

Malta 21 - 28 June 2008



No sooner have we come back from a successful week away on a liveaboard than the next group of club members is off on the next trip – this time it was to Malta. 16 decided to join us for some early summer fun in the Med. It was a really good week. We arrived at a reasonable time, drove past the hospital where Chris was born (to comments of “what was it like then with all those Italian bombers coming over”) and dropped our gear off at the dive centre to be told that they were expecting a heatwave for the week we were there – it was 30 degrees by 9.00 in the morning so the forecast was right! After settling into our various apartment blocks the first night we unloaded dive gear at the centre, and set about developing a taste for the local brew “Cisk”.

There was no messing about and the first day saw us straight down to the Gozo end of the island for a 30m dive on the newest wreck in Malta, the P29 (above). Although it has only been there a year there is already a lot of life on it and some easy penetration. On the way back we stopped off along the reef and found the first of many tunnels and swim-throughs. Nigel set the standard for air consumption but to give him his due it got better through the week although he was the determining factor regarding dive time during all the briefings. In fact poor Nigel got quite a lot of stick, with shouts of “Save the Whale and “call Greenpeace” being banded about far too readily. It’s the neoprene mate, it shrinks every year. The second dive was through more caves and swim through – not much life but nice nonetheless.



The very religious Maltese people like to deposit religious artefacts around the place and they clearly don’t think the sea should be an exception as we found our first Virgin Mary statue of the trip at 14 metres sharing a cavern with some small fish! Reckon they might be Monk fish! (ouch - sorry) We also spotted a “HUGE” sea hare that decided to go off for a swim – some great video footage on that one. That evening some of us were having a beer – the sad slightly drunk looking bloke in the corner suddenly got up and picked up a microphone and started singing. Crikey he must be pissed we thought. But no, Eric, was actually the entertainment for the over 80’s club that suddenly appeared. The most worrying thing was that John, who is definitely not 80, knew the words to all the songs. The next day we were off to the Um el Faroud, a huge freighter and arguably one of the best wrecks in the Med. It was so good that we decided to do 2 dives on it, and is big enough that you will always find something new. I found treasure, a silver toe ring, obviously Byzantine Dynasty while Steve found a key ring of Korean origin, circa 2007.

Wednesday we got up a few minutes early and jumped on a ferry to Gozo, which was a bit of an adventure. A lot less chaotic than Malta, it was nice to return after a 2 year absence. Although there are now a few nice wrecks on Gozo it was decided that we should still do the classic Inland Sea and the Blue Hole. Both cavern dives the colours were amazing and with relatively few divers around we had some excellent visibility and a great chance for some good photography.





Classic moments – there were several but the best have to be Mel (Aussie dive guide) getting a ticket from a copper for having 11 in the minibus when it was only licensed for 8 – even though it had 11 seats which was a bit bizarre. The coppers were actually traffic wardens with somewhat draconian powers. The other moment was when John left his mum on the ferry as we drove off – well that was not very nice.. We're missing one went up the call as we sped off – "its only my mum" said John.

The following day, the group split, with the more experienced divers opting for a boat trip to the Imperial Eagle at 42m and the others going for the Rosie at 30m. Both groups had a great day. The eagle group jumped on board Tony's Dive Service boat to be greeted by a salty sea dog with an impressive Santa set of whiskers. Chris forgot to check his box and had no regs "they were there, someone has taken them out" – yeh right!. Thankfully the guide had a spare set. My computer was doing interesting things and as we got to the Jesus Statue it was

reading 56m and still descending. By the end of the dive it read max depth 59m and a missed deco stop of 79 minutes.

From the Jesus Statue we swam to the Eagle, which is a lovely wooden decked wreck with plenty of entry and exits points. A lovely dive. The final day of diving was the Caves of Comino – I have always wanted to dive on the Calypso, but have to say, this was not the boat I had imagined. Chris, managed to forget his wetsuit this time but there was enough spare time to get another. The first dive in Alex's cave was the opportunity for Ruth to see the cavern she missed last time. At the top you can surface into a small air filled cavern – good fun. It was then a quick chug around the island to Santa Maria where the Comino Base Jumping Championships took place – those mad or brave enough climbed up through the cavern And then jumped off the top. Some great videos and photos and thankfully no-one was hurt!!!!



The last dive was a 60 minute classic, though the Santa Maria cavern, onwards through "Zorro's" cave and then finishing off with morays, barracuda and the odd cuttlefish. A great way to finish. That evening saw the whole group out having a few beers to celebrate Chris' 59th birthday. Conner made the acquaintance of several young fillies while his Dad Paul ensured that he wouldn't get into any trouble by distributing "Dad pants" all around his room – enough to put anyone off. The last day was spent relaxing, drinking, eating and wandering around the "tat" shops, which were numerous. Chris and the lads managed to emerge at a reasonable time for a full-fried breakfast (everyone seems to offer that!) ... and Sangria! Steve went for a dive on the Faroud – a group of us were going to dive the Blenheim Bomber but there were no boats available which was a shame – Steve bought the Blenheim t-shirt anyway! Talking of which, Nigel now has the complete 7/10ths t-shirt collection to his name. In the evening Chris proved how much alcohol he had consumed by eating a beetle that Becci had stepped on – gross. Sue was concerned it might have been Billy, the cockroach she had

become friends with in her room! The whole Malta experience was a good one, but then lets face it, all our trips are!

[Buddies Dive Centre](#) in St Pauls were excellent and we would thoroughly recommend them as a dive operation. Audrey and Rupert run an excellent and efficient centre – hey just like ours – and nothing was too much trouble! The dive guides were also excellent – Karsten is an endless source of knowledge and amusement and laughs continuously! Dave, Reg and Mel were all very good and we wish Mel well when she goes off to Antarctica for 2 ½ years. And, although he is probably up to something because he is French, we even took to Reg from Burgundy. The whole team were great fun and we hope that the contents of the little envelope showed our appreciation. Another great club trip? Once again we have to say a resounding **yes**. Gozo and Malta are so easy to get to, such great value and have some of the best diving in the med, so we might make it a bit of an annual pilgrimage, a bit like Dahab. We are also thinking about running a few long weekends there – anyone up for that? Photos from the trip are on the gallery on the website

