

Dive Expo, Belgium's new Rec-to-Tec show

We report on the first edition of this new initiative in the Belgian and international diving scene.

Exploration, science, freediving, UW photography and cinematography, legendary wrecks... Along with a selection of stands and teams from top dive brands and manufacturers. The **first edition of Dive Expo** did not disappoint expectations.

My report is mainly focused on the **stage presentations** side, an important and very dynamic part of the event, which favours topical contents. This is obviously not meant to overshadow the fantastic atmosphere lived on the **exposition side**, with numerous stands, where everything was neatly organised, and visitors were able to meet friends and exhibitors.



Day one commenced big time as **Prof. Costantino Balestra** (VP DAN Europe Research) took the stage, delivering an informative and charismatic presentation primarily focused on new research studies about inflammation and diving, and the [effects of deep CCR diving on human physiology](#). The talk summed up what was understood in the past 10 years of diving studies, including a special focus on deep CCR dives showing that the *inflammatory state* is evolving through the repetitive dives on a liveaboard, and that the *pulmonary stress* of long CCR dives was counteracted after a few days of repetitive diving. Several studies also showed the importance of *micro-particles* in the understanding of decompression, and the *distal artery hypothesis* for some kind of Decompression Sickness (DCS).

Following, Sardinian-based inventor, instructor, and cave explorer, **Thorsten "Toddy" Wälde**, provided a detailed account of how he transformed his extreme utopia exploration dive profiles into something safer. However, a word of caution - what Toddy does is not for everyone; do not expect the same results or even to make it out alive. His feats are limited to a select few.

After a break for a second coffee and a visit to the exhibitor stands, it became evident that Dive Expo, despite its modest size and local charm, delivered everything I had hoped for and more, including

manufacturers, training agencies, and enticing dive destinations.

My next session featured **Pedro Balordi** from Switzerland, known for making insane cave exploration seem feasible. He presented a multitude of different caves within the 45 minutes available to him in a light but still heartbreaking manner, reminding us that “no, 16-hour dives are not normal.” His insights into equipment choice and the absence of bivouac options were particularly intriguing.

I concluded my day with **Mikko Paasi** of the Thai rescue team and his captivating presentation about mine diving in Thailand. As expected, Mr. Paasi infused his talk with passion and expertise.



The first day concluded with an informal gala dinner, providing a pleasant opportunity for everyone to meet and chat.

Day two unfolded in freezing Belgium, witnessing a change in plans as **Aron Arngrimsson** presented live-aboard options for Truck Lagoon and the Bikini Atoll instead of René B. Anderson’s scheduled “Scandinavia Wreck Diving.” While not suitable for every budget, these options are worth considering for wreck diving enthusiasts.

This was followed by **Tommy Vuylsteke & Pieter Germeys** delivering a captivating presentation on “The Life Behind Underwater Cinematography.” A unique approach showcased their high-end film productions featured in major films, offering a backstage glimpse and a humble perspective on the diving aspects of their job.

Next, legendary Italian explorer **Edoardo Pavia** presented “How Can We Increase Safety in CCR Diving?” Mr. Pavia emphasised the need for personal responsibility in safety or risk manufacturers restricting freedom to decide actions when using a CCR due to poor decisions.

The event continued with **Richie Kohle's** "Inside Britannic," providing a unique and exciting look into one of the world's most iconic wrecks. Kohle's extensive experience on various expeditions added depth to his storytelling.



Dive Expo concluded as powerfully as it began – a joyous experience. The venue, though simple, was cozy and welcoming. A shoutout to organiser Stefan Panis and his crew, including charming daughter Lina, for their fantastic work in this first edition.

Will I go back in 2 years? Without a doubt, I most certainly will.

About the author

[Stratis Kas](#) is a diving instructor, filmmaker, adventurer and storyteller. He travels to remote locations to create stunning footage that change the way we look at diving exploration. His latest books are "Close Calls" – now considered a must-have book for any diver – and "Cave Diving".