

Whilst England was exposed to some of its severest winter weather in memory, two friends from SPS ([www.swindonphotosoc.org.uk](http://www.swindonphotosoc.org.uk)) and I went on a holiday to Taba Heights on the Red Sea coast in the Gulf of Akaba. We had to “endure” 25 °C sunny skies with very little cloud cover and very calm seas. We stayed the second week and were pleasantly surprised by the diving opportunities offered the areas only dive operation. Taba Heights Waterworld is crew by a team of friendly and helpful people. Even the English one!! We booked a couple of days shore diving and one day Boat diving and also a days snorkeling off a sailboat – well I did not want to tire myself out – I was on holiday after all!

For pictures go to

<http://picasaweb.google.com/malcolm.the.talc/UnderWaterTabaHeights#>

### **Taba Heights Waterworld Dive School reef - Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

Diver Guide = Gary Maguire #645364

This was our first dive and regardless of the divers' experience this had to be a simple check dive. One of our group had not dived in over 12 months and had to complete a refresher course of 2 dives after a written exam.

I felt very safe with this school's attitude to safety.

My buddy & I had first to perform mask off/on & clear, mouth piece retrieval and buddy breath out of air before we were allowed to continued the dive.

Good dive considering it was “just a check dive”.

Finned down the gentle slope to max depth of about 20m; continued NE to edge of test area then back up slope to sea grass area then back SW to beginning.

Species seen were -

Plenty of lion fish, Parrot fish, Trigger fish, white "pepper pot" moray eels one of which was free swimming, many puffer fish of various species. Stone fish on two separate outcrops of manmade breeze blocks deliberately dropped to make an artificial reef.

Highlight for me was the 10 inch muddy brown/green sea horse clinging to some old scrap metal. Completely stationary it was difficult to notice if not pointed out to you.

Right at the end of the dive a cuttle fish joined us and was completely unfazed by our being there.

### **Taba Heights Waterworld Dive School reef- Thursday 5th February 2009**

Diver Guide = Gary Maguire #645364

First dive today was basically a repeat of previous dive route but Gary allowed us to control the speed of the dive as there was just the 3 of us who had gone on the photographic holiday the week before. Took my Olympus SP350 and captured most of what we saw on previous dive. We saw two seahorses this time though as we went to 24m and an anchor where most of the seahorses are seen.

Also saw baby lionfish, spotted puffer fish, porcupine puffer fish, pepper-pot moray eel, trunkfish, many banner fish and a file-fish right at end of dive in about 2m of water.

Second dive of the day was half a mile further round the coast from Waterworld's base in Marina Bay. This dive was straight out to 15m then SW onto the coral banks and then back NE to start.

Some of the fish seen were Clown, parrot fish, goby by its hole, crown of thorns and finally towards the end of dive Gary found what he was hoping to see a sea moth.

**Dive Site = “Aquarium” off-shore by Hyatt Hotel, Taba Heights, Egypt**

Sunday 8th February 2009

Dive Guide = William (AKA Willie)

Dive Boat = AL-AMIRA ASMAA – Sue & I were the only passengers; 4 crew + dive guide!!

The dive site was only a 1000 yard or so from where we had snorkeled the previous week off the shore. As we requested Willie allowed us to keep to around 15m as the sea bed was quite flat. Finning from pinnacle to pinnacle, Willie took his camera too so there were 3 of us with U/W cameras and housings. At 15m I took a white balance reading off the sand and used it throughout the dive. Willie went off scouting for more sites and Sue & I had 10 minutes to ourselves at each pinnacle. This was great for photos. Again saw several “nemos”, a lonely and very exposed scorpion fish atop a rocky outcrop, yellow “Christmas tree ferns”, shoals of deep blue trigger fish; close up they have enormous teeth and finally we saw a large unicorn parrot fish.

**Maxwell’s reef**

Second dive site was a little further out from the newly Club med hotel being constructed just north of the Hyatt hotel. Positions roughly NE end of bay we were again about 1000 yards out from the shore.

Angel fish, curiously a completely intact but dead small Fantail Lionfish, cleaner wrasse on red spotted wrasse, a sea slug with unusual tentacles with leaf shaped ends, 2 different nudibranchs black & white and another with yellow markings.