



A refracted view of a shark through the surface with the underwater view and the sky won the Innovation Award at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year in 2004.

what the 10-17 Tokina offered and is very sharp. But at a price! Although the Tokina won't autofocus with the FTZ adapter I have shot it prefocused at 0.4m but the buildings were a bit soft for my taste.

I love the caustic light patterns on the bottom and sometimes you can add interest by bobbing the housing up and down to create additional

rings. Shooting up slightly allows you to capture reflections on the underside of the surface. Always look for shadows too! I like to shoot slightly downwards sometimes, showing the surface as well as the meniscus.

Enjoy.

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The Wrecks of Abu Nuhas

by Peter Stenberg

A few hours outside of Hurghada, north of the island of Shadwan, right where the Gulf of Suez meets the open Red Sea, lies the famous and equally infamous reef of Shaab Abu Nuhas.

This triangular shaped reef called Abu Nuhas is feared among even the most seasoned captain because of its treacherous position. It's situated right before the safe passage, or at least the unobstructed waters of the open Red Sea that awaits ships after successfully navigating the Gulf of Suez.

Here more ships than on any other reef in the Red Sea have met their faith due to heavy weather, navigational errors or simply due to bad luck. Earning this reef its reputation as the Ships Graveyard.

Since the Suez Canal in the mid 1800s finally opened up the shortcut that connected the western world and the valuable trade-route of modern day India, several ships now make the bottom around this reef their final resting home.

This route remains to this day one of the busiest routes of cargo-ships in the world and in-between



The pinnacle of the adventure of shooting in this incredible place. Capturing a panorama that really showcase the grandness and beauty of these wrecks. This shot is a panorama consisting of 5 separate vertical shots and then stitched together using Lightroom. It shows a diver explores the rear mid-section of the iconic and striking wreck of the Chrisoula K. Here the precious cargo of Italian floor-tiles can be clearly seen through the now opened up part of the port side of the ship.

1/60s f/10 ISO 320 Nikon 16-35@16mm.

dives you are often reminded of the importance of this route by the number of huge ships sailing by while the rusty remains of tragedy lies beneath the surface calling for any diver, seasoned wreck-diver or novice alike.

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to sharpen my skills, practise new techniques and to land some great shots was now at the fate my shutter."

I set out on this trip hoping to capture some great images of these iconic wrecks and the marine life that surrounds it and at times totally engulfs it. Equipped with my Nikon d850, wide-angle 16-35mm & a

105mm macro lens I headed to Egypt with my hopes high on landing some great shots and trying out some new techniques, like shooting a panorama underwater for the first time.

Right up on arrival in the Red Sea I realised that this would be the perfect spot and opportunity for me to sharpen my skills, practise new



The availability of great wrecks in this location is just amazing and combined with the interesting, and sometimes tragic history these wrecks are nothing short of fantastic dives and the opportunities for some amazing wreck shots really are everywhere. On the left a diver explores the rudder and massive propeller of the oldest of the wrecks found here, the Carnatic which sunk in 1869. 1/80s f/10 ISO 200. Nikon 16-35@16mm. On the right is the stern section with intact rudder and propeller of the Chrisoula K. 5 vertical shot panorama 1/50s f/11 ISO320 Nikon 16-35@16mm

techniques. Landing some great shots was now at the fate my shutter. With typical Red Sea conditions and visibility everything was lining up to be just optimal for wreck photography. So shooting here perhaps the greatest challenge was going to be capturing the images that I had in mind without too many divers in the frame, taking the feeling of exploration away from the viewer. Because as beautiful as this place and it's wrecks are, it is a very popular spot. I had previous to

the trip researched the wrecks and I had a good idea of what awaited me underneath the surface. My main goal was gonna be capturing really clear high quality shots of the wrecks from the outside using ambient light only. This decision was partly made because previous to this trip one of my strobes had malfunctioned just a few days before the trip, leaving me with more limited options for shooting strobe-lit photos.

Even though these waters have

a fearsome reputation several of the wrecks here are now easily available for divers. Partly due to their relatively shallow depth. On most wrecks a dive beneath 30 meters is not even possible, let alone necessary. But also because the wrecks are lying almost on top of each other in typical Red Sea clear blue waters with a visibility often exceeding 30 meters.

In the area surrounding the Abu Nuhas reef there are at least seven wrecks and four of these lie within

easy reach, right next to and even on top of the reef itself.

These four most famous and classic wrecks here are Chrisoula K, Carnatic, Ghiannis D & Kimon M. All of them equally impressive with lengths averaging around 100 meters and they all have an interesting story about the devastating circumstances that led to their demise. Remembering these stories, the people who were on it and the ethical consequences of diving in sites where human fates came

to an end is important and almost inevitable as the wrecks remind you of their dramatic end as you witness the destruction of these huge ships around the reef.

One of the most iconic and photogenic wrecks in the Abu Nuhas is the magnificent Ghiannis D (pictured above). A more picture perfect shipwreck on the bottom is hard to imagine. It's hard not to evoke memories of Tin Tin walking on the bottom among the remnants of old shipwrecks lying on the bottom.

This is really one of those wrecks where imagination and expectation of the creative mind meets reality in a wonderful composition.

The fact that the wrecks, like for example the oldest wreck found here, the Carnatic - sunk in 1869 - have with time been converted into a reef itself really helps to make this not just dives that reveals rusty structures of old ships but amazing reef dives.

The wrecks are completely covered in hard and soft corals in all colours, sometimes making the wreck almost indistinguishable from the reef itself. Fish and marine life have made both the exterior and interior parts of the wrecks their home. Bigger fish like jackfish, napoleon wrasse, groupers and sometimes even tuna are attracted to and circle the area hoping to find their next meal. While smaller schools of fish, like the beautiful



The famous and photogenic stern of the Ghiannis D lies at rest on a 45 degree angle and she is a striking sight. She was on her way to Saudi Arabia carrying a precious cargo of wood when disaster struck and due to a navigational error she hit the reef in 1983. The wreck offers great swim-through possibilities in several different rooms and sections including the intact engine room. Capturing this wreck in this angle is a well photographed angle but surely makes for a stunning composition that will land this classic a spot on my wall.

1/80s f/9 ISO 250 Nikon 16-35@16mm



Orange anthias pulsate in and out of the foliage like a breathing rhythm of nature. The pastel coloured soft corals that contrast the deep blue water that symbolise the Red Sea canvas are literally everywhere to be found. 1/60s f/10 ISO 160 Nikon 16-35mm @16mm

orange anthias hover next to the hull, closer to the comfort of protection among the broken wreckage.

Here all the usual inhabitants of the coral reef seem to naturally belong. Nudibranchs, scorpionfish, morays, lion-fish, blue spotted stingrays and a personal favourite, the crocodile fish (pictured above) are easily spotted on and around the wrecks. It's hard to find any part of the wrecks that isn't converted to a home for marine life.

If you dare to venture inside to explore the internal parts of the wrecks, you will beside from having the opportunity to explore parts of their valuable cargo and even an intact engine room, find that even the darkest corners have become a lively habitat with a delicate play of life opening up before your torch.

Schools of red cardinal fish stare back at you with their big glaring eyes as you expose them as

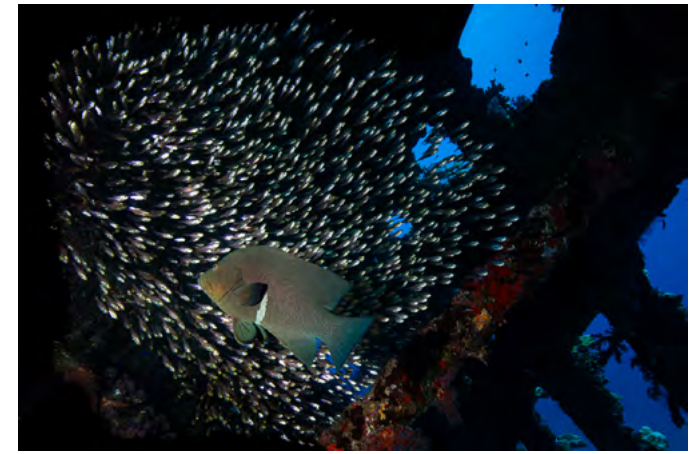


The amount of marine life that flourish in, on and around the wreck is quite incredible. Pictured here is the commonly seen Blue Spotted Stingray (1/100s f/13 ISO 100 Nikon 16-35mm @35mm) and a big grouper chasing a school of glass- fish inside the Carnatic (1/80s f/10 ISO 200 Nikon 16-35mm @16mm)

they hide in the corners. Huge schools of glass-fish play a beautiful game of hide and seek as they move around in the dark, simultaneously hiding while preying on unsuspecting smaller critters.

Given the fact that the wrecks have spent decades, and (like the Carnatic), even a century and a half on the bottom, they are still surprisingly intact. But the question of how long always lingers. Parts of the swim throughs that used to be possible and iconic parts that used to stand tall have slowly started to break away. Entire sections with iconic features like for example the famous and well visited "tool-shop" on the "Wreck of Tiles", The Chrisoula K are now completely collapsed. Forever hidden in the broken wreckage as if nature and time turned the page and closed a chapter, leaving the ones who come after with less and less.

Time and nature are probably the biggest



driving factor of the inevitable destruction of these time capsules, but it's also clear to see that dive practices like mooring, anchoring and sheer popularity with divers also drives this process forward. It's not hard to imagine that the unnatural disruption caused by bubbles, dive lights, noise, pollution and bad dive practices drive not only the decay of the wrecks forward. But they also drive marine life a little further away from this beautiful testament of nature's force to turn a tragic event like ships, cargo and lives being lost, in to an opportunity for life to once again flourish and thrive. Ethical questions like this is always a consideration when diving in a popular spot and an ever growing part of the awareness that a diver needs to have in his or her tool-box in the modern days of diving, where untouched and pristine is growing more and more scarce.

So one can only hope that this fantastic place will continue to be treated with the respect that it deserves. Not only to respect the people and ships once lost here, but to respect the work that nature has done in shaping this "Ships Graveyard" into a wonderful display of nature and Red Sea diving at it's best.