



22 years and 2000 odd dives later, John Nicolson is still as crazy about diving as he was when icons such as Jacques Cousteau and Lotte & Hans Hass first encouraged him to venture beneath the waves



■ WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO DIVE?

● Unofficially I 'learned' to dive in a cold Scottish loch with a second hand kit. Officially I learned at Eastwood Sub Aqua club some 22 years ago. My first sea dive is one I remember well as it was in the sparkly blue seas of Tenerife where I produced my unsigned handbook, which they took to be a qualification and allowed me to dive. Sneaky, but worth it!

■ WHAT TYPE OF DIVER ARE YOU?

● I will openly admit that I have turned into the kind of diver I spent many years despising. That is to say, I now dive with a camera. It used to drive me crazy when I found myself stuck behind an underwater photographer, meticulously framing shots of some creature or another, but I am sorry to say that person is now me.

■ WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PIECE OF KIT?

● That has got to be my rebreather as it lets me dive deeper and for longer. It gives warm air which keeps me comfortable; I can dive deep without shelling out loads for trimix; there are no bubbles to scare away the fish; and because I can stay under for longer there is more chance of me getting some good pictures of all those fish that aren't scared.

■ DIVE BUDDY - WHO DO YOU ENJOY DIVING WITH MOST?

● I will have to be politically correct here and say my partner, Marion (for those who don't know her - she is small and dangerous!).

■ FAVOURITE DIVE SITE?

● The Cenotes in Mexico were amazing with 100 metre visibility, awe-inspiring rock formations, weird creatures and massive caverns. It was definitely my cup of tea.

■ BEST COUNTRY VISITED?

● This would be a toss-up between Mexico, the Maldives or Egypt. For me, the best diving in the world has to be at the Red Sea but I think I will answer the Maldives, which was a fantastic holiday destination with pretty spectacular diving



The fabulous Lotte Hass

thrown into boot. There are loads of sharks; hammerheads, blue tip, reef as well as massive moray eels. I did in fact win a photography competition while I was there (ran through our tour operator Tony Backhurst) for an image I took of a moray. I won a half price holiday and so we went to the Red Sea - not bad for something I actually enjoy doing.

■ WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO DIVING?

● It was Jacques Cousteau that first made me want to take up diving - so he is to blame, but nowadays it is the sheer thought of being underwater, taking photos and pinching things from wrecks that motivate me on a weekly basis. (Note to the Receiver of Wrecks - John is, of course, joking here - Editor).

■ DREAM DIVE BUDDY?

● Here's one for the old folk among us! Lotte Hass - I remember being quite mesmerised by Hans' images of her under the water in her bikinis - enough said really!

■ DREAM DIVE DESTINATION?

● This is one of two destinations for me - either the Galapagos or Truk. I will be going to one or the other next year although I am favouring the Galapagos at the moment as I want to see all the amazing creatures it is home to before it is too late. I don't think they will allow divers there for very much longer and I need to get out there while I still can.

■ BEST DIVE BOOK EVER READ?

● I don't read many books as I spend all my free time actually in the water. I would much rather experience it myself than read about it in a book.

■ WHAT BUGS YOU MOST ABOUT DIVING?

● Bad visibility drives me up the wall as it means I am unable to take decent pictures or see clearly enough to pinch off the wrecks! (You're labouring this one - Editor)

■ HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DIVING TO NON-DIVERS?

● I have to describe it all the time to trainees in the pool - but put on the spot like this I am struggling to find the words. There is of course the feeling of weightlessness, going to places no one has been before and seeing things that other people can only read about. But summed up into just two words I would say it is 'Great Fun' - pure and simple.

Join diving enthusiast John Nicholson at his website - www.finstrokes.com



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