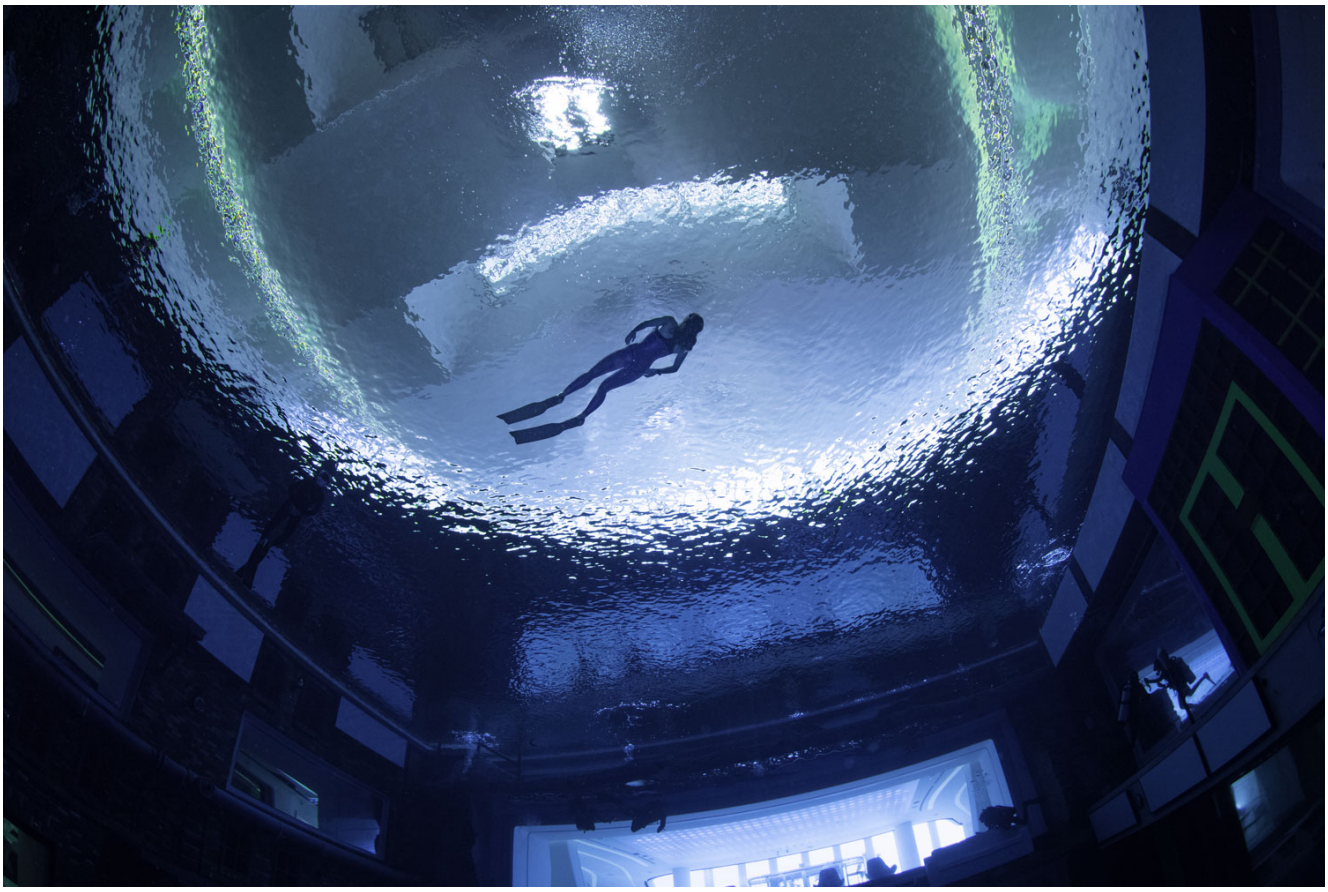
# Deep Dive Dubai—The Deepest Pool In The World Is Not A Pool

*July 6, 2021 — More than six years in the making, Deep Dive Dubai finally announced the opening of its 60-meter deep diving pool—the deepest in the world. Here marketing manager **Jesper Kjoller** takes us for a tour and a test dive of this unique aquatic facility. Are you ready to take the plunge?*

*Deep pools are not a new idea. There are a few of them in Europe already and they offer divers an opportunity to train or to enjoy deeper dives in a controlled and safe environment. Exciting as these spots are, they are still essentially swimming pools with chlorinated water and white square tiles. The recent launch of Deep Dive Dubai completely changes the landscape. Never has an indoor diving facility provided so many compelling reasons to visit.*



Dubai has a tradition for creating attractions and facilities that result from out-of-the-box thinking. As an example, the desert-bound Emirate obviously does not have any alpine skiing opportunities. So, Ski Dubai—an indoor ski slope—was developed. There were no safe road cycling opportunities, so over 200 kilometers of dedicated cycling tracks were built. Dubai also boasts an opera house and a Ferris-wheel larger than London Eye, not to mention the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa. Dubai also has one of the most impressive and popular skydiving facilities globally and the world's longest urban zipline. The examples of these "only in Dubai" wonders are endless, and they keep coming.

The Persian Gulf is a sandy and shallow basin and does not offer the most exciting diving, so in order to provide divers with reliable training opportunities, a 60-meter/196-foot deep pool was proposed as a new addition to the list of Dubai wonders. But, true to the Emirates’ inclination for extraordinary endeavors, the creators of Deep Dive Dubai decided to develop the idea a little further and give this project a unique

Dubai spin.

## An Underwater Metropolis

A 60 meter pool could have quickly become a somewhat dull and sterile environment unless a more creative approach were adopted. Numerous international design teams and professional theming companies explored ideas for something that would be unique and marvelous. The development team was expanded to include world-record-setting explorer and aquatic pioneer, Jarrod Jablonski, founder and president of Global Underwater Explorers (GUE). The design team wanted something that could engage a sense of fun, intrigue, and fantasy while recognizing the important role diving has played in the history of the UAE.

Recalling the importance of pearl diving in the development of both the region and international trade, Deep Dive Dubai was designed in the shape of an oyster. The pearl diving profession was once an essential trade for Dubai until Japan introduced industrial pearls some hundred years ago and strangled the pearling industry. Many Emirati families can trace their ancestry to a time when they were involved in the pearl trade. The design team finally landed on the idea of a sunken city, providing a surreal diving environment and nearly endless opportunities to develop unique and interactive spaces with the ability to change parts of the facility to keep the environment fresh and engaging.

Deep Dive Dubai is themed as a submerged metropolis intact with seminal city furniture such as lampposts, shopping carts, bicycles, billboards, ATMs, trash cans, phone booths, fire escape ladders, among other everyday objects from a modern metropolis. You get the picture. But you will not only be diving amongst urban artifacts. After an unknown post-apocalyptic incident eroded the city's walls, you can explore a fully furnished apartment. The different rooms in the apartment are decorated with classic artwork on the walls, furniture, and toys. There is also a workshop with cars, motorbikes, arcade games, and much more.

It is anybody's guess what happened here. Did the entire city sink? Did a natural disaster cause it to be flooded? An earthquake, perhaps? Or is it possibly a model of a human city in a parallel universe? An enormous tree with roots that stretch deep down almost from the surface adds to the mystery and implies a nature take-over.




## Mixed Metaphors

The outside of the building—inspired by a giant oyster shell—and the diving environment resembling a sunken city are linked together by the décor inside the impressive three-story facility surrounding the 60 meter/196 ft shaft. The interior design of the dry areas is reminiscent of a spaceship from a 1970s science-fiction movie with flowing organic lines forged in the 3D printed walls, clean white interiors, and open spaces. Imagine a flying saucer shaped like a giant oyster shell landed on top of a block of Manhattan after a natural disaster flooded the neighborhood. *Oystershell*. *Spaceship*. *Metropolis*. The metaphors are mixed, but the mystery will definitely spark your imagination. Divers exploring the underwater environment in Deep Dive Dubai will marvel at the enigma, and it is impossible not to speculate what really happened here.

Adding to the mood and atmosphere, the diving facility's curtains can cover the gigantic window panels and the skylights in the roof, insulating the complex from the sunlight. This will allow the advanced light system to create different settings or even simulate a night dive experience in broad daylight. Multiple hydrophones connected to an advanced sound system allow for playback of music, soundscapes, or verbal diver recall in an emergency. The possibilities for creating underwater sensory experiences with light and sound are endless.

## Spectator Sports Anyone?

Divers who always wished they could share their diving experience with a non-diving friend or loved one have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to do just that. From the surface down to 12 meters/39 ft, viewers can watch divers traverse the first two floors of their adventure below the dive deck. Visiting divers, friends and family can also enjoy a delicious meal or fine refreshments in the spacious restaurant while they relax and enjoy the view inside the pool through vast glass windows. Deep Dive Dubai will have managed to turn

diving into a spectator sport. The pool is also covered by 56 cameras serving a threefold purpose: the video feed can be shared on large monitors that are situated throughout. This feed is also projected to the dive control station where the dive supervisor monitors all areas inside the pool for safety. A video capturing the visitor experience can be edited and shared with the guests after their visit.



## A Research Facility

While on the subject of safety, conservative ratios between guides/instructors and guests/students and the cameras covering all angles of the huge body of water ensure a safe experience. Deep Dive Dubai also provides ideal diving gases to optimize safety: nitrox for shallow dives and trimix for deeper dives. A multinational team of handpicked dive professionals, including instructor trainers from PADI and GUE as well as record-holding freedivers and technical divers, are on staff.

The controlled and predictable environment delivers the optimal setting for people of all experience levels—from first-time scuba divers and freedivers to those seeking one of the world's most unique diving experiences. Even high-end technical divers and freediving athletes will find the experience rewarding. From fun-filled dives to focused training, there is something here for everyone.

Divers can even enter underwater habitats at 21 and six meters (70 and 20 ft) while talking to one another and looking out large windows into the pool. They can use the habitats for fun, training, or decompression. These habitats resemble commercial diving bells and can be supplied with different gases from the surface as needed. Display monitors and surface communication devices enhance the unique experience, offering diving support or to provide even greater safety.

Deep Dive Dubai also houses the largest hyperbaric chamber in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Most decompression chambers are small and uncomfortable tubes that only allow for one or two

patients and a tender to be inside during the recompression therapy. The centerpiece in the hyperbaric facility in Deep Dive Dubai is a modern, fully automated 10-person multi-station chamber with comfortable chairs, an entertainment system, and even a full-size bathroom cabin.





Divers Alert Network (DAN) Europe conducted a thorough review of the facility's functionality, intrinsic safety, operating procedures and the level of staff training through its Recompression Chamber Risk Assessment (RCAPP) program. They are also providing Deep Dive Dubai and their diving staff with medical assistance services, access to an emergency hotline, as well as accident and liability insurance coverage.

Having easy access to a modern and advanced hyperbaric facility provides another level of safety and opens interesting scientific research possibilities. The unique combination of a hyperbaric chamber and a 60-meter dive facility under the same roof will provide the perfect platform for medical research in diving physiology and related areas of interest. Deep Dive Dubai will liaise with international universities, diving physiologists, and DAN Europe while exploring unique research projects in diving medicine.

There are classrooms for teaching dive courses with windows facing the pool, meeting rooms, and a comfortable 50-seat conference area with a large screen for presentations, seminars, and product launch events. Deep Dive Dubai will offer many exciting possibilities for movie production as one of the largest underwater studios in the world.



## Taking The Plunge

We walk down the slope leading into the pool and don our fins on the ramp while clarifying the last details of the dive plan. We are diving open circuit trimix, and we carry 50% nitrox to accelerate our deco. The view when we glide out in the middle and look down is breathtaking. I do not have any fear of heights, but I can't help but feel a slight tinge of vertigo when I look all the way down to the bottom of the shaft. Sixty meters is gloriously deep! We descend all the way down while enjoying the view of the cityscape surrounding us. It is a surreal experience to see all these convincing objects of everyday life in an underwater environment. We arrive at the bottom, and when we look up, we are met with another Deep Dive Dubai signature sight – the circular shaft towering above us with the super bright light in the ceiling of the facility resembling the sun catching our bubbles.

We leave the bottom and enjoy the view of the brick walls in the shaft decorated with strange graffiti—the artists were obviously narked when they created the weird creatures covering the sides. Arriving at 40 meters/130 ft, we swim into the circular donut-shaped garage, where cars, motorbikes, and arcade games are scattered. There is even a full-sized Star Wars Stormtrooper and a pool table. We complete the 62 meter/203 ft circuit and ascend the monumental staircase leading to another donut at 30 meters/100 ft, where we arrive at the apartment. The occupants apparently had to abandon their living space in a hurry, leaving magazines and a box of popcorn at the coffee table. The TV is still on, and the living room is decorated with posters of iconic movie stars. In the apartment donut, we also pass the music room with the grand piano, the kitchen, the dining room, the bedroom, and the art room. There are so many details to take in, and I realize that it will take many dives to fully explore everything.

The variety of wayfinding lights illuminate many areas while further mood enhancements allow softly lit areas or even areas one can enjoy in total darkness. An entirely new kind of cave diving! We ascend from the apartment through a library shaft with walls covered by bookshelves filled with timeless literature. We

do our gas switch at 21 meters/70 ft inside the shaft and begin the decompression portion of the dive while studying the book titles. Shakespeare, James Joyce, Jules Verne – all the classics are there. We complete our decompression while exploring the shallower part of the pool and we wave at the passing spectators outside the windows. Never have 45 minutes of deco stops been less boring!



## A Guinness World Record

Deep Dive Dubai is, without a doubt, the most impressive diving facility in the world. After your first visit, you will probably struggle to decide the most remarkable part of the experience. Is it the friendly and professional staff? The luxurious surroundings? Or maybe the cutting-edge technology? Perhaps it is the never-ending row of wonderful surprises and details in the theming.

*When you get the chance to improve your diving skills in a controlled and exciting environment with tips and tricks offered by world class diving instructors, you will probably find that even if Deep Dive Dubai is the deepest pool in the world, the record depth—officially verified* by *Guinness World Records*—is maybe the least interesting feature.

**FACT FILE – DEEP DIVE DUBAI FILTER SYSTEM**

The water in the pool is treated in one of the largest and fastest filter systems in the region, with a capacity to circulate all 14 million liters/3.7 mil gallons of water every six hours.

First, it is passed through a perlite filter which consists of a naturally occurring siliceous volcanic rock. Here larger particles such as dust, debris, and organic matter are removed. Perlite is a naturally occurring volcanic glass that is super-efficient—it only produces 10% of the amount of backwash compared to a sand filter.

The second step is ozone ionization to control bacteria. NASA developed this process for drinking water production in the Apollo spaceships in the 1960s. The ozone treatment significantly reduces chlorine usage by 80%, and chemical byproducts such as bromide are greatly eliminated.

The third step involves two huge UV reactors that disinfect the water terminating all the bacteria. UV is commonly used in hospitals to sterilize operating room instruments.

After that treatment, the temperature is adjusted, and the water is pumped back into the pool. It is unnecessary to replenish with water from the outside except to compensate for a slight loss of volume due to evaporation.

## Additional Resources:

- *How does Deep Dive Dubai compare with other deep pools? See Dan Europe Blog:* ***Size, err Depth, Matters: Why Do Pools Keep Breaking Records?***
- **Deep Dive Dubai website**
- Facebook @DeepDiveDubai
- Instagram @DeepDiveDubai

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## About the author:

Originally a professional musician, Jesper fell in love with diving almost 30 years ago. He made a career change and became instructor in 1994 and PADI Course Director in 1999 when he was offered the editor chair of the Scandinavian Diving Magazine DYK. Jesper became a GUE instructor in 2011, and in 2015 he moved to Dubai to apply his skills in underwater storytelling and imagery as Marketing Manager of Deep Dive Dubai. From Dubai he travels the world to teach and report for international dive magazines and to participate in dive projects like the yearly Mars field studies in the Baltic Sea or deep wreck explorations in Egypt. In 2021 he began as Editor-in-Chief of Quest, the GUE Member Journal.