6 Tips for Safe Dive Safari and Liveaboard Travels

Liveaboard dive safaris are particularly popular among divers planning their holidays. You live on the ocean and you can devote the entire day to your favorite activity: pure relaxation and adventure! What sounds like total freedom to you though, may represent annoyance or discomfort to others. To avoid turning your dream vacation into a bad memory, we have compiled a few tips and tricks specially addressed to those who have never undertaken a dive safari or liveaboard cruise before.

Medical considerations

As in any dive holiday, it is important to be in good health. Remember that a doctor may not be on board, so you better prevent problems in the first place.Make sure you have no dental problems and have all required vaccinations, personal prescription drugs, remedies for seasickness, diarrhea, constipation, colds and ear problems. Also consider your specific limitations (disabilities, diseases, allergies, etc.) which could get worse once on board.

It is always good to have a current **Medical examination for diving fitness** according to requirements of diving organizations or respecting the requirements of the diving and hyperbaric medicine societies.

In case a medical emergency should arise, there are some other element implied. The boat could be far away from shore: location of the emergency and time (night) might influence any possible evacuation. So be aware that there might be delays in getting you to a proper medical facility. Also keep in mind these kind of evacuations are normally costly and it is recommended to carry a good **dive (and health or travel) insurance** with you, together with emergency telephone numbers.

Dive training & experience

Complete dive training is important, and having **extensive diving experience** is of great advantage too. In most cases beginner training on board is not possible. Also, you can only focus on any new issues onboard, once the fundamental diving problems are mastered. This includes proper buoyancy control, drift diving, diving next to steep walls as well as wreck diving and night diving.

Dive materials and spares

Your dive equipment should be in perfect working condition, have the correct fit, and you should be familar with it. But it is always possible something breaks, so you better be prepared for some minor hiccups. Bringing along replacement parts is highly recommended, since in the case of malfunction or failure nothing can be purchased on site – You are in the middle of the ocean!

Just consider bringing with you:

- Mask or Fin straps
- Spare mouth piece
- Small spare lamp
- O-rings
- DIN/INT adapter
- Blind plugs HD, MD

- Tool kit
- Carabiner
- Cable ties

Choosing the right wetsuit

Generally this depends from the destination. Just remember that, especially during long dives, water can deprive your body of a high amount of thermal energy, even if it's relatively warm.

This is all the more important as on liveaboard cruises there are several dives per day. At the beginning of the day, as the first dive starts, the water temperature might feel warm and comfortable, but this will change after some dives throughout the day. Stepping into your wet and cold neoprene suit when getting ready for the night dive will feel anything but comfortable. A good idea may be taking along your thicker suit in winter or spring, especially when diving in sites such as the Red Sea.

Also remember that even a slight scratch from a coral heals very poorly in sea water and that nettle threads on the skin are painful. A thin wetsuit that also covers arms and legs can help prevent this. While snorkeling, it will also protect you against sunburn.

What about the boat/dive centre?

You want to make sure the centre and boat chosen can guarantee you a nice and safe holiday.

Liveaboard dive safari boats should have:

- optimised space
- fixation points for dive equipment, especially for tanks
- a large dive platform at the stern (entry and exit point)

Before booking, get detailed information about:

- Boat's name and size
- Cabin outfitting (e.g. double story bunks or single beds, air conditioning, shared toilets/showers or individual toilet/shower in each cabin, in-cabin space)
- Fresh water tank / additional desalination system
- 24-hour power supply / generators, charging options for flashlights, torches, lamps, etc.
- Tank size and material (aluminum tanks are lighter and require more lead), secured/lashed valve connections (DIN, INT)
- Max number of dives per day, possibility to do night dives, limitations regarding dives (duration, depth, residual pressure etc.)
- Space available in the salon, on the deck and on the platform
- Possibility to do accompanied dives on request
- Is the compressor on the deck (noise nuisance) or under the deck? Can it aspirate "bad air" such as exhaust gases from the boat's engine or the kitchen? Is Nitrox filling possible?
- Is the deck skid-proof, also in wet conditions?
- Are there any hand-railings to hold on to on the boat?
- Are there spare parts or extra diving equipment available on board?
- Are first aid and oxygen materials available and stored in a weather, water and shake proof mode?
- Does the boat carry safety equipment such as inflatable life rafts or boats, fire detectors, fire

extinguishers, radio, radar and GPS?

When you got an answer to all of the above questions, and you made sure your dive safari trip is well prepared, don’t forget to bring along your photo or video camera, and capture unforgettable moments.

We hope we provided you with some helpful pieces of advice, and wish you beautiful adventures, wherever you go!

Advantages of a liveaboard dive safari:

- Pure and simple diving without the need of hauling around heavy equipment
- Unspoiled, exclusive dive spots
- Sharing your favourite leisure activity with a group of like-minded people

Challenges:

- Living in a confined space with a number of strangers of different nationalities, having the most diverse habits and interests. Not everybody is made for it.
- Possibility to encounter long-lasting storms
- Water scarcity (check out our More water, less bubbles campaign)

Some information was taken from Werner Scheyer’s book Sicherheit (Safety)