

A week's holiday in Sharm El Sheik to help celebrate Camel Dive 20 years of existence.



**(7 – 14 Sept 2006).
Lesley & Graham Skeats**

It is now 2 weeks since we returned from a very enjoyable weeks diving in Sharm El Sheikh, so I thought it was time I gave a brief review of the holiday, (something to fill up the newsletter, if nothing else). We have dived some of the sites of Ras Mohammed and the Straits of Tiran before on previous holidays, but I don't think you can ever get bored or blasé about these sites. There is always so much to see, we never saw any big pelagics this time, but did see our first ever sighting of an eagle ray.

We stayed at the Hilton Sharm Dreams hotel about 5 minutes walk from the centre of Naama Bay. The diving we booked as a separate package and did this by email direct with the Camel Dive Centre. We have dived with Camel before and have found them to be a very professional outfit, we were not to be disappointed nothing had changed regarding their professionalism and their commitment to the welfare of the divers. Camel were busy with probably 5 or 6 boats leaving for different dive sites each day, departure times were staggered which helped ease the congestion and red tape formalities at the jetty and the marine police. I have to say that the jetty did not seem to be as chaotic as it was 3 years ago, there seemed to be less boats around. This is probably because Sharm's coastline is developing and expanding both to the East & West of Naama Bay, new resorts are being built and dive boats are now leaving from these new resort jetty's rather than bussing divers down to the main jetty at Naama Bay. Sharm now seems to be a family all year round holiday destination, (do we have Tony Blair to thank for this?). Not sure if this is a good or bad thing, guess it's a good thing if you think the locals are the only ones to benefit, I think not.

The diving was excellent, water temp 27°C, vis 25m>, and an average bottom time of 1 hour every dive, air temp of 38°C (if you don't like the heat avoid the July, Aug & early Sept. We fell lucky and had the same boat and crew all week, which meant our kit could stay on this boat all week. Excellent news as this seemed to be the newest boat of their fleet with a great crew, who could also rustle up an excellent feast for lunch.

Dive Log

Day 1 – Dived Local sites for a check dive – (Ras Katy & Near Garden).

Day 2 – Dived 3 sites in the Ras Mohammed National Park including the famous Shark to Yolanda, supposedly one of the top dive sites according to Jacques Cousteau. Not much remains of the wreck of the Yolanda, (a Cypriot freighter which

sank in 1980), just its famous cargo of bathtubs and toilets, and yes we did refrain from that photo opportunity!.

Day 3 – Dived the wreck of the Dunraven & Jackfish Alley, vis not so good on the Dunraven. The Dunraven sank in 1876 with a cargo of spices in seemingly good weather, it hit the reef, split open and sank. The wreck is encrusted in corals resting upside down between 15 – 28m.

Day 4 – Dived 3 of the 4 Tiran reefs; Woodhouse, Jackson & Gordon. Gordon reef is famous for the wreck of the Louilla which sits on top of the reef where it ran aground in 1981. Another ship has since collided with the Louilla splitting it in two.

Camel not only has an excellent reputation as a dive centre, but they are also well known for the night life, the “Camel bar”. This seems to be the “in place” and there is an excellent relaxed atmosphere at the Camel roof top bar. From here you can get an excellent view of the busy night life. There is no better place and vantage point to down that well earned chilled Sakkara beer. Forgot to mention that Camel also has an excellent Indian Restaurant on site, which we can both thoroughly recommend, just avoid drinking the local Egyptian wine.

An excellent week, (despite the lack of leg room on the Monarch flight) and no sign of any trouble, in fact security at the hotels and jetty have increased which I guess is no bad thing. We can thoroughly recommend Camel Dive Club, it is a PADI 5 Star dive centre with excellent staff and facilities. They do have there own hotel, but unfortunately they were fully booked for the week that we wanted to stay. We booked our flight and hotel on the internet with iglu.com, who at the time were offering some amazing deals to Sharm.

