

*Don't settle for 2nd best*



Film - No Filter  
No White Balance



Digital - No Filter  
Manual WB



Magic Filter  
Manual WB

Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards.

These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

*[www.magic-filters.com](http://www.magic-filters.com)*

# Chalkidiki

## The Diving paradise in Northern Greece

By Nicholas Samaras & Rabea Iatridou

Chalkidiki, the famous three-pronged peninsula in Northern Greece lies near the city of Thessaloniki (only 60 minutes away from the international airport of Thessaloniki), the second largest city in Greece.

This region is a resort area serviced by most international tour operators. Everyone knows Chalkidiki as a great holidays destination with magnificent white sanded beaches (most of them awarded with E.E.C. blue flags), landscapes fully surrounded by forests of all kinds of trees and of course the bluest of the unique Aegean Sea.

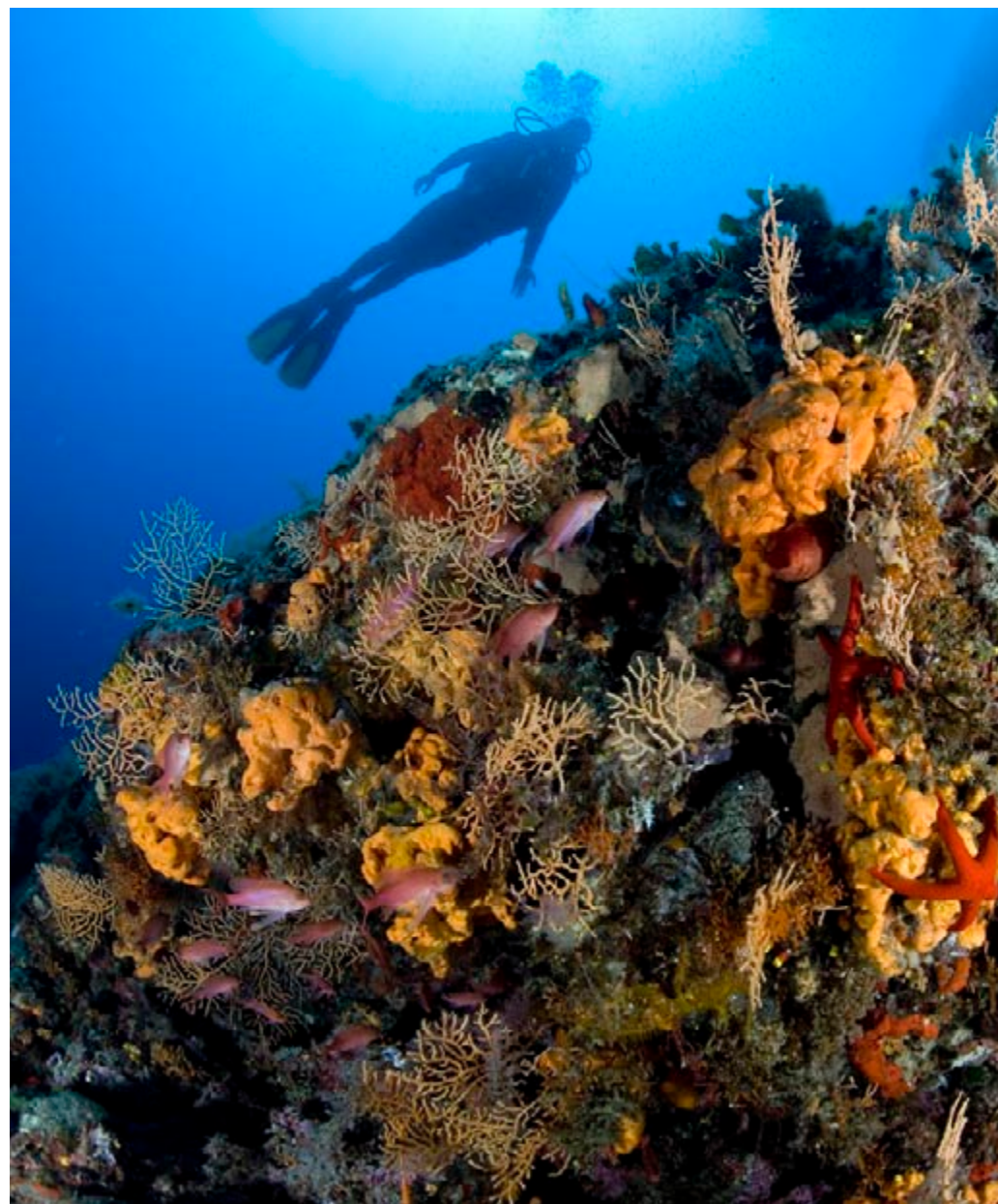
What most people don't know is that Chalkidiki is not only a place to relax on holidays, get a perfect tan and enjoy night life but is regarded as the Diving paradise of Greece, for divers and underwater photographers. The same place gives you different dive depending on the time of the year. This is magical. The diving location transforms during the year and gives multiple colour combinations and lighting.

As a diving destination,

Chalkidiki has to offer many great diving spots with perfect conditions for scuba diving, and digital underwater photography: excellent visibility, a few wrecks, some beautiful tunnels and caves with exciting lighting effects and rocks with soft and hard corals and fascinating marine life.

Water temperature during winter drops to 12-14 and during summer rise up to 26-28 oC. So the diving season runs from the beginning of April until the end of October and for braver divers with the appropriate equipment (dry or semi-dry suits) it lasts all year.

Chalkidiki has three large peninsulas: Cassandra, Sithonia and Mount Athos, but diving is allowed only in the first two. In both peninsulas there are many diving centres with modern facilities, up-to-date equipment and highly trained and experienced staff and most of them are located at the best beaches, big hotel units and camping areas, very close to diving spots and offer not only diving equipment for rental



*Aegean scene with Gorgonian & Anthias. Canon 5D, Canon 15mm Fish Eye, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f10 @ 1/125*



*Orange Mediterranean Sponge & Diver. Canon 5D, Canon 15mm Fish Eye, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f9 @ 1/60*

but also daily diving cruises and group diving from boat at specific destinations.

The bright Greek sun is your best friend here because you can take great shots of sunballs and sunbursts all day long and shoot wrecks and reefs with natural light with no strobes used.

Depending on how long your vacation is, you can arrange your dives in both peninsulas. If your staying is sort, it is better to choose one of the two peninsulas

and enjoy your staying there. Also it is recommended that you keep away from moving to places during weekend's hot hours (Saturday morning and Sunday evening). Chalkidiki is the weekend vacation resort for citizens of Thessaloniki and the traffic is absurd.

Peninsula Cassandra is the most popular holidays & travel destination in Chalkidiki and has to give high quality travel & tourism services for accommodation, rentals, cruises, ect at



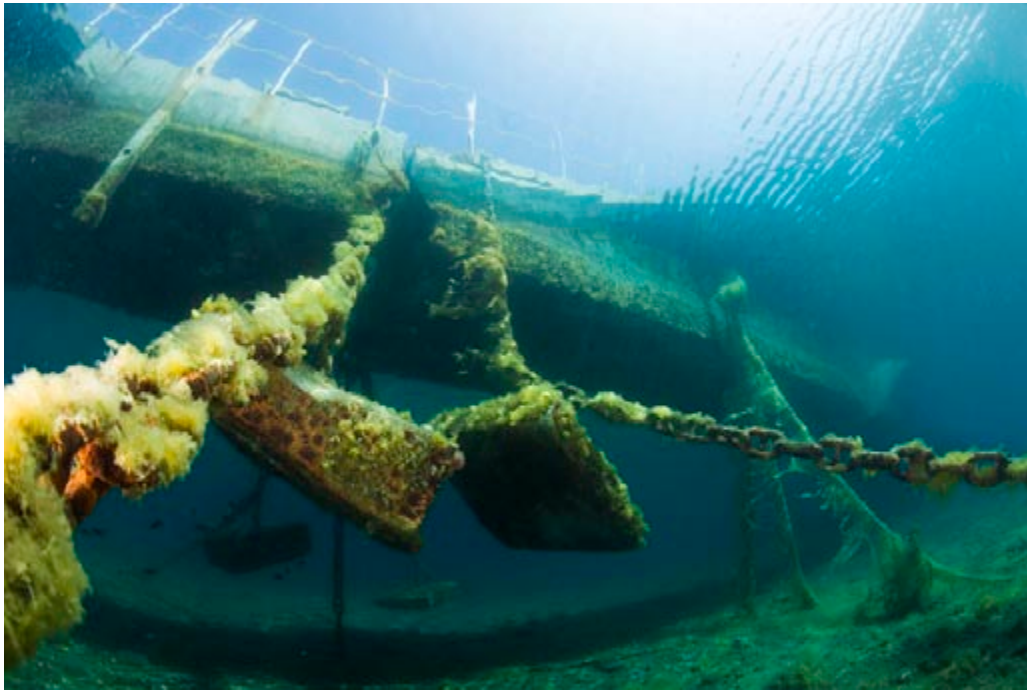
*Nudibranch Cratena Peregrina. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-110 flash, ISO 250, f8 @ 1/100*

affordable prices. Most of diving spots there are accessible from shore and some others require boat.

Most known diving spot in Cassandra is the wreck of boat Mitilini North-West of bight named Kipsa. Ship lies at 20m and if the visibility is good, this wreck cannot fail to impress you. It is great for wide angle and fish eye shots early in the morning before groups from local diving centres make their morning dive. The wreck is decorated with

shells, corals, anemones and coils and it constitutes a shelter for groupers, morays, scorpionfishes and big blacks. To dive to Mitilini wreck a boat is required, so if you want to plan a dive there the easiest way is to contact the diving center in Sani. In the afternoon, after the busy hours when the visibility is poorer it's the time for macro shooting

Koursaros (dokos) bay is an impressive shore dive at south east of peninsula Cassandra. The road



***Under the platform. Canon 5D, Canon 15mm Fish Eye, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f7,1 @ 1/250***

ends at marina and you can leave your car there and get ready for your dive. The dive starts about 100 meters from shore at the end of right hand side of bay, so you have to swim a little. If you look down you will see in your left hand an underwater entrance between two big rocks! It's magnificent! You will be thrilled. Rich marine life, plenty of colours and shapes.

In the other side of bay is Alonaki and you start your dive by reaching the shore passing from old camping facilities of EOT. Very nice dive with underwater walls

and big single rocks here and there. Big anemones and coils will give impressive colours to your pictures.

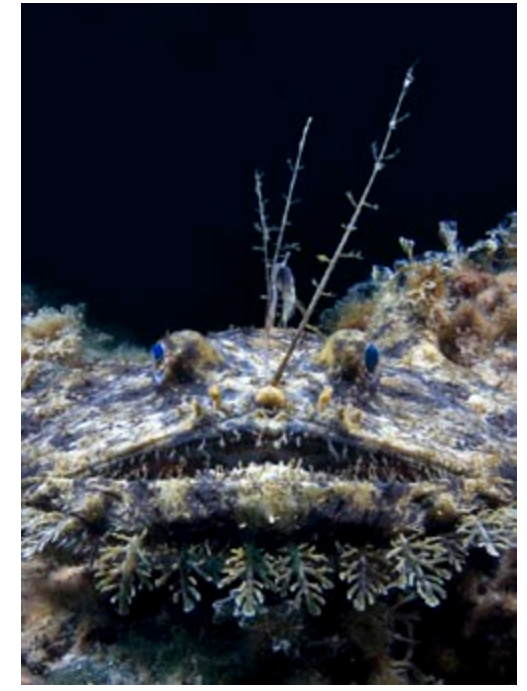
Porto Valitsa bay is one more excellent shore dive spot, very close to Koursaros. If the sea is wavy in one bay, diving can be done in the other as the two bays are opposite oriented. In Porto Valitsa there is a mini marina for your water entry but if you don't have a 4X4 car, you have to carry your equipment down to the marina (30m) on foot. You can do 2 dives in this bay: one left and one at the right and is magnificent for night dive also. Both sides have straight vertical and



***Blenny. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f18 @ 1/125***

horizontal underwater walls full of holes where you can find Lobsters, Octopus, Shrimps, Cuttlefish, Damselfish and Mediterranean eels with the right hand dive going deeper.

Avlaki is a small bay near Paliouri village. The road to get there is bad full of gravels and potholes so you have to be extra careful when driving. When you get there you will see straight in front of you a small breakwater wall. You will start your dive at the left hand side and follow the left turn underwater for 20 minutes



***Lophius Piscatorius. Canon 5D, Canon 17-40mm, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 200, f18 @ 1/160***

approximately. Max depth 40-45m with great sea scenery everywhere! Big fishes come and go but they keep their distance.

At peninsulas end are marked some very good dives but require a boat so you have to visit one of diving centres in area and plan your dives. You mustn't miss dive spot 'faros' (lighthouse) which is one of the favourite dive spots there.

Peninsula Sithonia is considered to be a peaceful travel destination, where you can relax and enjoy the

natural and desolate white sandy beaches. The coast line is outstanding by making all kind of turns and shapes, creating small gulfs and bays. There are so many trees everywhere so the green mixes with the sea blue, and creates magic contrast!

In Sithonia there are numerous mapped diving spots, most of them boat dives. If you choose to dive to Sithonia it is suggested to book a hotel room, or select an organized camping as south as you can, because all diving spots are down there (east and west side). Most of diving spots are mapped at Kelifos Island and at Kalamitsi bay.

4 miles from Porto Koufo is an underwater cave named Erica's cave from a girl drowned there some years before. Underwater entrance for cave is at 12m and the cave is not covered all over with water but it has a natural imposing dome in top, with fresh air and of course the possibility to swim in it. Underwater the cave goes in for 60 meters and it has about 10 meters width. As a cave it doesn't have something unique to see, except that it is a place for reproduction of crabs, lobsters and shrimps. Also some divers met there, at some point in a dive, a female Mediterranean seal monachous - monachous. The real advantage of Erica's cave and the reason to dive it is the spectacular exit, especially in middle of the day

in a sunny day. Between the rocks the most loved blues, turquoise, dark blue and in top a brilliant big sunball and sunbeams entering in water! Excellent spot for wide angle and fish eye photoshooting.

Wreck of a Turkish commercial ship 7 miles north ñ east of Porto Koufo that is located at east side of Sithonia peninsula. The wreck is cracked in two pieces the front and the back almost in the middle in depth of 17 to 40 meters. This wreck is excellent for wide angle shooting but also for macro as it has been transformed to an artificial reef, a home to many little sea creatures, fishes and colourful corals, many morays and Mediterranean eels. This is a boat dive so you have to contact a local diving centre.

A dive suitable for macro photography is in Kriaritsi diving spot. You can get there only with boat and be sure that you meet a plethora of nudibranches and sea slugs of all kinds and colours! You can meet mini flabelina trees, little sea plants with so many flabelinas climbed on (if you are lucky with their eggs also) that it looks like Christmas trees decorated in pink and purple!!

If you arrange Kelifos Island, your staying must be arranged near the village of Marmaras. There are plenty of hotels (simple, luxury and personal villas with pools



***Scorpaena Scrofa. Canon 5D, Canon 17-40mm, & S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f13 @ 1/60***

***Tylodina Perversa. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f22 @ 1/125***

and all comforts) and rooms to let everywhere. Avoid visiting Marmaras between the 1st and 15th of August because it is full tourist season and it is hard to find a place to stay. Diving in this area are mapped around a small island called Kelifos (means shell because of its shape that seems like a turtle shell). The island is located between the two peninsulas





*Hermit Crab. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f16 @ 1/125*

3 miles from Marmaras and it is very interesting to dive to because it has more than 10 diving spots the one better than the other! All over big rocks fully covered with corals, sea plants, small and big holes shelters for all kinds of fishes and sea slugs, precipices and abrupt stone walls decorated with colours. The visibility at this spot is excellent and gives you the opportunity to see bottom characteristics from the surface when snorkelling even in depth of 25m. Don't miss the opportunity to dive in Kelifos. Local diving centres organize daily trips with 2-3 dives mostly at the

east side which is the more interesting for divers.

Kalogrias beach is located in the south ñ west side of Sithonia. A great spot for vacation and all day activities. It has everything: sandy beach, crystal clear water, beach bar and restaurant and of course a very good diving spot. At the middle of the bay there is a tiny rock island with rich marine life, a good variety of fish and nidibranch, occasional octopus, and hundreds of shell crabs, funny decorated for camouflage, with everything you can imagine: seaweed, corals, even anemones and other sea plants It is an

easy shore dive around the rock tiny island and perfect choice for night dive also.

Armenistis Rock is an other shore dive in the left hand end of Armenistis Camping in south & east side of peninsula Sithonia. The beach in Armenistis is a dream. The sand is so white and the water there makes you think you are not in Greece but in a tropical paradise. For the dive you have to get ready on the beach and swim a little till you reach the rock. Then you descent from one side and swim around with max depth for the dive 47 meters and many morays and sea eels to see. Unfortunately it is difficult to meet big fishes because of the spear fishing with tanks at night, witch is illegal in Greece. It is a beautiful spot and it can give you many good scenes to shoot underwater.

Peninsula of Mount Athos (Agio Oros) is a place that can captivate the soul of any visitor. Mount Athos is the land of the Greek Orthodox monasteries, where entry is not allowed to women. Diving is forbidden near Mount Athos but there is in Ouranopoli a diving center that can provide boat dives in beautiful diving locations just in the border line with Mount Athos. There you can meet flocks of big fishes and if you take the daily cruise around Mount Athos dolphins will follow your boat

and swim around you playing and jumping of the water!

There are many more diving spots in Cassandra and Sithonia not mentioned here, but it will be uninteresting and boring to describe it all (Elina, Kerato, Stires ect). The best for you if you decide to visit Chalkidiki (something I recommend unconditionally) is to contact one of the many diving centres near the place you stay and plan a number of dives in both peninsulas.

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