

Government of Albania & World Bank

Pilot Fishery Development Project

Marine Eco-tourism Planning & Development (Phase 1)

FINAL REPORT

A Diving Survey of the Albanian Coast between Saranda
and Vlora to Assess the Potential for Diving Tourism



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October 2006

Government of Albania & World Bank

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A

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference for the diving survey are summarised below:

The diving team would use a vessel to systematically survey the coast from Vlora to Saranda a coastline identified in the Albania Coastal Zone Management Plan as being the most promising diving area.

- Act as Team Leader for the assignment to complete the underwater survey and establish a wreck and potential wreck-site database;
- Take lead responsibility for producing a photographic/video record of the diving survey (in close association with other team members);
- Note interesting features such as archaeological remains and for each dive site rank and assess the sport-diving marketability;
- Assess the equipment requirements for the development of sport diving sites (live-aboard facilities versus local facilities);
- Assess the most appropriate scale and investment costs for developing diving operations;
- Provide advise as necessary to the PMU and Saranda Eco-tourism Committee in the development of diving tourism;
- Define on-board requirements for the fishing vessels to operate as dive boats to accepted international guidelines (including the need for removable diving platforms, compressed-air bottle fastenings, power take-off for on-board compressors, seating, toilets, fresh water supply, life saving equipment etc);
- Advise on the establishment of dive shops (to international standards of safety) and procurement of equipment;
- Advise on the establishment of a national action plan for diving-related accidents;

The above work was split in to three separate missions as follows:

1. Familiarisation mission from 5 – 11 April 2006
2. First diving survey from 29 June to 10 July
3. Second diving survey from 28 July to 8 August

A total of 60 dives was envisaged for a total of 15 diving days with 4 dives per day. The first diving mission was initiated from Saranda and eventually moved on to Himara. The second diving mission was based from Vlora. The overall weather during the first mission was good except for 2 days when diving off the operational vessel was difficult. The weather during the second mission, apart from the first two days was however, consistently bad. The poor underwater visibility and high seas severely reduced the number of diving opportunities, as a result, only 47 dives were carried out.

Nevertheless the spread of dives along the coast still allowed an accurate picture to be seen and an informed opinion to be made.

B

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Albania is considered to have potential to expand income-generating opportunities within its fisheries sector due to the country's unique advantages of a long coastline, abundant inland water resources and proximity to lucrative markets. Following the demise of the regime in 1990 and the subsequent economic upheaval, a serious vacuum developed in the management of the marine resources, leading to uncontrolled and illegal fishing and a serious risk of depleting the country's valuable aquatic resources within the next decade. The stock assessment database is 10 years out of date and Albania has very limited resources to monitor the size, quantity or composition of its catch. Amongst the objectives of the Pilot Fisheries Development Project (PFDP) is the sustainable use of the marine resources. To achieve this, the project has established and started to support a number of community co-management Fisheries Management Organisations (FMO) throughout the country during the past nine months as part of the capacity building and institutional development process to strengthen fisheries resource management in Albania.

Project Development Objectives

The PFDP seeks to lessen the current pressure on the inshore fish stocks until adequate stock assessment guidelines and monitoring techniques are in place. The project departs from 'conventional' World Bank financed fishery development projects as the focus is on developing community-based marine resource and port infrastructure management. Pressure on fish stocks cannot be reduced without direct influence on vessel operations themselves, i.e. less fishing effort and fewer fishing trips. In order to reduce fishing effort but mitigate against the economic and social impact of such a strategy on sustainable livelihoods, alternative sources of income generation are needed, such as for example, diving tourism. These options were addressed in brief during preparation of the marine fisheries management plan (Marine FMP) in late 2004/early 2005.

Proposals

The conclusions of this diving survey indicate that the best diving tourism potential in southern Albania appears to be centred around the Karaburuni Peninsula. The dive sites along the western coast of the peninsula are only accessible by vessel from both Vlorë and Himarë. It is recommended that the basic infrastructure and organisation is put in place in these two towns to encourage and support the development of recreational diving centres.

Project Constraints

Four major constraints have been identified as obstacles to the successful establishment of Albania as a significant diving tourism destination. These are:

1. Total lack of national legislation in all matters relating to diving;
2. Lack of certified local recreational divers and instructors;
3. Lack of shore based diver rescue facilities;
4. Very poor access to the ports and villages with diving potential.

C

INTRODUCTION

The whole of the Mediterranean is badly over-fished and the Ionian Sea is no exception. Ideally, fishing should be drastically reduced to allow stocks the chance to recover. This cannot be done in a vacuum; fishermen need to have alternative sources of income. If this can be an activity offering them a similar or better income while allowing them to use their boats and continue their relationship with the sea, we have the perfect solution.

Recreational diving occurs world-wide. In developed countries most towns especially those by the seaside, boast an amateur diving club and/or a dive centre. These offer not only equipment sales but also diver training and organised excursions to local dive sites. They cater principally for local enthusiasts. Undoubtedly these types of clubs/centres will develop in Albania as free time and personal funds of local divers become available. This is not what we are intending here.

Along some lengths of coast, diving is particularly scenic, to the extent that divers will travel to the region to enjoy their pastime. They will spend some days there. They will visit local dive centres to learn to dive and to buy diving excursions. They will stay in hotels, eat in restaurants, rent cars and charter boats. A whole tourism industry can develop based solely around divers. Some places such as the Red Sea area of Egypt, the Caymans and other Caribbean Islands, the Maldives, etc. are heavily dependent on diving for their tourism.

There are many "Diving Destinations" spread throughout the world, places where the diving is sufficiently attractive and interesting to persuade divers to travel there to indulge their pastime and spend there holiday money. This is the philosophy behind the recreational diving survey of the southern Albanian coast, which is the subject of this report. Is the diving along the southern coast of Albania scenic enough to support a recreational diving industry? Recreational divers need boats, similar in size to fishing boats, to carry them to their diving sites. Could fisherman be persuaded to use their boats as diving tenders rather than to fish, at least for part of the year?

As an example of potential income it is estimated that in 1997, 33 dive centres existed in Malta and diving tourism generated \$60,000,000 of foreign revenue⁽¹⁾. This figure included all aspects such as flights, accommodation, meals, transport as well as direct income to dive centres. In 1970 Malta had 2 recreational dive operators. In 2006 it has 44 licensed dive centres employing some 150 persons. Malta is one of the closest diving destinations to Albania being just 350 miles from Vlora, the climate is very similar and the flora and fauna the same.

Is the underwater scenery in southern Albania good enough to support such an industry? What can be done to accelerate the rate of development?

D

OVERVIEW OF DIVING SURVEY

The aim of the underwater survey was to determine the appeal of the underwater sites lying between Saranda and Vlora and to record any places visited which might be suitable for an artificial reef. The area that can be surveyed on each dive in good conditions, does not exceed 500 metres by 80 metres. With such a long coastline and the time available, only sampling could take place.

Always with an eye on the intent to encourage tourism, it was determined that only those harbours offering safe summer shelter could be used as bases. Visiting divers would also need to find local accommodation and restaurants so these would also need to be available. Only Saranda, Himara and Vlora met these criteria.

Recreational divers would not normally expect to travel for more than 90 minutes each way from their embarkation point. Using a local fishing boat travelling at about 6 knots gives a maximum 9 mile radius. Sampling was therefore concentrated on sites less than 9 miles from these three ports. As diving tourism develops, the demand for faster semi-displacement boats (a greater range) would extend the circle of interest to say, 12 miles from port; so sampling, but less dense, also took place this far from the selected ports.

The habitat offered by wrecks, reefs and cliffs makes these particularly appealing to fauna and flora and therefore to divers. Careful examination of regional charts⁽²⁾ helped to indicate the sites that were most likely to prove attractive. Local fishermen were helpful, indeed enthusiastic, about helping with additional information about snag areas, bottom formation etc. The points along the coast where the survey dives should take place were decided after considering all these factors.

It was decided that the survey would start from Saranda then move to Himara and finally to Vlora. Vlora being the most exposed would be allotted the longest time. It also seemed logical to take advantage of any calm days to dive the most distant sites, keeping sheltered spots (of which there were few) and those closer to port, for the poorer days.

There were three field trips.

The first field trip was a familiarisation visit⁽³⁾ made between the 5th and 11th April by the a group comprising the Chief Technical Advisor, the Team Leader, the Marine Ecologist and a representative from the PMU.

The principal Harbours were visited, starting with Shingjin in the north then moving southward in sequence to Durres, Vlora, Himara and Saranda. The visits to the ports had two aims,

- 1 to view the type of boats available. All the boats were similar displacement hull fishing boats capable of around 6/7 knots.
- 2 to glean information about the whereabouts of local reefs and wrecks. At each port the representatives of the FMO's gave willing assistance in describing local snag areas. This information in conjunction with careful examination of local charts helped in the selection of the planned dive sites.

We were not allowed to enter the port at Durres so no boats were viewed and no meetings took place.

The actual diving survey took place on two field trips, timed, to be during the hopefully calm, months of July and August. Theoretically four dives per day could be possible, with no down time.

The second field trip (first survey trip) was from the 29th June to the 11th July and was initially based at Saranda. Although the boat, compressor and other equipment were not ready for use when we arrived, we were able to carry out two late afternoon dives from the shore that day on the wreck in

the harbour. The following morning was occupied preparing the boat - building a ladder and erecting a canopy - and arranging a store for the compressor and equipment. Although we had a very late start we still managed to fit in three dives finishing at 20.00. With good weather (apart from the Monday the 3rd July) and little restriction on our early morning departures we were able to fit in four dives daily from Saranda.

Because of military restrictions on boats around Porto Palermo we surveyed this site from the shore on the 2nd July. With the extra time traveling by road only two dives were possible.

We had intended to move base to Himara on the evening of the 3rd but the boatman was unwilling to travel in the dark so he made the journey complete with compressor, cylinders etc on the 4th. No diving was possible on the 5th either, because permission to leave harbour at Himara had to be sought from Vlora. Thus we lost two diving days, or 8 dives. We did however manage to retrieve something from this delay as we took the opportunity to dive at the Blue Eye.

Again the weather was fair at Himara and apart from the first day we faced little difficulty obtaining permission to sail each morning. So we fitted in the target 4 dives each day except the final day when we travelled a considerable distance up the coast leaving us time for only three dives.

Although we effectively lost four diving days for administrative reasons we still reached our target of 30 dives on the second trip.

Our third mission (second survey trip) to Vlora was not nearly so successful. Again we lost the first available day awaiting the arrival of the compressor, establishing a store, visiting immigration etc to gain permission to sail. Despite the delay each morning of awaiting permission to leave harbour, sometimes almost until midday, by working until after dark we still accomplished four dives on the 29th and 30th July. On the 1st of August the weather changed. A strong onshore prevented us from sailing to the outside of the peninsula so we fitted in three dives inside Vlora bay. The inclement weather continued through until our departure on the 7th August so we were restricted to diving within the bay and behind the Island of Sazan.

It soon became obvious that the whole bay is silted up as the sea was quickly reduced to a milky appearance by the swell running in. Once we had surveyed sample points within the bay and the wrecks there was little purpose in diving around the bay in almost zero visibility.

Nevertheless we continued our struggle with the weather, aggravated by the considerable delays each morning, in gaining permission to leave the harbour. Each morning we made the trip out to the headland to try to dive. Eventually on the morning of the 7th we were rewarded when we managed to dive twice before the sea became too rough again to dive safely. Although less dives were carried out than was planned, these are still sufficiently distributed to allow a reliable conclusion to be reached.

Although the TOR specifies the survey area as between Saranda and Vlora, consideration was also given to Shingjin. This was included in the familiarisation visit during which we had conversations not only with the representative of the FMO but also with a local diver. These suggested that the visibility along the coast adjacent to the port is poor. Our experience of the two day process of moving base also made it unrealistic to Include Shingjin in the survey area.

The short descriptions of each dive undertaken that are included in this report are in chronological order but also work approximately from the southernmost point of Albania northwards.

E

GRADING THE DIVES

A recreational dive is really like taking a walk underwater. A group diving together would find different things of interest on their underwater walk. A group undertaking several dives together, each dive on a different site, would have different opinions as to which dive was the most enjoyable.

The question to resolve before starting this survey, was how to classify the surveyed dive sites? How to determine their attractiveness? How to objectively measure their appeal? Especially with almost 50 dives spread over 6 weeks. Some divers prefer to dive on wrecks, some like to dive on cliffs, while others may prefer caverns. However there are common attractions. All like clear water, all like to see nice colours and fish, both small and large. Likewise there are shared dislikes. No diver enjoys spending 30 minutes swimming over sand or weed, peering through the murk, or coping with a surging current.

Each Dive is described is on a separate page. The basic facts about date, time, place, depth, duration, weather etc will be found at the top. The table at the bottom attempts to give a grading for each dive based on eight criteria each being marked out of 10.

These are

- ~ Visibility
- ~ Presence of currents
- ~ Bottom formation
- ~ Scenic value
- ~ Presence of colours, sponges, algae and the like
- ~ Occurrence of small fish
- ~ Occurrence of large fish
- ~ Interesting extra features such as wreck, caverns, drop-offs

It is understood that the grading is far from exact but it is an attempt to give some objectivity and consistence to the procedure. This is a development of the method used in the report to the World Tourist Association on the Andaman islands⁽⁴⁾

What can be safely said is, that sites with low scores, less than say 40, would be uninteresting to recreational divers, while those with a high score would attract visitors from other countries.

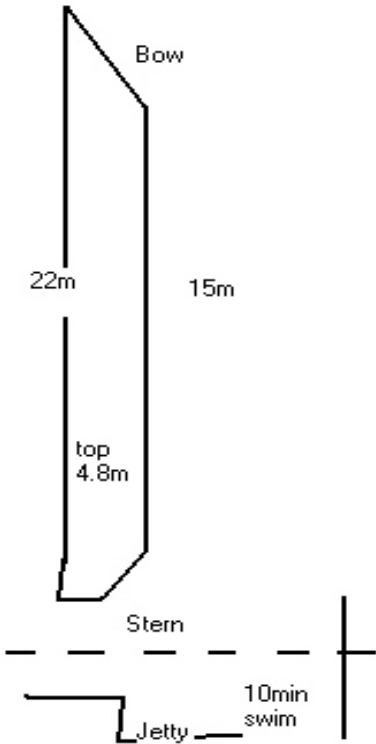
Dive 1 – Wreck Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
1	29 June 06	18.03	47	16	Mike Upton, Simon Diffy

Location in	Location out	Wind	Swell	Weather
Wreck in Saranda Harbour- marked by Buoy		moderate	Surface chop	Sunny

The wreck is situated in the harbour about 10-15 minutes swim (approx 300m) from the beach at Saranda.

This is a large wreck, fairly complete and lying on its side facing out of the harbour ie NW/SE. The propeller is intact, high up and closest to coast. The hold appears intact but empty. The large number of winches is a significant feature



The shallowest point is the bottom/keel and is at about 4.5 metres. This hulk stretches for some distance and runs perpendicular to coast

Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
5m	nil	mud	yes	few	some	couple	large wreck	Score out of 80
3	10	1	6	2	4	3	10	39

Dive 2 – Wreck Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
2	29 June 06	18.00	53	19	Shaun Upton, Genci Kapllani

Location in	Location out	Wind	Swell	Weather
Wreck in Saranda Harbour- marked by Buoy		moderate	surface chop	sunny

The wreck is described in “Dive 1”, previous page

The visibility was poor at about 5metres. We saw a variety of small fish and one small grouper (4-6 kg).

This is potentially a very good dive but visibility poor at about 5 metres and a scarcity of fish considering the good habitat. This may be explained by the almost continuous gill net and line fishing that we noticed takes place.



Several days later we made a second attempt to visit the wreck but with an inshore breeze the visibility had dropped to under 1metre.

Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
5m	nil	sand	good	some	some	few	large wreck	Score out of 80
3	10	3	7	4	4	2	10	43

Dive 3 – Shelving Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
3	30 June 06	11.54	42	29	Shaun Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°54.525	E19°54.463	N 40°54.525	E19°54.463	light	nil	sunny

We dropped down into 18 metres onto a stepped bottom of poseidonia and shells. The Poseidonia extended between 7 and 14 metres while the bottom continued down to an estimated depth of 40-45 metres (estimate)

Generally little fish overall but several pinna shells and a few small bream.

Good place for an artificial reef



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	Nil	sand/poseidonia	Fair	poor	few	none	pinna	Score out of 80
6	10	3	3	2	3	0	4	31

Dive 4 – Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
4	30 June 06	14.17	26	30	Shaun Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°57.841	E19°54.688	N 40°57.962	E19°54.658	light	nil	sunny

Plakatoi Northernmost point reached by boat from Saranda

We started at 15 metres and dropped sharply down to 20 then 30 metres with Poseidonia patches between 12 – 18 metres also containing areas of pinna shells.
Travelling north parallel to the coast we came across a large round sandy shallow platform with anchor at 6m.

Could be interesting to explore as a wreck site, but would have to be placed carefully to avoid damaging the few pinna shells there and poseidonia beds.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	sand/poseidonia	fair	poor	few	none	Pinna's/anchor	Score out of 80
5	10	3	4	2	3	0	7	34

Dive 5 – Sloping Bottom

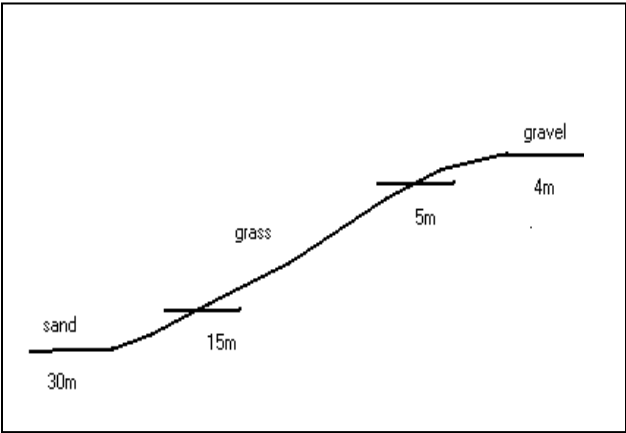
Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
5	30 June 06	12.56	27	28	Mike Upton, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°56.510	E19°56.810	N 40°52.265	E19°58.639	light	nil	sunny

We dropped onto Poseidonia at 9m then swam southwards parallel to the coast. The profile remained more or less as shown.

Nothing significant seen apart from a few live pinna shells. Visibility restricted to about 10-15m.

Slope just shallow enough for a wreck.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
10-15m	nil	sand/poseidonia	poor	poor	few	none	few pinnas	Score out of 80
4	10	3	3	2	3	0	3	28

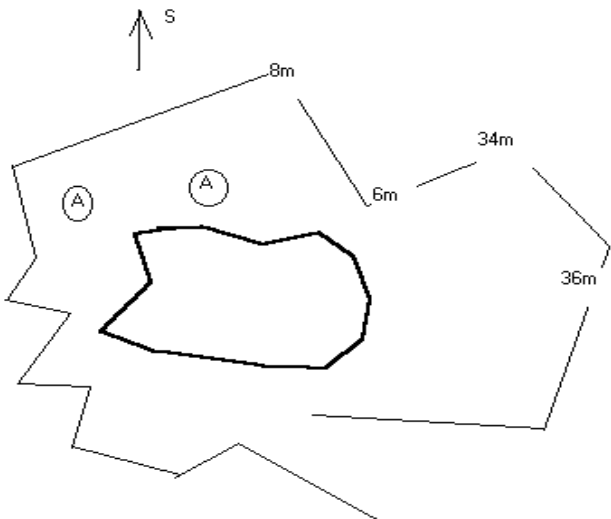
Dive 6 – Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
6	01 July 06	10.47	32	30	Shaun Upton, Paytim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°41.142	E19°59.338	N 40°41.142	E19°59.338	light	nil	sunny

Stilos Island at southernmost point of Albania

We dropped into 11m onto a sharply sloping bottom reaching an estimated depth of about 50m. No noticeable fish life below 20m except for an octopus. Poseidonia beds stretched to about 15m giving way to soft mud. In shallows quite a few small fish including bream and wrasse. There were broken bits of amphora at the Southern innermost side of the island (6-8m), also significant amount of yellow finger sponges. The few dead pinna shells suggest some level of pollution. Makes a nice shallow dive, might make a good wreck site



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	sand/poseidonia	Fair	in places	fair	octopus	amphora	Score out of 80
7	10	4	6	7	6	2	5	47

Dive 7 - Cliff Dive

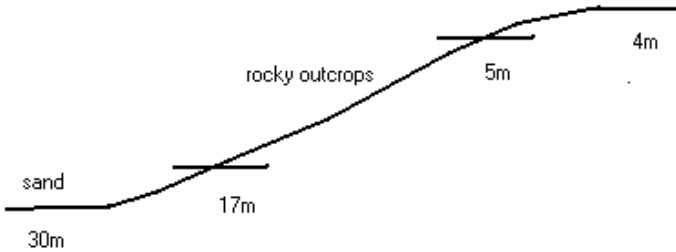
Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
7	01 July 06	10.54	35	30	Mike Upton, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°41.186	E19°59.940	N 40°41.186	E19°59.940	light	nil	sunny

Flelias - At southernmost point inside Albania.

We started in 6m swimming west away from border gradually going deeper until we reached 30m. We then swam along parallel to 30m contour before turning into the bay and eventually back to the boat. Very sparse fish life. Among the rock outcrops in the shallower water were a large number of large black sponges and yellow finger sponges. There was a significant amount of the brownish algae normally associated with polluted water

Typical Mediterranean beach type profile more or less for whole of area covered.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	Sand/rocks	Fair	In places	few	none	Large sponges	Score out of 80
7	10	4	5	5	3	0	4	38

Dive 8 – Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
8	01 July 06	13.21	32	32	Shaun Upton, Paytim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°42.106	E19°58.844	N 40°42.760	E19°58.865	light	nil	sunny

Dropped into 11m onto sharply sloping bottom. Rocky outcrops to 5m, then Poseidonia meadow to 14m where it gave way to muddy bottom, very similar to dive 6. Low rocks at about 25-35 metres, sparse fish life.

Lots of amphora shrouds scattered around the dive area at all depths.

Not potential wreck areas as slope to steep



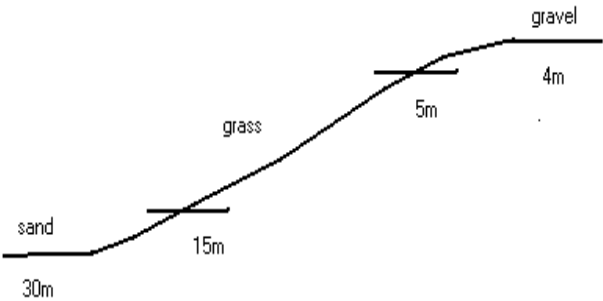
Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	sand/poseidonia	Poor	Few on rocks	few	non	amphora	Score out of 80
7	10	4	4	3	6	0	5	39

Dive 9 – Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
9	01 July 06	13.58	26	26	Mike Upton, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°45.289	E19°58.409	N 40°45.282	E19°58.403	light	nil	sunny

From 31 metres the sandy bottom slopes fairly steeply to 15 metres where Poseidonia starts, This continues up the slope to about 5 metre, where it becomes a shallow slope and gives way to sand and gravel.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	sand/ poseidonia	poor	few	few	none	few pinnas	Score out of 80
7	10	3	5	3	3	0	3	34

Dive 10 – Cliff Dive from Shore

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
10	02 July 06	11.51	57	32	Shaun Upton, Paytim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°03.742	E19°47.610	N 40°03.742	E19°47.610	light	nil	sunny

-Porto Polermo – Shore Dive

Entry into 3 metres with a long swim to drop off down to 18 metres. We swam south along wall that drops down into 28 with a second outer wall going down to 40+ metres. There was a cave in the inner wall at 34 metres. We had a nice swim along wall to the southernmost point of the island then turned back into the bay over drop-off into 7 metres with a swim back to exit point.

The fish life was sparse and the bottom rocky with patches of posidonia and a few pinnas.

This is a very pleasant dive. The water was clear with visibility 20-25 metres and the cliff edge interesting with a variety of sponges some Pinna shells but regrettably few fish.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25m	nil	mainly rocky	good	good	some	couple	drop-off, cave	Score out of 80
7	10	7	8	6	3	2	8	51

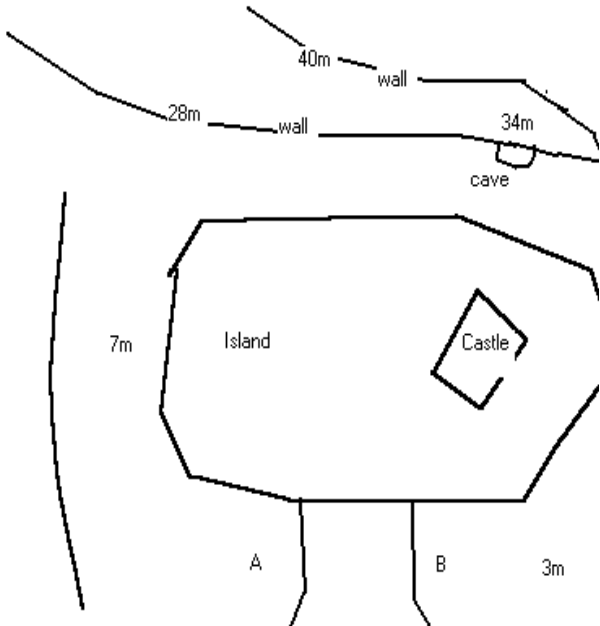
Dive 11- Cliff Dive from Shore

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
11	02 July 06	11.51	62	31	Mike Upton, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°03.742	E19°47.610	N 40°03.742	E19°47.610	light	nil	sunny

-Porto Polermo – Shore Dive

We entered the sea from the shore to the Southern side of the causeway (point A) and swam along southern side of island in 7m. The water was quite clear and the bottom rocky. After a few minutes we reached a drop off into 25 metres. We then turned northwards to follow the perimeter of the Island. The drop off continued for some time. Eventually we reached a large open cave the bottom of which was 31metres. Still following the perimeter of the Island we eventually swam up over the cliff in to 6 metres. The swim back to the exit point “B” gradually became shallower taking about 15 minutes and finally becoming rather tedious.



This is a very pleasant dive. The water was clear, visibility 20-25 metres and the cliff edge interesting with a variety of sponges some Pinna shells but regrettably few fish.

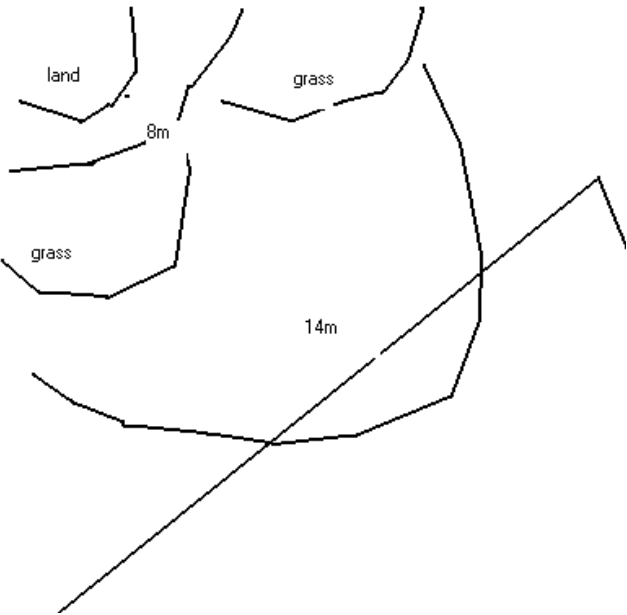
Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25m	nil	mainly rocky	good	good	some	none	drop-off, cave	Score out of 80
8	10	7	8	7	4	0	8	52

Dive 12 – Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
12	03 July 06	09.32	22	21	Shaun Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°53.050	E19°57.444	N 40°53.050	E19°57.444	moderate	choppy	overcast

We entered the water close by the point into a depth of 8 m. There were poseidonia beds stretching from 8 to 14m giving way to a sandy bottom with a few rock outcrops at 21m. Uninteresting dive. Not recommended for any activities.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
10m	nil	sand/poseidonia	Poor	little	few	none	none	Score out of 80
4	10	3	2	2	3	0	0	24

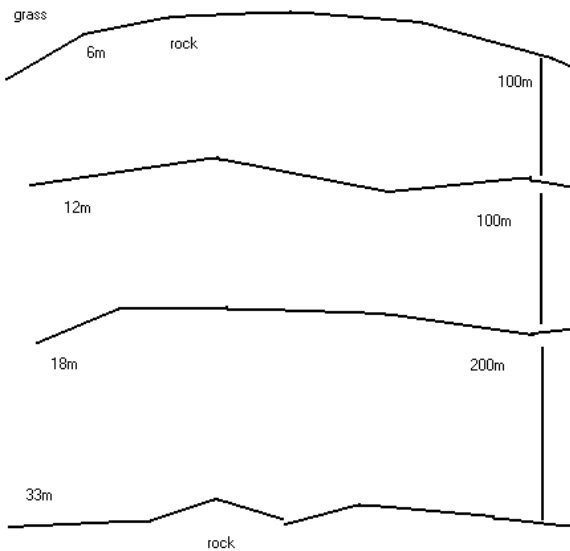
Dive 13 – Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
13	03 July 06	10.07	24	21	Shaun Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°53.703	E19°56.090	N 40°53.624	E19°55.943	moderate	choppy	overcast

We Dropped into 8 m. There was sparse fish life apart from an octopus and a shoal of sprats about 15-20cm long.

Apart from visibility this could be a good location for wreck.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
10m	nil	sand/rock	Fair	little	few	octopus	none	Score out of 80
4	10	4	4	2	3	2	0	29

Dive 14 – Reef Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
14	03 July 06	11.57	22	25	Mike Upton, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°52.754	E19°58.001	N 40°52.754	E19°58.001	moderate	choppy	overcast

We attempted to dive on a reef shown on chart to rise to 13metres on the 50m contour. Although our boatman was a local he had no knowledge of it. Unfortunately he had no working depth/fish finder.

We anchored in about 40 metres and swam out of the bay (SW) at about 25 metres for about 12 minutes then making a sweep to the left (SE) and then back into the bay.

The visibility was poor at about 5-10 metres and we were unable to find the reef. The bottom which we did eventually see once we turned into the bay was flat and with poseidonia.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
5-10m	nil	sand/poseidonia	poor	none	none	none	none	Score out of 80
4	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	18

Dive 15 – Reef Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
15	03 July 06	12.31	37	25	Mike Upton, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°52.265	E19°58.639	N 40°52.265	E19°58.639	moderate	choppy	overcast

We dived in the same area as the previous dive and also to try to trace a reef shown on the charts as rising to 13m. On this occasion the boatman claimed to know its whereabouts.

We anchored in 40 metres and swam at 25m in the direction we were told it would be. Again we were unable to locate the reef and what bottom we did see was flat with heavy growth of poseidonia.

Although disappointed as both sites are close to the harbour the poor visibility would make these spots unacceptable to recreational divers.

It is impractical to try to find a reef in poor visibility without at least an echo sounder aboard.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic ?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
5-10m	nil	sand/poseidonia	poor	none	none	none	none	Score out of 80
4	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	18

Dive 16 - Fresh Water Cave Dive

The Blue Eye. 5th July 2006 11.30am

Moving the dive tender, compressor and equipment from Saranda to Himara took two days. Advantage was taken of this break to visit the famous Albanian beauty spot, the Blue Eye. There are some 30 plus sources of crystal clear water exiting the mountains and forming into a stream. The largest exit hole is large enough to dive into. Indeed it was noted that there was a plaque with a sketch of the underwater lay out. Everyone was so impressed by the beauty of the area and the potential to dive there, that we returned complete with equipment and carried out a dive there.

How deep it is in the Blue Eye is not known. The divers followed the tunnel descending to 35 metres at which point there was no longer any natural light and the small lamps intended for looking under rocks etc in the sea were no longer sufficient. The water temperature at 13C was higher than anticipated but nevertheless too cold for an extended stay dressed in thin suits intended for sea diving at 20°C+. There was a strong current exiting the hole which meant holding on firmly to avoid being carried away. A proper exploration of this cave to a greater depth and extent would require specially trained divers using specialised equipment including ropes and helium.

It transpired that within an hour drive of the Blue Eye there are two other fresh water sources of a great enough size for diving. One of these was also visited but no diving was done there. Diving in fresh water caverns such as that at the Blue Eye is very specialised and requires formal training in both cave diving and fast moving water. Most Europeans attracted by this type of diving have to travel to Florida to undergo training and to indulge their interest.



Dive 17 – Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
17	06 July 06	11.01	32	26	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°02.746	E19°48.068	N 40°02.736	E19°47.997	light	nil	sunny

We dropped into 15m onto a bottom with rock outcrops and areas of Poseidonia. The bottom sloped gently to 23m with continuous poseidonia from 17m to 23m. Below 23 a steeper sandy bottom. There was significant debris from broken shells above 12m.

Towards end of dive there were a few small fish in shallow water, and a few live pinna shells.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	nil	poseidonia	poor	little	few	none	Few pinna	Score out of 80
7	10	3	4	2	3	0	4	33

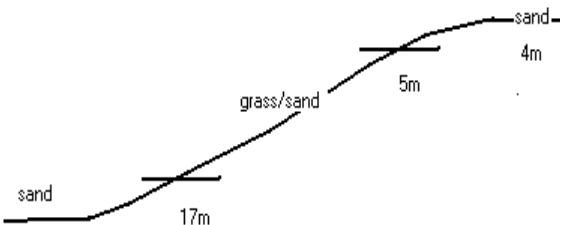
Dive 18 – Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
18	06 July 06	12.04	37	25	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°02.765	E19°48.806	N 40°02.982	E19°47.532	light	nil	sunny

We dropped into 10m then gradually swam away from coast to reach about 26m. Normal profile, sand to 8m then poseidonia but in areas with sand down to 18m giving way to sand only.

As we followed the coast at about 18 metres the profile changed to include rock outcrops with many rocks at 6m and a few smaller fish. We saw a beautiful naudibranch. On the slope less grass and occasional live pinnas.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	sand/poseidonia	Fair	few	few	none	few rocks and pinnas	Score out of 80
7	10	3	5	3	4	0	5	37

Dive 19 – Shelving Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
19	06 July 06	13.17	34	26	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°03.433	E19°46.628	N 40°03.479	E19°46.408	fairiable	nil	sunny

Dropped into 8m with a terraced drop to 12m with dense clumps of poseidonia with some pinna in open areas. Continuous healthy Poseidonia from 12 to 23m Then gradual thinning out to 31m

As we progressed along shore grass density dropped. Ascent from 16m where there was the shell debris



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	poseidonia	Poor	little	few	none	few pinna	Score out of 80
6	10	3	3	2	3	0	4	31

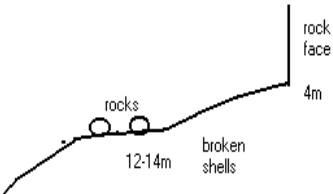
Dive 20 – Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
20	06 July 06	14.30	44	31	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°03.945	E19°46.270	N 40°04.146	E19°46.062	Variable	nil	Sunny

We dropped into 12m, swam outward over a mainly sandy sloping bottom with some poseidonia, some clumps of weed and some rocks.

At about 25 metres it dropped sharply to 40m or more. Swimming along the coast but moving shallower a ledge formed at about 14m with rocks some of which were very large (about 3-4m high).



The visibility gradually improved and the profile eventually became as shown

Not many fish but the variety of fauna/flora increased. On this dive we saw many live pinnas, three morinas, three or four octopus, cardinal fish and anthias.



A very interesting dive. There may be a space and a flat area suitable for a wreck but this would require a more detailed search.

Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	Nil	gravel and rocks	good	good	several	several	rocks, pinnas	Score out of 80
6	10	7	7	6	5	5	6	52

Dive 21 – Sloping Bottom

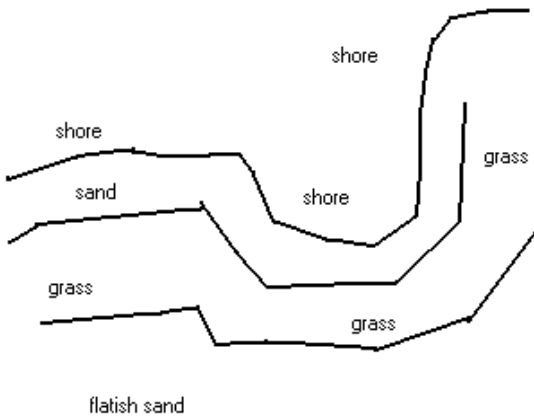
Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
21	07 July 06	09.13	28	21	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°07.251	E19°41.881	N 40°07.232	E19°41.740	light	negligible	sunny

We started this dive inside the bay close to the rocks on the northern coast, at 9m then swam out across the sand for some distance.

The edge of the rocks provided shelter for a few fish but essentially this was standard Mediterranean bottom with continual Poseidononia between 7m and 18m giving way to sand below that.

The slight slope and the firm looking sand bottom might make this a suitable place for an artificial reef.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	Nil	rocks at edge	Poor	few	few	non	non	Score out of 80
7	10	3	4	4	3	0	0	31

Dive 22 – Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
22	07 July 06	10.16	23	28	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°06.732	E19°41.964	N 40°06.732	E19°41.964	Light	negligible	sunny



We dropped into 8m onto rock and completed a circle to return to our starting point. There was a gradual slope from 8m down to 17m, then a drop-off to 28m. Some of boulders lying on bottom were so large they rose as high as 17m. These were interspersed with areas of Posidonia. The rocks formed into holes, tunnels, small grottos etc creating an ideal habitat for coloured sponges and algae, spirographis and variety of small fishes such as wrasse, vopi and damsels,

Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	strong	rocks	good	good	good	several	Tunnels/ holes	Score out of 80
7	3	8	7	7	6	5	6	49

Dive 23- Shelving Rocky Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
23	08 July 06	11.42	52	16	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

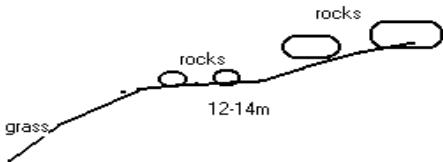
Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°06.732	E19°41.964	N 40°06.725	E19°42.302	light	negligable	sunny

We started at 12m, close to the rocky coast. The bottom was a mixture of large rocks, bare sand and areas of Poseidonia. The rocks provided a habitat for a wide variety of fish, sponges and algae.

We swam parallel to the coast travelling south for some considerable distance all the time over the same bottom formation.

There were not a lot of fish but the variety of the terrain and the relatively good visibility made this an enjoyable dive. Of significance we came across three octopus, one quite large, and one middle sized grouper.

Makes an excellent shallow dive



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	nil	Rocks and sand	Fair	good	A few	A few	Varied bottom	Rather shallow Score out of 80
7	10	6	5	7	4	4	4	47

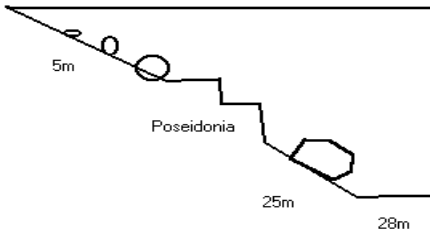
Dive 24- Sloping Rocky Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
24	07 July 06	13.11	25	28	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°06.605	E19°48.824	N 40°06.516	E19°42.911	negligible	nil	sunny

Dive started in 8m at cliff face. We swam outward to 28m onto sandy bottom, then parallel to coast and finally upward back towards sandy beach.

Shown, is a typical profile.



Rocks created interesting overhangs, and holes to form a fine habitat for territorial fish.

Observed one large umbrina, an octopus plus few typical wrasses etc and pinnas. Fish unafraid and approachable.

Nice variety of sponges, shells, polichides

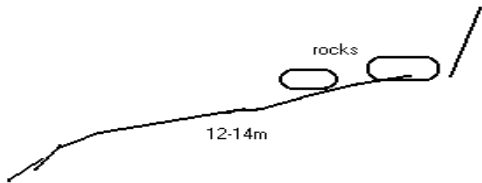


Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	nil	rocks on sand	good	good	good	A few	tunnels/ holes	Score out of 80
7	10	6	6	7	6	4	6	52

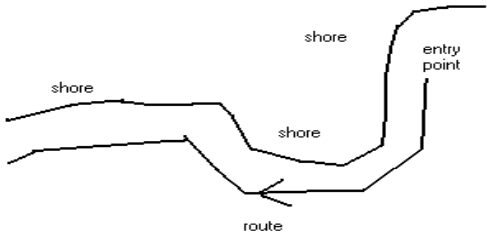
Dive 25- Rocky Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
25	08 July 06	09.39	41	19	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°08.614	E19°37.710	N 40°08.610	E19°37.616	light	negligible	sunny



The dive mainly followed a rocky coast southward. The edge of the beach was boulders down to about 14m and then areas of healthy Poseidonia , interspersed with compacted sand with tufts of poseidonia and a few pinnas .



The rocky coastline with overhangs, small grottos, swim-throughs and holes made a very interesting dive. Although there were few fish, most Mediterranean varieties were found such as damsel fish, wrasses, even a few cardinal fish, small groupers and octopus.

The rocks provided small tunnels, swim throughs, overhangs, holes and small grottos covered by sponges and algae of varying colours and varieties.

As it is, it is an interesting dive but with a few more fish this could become an excellent shallow dive.

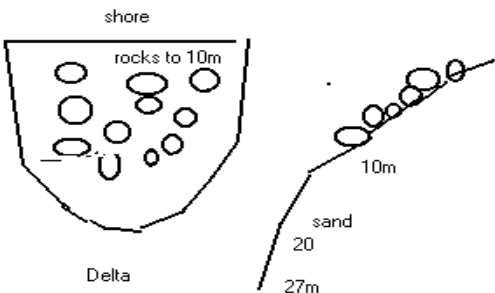
Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25 m	nil	some rocks	not bad, bit shallow	good	A few	A few	tunnels/ holes	Score out of 80
8	10	6	6	7	4	3	7	51

Dive 26- Rocky Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
26	08 July 06	10.02	23	26	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°56.510	E19°56.810	N 40°52.265	E19°58.639	light	negligible	sunny

Dive on underwater delta formed by gravel/ stones/ boulders. There was a strong current of different temperatures across the delta from SE to NW further confused by an up-welling of fresh water.



The bottom was mainly rocks of different sizes on gravel forming many holes, small tunnels etc and making a good habitat for fishes, sponges, octopus.

There were a few territorial fish plus a large octopus, some morinas and a flying gurnard.

An interesting dive but made a bit difficult because of the currents.



Visibity	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	strong	rocks	good	good	good	several	tunnels/ holes	Score out of 80
7	3	8	7	7	6	5	6	49

Dive 27 – Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
27	08 July 06	12.31	46	24	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°07.767	E19°38.977	N 40°07.651	E19°39.277	negligible	nil	sunny

Dropped into 21m just off the point and followed the cliff to the south-east. Our depth varied mainly between 9 and 15 meters as we followed the bottom and swam among the rocks. Although this was closer to a real drop-off the rocks did not provide any overhangs, or swim-throughs as at dive 25 a mile further North.

A wide variety of life but little of it.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25m	none	sand /rocks	fair	fair	few	few	semi cliff	Score out of 80
8	10	6	5	5	4	2	3	43

Dive 28- Sloping Bottom

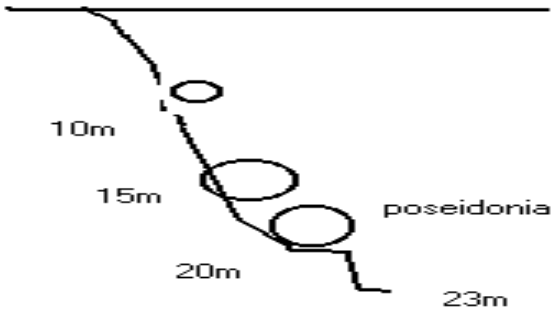
Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
28	08 July 06	13.48	32	22	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°07.651	E19°39.277	N 40°07.530	E19°39.457	light	negligible	sunny

Started dive at 6m and follow the coast SE, mainly along the border of the rocks and the sand between 15 and 22m.

In the main the dive was uninteresting. Very few fish except for a single bream that looked like an escaped farmed fish.

Presence of Caulerpa on flat sandy/muddy bottom replaced Poseidonia. Healthy Poseidonia only found between boulders in better illuminated areas of moving water.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	nil	sand/ rocks	poor	few	few	none	none	Score out of 80
7	10	6	4	3	2	0	0	32

Dive 29- Rocky Shelving Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
29	09 July 06	11.15	35	12	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°11.095	E19°32.089	N 40°10.805	E19°32.854	light	negligible	sunny

The northernmost point reached from Himara. Very remote and right up against the mountains. We selected a promontory and entered the water into 9m then followed the coast SE for the whole dive at about 12m. The bottom was mainly gravel of differing sizes with rocks of all sizes forming an intricate pattern of holes etc down to about 15 metres thereafter giving way to small drop-offs into mainly sand/gravel.

Among the rocks were most typical species of flora and fauna although not in abundance..

Towards the end of the dive the rock formations became increasingly more interesting so towards the end we came across swim throughs and a particularly unusual “igloo” shaped rock with windows and doors forming two interlaced arches which was fun to swim through. This formation alone would make this dive worthwhile. The only draw back – the distance from the harbour at Himara.

We have noted that as we have moved northwards and westward the presence of Caulerpa has become less so that we did not observe any on this dive



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25m	nil	gravel/rock	good	fair	good	few	large rock formation	Score out of 80
8	10	7	8	6	6	4	10	59

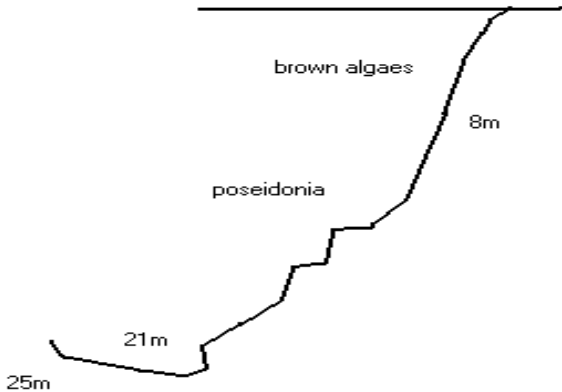
Dive 30- Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
30	09 July 06	12.11	26	25	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°10.906	E19°32.619	N 40°10.805	E19°32.854	light	negligible	sunny

Dropped into rocks at 16 m. Swam outward over rock to 25m then turned E parallel to coast gradually working inwards and upwards over undulating rocky bottom with some large boulders.

Brown sludge like algae on slopes between brown algae and poseidonia



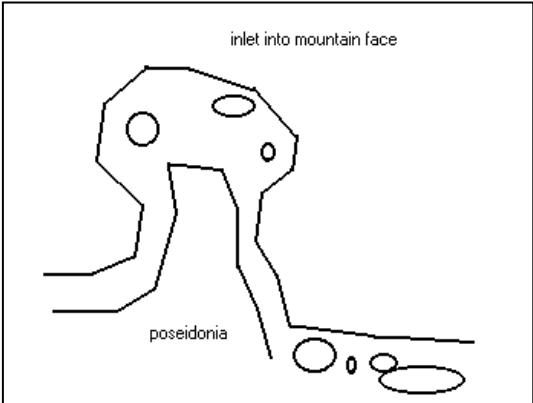
Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20m	nil	sand	poor	nil	few	none	none	Score out of 80
7	10	4	4	0	2	0	0	27

Dive 31 – Rocky Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
31	09 July 06	13.03	30	20	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°10.740	E19°33.082	N 40°10.671	E19°33.337	light	negligible	sunny

A very remote spot, midway between the Vlorë Peninsula and Himara. We started the dive at the entrance to small inlet into a very steep mountain side, descending 14m onto a poseidonia meadow. We swam into the inlet an at 14m d then outward and along the cliff edge



moving to the NW. There was a strong cooler current coming from the deeper water and travelling southward. The mixing of the waters produced turbidity, reducing visibility.

A large area of Poseidonia extended across the entrance of the inlet giving way to large rocks/boulders at the southern corner of the inlet



The initial part of the dive was uninteresting but improved among the rocks. There were few live fish but we came across many dead fish mainly small chromis and vopi. These were recently killed by explosives. Probably by the two men we observed in a small grey rubber dinghy as we arrived at the area accompanied by another man on the edge of the rocks. Dive of moderate interest not worth the journey. We did not observe any Caulerpa on this dive.

Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-25m	some	sand/rock	fair	fair	few	few	Small drop off	Score out of 80
7	7	7	7	5	4	2	4	43

Dive 32- Cliff with Cavern

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
32	29 July 06	11.49	40	26	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°25.153	E19°17.545	N 40°25.167	E19°17.396	Light	negligible	sunny

We entered the sea against cliff, dropping to a ledge at 18m with large boulders. As we swam north, the ledge gradual dropped to 23 m at which point there was a large cave.

The cave bottom was a mixture of fine sand and silt which was easily disturbed. There were both live sponges and a few sponge “skeletons” on the cave roof.



As we continued there was a strong northerly current which carried us along a vertical cliff, dropping-off to almost 30 metres and populated by many typical fishes, damsels, wrasse, anthea and by filter feeders.

This was a beautiful dive, the only reservation being the reducing the visibility and clarity. brought about by the mixing of waters of different temperatures.

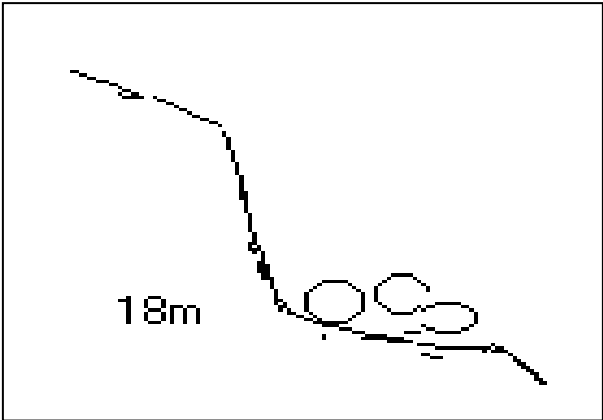
Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25m	strong	rocks	v. good	good	many	several	cave/cliff	Score out of 80
7	7	8	9	7	8	6	10	62

Dive 33- Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
33	29 July 06	13.05	41	24	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°25.145	E19°17.322	N 40°25.525	E19°17.458	Light	negligible	sunny

We entered the sea onto a flat rock bottom at 9 metres in front of the bunkers at Gjuheza Cape. We swam towards the bay reaching 24 metres. From 14 downwards it was poseidonia meadow eventually giving way to sand. We then started to go slightly shallower over crevices and rocks/boulders. At 18m came across wreckage of boat in 3 major parts. We then continued following a gradual rocky slope getting gradually shallower until exiting from 5 metres.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25	Nil	sand/rock/poseidonia	fair	fair	few	couple	wreckage	Score out of 80
7	10	5	6	4	4	2	4	42

Dive 34- Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive	Max Depth	Divers
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			Duration in Minutes	in metres	
34	29 July 06	15.09	40	15	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°25.622	E19°17.639	N 40°25.654	E19°18.000	Light	negligible	sunny

Started the dive close to a small bay and made our way eastward along the coast swimming between 5 and 12 metres above the bottom. This was mainly fine sand and silt with some outcrops of rock and patches of Poseidonia. A few pinna shells and sponges brought some relief to an otherwise disappointing dive.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20	Nil	sand/ rocks	poor	fair	few	none	pinnas	Score out of 80
5	10	4	3	5	3	0	3	33

Dive 35 – Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
35	29 July 06	16.40	32	27	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°25.871	E19°18.315	N 40°25.967	E19°18.324	light	negligible	sunny

Dive at the northern edge of peninsula
We entered water in front of Haxhi Aliu cave, going to 27m on the drop-off which continued down to a depth estimated to be greater than 35m. We followed the drop-off into bay at 27 metres. After 10 minutes the cliff gave way to steep scree for 5-7 minutes and then became a terraced slope with rocks, boulders crevices etc. The drop off section was cold with filter feeders but no fish, likewise the section of scree. The final terraced section was populated with chromis, wrasse, anthias, cardinal etc. There were a few larger fish, bream, bass and small grouper. The first section of the dive was uninteresting but the terraced section was colourful, interesting and very enjoyable.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	sand/rocks	good	in places	in places	few	drop-off	Score out of 80
5	10	4	6	6	7	4	4	46

Dive 36 – Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
36	30 July 06	10.51	35	23	Andrian Vasso, Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°26.080	E19°20.167	N 40°26.080	E19°20.167	NW force4	nil	sunny

Moderate NW wind (on shore wind restricted us to diving within the bay.
The dive took place in the lee of the peninsula in bay close by a small island. We started the dive to the south of the island at 5m, swimming in a gradual curve to reach 23m before eventually arriving at the back of the Island.



The bottom was mainly poseidonia, with boulders in shallow water nearer the island. There we saw a few fish and a couple of small grouper

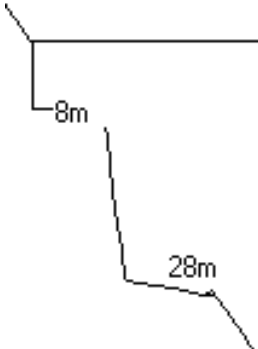
Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
10-15m	nil	poseidonia /rocks	Fair	few	few	couple	none	Score out of 80
4	10	4	4	3	4	3	0	32

Dive 37- Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
37	30 July 06	12.04	38	35	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°26.302	E19°19.114	N 40°26.293	E19°19.361	NW force4	nil	sunny

The on shore wind (about force 4) restricted us to diving within the bay.
The dive started immediately below the light on the inner headland of the peninsula. After dropping onto a ledge at 8m, we descending down a cliff that shelved a second time at 28m and then



down a rocky slope to 35 metres.

We followed the coast southwards into the bay staying at about 25m most of the way. There was a considerable amount of sediment flowing gently but steadily out of the bay. This is obviously normal since the bottom was everywhere covered in a white layer. There was quite a lot to see, in particular lots of filter feeders. Towards the start of the dive (the outer point) there were also quite a few fish of the types typical of underwater cliffs, damsels, anthea, and wrasses. These became scarcer as we travelled into the bay. We saw a few Moray eels, some rather large. Despite the poor conditions this was all in all an enjoyable dive. It is possible the visibility was effected by the winds of the day.



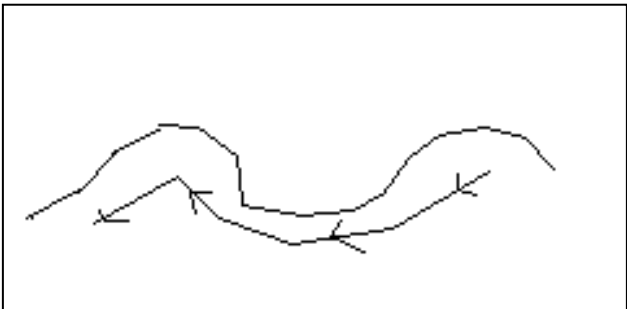
Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
10-15m	nil	Poseidonia /rocks	fair	few	few	couple	none	Score out of 80
4	10	4	4	3	4	3	0	32

Dive 38 – Sloping Sandy Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
38	30 July 06	13.49	33	21	Andrian Vasso, Genci kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°25.573	E19°21.090	N 40°25.514	E19°21.255	NW force4	nil	sunny

The on shore wind (about force 4) restricted us to diving within the bay
We started in 5m in first inlet and swam south into bay reaching 21m on a steady slope of about 45°. There was nothing to see but mud and silt. After 20mins swimming we came across some broken pieces of amphora and a large mine. A totally uninteresting dive, which the mine turns into a place to be avoided.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
5-10m	nil	silt	no	none	v. few	none	amphora	Score out of 80
3	10	0	0	0	2	0	2	17

Dive 39- Flat Sandy Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
39	30 July 06	15.16	26	24	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°23.827	E19°23.247	N 40°23.707	E19°23.438	NW force4	nil	overcast

An on-shore wind (about force 4) restricted us to diving within the bay
We dropped onto a grey sand/silt bottom at 8 metres then turned outwards along gradual slope until we reached a small terrace about 2 metres high between 12 and 14m. We followed this south for 20 minutes. There was nothing to see except an occasional spirographis. We turned back towards the beach for the last few minutes doing our safety stop among a few boulders almost exactly against the shore line.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
5-10m	nil	silt	no	spirographis	v. few	none	none	Score out of 80
3	10	0	0	2	2	0	0	17

Dive 40 – Wreck and Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
40	01 Aug 06	10.53	28	21	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°19.264	E19°22.318	N 40°19.402	E19°22.073	NW 3-4	2m onshore	sunny

This dive was carried out in a moderate onshore wind and difficult surface conditions. We swam close to shore just south of the wreck and descended onto a shelf at 8m, then down to 22 metres and swam northwards in the direction of the wreck just above the bottom at 25m. The terrain was a small cliff with rubble towards the bottom.

We reached the wreck that is in 9metres with superstructure proud of the surface. The heavy surge precluded us investigating the area around the wreck. Then we swam a little further northwards and out of the very small cove in which the wreck is jammed to reach a nice drop off. Unfortunately we were not able to explore this as the conditions were deteriorating rapidly and we had to abort.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	rocky	fair	fair	several	few	Wreck/cliff	Score out of 80
6	10	7	5	5	6	3	10	52

Dive 41- Wreck Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
41	02 Aug 06	12.10	19	11	Mike Upton, Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°20.780	E19°28.409	N 40°20.780	E19°28.409	SE 5-6	calm	sunny

A strong (5-6) SE wind restricted us to diving within the bay

Wreck as marked on chart, lying in 11m on silt/sand. We swam from the bow along the length of the wreck and back again. The wreck stands between 3 and 6 metres above bottom. Apart from the bow section it is very badly damaged.

The visibility was bad possibly due to strong wind but its position and the amount of silt suggests it is never good.

During the dive we did not see a single fish until the very end of the dive, on the bow, just as we were about to surface there was about a dozen.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
5-10m	nil	silt	poor	none	few	None	Wreck	Score out of 80
3	10	0	2	0	2	0	8	25

Dive 42- Wreck Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
42	02 Aug 06	12.56	35	24	Andrian Vasso Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°22.885	E19°27.918	N 40°20.885	E19°27.918	SE 5-6	calm	sunny

A strong (5-6) SE wind restricted us to diving within the bay.

We attempted to find the wreck using the chart, the GPS and the echo sounder but eventually found it using visual transits from the local divers and the echo sounder. We dropped a shot line then dressed and returned to start the dive over wreck. We made a complete circuit of wreck examining both outside the wreck and inside the upper corridors.

The wreck is of a large hospital ship, upright and complete. It lies in 30 metres with the upper structure in 15m.

It forms a good habitat with a wide variety of filter feeders and wrasse, damsel etc. Also a few grey grouper and large bream. Although the visibility was restricted it was good considering its position in the bay and weather of day.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
10-15m	nil	silt	yes	some	good	few	Wreck	Score out of 80
4	10	0	5	5	7	3	10	44

Dive 43- Steep Rocky Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
43	03 Aug 06	11.08	37	30	Mike Upton Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°30.608	E19°16.621	N 40°30.681	E19°16.528	S 4-5	nil	sunny

Sunny with strong S wind (4-5). Diving restricted to within bay/behind island

Started dive in front of scree. Dropped onto 20m of silt. After swimming for 10mins we reached steep slope covered in boulders. The dive improved greatly at this point. The boulders were well populated with lots of damsels, anthias and wrasse. We came across three moray eels some octopus and a few reasonable sized grouper. In better sea conditions the visibility will probably be better giving a very nice dive.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
20-25m	nil	silt/rocks	yes	some	good	fair	no	Score out of 80
8	10	6	6	8	7	6	0	51

Dive 44- Steep Rocky Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
44	03 Aug 06	12.13	25	30	Andrian Vasso Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°30.648	E19°16.511	N 40°30.745	E19°16.405	SE 5-6	calm	sunny

A strong (5-6) SE wind restricted us to diving within the bay or sheltered behind Sazan Island

This dive essentially commenced where dive 43 finished. We started in 8 metres on a steep slope covered in boulders. We travelled down the slope to 24m then swam northwards parallel to the coast. The rocks formed a good habitat for many different species of fish, algae and sponges. We also saw a few larger fish. However as we moved northwards the rocky bottom gave way to gravel and sand and the fish life diminished.

During the dive we came across quite a lot of small gun shells and other military debris.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
15-20m	nil	rocks/sand	initially	some	good	few	none	Score out of 80
5	10	4	5	5	5	3	0	37

Dive 45- Sandy Sloping Bottom

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
45	04 Aug 06	10.27	25	27	Mike Upton Pajtim Shpata

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°30.777	E19°16.347	N 40°30.831	E19°16.334	S 5-6	nil	sunny

There was a very strong S wind (5-6) so diving was restricted to this site or within the bay. We only managed this one dive before the wind became too strong to do any more diving that day

We continued from exit point of dive 44. We swam for some time at about 20m hoping to find more boulders or rocks but this was simply a steep sandy/silted slope with nothing of interest. Anyway the presence of military debris such as shells (do not know whether live or not) makes this a prime place not to visit.



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
10-15m	nil	silt/sand	no	Little	few	none	no	Score out of 80
4	10	3	2	3	3	0	0	24

Dive 46- Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
46	07 Aug 06	11.02	31	31	Mike Upton Pajtim Shpata

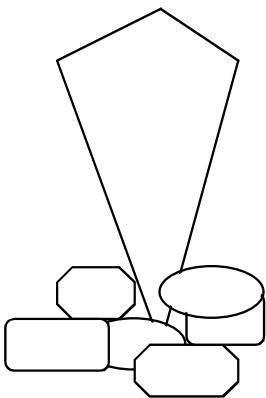
Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°24.210	E19°18.741	N 40°24.197	E19°18.740	S 5-6	nil	sunny

We started the dive close to the cliff face, which descended straight to 35 metres and swam north at 24metres. The bottom, which was a mixture of different sized rocks and boulders forming small caves, crevices and holes, reached 40 metres in places. The whole area formed an ideal habitat for the numerous smaller fishes and sponges with the occasional larger fish.

These were typical Mediterranean, damsels, anthius, wrasse etc. We came across a few small grouper, groups of brown meagre and moray eels, some of these quite large. The visibility was about 25-30 metres which was very good considering the heavy sea of the preceding several days.

At one point we thought we had found a wreck. There was a huge boulder shaped like the prow of a ship, which rose from 38m to 8metres.

An excellent dive



Visibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
25-30m	nil	Boulders	very	many	lots	many	Huge Rock	Score out of 80
8	10	8	8	8	10	7	6	65

Dive 47- Cliff Dive

Dive Number	Date	Time In	Dive Duration in Minutes	Max Depth in metres	Divers
47	07 Aug 06	12.07	36	32	Andrian Vasso Genci Kapllani

Location in		Location out		Wind	Swell	Weather
N 40°23.570	E19°19.436	N 40°23.570	E19°16.436	NE 3	nil	sunny

We dropped down against cliff to immediately find a cave at 15m. We then swam northwards following cliff edge. The bottom was mainly gravel covered in rocks varying in size up to huge boulders, forming holes and caves and crevices making an ideal habitat for all varieties of fishes, sponges and algae.

During the whole dive there were shoals of damselfish, anthias, cardinals, boops etc. The rock surfaces were covered in algae and brown and red and yellow sponges. We also saw a few grouper and other larger fish.

Towards the end of the dive, in 27metres, we came across a huge rock shaped like the hull of ship, full of multicoloured sponges and algae. All in all, a really wonderful dive.



isibility	Current	Bottom	Scenic?	Colours? Sponges, algae etc	Small Fish	Large Fish	Features	Total points 80
25-30m	nil	Rocks	very	Many	many	several	Cave/cliff	Score out of 80
8	10	8	8	8	9	7	10	68

G RESULTS

Reference to this individual dive reports should be made while reading this section. For convenience a summery of the scoring etc, for the sites dived is drawn up in the table below. Scores over 40 are shown in red. The table is divided into three sections, Saranda. Himara and Vlora. There are few “red” scores for Saranda, while both Himara and Vlora have almost a half red.

Dive No	Date	time	Co-ordinates		time	Co-ordinates		Dive time	Max depth	Score
			N	E		N	E			80
		Saranda								
Dive 1	29-Jun	18.03			18.50			47	16	39
Dive 2	29-Jun	18.00			18.53			53	19	43
Dive 3	30-Jun	11.54	54.525	54.463	12.36	54.525	54.463	42	29	31
Dive 4	30-Jun	14.17	57.841	54.688	14.51	57.962	54.658	26	30	34
Dive 5	30-Jun	12.56	56.510	56.810	26min	52.265	58.639	27	28	28
Dive 6	1-Jul	10.47	41.142	59.338	11.19	41.142	59.338	32	30	47
Dive 7	1-Jul	11.17	41.186	59.940	11.52	41.186	59.940	35	30	38
Dive 8	1-Jul	13.21	42.106	58.844	14.03	42.76	58.865	32	32	39
Dive 9	1-Jul	14.45	45.289	58.409	14.51	45.282	58.403	26	26	34
Dive 10	2-Jul	12.31	03.742	47.610		03.742	47.610	57	32	51
Dive 11	2-Jul	12.30	03.742	47.610	01.32	03.742	47.610	62	31	52
Dive 12	3-Jul	09.32	53.050	57.444	09.54	53.050	57.444	22	21	24
Dive 13	3-Jul	10.07	53.703	56.090	10.26	53.624	55.943	24	21	29
Dive 14	3-Jul	10.22	52.754	58.001	10.44	52.754	58.001	22	27	18
Dive 15	3-Jul	12.31	52.265	58.639	13.08	52.265	58.639	37	25	18
Dive 16	5-Jul	11.30	Blue Hole		11.50	Blue Hole		20	38	
		Himara								
Dive 17	6-Jul	11.01	02.746	48.068	12.33	02.736	47.997	32	26	33
Dive 18	6-Jul	12.04	02.765	47.806	12.41	02.982	47.532	37	25	37
Dive 19	6-Jul	13.17	03.433	46.628	13.43	03.479	46.408	34	26	31
Dive 20	6-Jul	14.30	03.945	46.270	15.16	04.146	46.062	44	31	52
Dive 21	7-Jul	09.13	07.251	41.881	09.41	07.232	41.740	28	21	31
Dive 22	7-Jul	10.16	06.732	41.964	10.39	06.732	41.964	23	28	49
Dive 23	7-Jul	11.42	06.732	41.964	12.34	06.725	42.302	52	16	47
Dive 24	7-Jul	13.11	06.605	42.824	13.36	06.516	42.911	25	28	52
Dive 25	8-Jul	09.39	08.614	37.710	10.21	08.610	37.616	41	19	51
Dive 26	8-Jul	10.02	09.592	35.518	10.30	09.638	35.442	23	26	49
Dive 27	8-Jul	12.31	07.767	38.977	13.27	07.651	39.277	46	24	43
Dive 28	8-Jul	13.48	07.651	39.277	14.10	07.530	39.457	32	22	32
Dive 29	9-Jul	11.15	11.095	32.089	11.50	11.087	32.297	35	12	59
Dive 30	9-Jul	12.11	10.906	32.619	12.37	10.805	32.854	26	25	27
Dive 31	9-Jul	13.03	10.740	33.082	13.33	10.671	33.337	30	20	43

Dive No	date	time	Co-ordinates		time	Co-ordinates		Dive time	Max depth	Score
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			N	E		N	E			80
		Vlora								
Dive 32	29-Jul	11.49	25.153	17.545	12.29	25.167	17.396	40	26	62
Dive 33	29-Jul	13.05	25.415	17.322	13.46	25.525	17.458	41	24	42
Dive 34	29-Jul	15.09	25.622	17.639	15.49	25.654	18.000	40	15	33
Dive 35	29-Jul	16.40	25.871	18.315	17.13	25.967	18.324	32	27	46
Dive 36	30-Jul	10.51	26.080	20.167	11.26	26.080	20.167	35	23	32
Dive 37	30-Jul	12.04	26.302	19.114	12.42	26.293	19.361	38	35	32
Dive 38	30-Jul	13.49	25.573	21.090	14.22	25.514	21.255	33	21	17
Dive 39	30-Jul	15.16	23.827	23.247	15.42	23.707	23.438	26	24	17
Dive 40	1-Aug	10.53	19.264	22.318	11.21	19.402	22.073	28	21	52
Dive 41	2-Aug	12.10	20.780	28.409	12.29	20.780	28.409	19	11	25
Dive 42	2-Aug	12.56	22.885	27.918	13.20	22.885	27.918	35	24	44
Dive 43	3-Aug	11.08	30.608	16.620	11.45	30.681	16.528	37	30	51
Dive 44	3-Aug	12.13	30.678	16.511	12.38	30.745	16.405	25	30	37
Dive 45	4-Aug	10.27	30.777	16.347	10.52	30.831	16.334	25	27	24
Dive 46	7-Aug	11.02	24.21	18.741	11.40	24.197	18.740	31	31	65
Dive 47	7-Aug	12.07	23.570	19.436	12.43	23.570	19.436	36	32	68

1. Saranda

Saranda is a picturesque little town. The promenade has been very tastefully developed and the small commercial port has had only a marginal affect on the ambiance. It is developing rapidly and there is a excess of small hotels and restaurants. Many of these are not to the standard expected by modern European travellers but then neither are the prices and any shortfall in facilities is more than compensated for by the hospitality of the residents. Saranda already exists as a tourist town so the infrastructure exists to allow diving tourism.

The major obstacle to Saranda is accessibility. The easiest route to Saranda is via Corfu and the ferry from there. The service is good and fast but a direct flight is simpler and the sea leg makes it always weather sensitive.

Unfortunately the diving around Saranda is not good enough to encourage divers to visit the town. The whole sea bed from the Greek border north to Piqerasi is more or less silt and sand. The local topography suggests this. Apart from some foothills, the whole area close to the sea approximates to a plateau. All of the run-off from the mountains behind must end up in Bitrinti or in the sea.

There are few natural habitats for the territorial fish which divers enjoy to see, while the visibility is reduced by the suspension of fine silt. A couple of dive sites, like the tiny island of Stiros right in the South were pleasant enough but generally speaking there is little prospect of diving tourism developing around Saranda.



2. Himara



The old town of Himara is on the hillside. The “port” also referred to as Himara, is little more than a village with very limited hotel and restaurant facilities. Its position under the massive mountains is idyllic and has great potential as a tourist resort. This however will not happen until the upgrading of the very difficult access road both from Saranda in the south or Vlora in the north is completed.

The harbour itself is probably acceptable during the summer months but it is quite open to winds from the south. Indeed even in the summer months there must be times when mooring a boat there would be risky.

From Himara it was possible by boat, to reach from Porto Palermo to the south, up level with Llogora in the north. Because of the current restrictions on travel by sea, we dived the inside of Porto Palermo from the beach, which was quite enjoyable. Outside it was not as good, but essentially the further north the better the diving. There are probably sufficient good dive sites accessible from Himara to support diving tourism. Creating habitats by adding artificial reefs with some wrecks would increase this potential.

3. Vlora

Vlora was by far the largest of the towns we used as a base. Its fishing harbour is well protected. The town is quite large and offers a wide selection of basic tourist facilities such as accommodation and restaurants. There is daily direct sea access by ferry from Brindisi. The airport in Tirana is some 3 hours distant by a road which is poor on some stretches but is being worked on.

It appears that sediment from the surrounding mountains is deposited in lake Nartes and within the bay formed by the peninsula. On all the dives within the bay there were considerable silt deposits. This were easily disturbed by even moderate winds, greatly affecting the enjoyment of the dives. By contrast diving on the outside of the peninsula was very good, indeed some of the dives could fairly be described as spectacular.

Vlora has great potential for the development of diving tourism but there are certain factors which must be carefully taken into account. The outside of the peninsula is very exposed. If an incident should occur it would be very difficult to take the diver ashore on this rocky coast and even if this could be accomplished, the peninsula is virtually deserted. It is a one hour journey at 7 knots to reach the headland. To reach the wreck on which we dived (dive 40) is another hour. Realistically to open up this coast would require a faster boat.



There are already two wrecks inside the bay. That further north (c/f dive42) lies in sand/silt but the visibility was still good enough make the dive enjoyable. Wrecks (one or two) placed in the vicinity, say a kilometre apart these would presumably also enjoy acceptable visibility. All would make good alternative dives on those days when the peninsula was not diveable.

H

CONCLUSIONS

Saranda is unlikely to become a Diving Destination (see Introduction page 3) although there may significant potential for developing fresh water diving at the Blue Eye. The diving accessible from Himara could make it an acceptable diving destination but it is Vlora that has the best immediate potential with some excellent, if exposed diving.

It is obvious that excellent diving that exists between Himara and Vlora.

However while very enthusiastic divers may put up with the current discomforts and pay a lot of money to enjoy an outstanding dive, the average holiday diver will not. In addition to "Good Diving" a holiday diver expects a wide range of facilities and creature comforts. Many Europeans take diving vacations each year, but they also have a large number of diving holiday destinations to choose from. Below are the minimum requirements to make Albania a "Diving Destination". Each one of the following criteria is essential for diving tourism to develop.

1. Scenic diving and good alternative diving if the weather turns nasty;
2. A wide choice of dives so that non has to be repeated on a one week diving holiday (better two weeks diving);
3. Comfortable seaworthy boats, fast enough to quickly reach the diving sites;
4. Full safety back up on the boat and on the shore, including emergency first aid equipment, sea rescue and rapid transfer to a good hospital with decompression facilities as Diving Tourism does not come without diving accidents;
5. Comfortable accommodation and good food;
6. Strictly enforced regulations to ensure safety standards are met;
7. Easy access to the destination country with a short travel time from home (under 5-6 hours) and a minimum of connections.

Other important criteria are

8. A Wide choice of dive operators offering diver training in various languages and interesting excursions;
9. Après-dive activities where divers can socialise and enjoy evenings out together.

Of the list above both Vlora and Himara can offer scenic diving (1), Vlora and to a lesser extent Himara can offer accommodation and food (5). Vlora can also offer some foul weather diving, which can be improved artificially and possible après-dive activities.

If Albania is to launch diving tourism these towns have to meet the other essential criteria. Some of these can be affected fairly easily, some will require state investment and/or private investment while others depend upon improved national level infrastructure.

I

RECOMMENDATIONS

A tourist diver is not an especially robust or daring person. He is an ordinary husband or wife, retired person or maybe teenager. Even children of 12 years old can gain a diving certificate. The environment and conditions in which he feels safe and comfortable are the same as for any other tourist. The suggestions made here are with this in mind.

Diving tourism will, at some time, develop naturally, by which time many of the recommendations will have come about as part of the development and restructuring of Albania and its likely integration into the European Union. With diving tourism, inevitably will come accidents and abuses. The bad publicity this will bring in the international media and pressure, from external sources such as Tour Operators, will compel the government of the day to introduce diving legislation. By this time there will also be the problem of making operators upgrade their standards and capital equipment.

Albania has at present, the advantage of seeing the mistakes that other destinations have made and taking steps to avoid them.

1. Legislation and Training.

a) Boats and Regulations

Albania has a great potential for pleasure boating of all kinds. Currently there is ban on the use of pleasure boats but this does not prevent rules being drawn up at this time.

The local fishing boats rigged for fishing would not be suitable to carry passengers (divers) unless the skippers prepare their vessels prior to the start of the diving season.

- i. The boat would need to be certified as seaworthy, and as carrying suitable passenger insurance, first aid equipment and an emergency radio;
- ii. The trawling tackle etc that occupies much of the deck space and creating obstructions and major hazards to divers would have to be removed and stored ashore;
- iii. A good simple canopy would have to be fitted to offer protection from the sun and rain;
- iv. A good ladder designed to be used by divers would have to be attached;
- v. Toilet facilities, such as a portable chemical toilet would need to be provided.

No doubt, when the demand for “charters” arises, economics will encourage fishermen to re-organise their boats to satisfy these needs.

It is recommended that regulations for carrying passengers, based on EU standards should be drawn up at this time. Once prepared, they should be introduced in gradual steps spread over a period of years to minimize the impact.

b) Diving Legislation

It is recommended that Regulations for Recreational Diving Operators based on EU (now ISO) standards be drawn up and enacted at the earliest possible time and **before** diving tourism happens. Some decisions would have to be made about who should enact and administer them and how enforcement could be affected.

In the not to distant future divers will appear in Vlora and Himara and so will Instructors, both qualified and unqualified. The legislation is needed to prevent the diving industry growing in a haphazard and unregulated fashion. It is also needed to discourage the “dumping” into Albania of old diving equipment that no longer meets the new EU standards. Experience shows that it is very difficult to weed out low quality operations once they have gained a foothold.

c) Training of Albanian Divers and Instructors

The training and qualifying of divers and instructors on the international level is very sophisticated and uniform. Divers and Instructors travel world wide. The training and qualification records which they present are understood and accepted almost everywhere.

i) Diver and Instructor Training

For local residents to directly enjoy some of the economic benefits of diving tourism, there must be a pool of trained and qualified instructors and divers. Initial diver training would be best carried out in Albania. It would be cheaper and more convenient for those attending the course and allow the trainees to become familiar with the local dive sites on which they will eventually be guiding tourists.

However there is much to be gained by undertaking the final training of Instructors and divemasters abroad, at an existing diving destination. Trainees will be exposed to the pace and pressure of a busy dive operation and also be able to compare directly the diving sites with those in Albania. Such “internships” normally last 6 weeks. The Divemaster,⁽⁵⁾ and Instructor Course and Exam alone take four weeks.

ii) Current Local Divers

There does not appear to be any formal structure for either recreational or commercial diving in Albania. It is important that local divers who have neither formal training nor recognised international qualifications are not penalised. A scheme should be devised to confirm and enhance, where needed, their knowledge and diving skills, then issue international qualifications. Educational schemes⁽⁶⁾ that can be completed in a weekend, are already in place for this kind of situation

d) Association of Recreational Dive Operators

Diving is a very specialised and technical skill and non-divers often find it difficult to comprehend the needs of divers. This has become even more difficult with the introduction in the past few years of “technical diving” using re-breathers and gas mixes of air, oxygen, helium and nitrogen, to the extent that even older experienced divers are confused.⁽⁷⁾

It is unrealistic to expect administrators to make good decisions about a matter they do not understand so every time an issue arises they will have to turn to an “expert”. The “expert” should be the local stake holders represented by through an Albanian Diving Operators Association.

It is not the place of the Administration of the day to run associations, but such an NGO should be encouraged from the outset. Once in place, decision making can be made lighter by sharing the responsibility with the local stake holders.

2. Improving the Product.

There are many good dive sites accessible from both Vlora and Himara but their number can be increased by improving access and by placing artificial reefs or wrecks. A wide choice of sites is one of the factors which makes a destination more attractive

a) Wrecks⁽⁸⁾

Wrecks are very popular with divers who like to swim around and through them, but most important, they also act as a home for many species of fish, sponges and shellfish. Divers visit some destinations just to dive on the local wrecks. A wreck or better a few wrecks, placed with the correct orientation in the right places can greatly increase the diver appeal of both towns. Plans should be put in place immediately to position wrecks and enact the legislation to protect them. This issue is so important that a separate report dealing with the potential availability of

wrecks has been prepared.

b) Marine Protected Areas⁽⁸⁾

There is little purpose in investing time and money to launch diving tourism and in creating new wreck dive sites if at the same time existing sites lie unprotected and free to be plundered and destroyed by a few ill advised divers and fishermen.

The position of the good diving sites, some of these are almost virgin, is now known, If it is felt necessary to better determine the exact boundaries of these good diving areas, a more detailed survey might be carried out.

It is recommended that the lengths of coast containing the prime diving sites, existing wrecks, and those which will be placed should be designated Marine Protected Areas(MPA) and the appropriate legislation enacted to safeguard them.

The issue of wrecks and Marine Protected Areas is so important it is not developed here but in a separate report drawn up in parallel with this one.

3. Safety, Rescue and Treatment.

a) Sea Rescue.

All fishermen, boatman and divers understand that the sea brings hazards and they normally take any steps they can to minimize these. But accidents happen. Along most stretches of coast there is a local system for search and rescue of boats. Any growing diving community should be included within this system.

b) Recompression Chamber

In addition to the risk that goes with boating, the diver also faces the possibility of a diving accident. Most diving accidents occur on the surface hence the importance of sea rescue but the dangers of decompression sickness, and pneumothorax are always there. These require treatment in a recompression chamber.

All diving destinations have a recompression chamber and a trained team on call twenty four hours a day. Treatments in a recompression chamber occur periodically at all diving destinations but these are infrequent so most of the time the chamber is not in use for the treatment of diving accidents.

However, recompression is also standard treatment for many other ailments, for example spontaneous pneumothorax, gangrene, carbon monoxide poisoning, diabetic ulcers, difficult tendonitis etc. The best place to install a decompression chamber is in the local hospital so it can benefit the whole community.

It is recommended that plans be put into effect to purchase and install a recompression chamber in the public hospital at Vlora and to train a team in its use.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report a phased development of Diving Tourism should be launched. This is a brand new Industry for Albania that would provide work and income for a wide range of stakeholders in Vlora, Himara and other coastal villages. These would include Dive Operators, Instructors and ancillary staff, boatmen and those needed to maintain and service boats, together with the rest of the downstream activities such as restaurateurs, hoteliers, and taxis.

1. The first step should be the writing and enacting of Recreational Diving Regulations based on the EU standards recently drawn up by CEN.⁽⁸⁾
2. Simultaneously, the identification, retraining and qualifying of local divers and the selection and training of local Diving Instructors could take place.⁽⁴⁾
3. Plan, purchase and install a recompression chamber at the hospital in Vlora, together with the identification and training in hyperbaric procedures of a team of operating staff.
4. Draw up plans for sea/land rescue procedures for divers with the appropriate stakeholders.
5. Build on the information already gained to draw up a master plan for selecting the exact location for placing wrecks to form artificial reefs.
6. Draw up legislation to protect these artificial reefs once in place and also to protect the lengths of coast where natural prime diving sites already exist.

K

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L PHOTGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION



PLATE 1 – The fishing vessel used from Saranda



PLATE 2 – The dive vessel used in Vlora



PLATE 3 – Entering the water



PLATE 4 – Exiting the *Blue Eye* in Saranda



PLATE 5 – Wall dive



PLATE 6 – Stingray



PLATE 7 – Octopus



PLATE 8 –Finger sponge



PLATE 9 – *Pinna Nobilis*



PLATE 10 – *Spirographis*

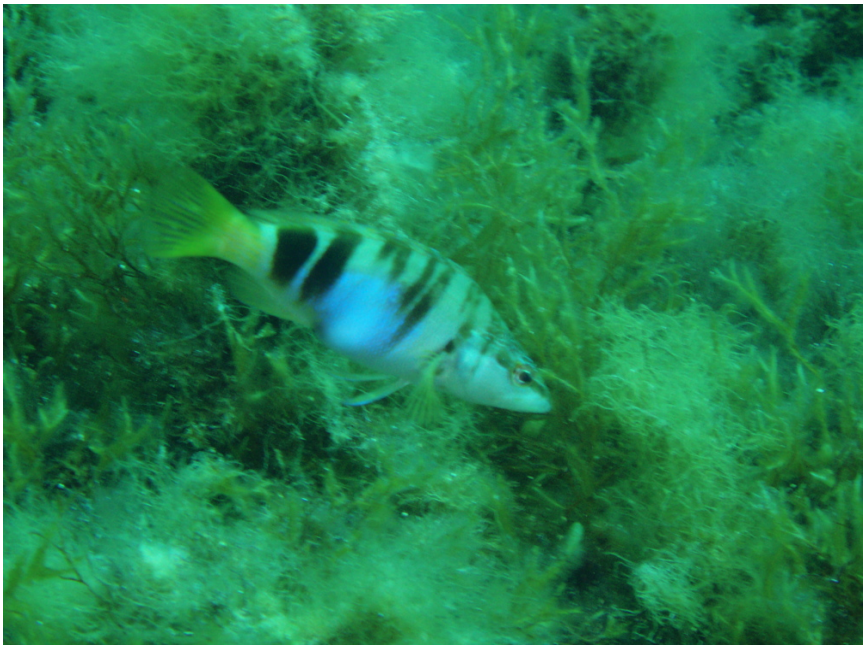


PLATE 11 – Wrasse

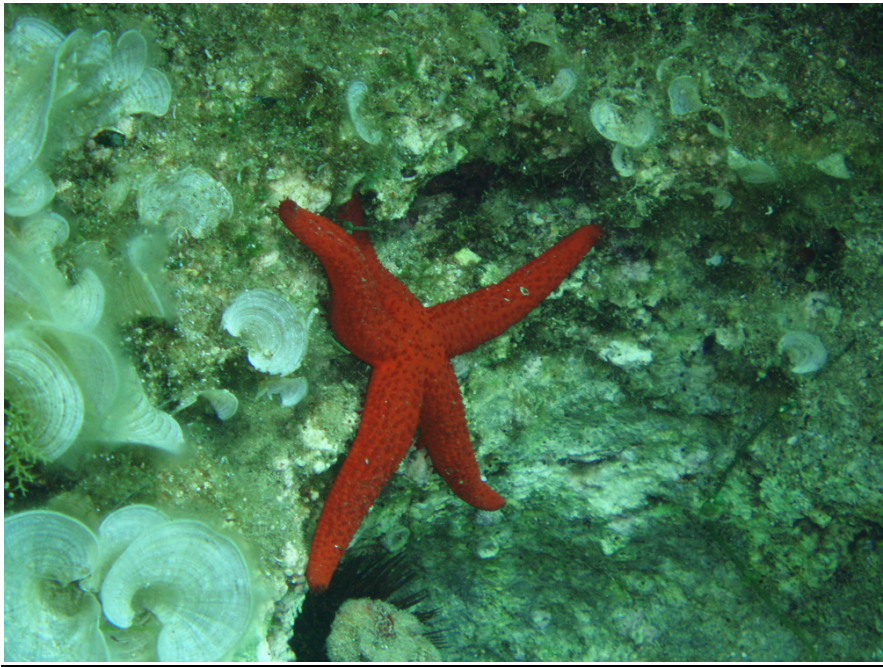


PLATE 12 – Starfish