

## **Diving and Snorkelling around Sur**

For those who may be considering diving or snorkelling as a hobby, the seas around Sur and Oman, in general, are an ideal place to learn or continue to develop your skills. It is a fantastic place to dive with sites to suit all levels of ability. The main attractions are the very beautiful, varied coral and fish life that can be seen either by snorkel or scuba diver and the pleasant warm water also adds to your enjoyment.

Diving is mainly based around four geographical areas, all of which are accessible by boat from Sur harbour within 20-60 minutes:

### **Qalhat and Sur sites**

These are the nearest dive sites to the OLNG plant, within ten minutes drive in either direction from the site or 20 minutes from the Sur harbour by boat, and both are accessible from land or sea. The two sites are shallow reefs from three to seven metres in depth, but distinctly different in nature. The reef to the north has many types of coral and a wide variety of fish species can be seen there. The dive to the south is close to a small desalination plant; it is less varied in coral and fish species but has the added attraction of turtles resting in the natural hollows formed in the corals.

### **Ras Al Hadd sites**

Within 40 minutes by boat to the south of Sur there is a picturesque sheltered bay, which is occupied by local fishermen's dhows at anchor and has a beautiful sandy beach. The beach has accommodation in huts for overnight stays and a beach café built in the shape of a dhow. At the entrance to the bay there is a shallow reef from three to five metres in depth, with a superb variety of fish and coral species. As the reef extends out beyond the bay to the north, it becomes much deeper to between 15 and 18 metres. This reef is home to a large population of Honeycomb and other types of Moray eel. Rays, together with other reef fish, swim here and a whale has also been seen swimming past by some of the diving club members.

Out on the southern side of the bay (approx five minutes by boat) there is a large sandy beach. The seas close to shore are teeming with turtles, particularly during the breeding season. This is a wonderful site to take the boat, drop anchor and snorkel amongst the turtles in five to seven metres of water. If you lay motionless in the water the turtles will sometimes swim close by to check you out; it is something most visitors to the area treasure as a fantastic experience being that close to nature.

### **Woking Wreck site**

A further 20 minutes south, down the coast from Ras Al Hadd, out into the Indian Ocean is a wreck dive. The 'Woking' was a cement ship; she broke her back within a few hundred metres of shore during a storm. At low tide you can stand on one part of the ship, which is approximately one metre below the surface and the maximum depth is about 16 metres at the lowest point. This ship, as with most wrecks, seems to be a haven for all types of marine creature. The wreck has a large population of cuttlefish and some of the larger reef fish species can be seen here.

### **Tiwi dive sites**

To the north of the OLNG plant within 45 minutes by boat from Sur harbour there are two wall type reef dives close to the village of Tiwi. The nearest to Sur is called Devils Point; it starts at a sedate depth of around five to seven metres, then plunges down a wall to a depth of 18 to 20 metres. This dive site is home to a spectacular array of

large reef fish such as Groupers. You often see fish here swimming in mid water as if floating in space, halfway down the vertical wall of the reef. In amongst the rock wall there are other Lion Fish hiding in the shade and down on the seabed it is not uncommon to see large Rays resting in the soft sand. There is also a section of this dive where you can test your buoyancy control by diving through holes in the boulders and rocks which are part of the reef.

A short five minute boat ride from Devils Point is all it takes to reach Tiwi Wall. This dive, like the Devils Point dive, starts at around five or six metres in a small bay. Once away from the shore the reef quickly descends down to about 20 metres. This site is again home to a large community of reef fish.

All these sites are suitable for all abilities of scuba diver. Each of the reefs and the wreck are big enough for you to dive the site several times without becoming bored with what you see; they change with the seasons, conditions and the area of the reef or wreck you dive on that day.

There are a number of local attractions the diving section have not yet explored; near Ras Al Hadd there is a shallow lagoon, which they have been told has a crashed plane hiding in the waters. There is also a shipwreck at Tiwi, which they also hope to dive.

If you love nature diving and snorkelling in and around Sur is the right place. No other environment approaches the abundance, diversity and vibrancy of our pristine coral reefs. You can see more species in ten minutes on these reefs, than in ten hours in the most unspoilt wildernesses above the water.