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north island
SEYCHELLES

NORTH ISLAND

DIVING & DIVE CENTER



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NORTH ISLAND'S DIVE SITES AND MARINE LIFE

North Island presently has over 20 dive sites, of which eight are more frequently dived due to their proximity to the island and the prolific marine life found there. Most of the sites are around North Island itself with several more situated around neighbouring Silhouette Island (approximately half-hour's boat ride away). Long-range dives such as the South Marianne (good for grey reef shark sightings) and Shark Bank are situated further afield and are therefore chargeable.

The diving itself is hugely interesting and the sites offer a range of diverse topographies and sightings – each site is fascinating in its own way.

The coral life around Seychelles was severely affected by the El Nino weather phenomenon in 1998 in which many shallow reefs were bleached (lost their colour and died). However, despite the bleaching, there is good coral growth on many of the dive sites as well as a variety of soft and hard corals that have re-established themselves. Common coral sightings on our prime sites are that of daisy coral, lettuce coral, plate coral, staghorn coral, palmate sea fans and a wealth of sponge life.

Fish life is abundant around the Seychelles islands and apart from the array of resident reef fish that are present on almost all the dive sites, it is also common to spot large shoals of silver kingfish and sea-pike as well as giant barracuda, bonito, golden pilot jacks, wahoo and many other species of the kingfish family.

Spotted eagle rays are also common sightings as are humphead parrotfish, Napoleon wrasse, whitetip reef sharks, round ribbontail rays, porcupine rays and the inquisitive orbicular batfish.

The depth of the dive sites range from 5 to 30m. Open Water-certified divers (or equivalent certification) are permitted to dive to only 18 metres (without further training) while Advanced Open Water divers (or equivalent certification) are permitted to dive to a maximum of 30 metres. No dives are conducted deeper than 30 metres.

Many of the sites allow for multilevel dive planning and have sloping topography that begin at around 10 metres or so, gently sloping deeper to 24 metres or more.

The water temperature ranges from a minimum of 24° Celsius from around June to early October (the winter season) and increases to around 30-31° Celsius by the end of the summer in March and April.

While there is seldom current, drift diving techniques (the dive team's preferred method of diving) are conducted on all dive sites, thereby ensuring minimal impact on the reefs. This also means that a dive float is towed by the dive leader so that the skipper of the boat can easily locate the group at any time – no long swims back to the boat or shore.



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NORTH ISLAND DIVE SITES IN DETAIL

Of the wealth of dive sites that are available for North Island guests, the nine listed below are worthy dive sites for seasoned divers. Those that have not been included below are very shallow and would suit less experienced divers or snorkelers.

SPRAT CITY (RATED: 7/10)

- Situated at West Beach, North Island, average depth ranges between 7 and 21m.
- The big attraction about this site is the abundance and variety of fish life that teem around three coral mounds.
- Seasonal shoals of sprats inhabit the reef from late June, making it virtually impossible to see the reef, hence the name Sprat City. Other common sightings are great barracuda, golden pompano, fulvie kingfish, golden kingfish, regal angelfish, humphead parrotfish, napoleon wrasse, powder blue surgeonfish, bluebanded surgeonfish, unicornfish, white-tip reef sharks, variegated lizardfish, emperor angelfish and oriental sweetlips. Shoals of gamefish move in and out, depending on the season and time of the day. Spotted eagle rays are also a regular sighting. Coral growth is returning well so that there are many species of hard coral on this site.
- This dive site is approximately 10 minutes from the launch area.

THE SPOT (RATED: 9/10)

- Situated near North Island, the average depth is 18-35m and slopes to greater depths.
- This is an incredibly active dive site that is rated one of the top sites by the dive team. Strong currents often prevail here, making it difficult to remain on the spot. This dive is only recommended for experienced divers.
- Hard corals can be seen on this dive, such as the likes of staghorn coral.
- Large shoals of fish move in and out and shark sightings are almost guaranteed. Large shoals of blue banded snappers are always seen here, in addition to many species of the kingfish family. Large round ribbontail rays are also spotted here.

FISHERMAN'S PLATEAU (RATED: 8/10)

- Situated near North Island, the depth ranges between 18 and 30m, a sloping dive site that attracts life at 18m.
- Similar to The Spot, an abundance of fish life is the main attraction here. Shark sightings are good. The kingfish family is a common sighting, with many varieties within the family being seen. Other regular sightings are emperor angelfish, powder-blue surgeons, many species of the butterflyfish family and blue banded surgeonfish.
- The exciting aspect of this site is that anything can happen here and the diver merely needs to wait and be patient. There is plenty of action on this site.



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MARIA REEF (RATED: 6/10)

- Situated near North Island, the depth ranges between 20 and 40m as the site slopes down greater depths.
- Again, this site has most of the action on the shallower parts. Bigger fish move in and out whilst the smaller inhabitants go about their business. Octopi are regular sightings here. Oriental sweetlips are common as well as ray activity.
- Coral life is fair.

TENDY BANK (RATED: 6/10)

- Situated near North Island, the laid-back atmosphere of the site is what gave it the name Hang Ten.
- This has the same type of depth as Outer Banks, ranging from 20 to 30m, sloping down to greater depths.
- On a good day this site can be very active, but quiet on others.

TWIN ANCHORS (RATED: 8/10)

- Situated off Silhouette Island, the average depth here is 6-19m.
- In addition to the stunning topography, the other exciting feature of this site is the coral growth and amount of coral life.
- There are two anchors lying somewhere in this site and it is always a challenge to find both.
- From the dive team's perspective, an exciting encounter here is the orbicular batfish. Towards one end of the reef they appear as ghosts and circle the divers for a long period of time. If divers are quiet and steady enough, the fish will approach and nibble on their fingers!
- Nudibranchs are often seen, along with the Spanish dancer's eggs. The odd white-tip reef shark can be seen as well as green jobfish.

THE ROCK (RATED: 5/10)

- Situated off Silhouette, the average depth here is 2 to 18m.
- This is a large rock that sits very high up in the water, almost reaching the surface. The attraction here is that the diver can swim along the massive rock and look up toward the surface for an interesting "fish-eye's" view.
- Gamefish are not often seen here but smaller reef fish are in abundance.



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CATHEDRAL (RATED: 8/10)

- Situated off Silhouette, the average depth is 12 to 35M.
- This is a very interesting site, rated very highly by the dive team. Of interest is the fact that the diver is swimming alongside granite cliffs that have some major cracks in them, producing awesome underwater scenery. The diver is able to swim into the cracks and the sound of the waves breaking overhead is something to experience.
- Shark activity and gamefish sightings can be expected.

SHARK BANK (RATED: 9/10)

- Situated close to Mahé, the depth ranges from 20 to 27m.
- This is a typical shark dive with sightings almost guaranteed.
- Other sightings that can be expected are spotted eagle rays and round ribbontail rays.
- Shoals of gamefish can be sighted here as they move in from deeper to shallower depths.
- This is an exciting and interesting dive.

FISH SPECIES AROUND NORTH ISLAND

The following fish species and coral species can be expected on most of the sites:

THE DIVE CENTRE - The attraction of diving on North Island is that guests don't have to do a thing. Diving equipment is preprepared by Dive Centre staff and is already on board the boat when the guests arrive for their pre-dive briefing at the Centre. Similarly, guests do not have to disassemble their equipment – again the Dive Centre staff takes care of this. While on board, the guests hardly have to do anything more than fasten their weight belts – the skipper will even take the weight of the scuba equipment while the guests amble to the edge of the boat – it's the most indulgent way to dive possible!

A qualified PADI Dive instructor or PADI Dive master accompanies all guests on dives and acts as a tour guide whilst on the dive, thus ensuring that the North Island focus on attention to detail is applied even underwater. Attention is also given to strict buoyancy control on all dive sites to avoid any accidental damage to the reefs. North Island has an established Marine Code of Conduct designed to minimise the impact divers have on the marine environment as a whole. Several of these regulations are orientated toward avoiding impact on the reef itself during the dives and include a no-touch, no-take policy to ensure that we limit our effect on the recovering coral reefs.



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Only PADI-sanctioned dive courses are taught on North Island and range from the children's Bubblemaker programme (a scuba programme for 8-year-olds and upwards) and the Discover Scuba Diving (DSD) course, more commonly known as the Resort Course, through to the PADI Dive Master level. Night diving is also available and is qualification- and weather-dependent. Our resident sponge crab on Sprat City is always a favourite sighting for a night dive on this site.

Proof of dive qualification is essential in order to make a dive booking. This can take the form of the actual dive certification card or the signed diver's logbook. Guests who have not dived in 18 months will be required to complete the full PADI Scuba Review programme, designed to refresh the knowledge development and the confined water skill sections of the PADI Open Water course.

Those wishing to complete the Scuba Review programme or to enrol in other PADI training courses will be required to complete a PADI Medical Statement. In order to avoid hassles with questions arising as to the medical fitness of the diver, guests should please bring along a recent Medical Certificate from their doctor verifying specifically that they are "fit to dive and currently have no pre-disposing conditions that are incompatible with diving."

Student training either takes place in the bay off Main Beach (water conditions permitting) or in our stunning, 45-metre infinity swimming pool, which has a shallow section perfectly designed for small children and a deep end of approximately 2.5 m.

EQUIPMENT - North Island's Dive Centre is fully operational with 16 sets of Sequest/Aqualung dive gear. Dive cylinders range in size from 10-litre to 15-litre aluminium cylinders. 10-litres cylinders are mostly used for swimming pool lessons and Bubblemaker for younger divers.

The Dive Centre also stocks Cressi-Sub, Cressi bigeye, Cressi focus and Dive-tek masks, Mares Aqualung fins (open heel and closed heel fins), Cressi dive booties and custom-made Cressi-Sub wetsuits. Weight belts are also provided, along with dive computers and compasses.



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