading the course.

So try to talk to the instructor in advance and ask yourself the following questions: What's his/her experience teaching? Is he still motivated or does he look like a bit burnt out?

3. HOW MANY STUDENTS will be taking the course?

The Rescue Diver course is a bit different than the previous levels. In this case, having the instructor just for you is not beneficial.

Having at least 2 or 3 other

students with you will make all the scenarios much more realistic and enjoyable. You'll also learn from other people's mistakes and have a great time while learning important skills.

Where To Do Your Course

In this case in particular, the place where the course will take place isn't very important as you won't be diving much. So you don't need a great diving destination and we wouldn't even recommend that you travel to a place to become a Rescue Diver.

Instead, find a course offered by a good instructor and with some other students signed up already and you will learn lots while having fun at the same time.

Don't forget to check out the [Scuba Diving Section](#) for more information about courses and continuing education.

“HAVING AT LEAST 2 OR 3 OTHER STUDENTS WILL MAKE ALL THE SCENARIOS MUCH MORE REALISTIC AND ENJOYABLE”

ANTONIO CALA



GEAR FOR DIVING

THE ESSENTIAL SCUBA DIVING PACKING LIST



Are you looking at getting your own diving equipment and not sure just what to choose? Are you worried about over over-spending or not making the right decision? No worries. We are here to help you with your diving equipment gear list.

This is our comprehensive diving gear guide to get you started. What you end up choosing comes down to the type of diving you plan to do in and your personal needs. If you have questions about what to buy for specific types of diving or a certain dive trip, drop us an email and we'll do our best to answer it.

Our diving gear list has been improved and modified over the years based on our experience and

dives around the world. Every diver has different needs and preferences but there are some things that are certainly more important to own than others.

The next chapters of this guide will focus on how to choose the best models for every piece of important gear that suits your needs best. When it comes to diving, remember that it's not about getting what others use or the most popular models, but to find what really fits you best, based on your preferences and needs.

If you want the complete checklist, click on the button below so you can download it on PDF format from our site.

CHECKLIST IN PDF



WHAT TO CHOOSE & HOW

FIND WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU



#1 MASK

A diving mask is one of the most important pieces of gear when it comes to enjoying your time underwater, because a leaky one can ruin your dive big time. That's why it's crucial to know how to choose yours.

PRICE: \$30.00 - \$120.00

MORE INFORMATION:

www.theadventurejunkies.com/how-to-choose-a-scuba-mask/



#3 REGULATOR

Diving regulators are one piece of scuba gear you absolutely need to trust underwater. You also have to be confident and comfortable with the model you use. That's why it's very important to choose the right one.

PRICE: \$150.00 - \$1,500.00

MORE INFORMATION:

www.theadventurejunkies.com/how-to-choose-a-scuba-diving-regulator/



#4 FINS

Diving fins are like your shoes underwater, they're your engine to get around. Having your own pair means you'll never have to suffer from the pain of having to wear crappy rental fins again. No more blisters, Yeah!

PRICE: \$40.00 - \$200.00

MORE INFORMATION:

www.theadventurejunkies.com/how-to-choose-scuba-diving-fins/



#5 DIVE COMPUTER

A dive computer is an important piece of equipment that makes diving more safe and fun. It's a tool that takes the math out of the sport so you can spend more time under the sea and less making calculations.

PRICE: \$200.00 - \$1,500.00

MORE INFORMATION:

www.theadventurejunkies.com/how-to-choose-a-dive-computer/



#6 WETSUIT

A scuba diving wetsuit keeps you warm and protects you from stinging creatures while you're underwater. It's been designed to be compressed underwater, so it's important having your own.

PRICE: \$40.00 - \$500.00

MORE INFORMATION:

www.theadventurejunkies.com/how-to-choose-a-scuba-diving-wetsuit/



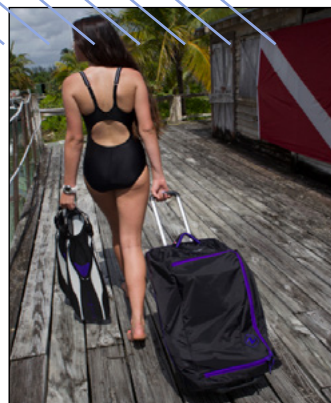
#7 DIVE CAMERA

Having a diving camera will let you capture all those special moments that only happen while underwater. But, with all the options available on the market, it's important to know which one is for you.

PRICE: \$300.00 - \$2,500.00

MORE INFORMATION:

www.theadventurejunkies.com/best-diving-camera/



#8 ACCESSORIES

Having a dive compass, a waterproof light or your own dive bag to carry your gear are accessories that can come in handy and make your diving experience much more enjoyable.

PRICE: Depends

MORE INFORMATION:

www.theadventurejunkies.com/dive-travel-packing-list/



HOW TO CHOOSE A DIVE MASK

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to get a dive mask but have no clue where to start?

No worries, we're here to give you a hand. Diving masks are one of the most important pieces of gear when it comes to enjoying your time underwater. Why? Because a leaky mask can ruin your dive big time. That's why it's crucial to know how to choose a scuba mask. Follow these 8 steps to find the right one for you.

1. Single, Dual or Multiple Lens

When it comes to choosing your dive mask you have 3 options: single, dual or multiple lens.

SINGLE LENS MASKS don't have any frame across the bridge of the nose so they normally seem more open.

A DUAL LENS MASK (also called "twin") will have 2 separate lenses, which is great if you need to install prescription glasses as the lenses can be easily replaced on these models.

Finally, the MULTIPLE LENS MASKS normally feature a window pane on each side that provides a feeling of having brighter and more open field.

2. Mask Skirt

The skirt of a mask provides a good seal to keep air in and water out. Something simple but very important.

Most of the best brands use high grade silicone to make their skirts

and it's been proven to be the best material for comfort and sealing. The best dive masks also come with a secondary skirt to increase the surface that is able to seal and reduces the possibilities of having a leak.

3. Mask Frame

You'll need to choose if you want a mask with a frame or without.

Most of the models come with a frame where all the other components (lens, skirt, straps and buckles) are attached to. This makes it easy to clean, replace some parts if they break or fit prescription lenses.

But there are also frameless diving masks out there like the one Amanda uses, where the silicone skirt is molded around the other components to keep them all together. These masks are very slim, lightweight and comfortable. They can even fit into a pocket of your bcd. The downside is that you can't take them apart. So they're harder to clean and its components can't be fixed if they break. Also, installing prescription lenses is not possible



on these models.

4. Strap and Buckles

Diving masks come with a silicone strap and a buckle system that keeps the skirt close to the skin.

There are different types of buckles out there but the best models have moved the buckle attachment point into the skirt, instead of having it on the frame as the older models. This way, the skirt seals better as the stress transferred to the side of the mask is reduced. A good feature to look for in your new mask.

5. Lens Angle

Dive masks don't run at the same angle as the diver's face. Having a mask with a bit of an angle has 2 main advantages.

First, it reduces the internal volume of the mask, which makes it easy to clean your mask underwater in case of water coming in.

And second (and most important) it makes it easier to look down. This is made possible because with an angle the lower part of the frame is pushed back towards the cheek bones and out of the visible range.

6. Get a Good Fit

Once you know the features you want for your mask, you'll need to get a model that fits your face well. To find a good fit, do the following:

Put the mask over your face without straps. Inhale through your nose and shake your head a bit. If the mask stays in place, that's a good fit. If it falls, the fit is not good. Try a different model.

7. Get a Slap Strap

Once you find the model you're happy with, get a slap strap.

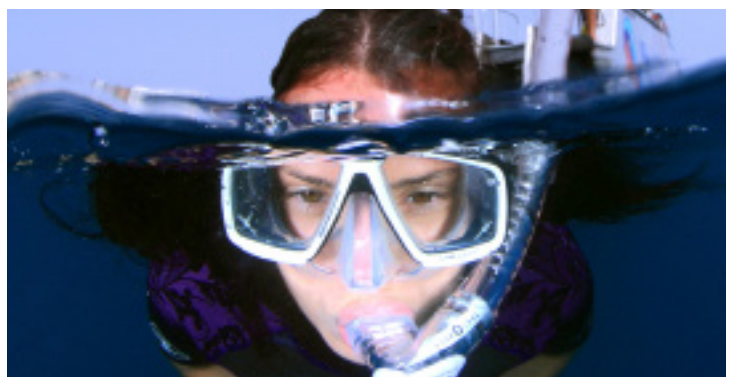
A mask slap strap is a neoprene sleeve that fits into your mask strap. It makes it easy to place your strap and protects your hair from getting stuck in it. A great add-on that you can easily get for a few bucks.

8. Care For Your Dive Mask

If you want your mask to last, you'll need to take care of it.

After every use, you should always rinse it with fresh water. If you can, use warm water as it works better to dissolve any salt particles from your equipment. Once washed, allow enough time for it to completely dry before putting away. Remember to store your mask in a dry location and out of direct sun light.

Don't forget to check out the article [Top 20 Scuba Diving Masks](#) for more detailed information about specific models.



“A MASK SLAP STRAP IS A NEOPRENE SLEEVE THAT FITS OVER YOUR MASK STRAP MAKING IT EASY TO PLACE IT AND PROTECTING YOUR HAIR FROM GETTING STUCK”

ANTONIO CALA



HOW TO CHOOSE A DIVING BCD

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: amanda@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to get a BCD but don't know which one to pick?

Don't panic. It's a very common problem among divers. There's so much gear out there that it's hard to decide what to get. Having your own scuba gear means you'll have a great fitting BCD, that you know how to use, every time you go diving. Follow these easy 7 steps to find the model that fits your needs best.

1. Style: Jacket, Wing or Hybrid?

A JACKET STYLE BCD inflates the entire jacket (the back and front), giving you a bear hug feel. It's the most popular option for Open Water students. The downside is they're bulky and some divers feel the BCD squeezes them when fully inflated. When the jacket is fully deflated it fits loosely, so you might need to adjust the straps so it fits you properly while you're diving.

A BACK INFLATION BCD only inflates the back portion. The advantage of this style is that they are more streamlined and comfortable than jackets. A sub-category of back inflation BCDs are backplate and wing set ups. This style is popular for divers who want a clean, minimalist set up. Wings are less bulky and require less exertion underwater which makes them a great option for wreck and cave divers.

A HYBRID STYLE BCD will inflate 3/4 of the back and 1/4 of the front. These are great for people who like a jacket style but also want the underwater buoyancy control of a back inflation BCD.

2. Cold Water vs Warm Water Diving

Cold water divers need to get a BCD with enough buoyant lift capacity. Lift capacity is a measurement of how much weight the BCD can hold on the surface when the bladder is fully inflated.

If you plan to dive in a thick wetsuit, you'll then need to wear more weight to counteract the higher buoyancy. When the BCD doesn't have enough lift capacity you could yourself struggling to stay afloat at the surface.

Warm water diving requires much less lift capacity and having a BCD with a lot of lift can actually cause you more harm than good.

3. Local vs Travel Diving

A GENERAL PURPOSE BCD is the best choice for cold water divers. They provide a lot of buoyant lift and integrated weight systems that are needed when using thick wetsuits or drysuits. This type of BCD typically has lots of D-rings and big pockets. The downside to general purpose BCDs is



they are the heaviest option.

A TRAVEL SPECIFIC BCDs are lightweight and compact. They have a low profile, and are designed to fold in half, which allows it to be easily stored in your suitcase or dive bag. The downside to these types is they have less lift capacity and smaller weight pockets.

DUAL PURPOSE BCDs are a hybrid of general purpose and travel BCDs. They pack small for dive trips while still providing enough buoyant lift and ballast weight capacity to be worn with a thick wetsuit or dry suit.

4. Weight Integration

Weight integration allows you to ditch your weight belt by allowing to put the weights directly into your BCD. This is done by using quick release pouches.

Integrated weights is especially useful to cold water divers using thick wetsuits. If you decide to get this type of weight system make sure the pouches stay securely locked in but are also easy to take off.

5. Attachment Points

BCDs come with D-rings that allow you to clip on accessories like surface markers, whistles and lights. Tech and wreck should look at getting a BCD that has at least 4 D-rings, one on each shoulder and hip strap. This will allow you to attach a stage cylinder.

Pockets are the best option for bringing accessories underwater and staying streamlined. They typically have either Velcro or zippers. Zippers are the most secure way to close a pocket, but they can get jammed with sand. Velcro allows for easy access but they tend to become less secure with age.

6. Size

Like any piece of gear, getting a great fit is important and will ensure that your BCD is comfortable.

Try it on first, or if buying online, use the sizing guide provided.

If you plan to wear your BCD with a thick wetsuit or dry suit, keep that in mind while sizing yourself. You might even consider going up a size if you're on the border between two sizes.

7. Women's Specific

The main difference is the women's version has a shorter back length to compensate for the female torso. This means the cylinder doesn't rest on the base of your spine which makes carrying a heavy tank less strenuous. Other differences are the placement of the chest strap on the BCD and the width and shape of the shoulder straps.

Don't forget to check out the article [Top 10 Best Scuba BCDs](#) for more detailed information about specific models.



“WEIGHT INTEGRATION ALLOWS YOU TO DITCH YOUR WEIGHT BELT BY ALLOWING TO PUT THE WEIGHTS DIRECTLY INTO YOUR BCD”

AMANDA ZEISSET



HOW TO CHOOSE A REGULATOR

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to get a dive regulator but have no clue where to start?

We're here to guide you through the process. Diving regulators are one piece of SCUBA gear you absolutely need to trust underwater. You also have to be confident and comfortable with the model you use. That's why it's very important to know how to choose the right one. Follow these easy 6 steps and find the model that fits your needs best.

1. Cold Water or Warm Water

When it comes to choosing your dive regulator, the first thing you need to think about is the temperature of the water you plan to dive at. This will determine if you need a sealed or unsealed regulator.

If you plan to go diving to tropical destinations like the Caribbean, almost any regulator will do. An unsealed regulator means that the water can get into the first stage which is totally fine when diving in warm water. These models are cheaper than the rest.

But if you are going to dive in cold water, you will need a sealed regulator. At low temperatures the water could freeze inside the first stage, blocking air flow, so that's the main reason why you need this type of reg. An environmental seals also keeps salt, sediment and other contaminants from entering the first stage.

2. Diaphragm or Piston

The first stage of your regulator can have either a diaphragm or piston construction. At a recreational level the differences don't matter that much, although there are some aspects to consider.

The main advantage of a piston first stage is that it's built with less moving parts, which makes them more reliable and the preferred option of deep divers. The main downside is that they are more expensive than the diaphragm models.

3. Balanced or Unbalanced

A balanced regulator provides consistent air flow no matter how much air is left in the tank or how deep you are. On the other hand, an unbalanced regulator will become harder to breathe from the deeper you are and when there's less air remaining in the tank.

Entry-level models are usually unbalanced but have the advantage of



being cheaper to service. Balanced regulators are normally more expensive but they improve the quality of your dive big time. Getting a balanced regulator is one of the best investments you can do to improve your experience underwater.

4. DIN or Yoke Valve

With the DIN VALVE the regulator is screwed directly into the tank. It provides a stronger seal and it's used a lot by cold water divers. It's the most common valve in Europe.

With the YOKE VALVE, the regulator is screwed over the tank. It's also called an A-clamp and is much easier to attach a regulator onto a tank with this type of valve. It's the most common valve used all over the world.

5. Number of Ports

Most regulators come with 4 low pressure ports and 1 (maybe 2) high pressure ports. Having more ports will give you the flexibility to set up your gear the way you find it more comfortable.

If you have (or plan to buy in the future) a dive computer with a transmitter, keep in mind that you will need an extra high pressure port to use it. So plan accordingly when buying your regulator.

4. Consider the Weight

Like any piece of gear you

plan to put in your pack, you should consider the weight. If you are trying to go as light as possible, remember that foam pads are your best bet. If you really want the comfort of an inflatable pad, there are a few on the market that are very light weight. The lightest pad for warmth is the Thermarest Neo-Air XTherm, probably the best sleeping mat for hiking.

6. Get a Comfortable Model

Even though this one is #6 on the list, it's one of the most important factors. As it happens with most of the gear you use, being comfortable with it while diving is essential.

When looking at different options, ask yourself the following questions: How hard do you need to bite to keep it in your mouth? Do the bubbles go into your face when you exhale? Is the hose too short that it pulls you back when you turn your head?

Some of these problems are easily solved with certain accessories like a different mouth piece or a longer hose. Just keep those annoyances in mind when choosing the dive regulator that fits your needs best.

Check out the related article [Top 10 Dive Regulators](#) for more information about specific models.



“THE COMFORT OF YOUR REGULATOR IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER”

ANTONIO CALA



HOW TO CHOOSE A PAIR OF DIVING FINs

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to get a pair of diving fins but don't know which to choose?

You've landed at the right place. Diving fins are like your shoes underwater, they're your engine to get around. Having your own pair means you'll never have to suffer from the pain of having to wear crappy rental fins again. No more blisters and leg cramps. Follow these easy 7 steps to find the best model for your needs (and feet!).

1. Full Foot or Open Heel

Depending on the foot pocket style, there are 2 types of fins you can choose from: open heel or full boot fins.

Full foot fins are made to be worn barefoot. They tend to be lighter and shorter. These are awesome for warm water diving and snorkeling. They're also a really good option if you're traveling to a tropical destination as they're not as bulky as the open heel models.

Open heel fins are made to be worn with booties and come with a strap to secure your foot. They're the best choice for cold water diving or if you need to walk on a rocky shore to get to the dive site. Open heel fins are by far the most popular option for scuba divers.

2. If You Choose Open Heel, Get Your Booties Together

If you decide to go for open heel fins, you'll need to get some diving booties to wear with them.

It's recommended to buy the booties together with your fins or, if you already have dive boots, bring them along to try them with your new fins before buying.

Booties differ in width and thickness of their sole, so they fit differently depending on the fin model they're worn with.

There are so many possible booties-fins combinations out there. So make sure you feel comfortable with yours before dropping the cash.

3. Split or Paddle Blade

Split fins are designed to offer the same or more propulsion as blade fins with less effort. They're the latest trend among divers and are becoming more and more popular.

Paddle fins have the traditional single blade design. They tend to have stiff blades that require more leg muscle to get them moving.

Nowadays, many models are modified paddle fins which are more



flexible than traditional paddles, making them easier on the legs and ankles.

They're between a split fin and a paddle fin, and have been demonstrated to be the most efficient option available.

4. Pack Size

If you plan to dive locally, the packing size of your fins won't matter much.

But, if you plan to do some diving trips overseas, then this is a factor to look at.

Some manufacturers have fins specifically designed for dive travel. They tend to be shorter and lighter. Check out the top 10 dive fins of 2016 to find out some of the best ones for travel.

5. Color

The color you choose for your fins will be a personal choice for most cases.

Dive guides and instructors normally prefer a bright color, such as white or yellow, so they can be easily found underwater by the rest of the group.

Shark divers should consider getting black fins as bright colors have been demonstrated to attract attention from these fellows.

6. Get a Comfortable Model

Fins are your shoes under-

water. So like when buying normal shoes, everyone's foot has different size and shape. So make sure you get a model you're comfortable with.

When looking at different options, ask yourself the following questions:

Are they too narrow?

Are they too loose?

Do they have a ergonomically designed left & right?

Remember that you'll be around 45 minutes to an hour with your fins on during every dive you do. You don't want to be counting the minutes till you can take your fins off!

7. Care For Your Scuba Fins

Rinse your fins with fresh water after every use and use warm water if possible.

Let them to dry completely before storing them in a dry place out of the direct sunlight.

Dive fins can last you many years. So make sure you take care of them!

Don't forget to check out the article [Top 10 Scuba Diving Fins](#) for more detailed information about specific models.



"SPLIT FINS ARE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE THE SAME OR MORE PROPULSION AS BLADE FINS WITH LESS EFFORT."

ANTONIO CALA



HOW TO CHOOSE A DIVE COMPUTER

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset

EMAIL: amanda@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to get a dive computer but don't know which one to choose?

Almost every diver has been in that situation. A dive computer is a very important piece of equipment that makes diving more safe and fun. It's a tool that takes the math out of the sport so you can spend more time under the sea and less making calculations with dive tables. Follow these easy 8 steps and find the model that suits your needs best.

1. Your Diving Level

The best place to start when it comes to choosing a computer is to consider what's your diving experience level. Absolute beginners and technical divers have very different needs. What's best for one diver isn't best for everyone.

If the product description of a computer sounds like a foreign language, there's a good chance that computer is too advanced for your level.

2. Budget

Dive computers range from \$200 to over \$1000. If you're just getting into diving and don't have a big budget you're in luck because there are plenty of good quality entry level computers that offer all the modern features.

If price isn't an issue, you can look at getting a computer with advanced features like air integration, a digital compass and multi gas capability.

3. Readability

Be sure that you can clearly read your computer's screen even with your mask on. Big numbers and back lit displays help with this. The Suunto EON Steel is popular among divers who prefer a large display because of its wide angle BrightSee color screen.

4. Nitrox Compatible

If you're a nitrox diver or plan to learn how to dive with it at some point, look at getting a nitrox integrated computer.

This feature allows you to choose the percentage level of Nitrox you plan to dive with and will adjust your no decompression time and maximum depth accordingly.



5. Console vs Wrist

Dive computers come in one of two different set ups: wrist or console.

Wrist computers are becoming more popular, especially the latest watch style ones like the Suunto D4i for example.

Divers that prefer to have all their instruments together should look at getting a console computer. Many of the same models that are available as wrist computers also come in a console version.

6. Computer Capable

Some dive computers allow you to connect it to your PC.

This is a handy feature that allows you to download your dive details so you can keep a permanent record of your dives.

The software (usually provided with the dive computer) converts your dives into graphs to show your depth throughout the dive and the time spent at each depth.

Advanced models can also show ascent rate violations, predicted nitrogen load in your tissues, and air consumption. These capabilities differ from model to model of course.

7. Air Integrated

The latest trend in dive computers is air integration.

This feature allows you to

monitor your air consumption on your computer with the use of a transmitter. Some high-end models even allow you to monitor the remaining air of a whole group of divers.

Many divers that use this system tend to ditch their SPGs. I don't think this is a wise decision because the technology still isn't perfect.

What happens if you lose the signal between the transmitter while you're 100 feet under the surface and you have no way to see how much air you have left in your tank?

8. Care For Your Dive Computer

Rinse your computer after every dive with fresh water. Use warm water if possible, it helps dissolve any salt particles.

After you've washed it, make sure it's completely dry before you store it away.

Keep your computer out of the sun, as it can deteriorate the straps.

You should also take your computer every few years to a technician to get it serviced.

Check out the related article [Top 10 Best Dive Computers](#) for more information about specific models.



“THE BEST PLACE TO START WHEN CHOOSING YOUR DIVE COMPUTER IS TO CONSIDER WHAT’S YOUR DIVING EXPERIENCE LEVEL”

AMANDA ZEISSET



HOW TO CHOOSE A DIVING WETSUIT

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: amanda@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to get a diving wetsuit but don't know where to start?

That's what this article is about. A diving wetsuit keeps you warm and protects you from stinging creatures while you're underwater. Having your own wetsuit means you'll never have to suffer from the pain of a leaky, smelly rental suit again! A wetsuit is a bit like a glove, after time it molds to the shape of your body, so when you have your own you know it will fit great. Follow these easy 7 steps and find the model that suits your needs (and body!) best.

1. Thickness

Scuba diving wetsuits come in different thicknesses. Most models will come in at least 3 mm, 5 mm and 7 mm. There are also some that are specifically for warm water diving and come in 1 mm and 2 mm versions.

If you see a wetsuit with a thickness represented with two numbers, 3/2 mm for example, the first number is the thickness of the torso and the second is the thickness of the arms and legs.

So, how do you know which thickness is right for you? Everyone's cold tolerance is different but follow these guidelines to get an idea. 2 mm: above 85 F (29 C), 3 mm: 70-85 F (21-28 C), 5 mm: 60-70 F (16-20 C) and 7 mm: 50-70 F (10-20 C).

Still unsure which one to choose because you dive in both warm tropical water and very cold water? Look at getting two different wetsuits. One specifically for warm water diving and another specifically designed for cold water diving. Sure, a 5mm with a hooded vest and gloves in cold water

could do it's not really the best option. You'll have to pay a bit more up front to buy two wetsuits, but in the long run it will pay off because you'll be more comfortable underwater.

2. Style

Wetsuits come in three different ones: shorties, full, and farmer john.

A SHORTY WETSUIT typically has short sleeves and is cut just above the knee. These suits are very comfortable and easy to put on.

A FULL WETSUIT adds a bit more warmth and helps to protect your arms and legs from stinging creatures.

A FARMER JOHN (OR JANE) WETSUIT is a two piece suit. One piece is an overall (long legs with a sleeveless top). The second piece is a jacket. They double up the insulation in the core, making them a great option for very cold water diving.



3. Stitching Construction

There are four types of seam constructions.

An **OVERLOCK STITCH** is stitched on the inside so you won't see any stitching on the outside. It's good for warm water 65 degrees F and up because some water might seep through these seams.

FLATSTITCH or flatlock stitching looks like railroad tracks and can be recognized from the outside. The interior seam construction is flat which makes it more comfortable against the body than the overlock stitch. Some water may seep in through these seams too so it's recommended for warm water, 62 degrees F and up.

BLINDSTITCH looks similar to the flatstitch, but is narrower. This construction is best for colder water because the seams are glued and then stitched, to help prevent seepage.

BLINDSTITCHED WITH SEAM TAPING (Fluid Seal) is same as a blindstitch except that the inner seams are reinforced or covered with tape. Very little water if any will seep through these seams which makes it the best option for extremely cold water, 50 degrees F and below.

4. Gender Specific

Scuba ladies, look at getting a women's specific suit, it will fit you much better which means you'll

be warmer and more comfortable underwater.

While you could probably get away with wearing a unisex wetsuit, if you're going to buy your own gear, why not get something that with fit you better?

5. Scuba Specific

While any type of wetsuit can keep you warm underwater it might not be the best wetsuit for scuba diving. Why's that?

Because diving wetsuits are designed to compress while at depth. They also take into consideration bouyancy. So, the same wetsuit that you use for surfing isn't the best option for scuba diving.

6. Size

Sizes vary from manufacturer to manufacturer, so always check the size chart before buying. Choosing the right size is extremely important to being comfortable and warm underwater. Too big and water could leak in, too small and it will be impossible to put on.

A scuba diving wetsuit should fit snug, so if you're on the border of two sizes, going for the smaller one is a good choice. A suit that fits poorly under the arms and around the thighs might let too much water to collect there, draining you of your body heat. Make sure the suit fits you properly in these two areas.

7. Price

The price of a wetsuit is determined by its thickness, stitching and features. Diving wetsuits can range from under \$100 for a thin shorty wetsuit to well over \$400 for a 7mm cold water diving suit.

When it comes to choosing scuba gear, your comfort and warmth should be priority not just the price tag. Try to go for the best wetsuit you can afford that best suits the type of

diving you plan to use it for. Being cold during a dive isn't only miserable, it's dangerous. Be sure to invest wisely! There are four types of seam constructions.

Check out the related article [Top 10 Best Wetsuits for Diving](#) for more detailed information about specific models.



"SIZES VARY FROM MANUFACTURER TO MANUFACTURER, SO ALWAYS CHECK THE SIZE CHART BEFORE BUYING"

AMANDA ZEISSET



HOW TO CHOOSE A DIVING CAMERA

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: amanda@theadventurejunkies.com

Want to get a dive camera to capture those special moments underwater?

Looking at getting into underwater photography can make your head spin. Choosing a camera for underwater photography doesn't have to be a stressful experience. You just need to know what to look for and what's on the market. That's why we've put together this guide to simplify the process and get you the best camera for your needs.

1. Housing availability

The first thing you need to consider when it comes to choosing the best diving camera for you is if there is an underwater housing available for it. Housings aren't made for every camera.

Generally, the top housing manufacturers make housings for Canon, Nikon, Sony, Panasonic and Olympus but not all models are supported.

2. Budget

Underwater photography is not a cheap hobby. The camera body plus housing will set you back at least 1,000 bucks. And that's not including strobes and accessories. That doesn't mean you should cut corners when it comes to buying gear, it means you should buy smarter.

The most common budget mistake people make when it comes to buying underwater cameras is that they buy the most expensive camera out there then go to buy the housing and strobes without realizing that those

are often more expensive than the camera!

Set a spending limit and total all the equipment you'll need to get started before you pay for anything.

3. System Type: Compact, Mirrorless or DSLR

There are three main camera formats to choose from: compact, mirrorless and DSLR.

There are some cameras that were made specifically for being used underwater for example the SeaLife DC1400. But, just from reading the mixed bag of customer reviews on Amazon, it's clear that it's not the best underwater camera for scuba diving. The buttons stick, the flash doesn't work, the shutter delay is insanely slow... just a few of the problems you can run into.

Your best bet for quality images and easy of use is buying a traditional above land camera and getting a housing to fit it. Or house a camera you already own of course.



COMPACT CAMERAS

Point and shoot cameras can be a good option for underwater photography. However, the auto function doesn't work that well underwater. So the best option for a point and shoot is an advanced model with a manual mode.

PROs

- + Light & Compact- Great for travel
- + Cheapest Option
- + Can shoot macro and wide angle on the same dive with wet lenses

CONs

- Small sensor (with the exception of the RX100) which means average low light performance and sharpness
- Shorter battery life than DSLR
- Shutter lag: the time difference between when you take the picture and when the shutter opens is frustrating when shooting wildlife.

MIRRORLESS CAMERAS

Mirrorless cameras are extremely popular amongst underwater photographers because they give you the versatility of interchangeable lenses without the weight, size and price tag of a DSLR. This type of cameras are perfect for advanced photographers who want high quality images in a small package.

PROs

- + Sensors 4-8x larger than compact cameras
- + Smaller & lighter than DSLRs
- + Great choice of lenses

CONs

- You have to commit to shooting either macro or wide angle because you can't use wet lenses
- Requires multiple lens ports for using different lenses
- More expensive than compact cameras

DSLR CAMERAS

While there are many mirrorless cameras that come close to delivering the quality of a DSLR, these are still the choice amongst many professional photographers. They have the widest range of lenses, incredible low light performance and offer maximum control over the photo.

PROs

- + Best low light performance and sharpness
- + Maximum control for advanced shooters
- + Widest choice of lenses

CONs

- Most Expensive
- Large and Heavy
- You have to commit to shooting either macro or wide angle because you can't use wet lenses

Please, refer to the [Top 10 Diving Cameras & How to Choose Yours](#) for a more in depth information about the topic.



“MAKE SURE YOU CHECK THERE IS A HOUSING AVAILABLE FOR YOUR CAMERA BEFORE YOU BUY IT. HOUSINGS AREN'T MADE FOR EVERY MODEL”

AMANDA ZEISSET



HOW TO CHOOSE DIVING ACCESSORIES

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

Are you looking for some useful accessories to complement your diving kit?

No problem, let us guide you through the different possibilities. In this section we are going to walk you some of the most useful and popular diving accessories used by scuba divers like you: diving lights, compasses and dive bags. As in the previous chapters, we will focus on what's important to look at when looking for the model that fits your needs best.

DIVING LIGHTS

If you plan on diving wrecks, caves or simply want to explore those cracks where colorful wildlife live, having a good diving torch is essential. Dive torches come in different sizes, specs and price tags. Every model is designed for a particular use in mind so finding what you need can be overwhelming. Here you have some aspects to consider to find the best model for you.

Type of Light

There are 3 different types of diving lights depending on how you plan to use them: primary lights, secondary (or back-ups) and photo-video lights.

A primary dive light should be very bright, have a long lasting battery and be very durable. For these types of lights, the more power is normally the better especially for night diving, when a high brightness is the best choice for proper underwater lighting.

A secondary dive light is normally more compact and lightweight. It's carried as a back-up in case the primary light fails for any reason. I personally like having the secondary light with a narrower beam angle as it's more versatile. A bit more about this in a bit.

If you're planning to do some underwater photography or video, you'll need a specifically designed photo-video dive light. These can be mounted on strobes and feature a wider and brighter beam to light your subjects.

Beam Angle

Bigger is not better when it comes to the beam angle of your dive light. Both a tight beam or a wide flood may each be appropriate depending on the type of diving you plan to do.

A wider beam angle will be very useful for night diving and it's the recommended choice for maximum visibility.

A smaller beam angle will provide a tight bright spot which is useful for looking into crevices and under ledges. It's also a must for limited visibility.



Type of Battery

TRADITIONAL ALKALINE BATTERIES are inexpensive and available almost everywhere in the world but they have a lower level of performance and a reduced battery life.

CR123 LITHIUM BATTERIES provide an excellent performance but are more expensive than alkaline batteries. Also, they might not be available in remote dive locations. It can also be a pain to take them on the plane with you. From an environmental standpoint, these batteries can be recycled.

RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES are the best choice if you dive frequently. You save money from buying new batteries each time. Also, they are the best choice from an environmental standpoint since they are reusable. The only downside is that they require both time to recharge and access to power, so you need to plan for that before going on a dive.

Xenon, LED or HID?

Xenon dive lights tend to be less expensive, but they don't provide the brightness of an LED or HID and have a shorter battery life. The main advantage of a Xenon light is that the lamp gives warm natural colors versus the bluish colors of LED and HID, an important factor for underwater photographer and videographers.

LED and HID dive lights provide an unmatched brightness, longevity, and energy efficiency. HID lights used to provide a higher color temperature but they have been surpassed by the new generation LED lighting. LEDs can now provide higher efficiencies and they are more robust and durable than the HID models. That's probably why they are the most popular type of dive lights used within the diving community.

Check out the article [The Best 10 Dive Lights](#) for more detailed information about the best models on the market.

DIVE COMPASSES

A scuba diving compass is a very useful dive accessory. If you dive at sites with poor visibility or like to venture out into "the blue" looking for big fish, it's essential to be able to find your way around. Here you have the 4 most important factors to consider when looking for your unit.

1. Digital or Analog

Digital dive compasses are normally integrated in some dive computers and are not sold separately. You need to calibrate them at first and every

time you change the battery. Although some are easy to read, they're not as accurate and reliable as the analog ones.

Analog dive compasses are conventional compasses adapted to be used underwater. They're accurate and reliable, and don't need to be calibrated so you can use them straight out of the box. They can also be mounted anywhere you want, no battery is required, and are sold separately or together with other dive accessories.

2. Tilt Tolerance

The tilt tolerance of a compass refers to how much you can tilt it without the needle getting stuck. This might not be very important if you use a compass on land, but it's crucial when using it underwater. As a general rule, the bigger the tilt tolerance the better. The only downside is that dive compasses with a high tolerance tend to be thicker and heavier than the other models.



"BOTH A TIGHT BEAM OR A WIDE FLOOD LIGHT MAY EACH BE APPROPRIATE DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF DIVING YOU PLAN TO DO"

ANTONIO CALA



3. Size

You want to have a compass you can easily read while underwater. Although most of the models come in a standard size, it's a good idea to go for a bigger size. Bear in mind the visibility is reduced underwater after you put your mask on and depending on the conditions of the water.

4. Mounting Options

Wrist mount is probably the most popular one. The compass is installed on a wrist band like a normal watch. Although some people don't like having the computer and the compass on the same wrist, you can always use one wrist for each.

You can also install your compass in a console mount. This way you'll be able to see air, computer reading and bearing all in one. The downside of this set up is the console becomes heavy and uncomfortable to dive with.

You can also use your compass with a retractable mount. You clip it onto a D-ring and pull it out when needed. This way the compass is easier to use and out of the way when not using it. These mounts tend to be a bit more expensive than the others.

Check out the article [Top 10 Dive Compasses](#) for more detailed information about the best models on the market.

DIVE BAGS

A dive bag will help you organize, protect and transport your scuba equipment. While it might not be the most exciting purchase you'll make as a diver, it's still one that counts. You've already invested hundreds if not thousands of dollars in your scuba gear, so make sure you take care of it.

1. Type of Bag

There are 5 types of dive bags: duffels, backpacks, rolling, carry-on and regulator bags. There's also hybrid versions like rolling duffels. Consider how you plan to use your bag mostly (dive travel or local dives) and then decide which one is best for you.

A LARGE DUFFEL BAG is easy to pack and is super versatile. It's a good option for local travelers who only need to carry their scuba gear from their house to the car.

BACKPACKS give you the freedom to carry your gear on your back while walking on the beach or on an uneven dock. If you go for this option, make sure the straps are padded and comfortable.

ROLLING DIVE BAGS are the way to go for travelers. They come as duffel bags, carry-ons or as large suitcases. Some also have straps so you can wear it like a backpack.

CARRY-ON DIVE BAGS meet the size restrictions for carry-on luggage

for most major airlines. Carrying your gear on insures that your thousands of dollars worth of scuba equipment doesn't get banged around by the baggage handlers. Also, you can avoid those annoying extra baggage fees.

REGULATOR BAGS are small and padded to protect your regs while traveling. This comes in handy if you want to bring your regs as a carry on and check your other gear. Some have special compartments for tools, parts and dive computers. If you fly often, a regulator bag is a must.

2. Material & Construction

A full set of scuba equipment is heavy, so you'll need a bag that can handle the load. Look for one with a sturdy design that is made from heavy-duty fabrics.

Also, check for reinforced stitching. Carrying dive equipment isn't the same as carrying clothes, it's heavy and some pieces of gear, like fins, are pointy. Reinforced stitching will help make sure your bag lasts.

A good dive bag should have corrosion-proof fasteners and hardware, like zippers, snaps, clips and handles. Salt water eats through metal like there's no tomorrow so be sure to get this one right or your bag can become useless after a few uses.

3. Zipper

The most important element of a dive bag is the zipper. Bags that are specifically designed to carry scuba gear will have a strong, corrosion resistant zippers. Make sure the zippers have a large gauge size and are made from high quality materials.

4. Specifically Designed Dive Bag or Any Old Bag?

Any old bag can store and transport scuba equipment but it might not be the best option for your needs. Dive bags are especially designed with strong, corrosion resistant zippers. They have robust wheels and frames, unlike many generic roller suitcases and bags. Also, they typically have a drainage value, which is handy for when you have to pack away damp equipment.

The simple answer is, if you want an equipment bag that will last for years and is great for travel, get one that's specifically designed to carry scuba gear. If you just want to store your gear or have something to carry it out to the car, any old bag will do.

Check out the article [Top 10 Best Dive Bags](#) for more detailed information about the best models on the market.

"BAGS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY
DESIGNED TO CARRY SCUBA GEAR
WILL HAVE A STRONG, CORROSION
RESISTANT ZIPPER"

ANTONIO CALA





A Diving Expedition to Malpelo Island,

INTO THE BLUE, DIVING WITH HAMMERHEAD SHARKS

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: amanda@theadventurejunkies.com

The island of Malpelo is rock in the middle of the Pacific ocean and it's also known as the "Shark Heaven".

The first sailors called it Malpelo due to its bad shelter for boats. These days it's one of the best spots in the world for scuba diving. The waters surrounding the island are full of life and swarms of hundreds of sharks can frequently be seen while diving here. diving here.

OUR EXPEDITION TO THE SHARK HEAVEN

Along with seven other divers I sit on the edge of the skiff in full scuba gear, my regulator is in my mouth, my fins are on the seat. The boat captain studies the area and current for the best place to drop us off. Once in the right spot, the divemaster asks, "Everybody ready?" then he counts 3..2..1..Go! We fall back off the side of the boat into the water.

I descend head first, with my BCD deflated and use my fins to propel me down into the underwater world that surrounds the island of Malpelo. The first moments I am disorientated, there is no reference, only deep blue all around. I must get to the bottom before the strong currents sweep me away. Rocks appear, it is a formation called El Bajon, our destination for this dive. The current is ripping and at one moment I thought I won't make it. Not making it means losing the dive, if you don't reach the rock you have no choice

but to drift with the current then ascent.

With all my strength I fin and reach the rock and grab hold. The dive group is scattered around the rocks, holding on as best they can. At 32 meters we wait. This is the typical routine at most dive sites in Malpelo, get down, hold on and wait. What are we waiting for you might ask? In just a few moments a school of hammerhead sharks passed overhead.

Schools of hammerheads are why divers come to Malpelo. The island is known for having one of the largest populations of scalloped hammerheads in the world. My first ever encounter with this shark happened here. Since that time I was hooked and became interested in learning about the schools.

A typical encounter with a school begins with spotting one or two sharks on their own. These sharks act as scouts, they make sure that the group isn't heading into danger. Within a minute of seeing the scouts, the whole school will pass. Generally the schools are made up of females and the positioning of the sharks represents a dominance hierarchy within the group. The larger, more physically fit females stay in the center of the school and force the smaller ones to the outsides. The males dash into the center to find a mate, it's a form of natural selection that ensures that males mate with the biggest, healthiest females, the ones that will have the most young.

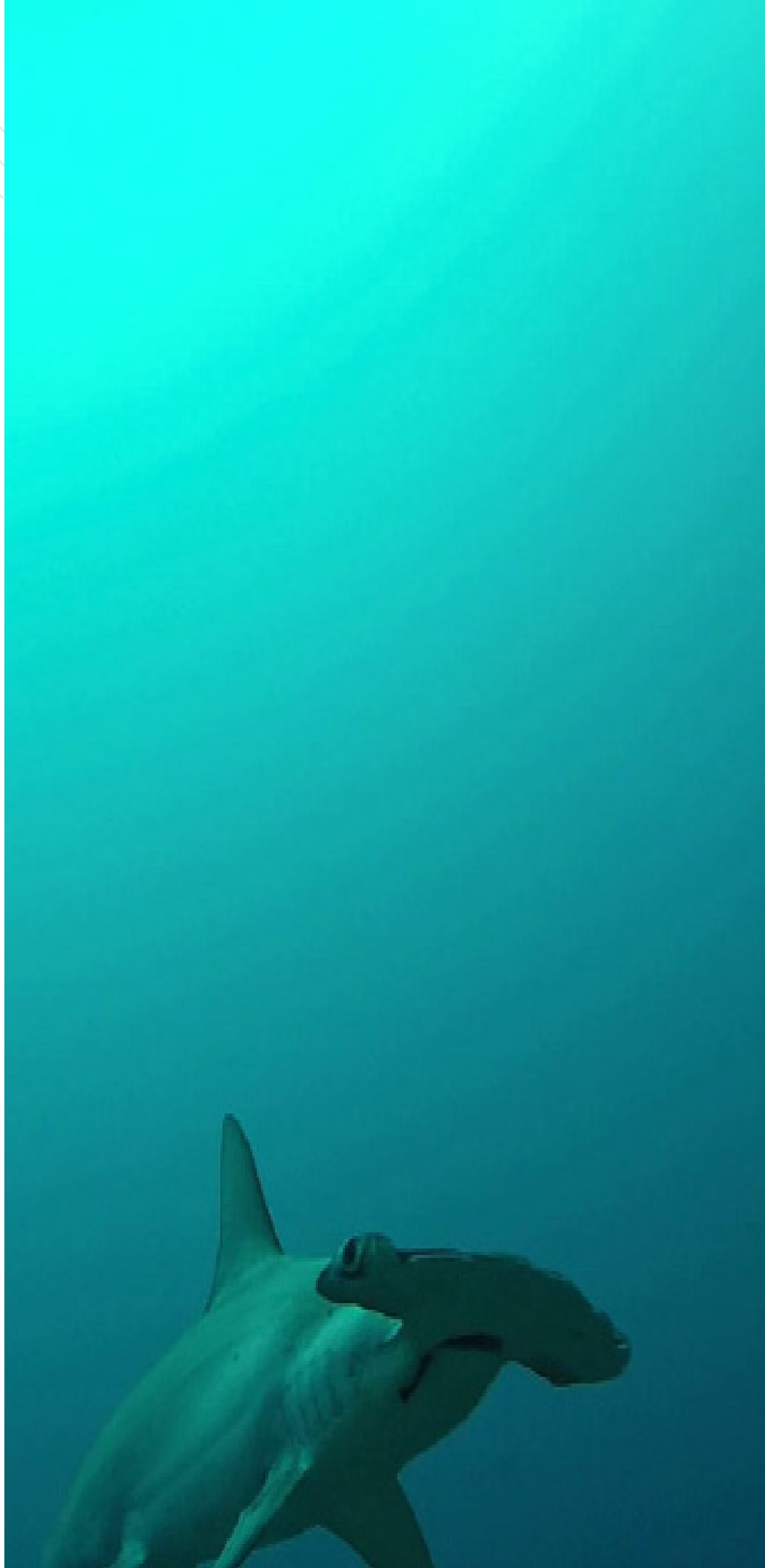
On this dive the current is so strong that even the sharks have a hard time to swim against it. One shark is pushed so much by the force of the current that I think it might even swim into me! As it comes near I study it, its unique head shape, the silvery color, the elegant weaving movement it makes while swimming, everything about this creature is interesting and beautiful.

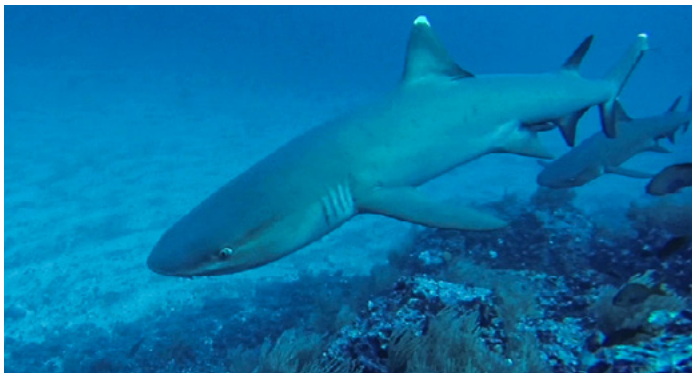
At this site we are in the direct path of the sharks who travel around the island. Diving in strong currents is a challenge, there are many factors that you have to consider and wrong calculations can lead to trouble. However, as a diver the currents are your friend because they mean there is a good chance of marine life. Sharks, like other fish rely on counter current gas exchange in order to pass oxygen rich seawater over its gills to do this they swim against the current.

While I am enjoying my time with the sharks, my dive computer has only five minutes until no decompression time is reached. The dive masters signals to the group to let go of the rock. We let go and the current takes us and we drift away into the blue together. Nearly all of our dives in Malpelo

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**"TO MANAGE THE RISK OF LOS-
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would end this way, you drift with your dive group, surrounded by blue without reference. This can be very boring but that day we were lucky, a baby hammerhead appeared. She swam fast towards me head first then would turn sharply, eye me, then swim off in the opposite direction, she played around like this for a few minutes then lost interest.

There is an inherent danger of diving in Malpelo and it has nothing to do with diving with sharks. Here the danger is the currents and unpredictable ocean conditions. If you lose the group the currents can take you miles away from the island and it could take hours of searching to find you. If the currents don't pull you out to sea they can bash you against the island, either option could result in a slow, painful death.

To manage the risk of losing someone, each diver is equipped with a Nautilus lifeline, a VHF marine rescue radio. These radios are designed so they can be taken underwater, however you can only open the case on the surface. It has three buttons, a green one, an orange one and a red one. Press green to talk to the small diving boat and the main liveaboard boat. Press the orange button to talk to any boat in a close radius. Press red as a last resort, this will send a distress SOS signal. The radio is equipped with GPS which allows you to read your coordinates to anyone who is willing to help find you.

As you have probably guessed Malpelo is not a place for beginners, you must be in control of yourself at all times, the conditions are unforgiving and the consequences of an error can be life threatening. A group of divers was wary from all the strong currents, as one divemaster puts it best, "This is Malpelo, there are no "hello kitty" sites. You have to be aware of what you are getting yourself into when you sign up for a trip here."

Aside from the currents you have to also consider that most dives are just above the recreational depth limit of 40 meters (132 ft). You have to be comfortable with deep dives and understand the risks that it entails.

Here in Malpelo I discovered a profound level of respect for the ocean. As I watch the waves crash over the rocks resulting in white foam I think of the immense power of the sea, it is beautiful and something to be always aware of. Every time I enter the water I remind myself of the risks that the dive entails and while you can do all you can to prevent an accident you have to put yourself at the mercy of the ocean.

The rewards for the challenges of diving Malpelo is huge. When I think of my dives here, so many great moments pass through my mind. One of my



favorites was when we spotted a school of hammerheads right below us. I descended a few meters, there were sharks on each of my sides and I was able to swim along with their school for a moment.

Hammerheads are not the only sharks you can see here, there are silky sharks and galapagos sharks as well. There are also some very rare sand tiger sharks that call Malpelo home. There are only a few sites in the world that you can spot this shark and even here in Malpelo it is very difficult.

There is one site called Bajo del Monstro that is known to be the home of this type of shark, the monster they call it here. It's called the monster because its jagged teeth that shoot out of its mouth. The monster lives at over 60 meters and most sightings have been seen at 70 meters (230 ft). As we were diving on nitrox, a special gas mixture that has a higher percentage of oxygen than standard air there was an even less of a chance we would see the monster. Nitrox allows divers to extend the time they can stay at depth before reaching the decompression limits but there are certain depth limits that you should not pass. For the mixture we were using it was 39 meters so the monster would have to remain a legend.

On another dive we went to the site El Aquario, an underwater pinnacle that is great for seeing big schools of fish. To arrive to this site we had to use a line that was anchored to the top of the pinnacle because the currents were so strong that we would drift away before reaching the site if we tried a free descent. As I was pulling myself down the line a whale shark appeared. Whale sharks are the largest fish in the ocean, aside from its size its beautiful spotted pattern makes this creature very impressive. Whale sharks are typically curious and unafraid of divers, this one was no exception. The group of divers held on to the line while it swam circles around us.

Aquario is a special site for me, it is where the best dive of my life took place. As we descended down the line we saw a few hammerheads. Usually by the time the whole dive group makes it down, the sharks have been scared off, that's what I had thought would happen this time but I was wrong. Aquario has a cleaning station on one side of the pinnacle. A cleaning station is formed by butterfly fish, king angel fish and mexican hogfish. Bigger fish such as jacks, snappers and sharks enter these cleaning stations to have the parasites eaten off them by the other fish.

On this dive a large school of hundreds of hammerheads circled the pinnacle and individuals came into the cleaning station. They swam slowly while

butterfly fish zip over them like a vacuum cleaner. Because the sharks had to slow down to get cleaned you get the chance to view the sharks up close.

When diving in Malpelo you never know what is going to happen.

While you can have an amazing dive at one site you can return to the same site an hour later and there could be no fish. While some divers have their theories about when is the best place and time to see the schools of sharks, what I have learned in my forty dives in Malpelo is there is no pattern, you never know what you are going to see and you just have to be ok with that. Everything about this place is unpredictable and that's what makes Malpelo such an interesting place to dive.



**“HUGE SCHOOLS OF
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS ARE
WHY DIVERS COME TO
MALPELO”**

AMANDA ZEISSET



THANKS FOR READING

We would like to thank you again for taking the time to check out the Diving Quick Starter Guide! We hope you've found some value in it and can use it as a guide to help you get into diving and explore the underwater world. Lots of great adventures are lying ahead waiting for you!

If for whatever reason you got this guide without ever subscribing to our email list (which is totally okay because we realize people love to share things like this), then please head on over to TheAdventureJunkies.com and subscribe to our email list there.

We would also suggest you to check out the other [Quick Starter Guides](#) for hiking and bicycle touring - just like this one!

And lastly, if you enjoyed this book, please feel free to share it on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

Cheers, best of luck and we look forward to helping you out again soon!

Antonio & Amanda
Founders of The Adventure Junkies

