



## A Guide to Dive Planning by John Geden

For those of you who may never have planned a dive before, it really is very simple. In fact most of the time you could simply book with a boat owner who will usually do everything for you.

However even if a skipper has agreed to take you to a dive site, there are still

a number of things that you need to consider to make the day a roaring success.

Give as much detail as you can to those you are inviting, at the earliest opportunity, and include the following...

1. Consider the experience levels of the group you want to take and cater for the least experienced diver. Depth limits for common dive grades are as follows:

PADI OW - 18 metres

PADI AOW & above - 35 metres

BSAC CD - 20 metres

BSAC SD - 35 metres

BSAC DL & above - 50 metres

Some people may have training to go deeper, for example PADI Rec Tec divers, and BSAC extended range. There are also IANTD and TDI technical divers who may use a variety of mixed gases or rebreathers. However for basic club dives you will not normally need to consider these groups because they usually plan their own dives and dive together.

2. Also consider what type of diving your group will want to do:

Wreck, Drift diving, Night diving, Reef, Caves, Inland or offshore site, Training dives or just fun/experience

What are the specific interests of the people that you are taking. Consider this in particular when it comes to choosing buddy pairs. A wreck diver will not thank you for buddying him up with a keen underwater photographer and vice versa!!

3. Find some background information about the site or the wreck. There are a variety of sources that you can use, particularly with regard to wrecks. The internet is always a good starting point and there are a number of very good diving guides available that give a detailed explanation of dive sites throughout the UK.

4. You need to consider the cost of the dive and collect either a substantial deposit or the full amount well in advance. The key to it all is advertising well in advance. The average cost for 2 dives with a boat skipper is £30-£35 in the UK. Also what is the agreement with the skipper regarding cancellation due to sickness etc.

5. What day of the week are you going to run the dive on? Consider traffic issues & divers occupations. Also car parking will be an issue.

6. Equipment considerations - Do your divers need two cylinders? Some boats won't come back to shore between dives. Some have compressors aboard. Do they require SMB's & reels. What about special equipment. Will wetsuits be OK or will divers really need dry-suits in the conditions that you are diving in?

7. How do you get there? How long will the Journey take? Can you produce a map for them?

8. Are you meeting somewhere first?

9. What are the transport arrangements? Can you

car share? Where do people park when they get there?

10. Where can they get food? Does the site have facilities, if not where is the nearest place? Will the boat skipper provide hot drinks? Some boats are like floating palaces, others are a little more basic to say the least!!

11. Is there a cash-point machine nearby? Does the skipper accept cheques/VISA or will he want only cash payments?

12. Can you kit up on the boat, if not where can you get kitted up?

If you are planning a dive you have a responsibility to those attending to consider their safety as well as their welfare and comfort. Often this may not make you popular because individuals may feel that they do not need your advice or suggestions. However you do have a duty of care as an organiser, whether receiving payment or not and so you must consider the following at the very least...

10. SAFETY....

Has the boat/site got Oxygen available? Is someone in your party oxygen administration trained? If not is the skipper Oxygen administration trained?

Is there a first aid kit on board? Where is it?

Is there a fire extinguisher on board? Where is it?

What is the telephone number for the Coastguard? (Solent Coastguard = 02392 552100 or VHF Channel 16)

Where is the nearest decompression facility? (DDRC Tel: 01752 261910 BHA Tel No: 07831 151523)

Have you got next-of-kin details for all divers?

Have all your divers got adequate insurance?

Where is the nearest phone or marine VHF radio? Can someone operate it?

Who is diving with who? Consider experience levels, fitness, equipment compatibility (computers vs tables/OC vs CC), Interests Who is the dive leader?

Who is going to give a dive briefing? If it is you, include the above information/points in your briefing.

Weather - The one thing that will always screw up your plans is the great British climate!

Check with the Met office via the web, met call or met fax. Phone the boat skipper a few days before and then the night before to ensure all is well. Have a back up plan up your sleeve and let everyone know what the arrangements are in case the weather is poor. Most skippers will not charge you for a cancellation due to poor weather but check when you book!

Metcall - Tel: 08700 767888 (2 day marine forecast)

Metfax - Solent area Tel: 09060 100457

Channel area Tel: 09060 100456

[www.met-office.gov.uk/marine](http://www.met-office.gov.uk/marine)

What are the tide times for the site that you propose to dive? You can get small tide tables from most chandlers or water-sports shops, usually free. What is the water level on low slack & high slack. (We usually only dive on a slack tide, this is the period between the end of the tide coming in/flowing and the start of the tide going out/ebbing.

Lastly, don't forget to take a few pictures and write a short dive report for our club website.

It will encourage other members to come along next time and others to join the club.

The following agencies or charter boats may be of use when planning dives along the south-coast:

[www.planadive.co.uk](http://www.planadive.co.uk) This is a great website that will help you do exactly what it suggests.

'James Alexander' - Hard-boat from Bourne-mouth Tel: 01202 749122

[www.wightwreck.co.uk](http://www.wightwreck.co.uk) This is the site for a chap called Peter Street. He runs a boat out of Gosport. Or phone 023 92613284

'Out Rage' Hard-boat runs out of Weymouth. Tel: Rod on 01305 822803

'Dawn Louise' - Mainly live-aboard's but will do day boat charters from Poole. Gary Tel: 07976 252248

'Yo Yo Divers' Southampton. Tel: 02380 780847

[www.channeldiving.com](http://www.channeldiving.com) A good website to get you started for diving in the English Channel.

'Spartacus' - Brighton based hard-boat. Tel Tim on 01273 586445

[www.sussexshipwrecks.co.uk](http://www.sussexshipwrecks.co.uk) This is a chap called Mike who runs day charters for wreck diving off the Sussex coast

Horsea Island Dive Centre - For when the weather is really too bad to do real diving!!

Only open Fri, Sat & Sun Tel: 02392 384243

'Meridian Express IV' - Hard-boat out of the IOW Tel: Paul on 02392 652772

'Wittering Divers' - Based in Sussex near Chichester and organise day-boat dives. Tel: 01243 672031

'Copperhead Diver II' - RHIB runs out of Littlehampton. Tel: Sean on 01243 811477

'My Joy' - Hard-boat runs out of Littlehampton. Tel: Vernon on 01243 553977

'Westbay Lass' - Hard-boat runs out of Littlehampton. Tel: Cyril on 01243 551371

'Michelle Mary' - Hard-boat runs out of Littlehampton. Tel: Ivan Warren 01903 739010

'Stella' & 'Sidewinder' - Hard-boats run out of Swanage by a really nice chap called Rich Tichenor. Tel: 01929427064

'Wight Spirit' - Hard-boat running out of Lymington by Ex Hants Police Supt Dave Wendes. Tel: 02380 270390

'Girl Gray' - Hard-boat based in Brighton. Tel: 01273 693400

'Grey Viking II' - Brighton based hard-boat. Tel Alan on 01273 300388

[www.blueturtle.uk.com](http://www.blueturtle.uk.com) Hardboat from the Portland area. Call Douglas on 01297 34892/07970 856822

'Protector Diving' - Portland based RHIB. Very large & fast. Tel: 01305 823376

'Independence' - Portland based Tel: 01305 816390

'Drifter' - Portland based. Tel: 01305 815150

'Muircu' - Swanage based. Tel: 01202 461718

'Preditor' - Poole & Swanage based RHIB. Tel: Gary Sharp on 01634 365676

Fathom & Blues. - Portland based dive shop organising trips out into the harbour & beyond. Tel: 01305 826789

'Voyager' & 'Deep Space 9' - Two very good catamaran type hard-boats running out of Littlehampton. Tel Paul Childes on 01903 739090. Stoney Cove - For when all hope is lost Tel: 01455 273089