

How to arrange a perfect dive trip **(if there is such a thing)**

1. Select your dive site

It may be on the coast in this country, abroad, or a trip to an inland dive site. As you're arranging the trip you can choose exactly what you want, and more importantly when you want. Do find out whether it is a marine reserve or whether there are any restrictions on bringing out shellfish, etc.

2. Timing your dive

Selecting the Orkneys in January, or Devon in February will not bring a very enthusiastic response from club members. Generally speaking, the summer months, I forget which they are exactly, are more popular. However, take care not to clash with someone else's dive trip, the holiday period means less available divers and you may miss someone else's excellent dive spot.

3. Find out as much information as possible about the dive site. Ask other divers in the club (they don't bite) and most people have all sorts of information stashed away and would be only too happy to share it with others.

4. The information you need is as follows:

- a) Interesting dive sites in the area, wrecks, reefs, scallop beds, flat fish hangout, crab and lobster estates, mermaids etc.
- b) Entry and exit points for the divers and/or boat.
- c) The tide tables for the area. Find out whether it is a Neaps or a Spring tide, as this will affect diving visibility.
- d) See if you can get hold of a chart for the area. This will show you currents, state of the seabed and depths. The club holds some charts and many individual members have odd charts of their own. Alternatively you could purchase a chart of your own if you think that you will book multiple trips to one area.
- e) Consider whom the dive is suitable for. Is it for all divers or more suited to novice or more capable divers? It is not always possible to include novices on every dive.

5. Accommodation

Ninety-nine times out of a hundred accommodations will have to be arranged. If you're booking a hard boat ask the skipper for ideas – they often have knowledge of nearby, reasonably priced B & B's. Bear in mind the travelling time from the accommodation to the launch site and parking issues.

6. Transport

Arrange a meeting prior to the dive and let people sort out their own transport arrangements. Car sharing is often more economical but bear in mind that diving equipment is heavy and bulky so you can't fit four divers in one car. Do give everyone a route to follow or if possible a photostat map and directions plus your phone number.

7. Inflatable boat diving

- a) Make sure that someone is willing and able to tow the boat. Check that the club boat is available for when you need it.
- b) Check with the Boat Officer (well in advance) that the boat is seaworthy. He will know when it was last used and whether there were any problems. If it isn't ask what assistance you or another member of the dive party can give to make sure that it is seaworthy. Check the boat box to make sure that all the safety equipment is intact.
- c) Make sure that you are able to launch the boat. Launching is generally under the auspices of the harbour master or coastguard and a fee is charged. Include this fee in the boat costs to be shared later.

- d) Sometimes parking of cars and trailers is restricted near the launch site; try to find out beforehand.
- e) Tell the coastguard when you are leaving and again when you are back.
- f) Ensure that fuel and oil is available for the boat at or near to the dive site. Keep an account of who has dived and how much has been spent on boat hire, fuel, oil and launch charges.
- g) Make sure that you have boat-handlers included on the trip, also VHF radio operators for the radio.
- h) Somebody will have to find the dive sites. Make sure you have the knowledge to do so.
- i) Wash the boat and engine after it has been to sea to remove all salt water. Turn it into another get together for those who have been on the trip and it will be less of a chore.

8. Hard Boat Diving

This is easier to arrange than inflatable diving but you are responsible for filling the boat and collecting the money for the skipper. It is best to demand a hefty deposit for would-be divers and insist on getting the money in well before the dive takes place.

- a) Make sure that everyone knows what to take on the boat, i.e. a windproof garment (especially for semi-dry suit divers) as often you will be on the boat all day. Find out whether the skipper is providing hot drinks or lunch (many do). If not divers may wish to take a flask and/or lunch.
- b) The skipper will take decisions concerning putting to sea and will take the responsibility for finding the dive sites so you can relax on that score.
- c) Timing is very important. Anyone arriving late to the harbour will, literally, miss the boat.
- d) If you like the skipper and his boat, make a note of details and pass them on to others who may wish to organise a repeat trip.

9. Air

You are wasting your time if air is unobtainable. Try to ensure that all divers have two tanks if possible. This minimises motoring to and fro to air filling stations.

There is a publication available showing air filling stations in the U.K.

When you have found your filling station, make a note of filling times. Generally compressor operators are sympathetic and will open to suit the needs of their customers.

A hard boat may have a compressor on board, especially if it is working out of a remote area. Check with the skipper.

- 10. Remind divers to take S.M.B.s, torches (with batteries), hire equipment well in advance, instructions, ...heads.
- 11. Get a weather report before you leave in case it is out of the question. Ring the local coastguard for the dive area. Ring the skipper – keep in touch.
- 12. Appoint a Dive Marshall for each dive. It doesn't have to be you. It is their responsibility to sort out dive pairs and fill in the log sheet.
- 13. Try to supply information of the area so that non-diving members can enjoy themselves as well. A well-known quote in the club states "It isn't a spectator sport" sums this up.
- 14. It's a good idea if everyone on the trip can meet up in the evening to eat and chat about the day's diving activities. This increases camaraderie and helps everyone to learn more about what to do, what not to do, and what they should have done. Keep the price reasonable and you'll keep the divers happy.
- 15. There are many publications featuring dive sites. Some can be obtained through Dive magazine. Keep your eyes open and we can all benefit.

16. Après Dive

Give all completed log sheets to the Diving Officer.

Report to the Boat Officer any problems with the boat, and to the Equipment Officer any problems with the equipment, so that it can be replaced.

Remember the après dive weekend activities like boat and engine washing.

If possible write an article for the club newsletter so that we can all learn from your experiences and keep in touch.

You can't please everyone all of the time, so just do your best and enjoy it.

Happy Diving

Kay Rainsley
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