

DIVING IN AT THE DEEP END



Stephen Fisher, one of our Indian Subcontinent specialists and a Master Scuba Diving Instructor, explains what is involved in learning how to scuba dive



Have you ever had friends return from their travels waxing lyrical about their amazing diving adventures and the wonderful marine life that they discovered under the sea? Like so many people, perhaps you have always thought how much you would love to try scuba diving yourself but have just never got round to it? Well, learning to dive and achieving your PADI Open Water diving certificate is much easier and less time consuming than you may have thought. Becoming a scuba diver can be quite a simple process.

You may have also heard the name PADI come up in conversation and just nodded in agreement, not quite knowing what it means. PADI is a professional diving organisation (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) and almost all diving instructors will be affiliated to this organisation. PADI diving instructors are the individuals who will educate and train you to become a PADI Open Water Scuba Diver. This is the most widely recognised and respected qualification in the world and gives you the freedom to scuba dive without an instructor being present, although you still need to dive with a 'buddy' (another qualified diver).

For those of you that are seriously thinking about learning to dive there are a few ways in which you can achieve your Open Water certification. Firstly, it can be gained whilst on your travels abroad and the whole course takes approximately four or five days. During the course you will have classroom sessions with your instructor covering the theory and the fundamentals involved in diving,

including safe diving practices, diving equipment and diving techniques. You will also partake in confined water sessions with your instructor who will teach you the skills needed to handle every foreseeable hazard that may occur whilst diving. Finally you will then have the opportunity to put into practice the new found skills you have learned over the last few days by participating in four open water dives to complete your certification.

Alternatively, for those of you who do not want to spend four or five days of your trip abroad learning how to dive and just want to go ahead and experience what all of the fuss is about, then you can complete the theory and attend confined water lessons within the UK and when you are on your travels you can finish the remainder of the course. The open water dives that you are required to undertake only take two days to complete.

Virtually anyone who is in good health, reasonably fit, and comfortable in the water can learn to dive. You must be at least 12 years of age to become an Open Water diver and there is no upper age limit. If you do suffer from asthma, have heart or breathing problems or severe back problems then you should contact your GP for a medical assessment before you consider learning to dive.

All I can finally say is give it a go. There is a truly amazing world down there, and like me, you'll be hooked.

Stephen Fisher MSDT
Indian Subcontinent Specialist
Telephone: 01993 838 319



Stephen's five favourite places to learn to dive

All these destinations offer wonderful underwater experiences for the first time diver as well as highly reputable dive schools.

Thailand



Nick Payton, a Thailand specialist, has an Advanced PADI qualification and can be contacted on 01993 838 116.

Thailand is renowned as a great place to learn to dive. It has hundreds of dive sites which suit all levels of divers. The Gulf of Thailand as well as the Surin and Similan islands are fantastic locations from which to spot titan trigger fish, reef sharks and the beautiful manta ray.

Borneo



Vanessa Coleridge, a Borneo specialist, is a PADI Dive Master and can be contacted on 01993 838 117.

There are a number of areas within the half a dozen seas surrounding Borneo that will be of interest to scuba divers, whether experienced or novice. This beautiful island is not only famous for the orang-utan: the whole island boasts a myriad of marine life including turtles, barracuda and hammerhead sharks.

Australia



Lucy O'Neill, an Australia specialist, is PADI qualified and can be contacted on 01993 838 821.

Because of the vast diversity of this country it is extremely

difficult to select a specific area that is better than any other. From the gentle reef diving in the eastern Gold Coast to the shark diving in the west this is a divers' haven and guaranteed never to disappoint.

Maldives



Rogier Westerhuis, a Maldives specialist, is a PADI Dive Master and can be contacted on 01993 838 312.

The Maldives consist of hundreds of beautiful coral fringed islands, each teeming with an abundance of marine life. Much of the diving here can be done from the shore, in the shallow waters that surround them. It is a superb place to dive, particularly for fledgling and inexperienced divers.

Central America



Pat Chase, a Central America specialist, is a PADI Instructor and can be contacted on 01993 838 618.

The tropical Caribbean sea hugs the eastern coast of Central America and is home to the second largest living reef in the world after Australia. The visibility is some of the best in the world which makes this a perfect destination for all standards of divers as well as being one of the greatest places for spotting the beautiful whale shark.

WEB PLUS

www.audley.co.uk/features/diving
An interactive map of select dive sites plus suggested itineraries