



## Culture

### *Education and Social Enrichment*

## **Expert Urges Qatar to Develop Diving**

With over a hundred miles of unspoiled coastline, Qatar has excellent potential for being developed into an ideal destination for recreational diving tourism, an expert on diving and marine activities has said.

The warm, shallow waters of the Gulf make Qatar an ideal place for beginner divers. For diving enthusiasts, there are enough interesting sites to keep divers happily occupied, honing their skills.

“Good beaches and a number of potential dive spots are among Qatar’s biggest assets,” observed Amr Aboulfath, Chairman, South Sinai Association for Diving and Marine Activities.

Aboulfath, who has 17 years experience as a professional diver, also heads the Chamber of Tourism Establishments in Egypt and is a member of the Egyptian Tourism Ministry’s Supreme Council for Diving and Marine activities.

“Qatar could develop the sector in the lines of Sharm El Sheikh, one of the mainstays of Egypt’s tourism revenues,” said Aboulfath, who is collaborating with Doha’s Q-Dive Marine Center ([www.qdive.net](http://www.qdive.net)), which offers diving related activities.

About sixty percent (60%) of Egypt’s tourism income is generated from the recreational diving activities, according to the expert who runs two diving schools in Sharm El Sheikh, including the prestigious Ocean College.

“If there were just 18 hotels with less than 4,000 beds 15 years ago, now there are 128 hotels, with a total of 60,000 beds,” he said.

“Q-Dive has plans to conduct a host of events to promote Qatar as a unique destination for diving,” explained owner and General Manager Nasser bin Mohamed al-Attiya and Managing Director Khalid Hassan Zaki.

Q-Dive intends to expand Qatar’s map of dive sites to attract foreign tourists and promote diving, which is a sport for the whole family, stated al-Attiya and Zaki.

Al-Attiya is an expert diver and marine enthusiast who travels all over the world and Zaki is a professional diving instructor with 15 years experience.

### **Recreational diving catches on in Qatar**

Recreational diving is fast gaining popularity in Qatar, which is blessed with a number of good dive sites, an expert said

“An increasing number of nationals and expatriates can be seen converging on the dive sites during weekends,” Khalid Hassan Zaki, a professional diver for over 17 years, told Gulf Times in an interview

Though climatic conditions in Qatar are favorable for diving throughout the year, summer is the best time, because the water is be very warm on the surface and cool beneath, making diving a very pleasant and refreshing experience  
Summer is also the perfect season for night diving.

Zaki spoke of the different dive sites around Qatar, mentioning the old club reef and the new club reef, both located around the Sealine Beach Resort at Mesaieed as being among the most popular dive sites in the country

The presence of a few shipwrecks, a favorite among divers, is a highlight of some of the dive sites Another attraction, like the natural reef known as rubble tower, ideal for snorkeling with its four to eight meter depth range, is at Hallit Al Usairi.

There are more dive sites in and around the Inland Sea (Khor Al Udeid) and some at Dukhan and Shamal, according to Zaki, who is familiar with almost all dive sites in Qatar The drive to the Inland Sea area which covers terrain ranging from challenging sand dunes to flat lands, is in itself a thoroughly enjoyable experience, said the dive instructor.

“Anyone above 12 years, who knows the basics of swimming, can learn diving quickly with a few lessons,” maintains Zaki, who is also an underwater photo/videographer and member of the Qatar Photographic Society and the Qatar Scientific Club

Diving improves alertness and makes one more focused, he said

“The advantage of diving training is that you are prepared to avoid any problems and if at all something goes wrong you will be better enabled to handle the situation,” he added

Diving is an environmentally friendly activity as divers all over the world care for marine life

“Diving also serves as a strong support to the international tourism industry as groups of divers move from country to country exploring existing and potential dive sites,” Zaki remarked

The fact that the revenue from recreational diving constitutes a major chunk of the total tourism income of countries such as Egypt, Thailand, Australia and Maldives is the best example for the tourism potential of the activity

“Divers have clubs, societies and even dedicated magazines,” said Zaki adding that diving apparel and accessories have become a major sector in the global fashion industry

More than a sport, diving has emerged as lifestyle in itself,” observed Zaki.



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