

Boat Diving Hits and Tips

So, you want to dive from the boat in the North Sea?

A few hints and tips to get you started with diving in the North Sea with EAB11:

A few days before:

1. Put your name down on the [booking sheet](#). Bookings can be made up to two weeks in advance. If you are an inexperienced diver or this will be your first dive from the club boat contact the Diving Officer (samanthajbean@yahoo.co.uk) so they can find an Instructor or Dive Leader to buddy you and guide you through club boat procedures.

The sheet will be updated the day before by the coxswain to give you final information on the meeting time.

All diving is subject to:

- Weather (obviously)
- Availability of space on the boat / enough people to fill the boat
- Availability of suitable crew members - including a qualified coxswain and a dive manager.

Diving is always arranged to the lowest experience level, i.e. if there are Ocean Divers on board, then there will be a maximum depth of 20m. However, there may be certain, rare, occasions when a trip may not be suitable for an inexperienced diver:

- When there are too many inexperienced divers booked on the boat for the remainder of the crew to manage safely
- When sea conditions (visibility and/or wave height) mean there are no accessible dive sites less than 20m in depth.

If you are an Ocean Diver you should contact the Diving Officer prior to booking so they can ensure a suitable qualified dive buddy is available and dive conditions are appropriate for your level of experience.

All diving is at the discretion of the Dive Manager for the day.

2. Make sure you have all the kit you need.

Some members of the club may be able to lend you the odd item but, as a club member, you are expected to provide your own kit. You can ask around the club for advice on hiring or buying kit, but you must have everything you need ready for dive day as there's no kit available at any of the launch sites. You'll also need to have a full cylinder, there's no air available at Sea Palling

3. Check all your kit works, they'll be no time to fix it on dive day. Make sure you have enough weight for neutral buoyancy in salt water. If you've got a new computer, make sure you've read the manual and know how it works! It's probably best not to bring cameras on your first dive.

The evening before:

4. If there are no details on the booking sheet, contact your allocated coxswain, who will tell you where and when to meet. Everybody's contact details are on the 'Members List' tab on the bottom of the sheet.
5. Pack all of your kit together. If you can, set up your scuba unit, remembering to turn off the cylinder, and pack your boat bag - it will make things quicker in the morning.
6. Avoid alcohol, stay hydrated and get a good night's sleep.

Dive day:

7. Stay hydrated.
8. Check the booking sheet to ensure the dive has not been cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. If the weather (wind in particular) has changed from the previous day, get in touch with your coxswain to make sure the dive is still on.
9. Pack some food for the day, including a hot drink and some water. A dive day can take up to 6 hours so make sure you have enough. Supplying a packet of biscuits will always gain favour with the rest of the party! Put your food in a waterproof lunchbox or drybag rather than a plastic bag - things can get a bit wet on the boat.
10. It takes about 45 minutes to get to Sea Palling from Norwich. Take the Wroxham Road out of Norwich (mind the speed cameras), turn left at Stalham, and follow the signs to Sea Palling.

Ensure you arrive in good time. Diving off Norfolk is tide dependent, and the tide will wait for no-one.

Sea Palling:

11. When you arrive at Sea Palling, meet in the car park to the left of Beach Rock. Parking spaces are limited and go quickly in peak season, so car share where you can.
12. The boat will be brought to the car park, and it will be readied for diving. As a club member you'll be part of the crew, and you'll need to help prepare, launch, retrieve, clean and fuel the boat. Don't worry, the coxswain will tell you exactly what they want you to do.
13. The coxswain is (generally) the dive manager for the day. They will dictate what diving is done, and when. Make sure you follow their instructions.
14. There's a café and toilets at Sea Palling.

The Dive:

15. The boat is relatively small, make sure you stow your kit carefully, and be mindful of everyone else's kit. As a new person on board, everyone will help you kit up, so don't worry.

16. The trip might be a bit 'lumpy' if the weather isn't at its best. Let the coxswain know if you've got a bad back / dodgy knee / tennis elbow etc.
17. A dive site will be chosen that is suitable for everybody aboard, and the coxswain & crew will 'hook in' a line for everyone to descend and ascend from. Your buddy will lead the dive, just follow their lead.

After the dive:

18. Once back at Sea Palling, you will be asked to assist with cleaning the boat, filling the fuel cans etc. The boat must be left ready for next time.
19. Payment. The coxswain will collect fees from everyone on the day. Fees can differ, depending on which boat you're on, but typically it will be a £10 boat fee; plus a share of the boat launching fee; plus a share of the fuel costs. Total costs are approximately £20 each.
20. After everything's cleaned up, we usually have a quick drink and a chat at Reef's bar before heading home.

Seasickness:

21. You're going to be on a boat for a few hours, if you're not used to it you may find yourself feeling a bit seasick. If you feel you need some medication, consult a doctor as some items cause drowsiness and shouldn't be taken whilst diving.

Although there's no scientific research to support it, many members of the club take ginger to help with seasickness; stem ginger, root ginger, ginger biscuits, ginger ale, chocolate covered ginger, any type of ginger works!

Other people use travel wristbands and seem to have the same miraculous results with them.

It's probably unwise to have a fried breakfast at the café before you dive!

Basic kit list (a minimum to dive in the North Sea):

1. Suit
 - If it's a drysuit, ensure you've practised with it before using it in the North Sea.
 - If it's a wetsuit, you'll need to bring some windproof clothing to stop you getting cold on the way home; wetsuit boots and a towel. You might also want to bring a thermos of hot drink to help warm you up after the dive.
2. Hood and gloves
3. Fins and mask
4. BCD
5. Weight belt, and enough weight. You will need more in the sea than you did in fresh water, add approx. 2-3 kgs

6. A full cylinder (min. 10L, but ideally 12L or 15L)
7. Regulators including a primary second stage, octopus, SPG & low pressure inflator hoses for your BCD (and dry suit if applicable) & clips for the hoses
8. A computer or
Dive timer & tables, or,
Depth gauge, watch & tables
9. An underwater torch
10. A Cutting implement; dive knife, line cutter, trauma shears
11. Surface Marker Buoy for dives planned as drift dives
12. Audible signalling device (E.g. Whistle)
13. Delayed Surface Marker Buoy & reel
14. A boat bag. This is a strong, lightweight, but not necessarily waterproof bag that contains all of the equipment that you are going to take on the boat, with the exception of your scuba unit and weight belt. It keeps everything together, and prevents it getting lost or broken.
15. A hat (woolly if it's cold, brimmed if it's hot)
16. Suntan cream & sunglasses
17. Some warm clothes for when you get back.

Recommended additional equipment:

1. Independent gas source, typically a pony cylinder & reg.
2. Distance line & reel
3. Back-up torch
4. A spares kit (fin & mask straps, etc.)