

# Blue immersion Blog

A series of articles for technical divers  
[www.blue-immersion.org](http://www.blue-immersion.org)

## The Other Side of Dahab and the Blue Hole the most dangerous Vs. the best technical dive site in the world

Desert mountains, a secluded bay, and minimal rustic restaurants are home to arguably the most misunderstood dive site anywhere in the world. Residing just a short drive outside the city limits of Dahab along dusty sand roads lined with wandering camels, it has become the most famous of the numerous blue holes around the globe. Some are deeper. Others are wider. But none have the history, allure, and mysterious attraction of the Blue Hole here in Egypt. Coincidentally its reputation as a renowned

scuba diving site stems from copious misconceptions and fabricated fables full of misinformation. Wikipedia calls it "the most dangerous dive site in the world." Others have labeled it the 'graveyard.' With little official statistics



about the history and unanswered events occurring at the blue hole, it has transformed into a myth bigger than itself. There most certainly is something different about the energy of 'The Arch' and the depths of the Blue Hole than any other diving location. But it is the other side of the Blue Hole that is never talked about. The environmental factors, ease of logistics, and available training here at the Blue Hole also make the 'most dangerous' dive site the 'best technical training ground' in the world.

### The Myth

Initial visits to the Blue Hole frequently start with a visit to the northern wall. Here several tombstones are embedding into the cliff wall among fossilized corals, acting not only as a memorial to people lost but also as a painful reminder of the consequences involving technical diving. These risks exist everywhere in technical diving, stressing the importance of proper training and attitude. Complacency or a lost respect for the sport can have serious outcomes. Numerous speculations exist about why accidents seem to happen more often at The Blue Hole than anywhere else.

The Arch is certainly what makes the Blue Hole so dangerous. It's also what makes it the best and different from any others of its kind. The appeal and sensation of diving the arch is second to none, but historically it's the depth and misinformation surrounding the arch that makes it so dangerous. With the top at 55m, it borders the limits of what some naive divers 'think' are achievable without the proper training or equipment. If it were 20m shallower, most problems with narcosis and lack of gas planning would be eliminated. 20m deeper would make it far beyond the limits of even the insane without

Further training and experience. But at 55m it provides the illusion that a visit to the arch is attainable and the rules of recreational diving (40m) and their training no longer apply.



The silhouette of the arch appears out of nowhere once you descend past 40-45m like a mirage in the surrounding desert. It is deceptive, giving the perception that you can simply penetrate the arch quickly and ascend on the other side. The closer and deeper inside you dive, the illusion fades and the reality of a 20m sloping

traverse becomes apparent. This causes sometimes fatal situations with stress and lack of gas planning. People have now been educated about the risks of The Arch and technical training has continued to grow, dramatically decreasing the number of fatalities annually. In recent years, only a few accidents have occurred at the blue hole and result from cases related to extreme diving, where the inherent risks are known and accepted.

### **Environmental Factors**

The environmental conditions and topography of the blue hole make it ideal for technical diving. Because the Blue hole lies on the inside a massive coral coastline, it is protected from already very moderate diving conditions. Inside you often have 40m visibility, no currents, warm water, and easily attainable visual references.

Technical diving brings on an array of new challenges for even the most experienced diver. The less environmental factors that can distract one's thoughts, the easier it is to concentrate on the importance of carrying out the necessary diving tasks safely. Focus can now be on trim and proper buoyancy rather than stressing about the possibility of a lost buddy in low visibility. Emphasis on proper NOTOX (gas switches) procedures can be accentuated without fighting a current and fatigue. It's these vital skills that should be the focus of any technical diving course. Those who like to play devils advocate use the lack of extreme environmental conditions as a negative for the blue hole, proclaiming it doesn't prepare you for other diving situations. It should be noted that no one-dive site prepares you for everything. Of course it is important to realize one's limitation and training, but it's equally important to get these basics perfected. It's these skills that are imperative to a solid technical diving foundation and vital for safe diving.



It's not only for beginner and novice divers that these environmental conditions are beneficial. A diver of any level can benefit and accelerate their skills in these conditions. Current depth records for open circuit and rebreather dives still occur here in Dahab, with numerous dives over 200m taking place in the nearby area. There are very few locations in the world that provide such possibilities in regards to depth and environment.

## Logistics

The logistics involved in technical diving are considerably elevated compared to normal recreational diving. The abundance of extra equipment and precision planning adds a level of organization to technical diving that most learn to love and appreciate. Depths are planned to down to the meter and time to the minute, requiring an elevated amount of focus. It's circumstances where small unplanned pre-dive situations arrive that stress can occur, which ultimately compounds into bigger and more dangerous situations. Most other dives of relative interest to technical divers command a boat as the only method of access. This demands that your dive plan must coincide with everyone else on the boat and the dive center itself. Last minute equipment repairs or unplanned personal situations can rush a dive or cancel it all together. At Blue Hole, coinciding with its relaxed atmosphere, a simple 5m walk from the beachfront restaurants will provide 100m+ of depth lingering below. You dive on your own time. You dive your own Plan. It's your dive and your dive only.



From a teaching aspect, this creates an atmosphere of tranquility that is second to none. Training dives are done literally 15m in front of the dive center. The gentle slope outside 'Lighthouse' provides perfect pool like conditions for trim and shallow water skills. A further 10m out lays a buoyancy course and enough

depth for simulated decompression dives. Yet a further 10m out the slope continues to drop making it an ideal 'office' for any technical course, all with occasional friendly visits from dolphins or a napoleon wrasse. Academics are done beachfront over a morning coffee, dive-planning discussions are done over lunch in the sun, and configuration debates steam into diner conversation. It's a diving town, seemingly put on this planet with one purpose

For us Team Blue Immersion ([www.blue-immersion.org](http://www.blue-immersion.org)) typical visits to the Blue Hole and The Arch start with planning done the night before. This leaves time to order the appropriate gases, visualize the dive, and make sure the plan for the following day is agreeable. Diving days starts whenever is preferred. The team is never rushed to catch a boat that leaves EXACTLY at 7 am, because taxis are tentatively order for 9:30 am. Pre-dive checks at the dive center are taken very serious, but still light hearted. The gases are almost certainly perfect, a result of some of best the gas blenders in the world. Any last minute changes or alterations of equipment that might otherwise spoil a dive day are done carefully, with the worst-case scenario being a slight delay in departure time. This delay is trivial as dive briefs, Bedouin tea, and banana shakes follow arrival to the Blue Hole. Ensuring that everyone is relaxed, mentally prepared, and not hustled before the dive eliminates all the little stresses that can compound and potentially turn fatal underwater.

## **Quality of Available Training**

Relatively unknown even a decade ago, technical diving has breached the mainstream boundary and become more popular than ever predicted. It's grown at an exponential rate with immense positive side effects. The endless calculations required for a dive plan years ago has been simplified into 'easier' to use computer software and equipment is safer and more readily available. Research and science into decompression theory is constantly developing and major diving organizations are forced to evolve in both depth and content.

Competition amongst instruction and dive schools in Dahab has produced a similar positive effect. The above mentioned environmental and logistical factors bring some of the best technical divers in the world to Dahab. Among these divers are also some of the best instructors in their desired field. With both businesses and reputations at stake, this competition forces instructors to be on the cutting edge unless to be let behind. Even instructors with years of experience may find it hard to enter a market like Dahab and those not willing to progress find themselves obsolete almost overnight. The result is a level instruction that is second to none for a student diver of all experience.

Divers who think they know everything and have nothing to learn instantly become participants in one of the most dangerous activities in the world. There is no place for egos in technical diving, as it's these egos that eventually hinder people from growing as a diver. If you keep both open eyes and an open mind, then you will be surprised what you can learn. You may find yourself learning things you want to avoid, but you will also find yourself surrounded and learning from some of the best technical divers in the world.

## **Conclusion**

The environmental conditions, ease of logistics, and available training individually make Dahab and the Blue Hole superior to most other locations in the world. There is a reason why this is where most records are broken. There is a reason behind frequent visits from the best divers in the world. But it is the combination of all three that make it the best training ground and mecca for technical divers of all levels.

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