

The Local Diving
Specialists



Presents

AUGUST 2013

North America Dive News

Northwest - Midwest - Northeast - Southeast - Southwest Editions

TOBERMORY
Wreck Diving Capital
of CANADA

Searching for Dinner
on California's
Mendocino Coast

Exploring the Emerald Waters
of SEATTLE - WASHINGTON

STRÝTAN
Diving Iceland's
Hydrothermal Vents

Catchin' Crawfish
How to Outsmart the
Elusive Spiny Lobster

Finding Treasures
in the Waters of
Long Island

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On the cover: "Anemone Still Life"

This inspiring image of an anemone was taken by Jim Boon, a Seattle diver who has been shooting underwater photos for about 11 years and seriously shooting for the last five. Jim says his favorite diving is cold water: anyplace from Tacoma and northward.

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We encourage readers to participate in determining the content of this publication by giving us their opinions on the types of articles they would like to see. We invite letters to the editor, manuscripts and photographs related to diving or diving-related business. Send us your stories and photos!

DIVE CLUBS, WHO NEEDS THEM?

It may be an odd way to start out a letter, but I needed to get your attention. For years clubs have come and gone, today they have dropped in size and some are barely hanging on. A lot of store owners do not believe in the DIVE club or do not want to support any club. As a store owner I believe we all need to embrace the clubs and support them in any way we can.

Store owners are very busy and have a lot on their plates; most have lost sight of even why they are in the business. As an owner myself, I know how hard it is to find time to get out and enjoy a dive. It seems every time I head to the lake I am taking students, but what got me into the business is not what I am doing today. I have a store; to clean, inventory to check in price out and stock, I need to update my web site and Facebook page. I need to meet with sales reps and work on marketing my business. Trust me the list goes on, so where do I find time to DIVE for FUN? First I want to say, I still make time for fun, if you lose sight of that you have lost the vision needed to make your business successful.



Patrick Hammer is the owner of the Our World Underwater Show, director of the Tim Early Foundation, and co-owner of Scuba Emporium of Orland Park, Illinois. He is a PADI Course Director and interacts with many successful retail dive centers around the world.

So why support the DIVE clubs? All clubs are full of divers old and new that have time and energy to DIVE. These people want to socialize and go on local trips. The more we can keep people diving in any local market the better we all are and the store do. So if a club has 10 members or 100 and meets monthly, or quarterly, you are injecting excitement into your local market and taking people out diving, just what they want to do. Clubs need to work close with the DIVE center and the center with them. I look at it as a marriage and we both need each other. Once you split up it is a lonely place. I understand and hope the club DOES NOT try to go against the store that supported them and helped them get to where they are. I see the value in a club and understand the importance. I also believe ALL staff members should show their support and be members as well as make a few meetings and go on

Strytan: Diving Iceland's Hydrothermal Vents

By Michael Salvatoreza & Christopher P. Weaver

The waters of the Eyjafjörður Fjord were still and calm. There was a sharp crispness to the air and snow covered the hills lining the shore. Except for the gentle lapping of water against the sides of our inflatable dive boat, the world around us was silent. To the north we could see heavy grey clouds hanging low to the horizon, the first signs of an approaching storm undoubtedly born in the arctic wilderness just a few miles away. In a few short hours, the weather would turn bad and diving would become impossible. For now, all was calm and we were focused on preparations for an underwater adventure to an alien world.

In 1997, Erlendur Bogason and his friend Árni Halldósson discovered an amazing hydrothermal vent in the dark waters off the shores of Hjalteyri, a small fishing village located near the town of Akureyri. *Strytan*, as this location has been named, is a towering chimney-like geological formation rising to over 200ft (230m) from the ocean floor to nearly 50ft (15m) below the surface.



▲ A giant stride into the Nesgjá fissure

Hydrothermal vents have been discovered in many places throughout the world, usually along continental rift zones, but they are generally located many thousands of feet deep. Currently, *Strytan* is the shallowest known vent in the world and the only place where scuba divers can actually dive on an active hydrothermal vent. A "White Smoker", *Strytan* is a set of chimneys that continually emit very hot water (167°F/75°C) at an estimated rate of 26-gallons/100 Litres per second. These geological formations are formed by smectite, a white clay material that mixes with other crustal elements and minerals as it circulates through the

oceanic crust under very high pressure and temperature. When this material mixes with the cold ocean water after emerging from the ground, it coagulates, hardens and forms the chimney. *Strytan* started forming at the end of last ice age 10,000 years ago. At *Strytan*, divers can explore these towering formations and will marvel at the marine life that abounds in these waters.

Our dive began with a routine back roll into the teeth-chattering 34-degree water. Instantly, our eyes adjusted to the dim light of the greenish-black water. Peering down through 50-foot visibility and searching for

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▲ Hot water emerges from Strytan at an astonishing rate

something to orient ourselves, we focused first on the down line. Bogason, who operates the nearby Strytan Divecenter, has installed a mooring buoy to ensure the protection of this delicate environment and to help divers find their way to the site. Descending into the waters of the fjord, our eyes opened wide as the first glimpse of the chimney came into view.

At first, *Strytan* appears as a tall, narrow spire...rocky, covered with multi-colored Plumose Anemones, but otherwise somewhat uninteresting.

Until you get close.

After just a few minutes, we became aware of hazy, "out of focus" water...the tell tale sign of hot fresh water mixing with cold salt water. These haloclines and thermoclines were easy to spot and were the best evidence of the rushing geothermal water flowing into the fjord. Scientists studying this phenomenon estimate that the water emerging from the cone is about 1,100 years old.

Normally, divers in very cold water never remove their gloves...but at *Strytan*, things are a bit different! Divers here can carefully remove their gloves and warm their hands in the hot water flowing out from the cone...a unique method of hand warming on a cold-water dive!

In addition to geological marvels, *Strytan* is home to a wide array of interesting marine life. Macro enthusiasts will spot colorful *Flabellina nudibranchs*, along with crustaceans, sponges, starfish and anemones. Swirling around the chimneys are schools

of Cod and Pollack, and sharp-eyed divers will also encounter Starry rays, the curious Lump sucker fish and the ferocious looking Wolffish.

Strytan is the first protected underwater area in Iceland, gaining this status in 2001. This unique location has received worldwide

scientific attention as well as being filmed by Bogason for National Geographic. Despite the rugged appearance, it is actually a fragile environment. Careless divers who don't pay attention to proper buoyancy can quickly damage rock formations that have taken thousands of years to form. Visitors are strongly advised to be careful and respectful.

Nearby in the same waters are other dive sites worth visiting.

Arnarnesstrýtur, sometimes referred to as "Little Strytan", is a cluster of smaller hydrothermal vent cones covering an area 1312 feet (400m) by 3281 feet (1000m) with an amazing variety of marine life. Arnarnesstrýtur was protected in 2007 and became the second protected underwater area in Iceland.

The *French Gardens* is a sublimely beautiful, though rarely visited site consisting of additional cones and vents.

Diving in Northern Iceland is a unique adventure. Here, divers can experience the wonders of Earth's geological forces by visiting the underwater hydrothermal vents or by diving in *Nesgla*, a crack or fissure in the Earth's crust formed through tectonic

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activity and flooded with water of unbelievable clarity. Opportunities also exist to dive with spawning cod fish in early April, and to experience diving sea birds off *Grimsey Island*, a small island north of Iceland and located right on the Arctic Circle. In the harbor near Akureyri, the wreck of the "Standard" lies in shallow water. A German bark, *Standard* was built in 1874, sunk in 1917 and discovered in 1997.

If you are an experienced cold-water diver in search of underwater geological adventures, put northern Iceland high on your list. Where else can you take a thermos on your dive, fill it with hot, geothermal water, and make some hot chocolate with 1100 year old water with it before returning to the dock?

Getting There

International visitors arrive in Iceland into Keflavik Airport. Most passengers do not require a Visa to enter Iceland as long as their stay does not exceed 3 months. Transport to other regions in Iceland can be accomplished either by driving or through domestic air travel. There are domestic airports in Reykjavik, Akureyri, and several other towns. Drive time from Reykjavik to Akureyri is 4-5 hours, while air travel is 45 minutes.

Baggage

Baggage allowances vary for each international carrier, so check before you



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leave! Note: Some international carriers are now enforcing weight and size limits for carry-on bags as well what is considered a personal carry-on type of bag.

Weather

Iceland lies on the edge of the Arctic and, at its northernmost point, is only 30 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Accordingly, the winters are long, generally from September to April. In the depths of the winter, daylight is almost nonexistent and in the summer the days are almost 24 hours long. However, due to the moderating influence of the Gulf Stream, winter weather in the south can be milder than in New York or Zurich. Winter is harsher in the north, with fierce storms, wind driven snow and low temperatures. Temperatures are the lowest in the Highlands.

Currency

The local currency is the Icelandic Krona, but US Dollars and Euro are often accepted.

Electricity

Voltage: 220-240V/50Hz
Primary Socket Type: Europlug, Schuko
Travel Adapter: Round Pin Universal Plug
Reykjavik has a recompression chamber.

Scuba Diving

DIVE.IS (www.dive.is) is located in Reykjavik 15 minutes walking distance from the city center. Divers can meet at the shop, or at the National Park Thingvellir to dive Silfra. For longer tours, Dive.IS will arrange pickup and transport from the international airport at Keflavik.

The Strýtan Dive Center www.strytan.is is located in the small fishing village of Hjalteyri, about 22 km north of the northern town of Akureyri. Dive.IS and the Strýtan Divecenter often work together to provide seamless tours to the best dive sites along the entire Icelandic coast. Divers can meet at the Strýtan Divecenter by driving about 4 hours from Reykjavik or by flying domestically to Akureyri. The Strýtan Divecenter can arrange to meet at the airport and provide transport to local lodging. ■

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