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What a wreck!

TRAVEL 360 ▶ Shipwreck diving is the way to go if you're looking for adventure with a unique twist, says **Tania Bhattacharya**



There are adventures and then there are Adventures. Some years ago, bungee jumping or swimming with sharks were what the daredevils did. Today, it's all about shipwreck diving.

Resting in dark waters across the world are tons of decaying shipwrecks, waiting to be explored. You've to at least be an amateur diver to tackle even the tamer sites. But serious wrecks need serious diving skills. So here are some wrecks you can visit — based on your diving abilities. And sheer guts.

HATTERAS

Cape Hatteras is situated along the North Carolina coast in the US. The cold-water Labrador Current and warm-water Florida Current collide just off the cape, creating turbulent waters and a huge expanse of shoals known as the Diamond Shoals, where a large number of ships ran aground. Add to that ship losses during the World Wars and you've got world-class wreck-diving site — also known as the Graveyard of the Atlantic.

■ **Hot ticket!**

Cost: Stay at the Hatteras Marlin Motel in Hatteras village. Rates start from \$99 (about Rs 5,000) per night for a double room, going up to \$175 (about Rs 8,750) for a suite. Go to www.hatterasmarlin.com.

DiveHatteras charges \$155 (about Rs 7,750) per diver for each day of diving. This includes boat services only and each trip is limited to six divers. Diving at farther sites and renting equipment cost extra. Go to www.divehatteras.com. Return airfares (ex-Calcutta) to Raleigh (NC's capital) start from Rs 67,000. Hatteras is about 400km away by road from there.

Level: You have to at least be an open-water certified diver. Variable sea conditions call for advanced diving skills.

Depth: Up to 120ft. Clear visibility.

Season: May to October.

CHUUK

This island group in Southwest Pacific is one of the Federated States of Micronesia. Its sunny lagoon is home to almost-intact sunken ships — earning the name The Ghost Fleet of Truk Lagoon. Diving in these waters will allow you to swim through ships with holds full of tanks, fighter aircrafts and bombs.

■ **Hot ticket!**

Cost: Odyssey Adventures offers a 7-night, 8-day wreck diving expedition, while you live on-board the *Odyssey*.



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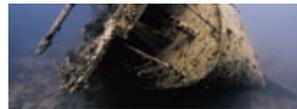
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The Rs 1.55 lakh per person-package (on double occupancy) includes airport transfers, stay, meals (except dinner on the final day), up to five dives daily and more. Go to www.trukodyssey.com. Fly to Chuuk from Honolulu (return airfares start at about Rs 97,000). Return airfares (ex-Calcutta) to Honolulu start from Rs 1.14 lakh.



Camel Dive

Level: Some diving experience needed. Odyssey Adventures offers advanced courses at extra costs.

Depth: Anywhere up to 200ft. Visibility ranges from 30ft-100ft.

Season: Diving is possible throughout the year, though December to April is the best time.

RED SEA WRECKS

At an easy distance from Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, the Red Sea wrecks are surrounded by stories. Take the *Dunraven* wreck, which was carrying goods from India and apparently collided with a reef after a drunken brawl between the captain and his first mate — over the captain's wife. It's a magnificent site, as the ship sank upside down. Then there's the SS *Thistlegorm* wreck, which was sunk in 1941 by the Germans.

■ **Hot ticket!**

Cost: A 7-night, 8-day stay at Camel Dive Club and Hotel starts from 372 euros per person (about Rs 24,350 on double occupancy). This includes stay, breakfast, six guided dives, airport transfers and equipment on rent. They offer several diving courses too. Diving at the *Thistlegorm* and *Dunraven* sites will cost extra. Go to www.cameldiver.com. Return airfares (ex-Calcutta) to Sharm el-Sheikh start from about Rs 39,000.

Level: Beginners as well as experienced divers can dive here.

Depth: Up to 150ft. Good visibility.

Season: All-year round.

YONGALA

This wreck is located in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Australia. The SS *Yongala* was a passenger steamer that sank in 1911 after running into a cyclone. The wreck remained undiscovered for nearly 50 years thereafter.

■ **Hot ticket!**

Cost: Yongala Dive offers a 2-day diving package, including full gear, for AUD 478 (Rs 25,000 approx.) per



person. The Queen room at the Yongala Diver's Lodge is tagged at AUD 60 (Rs 3,000 approx.) per night for two persons with breakfast — if you stay for two nights or more. Go to www.yongaladive.com.au. Return airfares (ex-Calcutta) to Townsville, the nearest airport, start from about Rs 89,000.

Level: Intermediate.

Depth: Up to almost 110ft. Average visibility.

Season: All-year round.

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