

Nemo33 - Dive another way

by Michel Braunstein

Born and raised in Belgium, I had the opportunity to dive quite a bit in the country's dark lakes and flooded quarries (Opprebais, Vodelée, Ekeren, Barrage de l'Eau d'Heure, and more). One of the features these sites all have in common is the freezing water!

Actually, I would have never had imagined that it would be possible to dive in clear 33°C tropical water in the very heart of Belgium. Surprisingly enough, I had the opportunity to do so in a very special place, the deepest swimming pool in the world located in Brussels, Nemo33 (<http://www.nemo33.com>).

I arrived at Nemo33's on one of those typical Belgian rainy days. The organization was so meticulous that all the employees had "Smart" cars licensed NEM_022, NEM-033, NEM-088, NEM-099. There was a small yellow submarine at the building's entrance. After entering, you could see the restaurant with soft lights and large deep blue windows facing the swimming pool. This sight definitely reminded me of Captain Nemo's Nautilus Submarine, only the monsters in the water were wearing diving gear!

The few things I knew about

Françoise Herman, the swimming pool manager prior to our meeting was that she had been in charge of a diving center for seven years in Sharm El Sheikh, that she owned a diving boat, and that she went through many adventures. Well, I thought I'd deal with a strong and authoritative person but in fact, she was a charming and sensible young woman.

We went up three floors to reach the swimming pool and I was given full diving gear (Tank, regulator, BC and fins). It's really fun to get to a diving spot without having to bring along a large and heavy bag full of equipment!

The place is very clean. All the equipment is modern, well set up and maintained to a high standard. On the pool's surface, a nice red Zodiac helps new divers learn to step off the boat and climb back into it after the dive.

When we were ready, Françoise took me to the deep end after going through the shallower parts of the pool. The deepest part of the pool is actually quite wide. We went through it slowly and after a few moments, she showed me her diving computer which displayed 35 meters. It's quite impressive to look upwards from such





a depth across serene and clear source water. It was really moving to observe the scene from the bottom through that wide cavity. There was no sunlight but instead the powerful glow of the electric light on the building's ceiling. What a splendid image!

After the “abyss”, Françoise led me inside “caves” where we could stick our heads outside the water despite the fact that we were at a depth of 10 meters. The first cave was nicely decorated with stalactites on the ceiling and on the walls; my buddy did some meditation there. The second cave was decorated with submarine windows showing some underwater life. The third cave, not yet decorated, is used at the end of diving courses when the instructor opens up a bottle of Champaign and drinks it together with the newly certified divers to celebrate their success.

After our dive, we went to eat Asian food in Nemo33's restaurant in which they invested a great deal in the atmosphere, food standards, as well as service. I've been to numerous restaurants in sports centers but I have never tasted such delicious food in this type of environment. It's not surprising that many people working in companies nearby go there

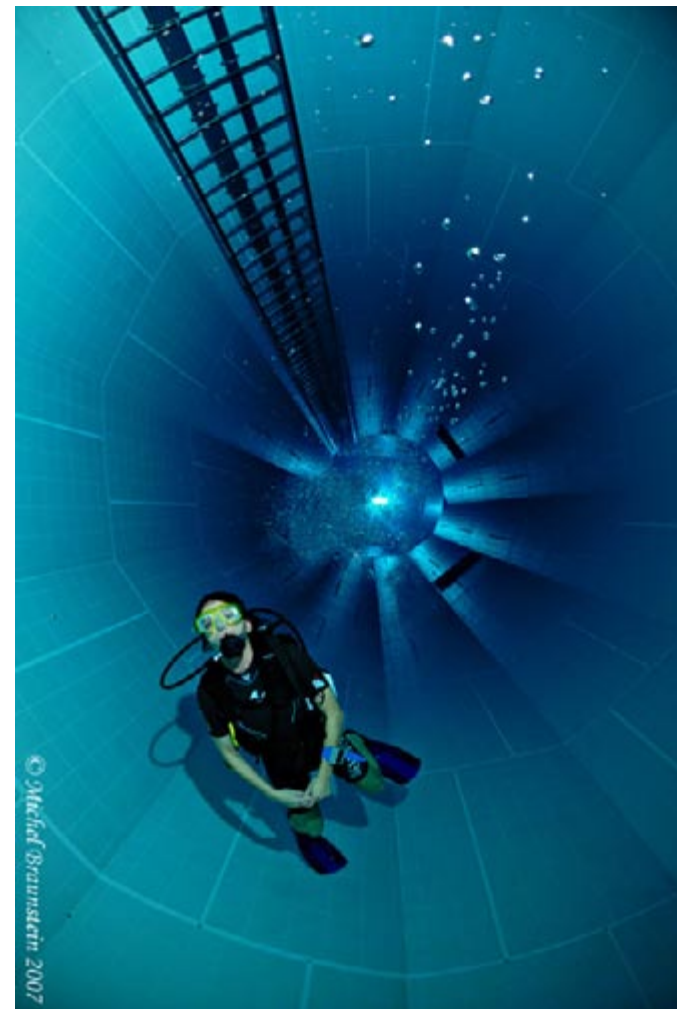


to have lunch, just to enjoy.

While at the restaurant, I was lucky enough to meet John Beernaerts, the fascinating man who had the Nemo33 dream and engineered the project. John used to be an engineer and one day decided to begin working independently. He is now managing Nemo33. Since for many years diving was his passion, he decided to integrate it into his professional life. He built Nemo33, the deepest pool in the world to date. Contrary to other similar pools which are dug directly into the ground, Nemo33's pool is built from the third floor of the building downwards, which from a technical perspective is much more complicated. When at the restaurant, you sit at a depth of -7 meters underwater.

After the meal, Françoise invited me to go on another dive. This was a real pleasure. No doubt that next time I am in beautiful Brussels or surroundings, I won't miss a dive at Nemo33.

In addition to enjoying a dive and having a fantastic meal at Nemo33's, you can take any PADI diving course as well as going to aqua gym or “Living better” courses.



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