

A Hidden Gem

Patrick Shier's visit north to the small fishing village of

Rosehearty was a photographer's delight with no end of marine

life to spot and capture - here he tells readers of **SCOTTISH DIVER**

how to get the best from a dive in this unique spot ...

WHO WOULD believe that an old historic fishing village situated on the northeast tip of Scotland would attract so many visitors from all over the UK, all of which return time after time? As you travel along the coastal road leading into Rosehearty you will notice a number of small, sheltered harbours that are home to the many fishing boats that rely on the area for their very existence. Being rich in nutrients the area attracts a diverse range of marine life and is probably the reason Rosehearty has been associated with fishing for over 600 years.

Now though, scuba diving has taken

off in a big way as there is something for everyone. There are plenty of wrecks at varying depths for the wreck enthusiasts and colourful reefs with diverse marine life both of which put this dive at the top of a 'to do list'.

THE DIVE SITE

You can park close to the beach in the small carpark, but arrive early as it can get very busy. Entry to the sea is at the tip of the large gully on the right-hand side. It is best to take your kit to the entry point in stages and then kit up, as you have to cross a section of slippery volcanic rock. Once kitted up and

buddy checked, it's a giant stride in to the clear blue water. Depth at the point of entry is around two metres and then after a couple of fin kicks there is a sharp drop to 6 metres.

This dive site is known for its good visibility which can be as awesome as 30 metres, but what will surprise you is the amount of colour and marine life waiting to greet you at such an early stage of the dive. Although it doesn't matter which way round you do the dive, you will find virtually all of the marine life and colour if you start the dive with the reef on your right shoulder.

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urchin and starfish



bloody henry starfish

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scorpionfish



horseman anemone

Follow the contour round until you reach a depth of around 9 metres and at this depth you should find one of the three swim throughs that are literally covered in deadmens fingers, plumose anemones, soft coral and sponges. The width at the entrance is around one and a half metres and has a length of 10 metres so only go through it if you have overhead experience or are with a guide. Shine a torch along the wall and watch as it comes to life.

Once through continue on and you will come to a basin around 30 metres in diameter and with a depth of 12 metres. Here you will find all manner of marine life including many shoaling fish such as saithe, mackerel and pollack. The seabed in the basin is made up of volcanic rock and is alive with crustaceans such as lobsters, edible crabs, hermit crabs and squaties and if you look closely enough you will find that it is an ideal home for octopus and squid.

There are three pinnacles on your left, together they have a total diameter of around 20 metres. To get to them follow any one of the gullies, you will find that they are all alive with colour and have something new for you to look at or photograph.

Try not to rush as there are kelp beds in the gullies that really do warrant time spent investigating, as wolf fish and monk fish (normally found in deep water) have been spotted hiding here, along with scorpion fish. Smaller creatures such as nudibranchs, sea hares and pipefish can be found either on the kelp or climbing over the sponges and soft corals.

Dolphins, minky whales and basking sharks have all been found in the area on a regular basis so keep your eyes open and cameras ready. Between the pinnacles there are areas of sand where skate and dogfish reside; also fishermen place lobster pots here so make sure you have an SMB with you to notify any boat traffic that you are below them.

Moving round to the right you will get to a maximum depth of 18 metres as you reach the open sea. Here you might find a gentle current pushing you one way or the other so keep an eye on your air and dive time. If you haven't dived here before it's worth employing the use of a dive guide as there is so much to see and investigate. And if you think a day dive sounds good then I recommend that you try a night dive as you won't believe how much more life there is to see.

FACTFILE

USEFUL INFORMATION

You can dive here at any state of the tide but it's worth pointing out that the nearest dive centre for air fills is in Aberdeen, some 40 miles away, so if you plan to make more than one dive or need to hire equipment contact them first.

There are toilets that provide a sheltered area for changing into and out of your kit and fresh water to rinse equipment down once you have finished for the day. There are also a number of restaurants and cafes in the area for that all important cup of tea and bacon sarnie.

HOW TO GET THERE

From Aberdeen follow the A90 until you reach Fraserburgh, here you will turn right on to the coast road B9031, signposted Sandhaven and Rosehearty. Continue on to main street entering Sandhaven and then shortly afterwards the road enters Rosehearty, follow the road on through the town until you reach the carpark.



dahlia anemone



dead mens fingers



plumose anemone



pogge



plumose anemone

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