

Marsa Alam November 2003

Another longish gap since our last Red Sea trip. This time it was just Ken Blay and myself who decided to try going further south to to a hotel near Marsa Alam. We also shifted to November as our regular Red Sea holiday week, something which has continued for a number of years. There is an airport at Marsa but at that time there were no direct flights from the UK so we had to travel by road from Hurgada. This is a 4-5 hour trip made longer by the fact that the bus ducked and weaved all over the place picking up other Regal passengers. The hotel had it own Dive shop, the couple who ran it run for Emperor Divers were excellent and could not have been more helpful. This was another basically Italian hotel with only a small number of Brits. The lucky Italians did have direct flights to Marsa. Both shore and boat diving was offered and we tried both. Boat dives were run from Marsa village about 25 south of the hotel. Shore dives used Landrovers to get to suitable beaches. Diving here was much better than at El Quseir and well worth the extra transfer time. There were two memorable sites. Firstly Elphinstone Reef with is huge drop-offs where we saw sharks on virtually every dive. Secondly Abu Dhabab, which is a shore dive where we saw huge turtles on the sea grass and free swimming Remoras. Sad thing about Elphinstone is that it took 3 hours by boat from the marina but was in fact only 3 miles due east from our hotel. The hotel was developing a jetty over the reef which would allow direct access to day boats and house reef diving, pity it was not finished before we left. The list of dive sites looks thin but many of the reefs were quite large and provided multiple different profiles at the same location. A good weeks diving and we decided the area was well worth a repeat visit. The only downer was the behaviour of the only other British diver at the hotel. He managed to alienate everyone and Ken and I had to work hard all week to prove that he was not a typical BSAC diver. Hope we never meet him again. We did 12 dives at the following sites:

Shaab Marsa Alam – 19M	Abu Dhabab – 22M	Elphinstone – 25M	Dolphin House Reef – 15M
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Still using the Sea&Sea MX5 with strobe and wide_angle lens. These pictures appear even better than than the 2002 results. Partly I think due to my increasing confidence (and dare ilsay it - competence) with the camera, partly because the water was much clearer and partly because I had the photos produced directly onto CD by the processor rather than more scanning them myself. On balance, I think the latter has most to do with the improvements.



Antheas dancing round nice corals



Batfish



Bluespot on a ledge at Elphinstone



Large Brown Box Fish



Clownfish with Kens Fingers to show size



Nice Corals - looking down on Lionfish



Crocodile Fish



Lionfish hunting



Moray swimming free



Picasso Triggerfish



Ken holding a Puffer Fish with dive guide shaking fist in background



Remoras at Abu Dabbab



MSmiler! - no idea what its acled and have never seen another like it



Me posing with DV out.



Titan Trigger Fish



Turtle heading for surface



Turtle grazing on Sea Grass with a couple of Remoras on its back



Shoal of Yellow Snapper at Elphinstone



Oceanic White Tip



Another White Tip which has lost the upper part of its dorsal fin. Note the shoal of humbugs in attendance



Dives on shot line with White Tip patrolling above



Reef Wall at Elphinstone - clear water and vibrant colours



Wreck of a liveboard dive boat. Everyone had a picture taken sitting on the toilet.



The beach at Abu Dabbab where we did a shore dive.



Butterfly Fish



File Fish



Sunset on way back from Dolphin House Reef



Jetty at Marsa Alam



Marsa Alam moorings note how small village is in background



Pool at Hotel



Ken holding a puppy found at side of road on way back from Marsa Alam. It was adopted by the Dive Shop manager.



View from our hotel room showing small pool and sea in background



Jetty being constructed at the hotel for boats and shore dives on reef wall.
Elphinstone is about 3 miles due east of hotel



Yet another frustrated artist on the domestic staff