



Photo: Aaron Wong

# Diving & Snorkelling

[www.seychelles.travel](http://www.seychelles.travel)



the seychelles islands  
another world



Photo: Tony Baskeyfield

## **Dive into another world where few have yet ventured**

Diving in Seychelles is your portal to a vast, extraordinary world and one that promises marine extravaganzas as diverse and vibrant as they are unique.

The Seychelles archipelago's 115 granitic and coralline islands are sprinkled like emeralds over one million square kilometres of the Indian Ocean between 4 and 10 degrees south of the equator, forming a sparkling archipelago widely believed to be the most beautiful on earth. The 43 granitic islands cluster around the principal island of Mahé while the more numerous coral islands extend in an arc towards Madagascar.

In this area of perpetual summer, Seychelles' enjoys comfortable year-round temperatures of between 24°C to 30°C and lies outside the cyclone belt, offering year-round diving and snorkelling for novices and experts alike. Colourful reef fish, octopus, lobster and turtle are abundant in the waters of the Inner Islands and around their ancient granite boulders reefs while more adventurous dives offshore include the famous 'Ennerdale' wreck and rocky pinnacles which are the haunt of larger groupers and stingrays.

You can also experience the thrill of swimming with whale sharks, those gentle giants of the sea that are regular visitors to Seychelles waters or diving the spectacular coral walls of the Outer Islands from one of the live-aboards. The dedicated and accredited diving centres of most hotels and island resorts offer everything from one-day introductory courses to international diving instructor certificates.

The beauty of the Seychelles underwater experience is that the abundance of marine life in clear waters means that snorkelling can be every bit as rewarding as taking the plunge into the deep, with an ever-present kaleidoscope of marine life on parade close to shore in impressive displays of colour. Snorkelling equipment is available for sale or rent at most dive centres.

## **Seasons & Conditions**

Diving is possible all year round but is largely governed by an island's position and the prevailing winds. Generally speaking, the best conditions for both the Inner and Outer Islands are in the calm periods, April-May and October-November, when the water temperature can rise to 29°C and offers excellent (up to 30 metres) visibility.

In December and January, the north-west winds blow but conditions remain much the same as in the calm periods, with the exception of greater surface movement and some localised turbidity. From May to September the winds are stronger and blow south-easterly so most diving is on protected sites on the north and west side of the islands.



Photo: Courtesy of Subios Underwater Festival 2008

Visibility and temperature drop during August with water temperatures of around 25°C. A long wet suit of at least 3mm is recommended at all times. Unlike the Inner Islands, some of the more southerly Outer Islands are close to the cyclone belt, and during these months (November to May) they can experience extremely rough conditions on occasion. A 3mm shorty wetsuit is the minimum protection recommended for the Outer Islands reef. Islands with big drop-offs and walls often have marked thermo-clines with temperatures ranging from 19°C to 27°C and a full suit is an advantage for most divers.

## **Dive types & depths**

With 43 Inner Islands to choose from, variety is the order of the day. All of these northerly islands offer impressive granite reef locations where the sculptured rocks can be covered with soft corals and sponges, and fish life is prolific, due to the archipelago's isolation and also strict conservation rules. Wreck dives are available in some areas but only the islands to the south have wall or drop-off dives and drift diving opportunities as well.

Outer Island diving is rich and varied, featuring everything from mini-walls and canyons to migrating Manta Rays, numerous wreck sites and some of the finest Gorgonian fans in the Indian Ocean. Diving on Aldabra's terraced walls is dramatic and Green Turtles are common both in water and on their habitual pilgrimages up the beach to nest. The Cosmoledo atoll offers huge hard coral bommies with 3 metre Gorgonian fans and massive barrel sponges all under the watchful guard of inquisitive Potato Bass. Astove's settlement reef presents another awe-inspiring wall dive whose reef top is incised with crevasses and caves and boasts a large resident Green Turtle population. Dive depths vary, ranging from 8 to 20 metres for inshore sites and up to depths of 40 metres for dives offshore.

## **Marine Life**

The Inner Islands' marine life reveals an abundance of fish even on shallow inshore reefs and features different types of Butterfly fish and Angel fish, Soldier fish, Squirrel fish and Sweepers among many others. The island reefs are also havens for many invertebrates including Octopus, Spiny Lobster and a plethora of Nudibranchs, such as the Spanish Dancer. Sites with regular current flows support fan corals and colourful tree coral formations while more remote sites shelter the larger fish species, such as the Napoleon Wrasse, Giant Grouper, Reef Sharks and Ribbon-tailed Stingrays. Most spectacular are the plankton-eating Whale Sharks found around the Inner Islands, with peak sightings in August to October.





Marine life around the relatively isolated Outer Islands tends to be even more prolific, with frequent sightings of many of the larger grouper species, particularly the spotted Potato Bass as well as Grey Reef, Silver Tip, Nurse and the occasional Hammerhead Shark. A number of rare exotics have been identified from this area such as the African Pygmy Angelfish thought to exist only in small numbers at depth off Mauritius and now found regularly in easy diving depths off Astove. The cartoon-like Yellow Rubber Lipped Sweetlips is another firm favorite while elusive Long-Nosed Hawkfish can be easily found in most Gorgonian fan areas.

## **Diving Tips**

Seychelles offers year-round diving experiences in waters mainly outside the cyclone belt and dive centers around the country cater for novice and experienced divers alike, offering a number of specialised courses. Divers should bring proof of certification and medical clearance for any medical problem. Due to the remote location of both the inner and outer islands, we advise all divers to have a DAN (Divers Alert Network) insurance. Most dive centres offer modern dive equipment rental and service facilities. However, repair facilities for divers' own gear may be limited, subject to availability of specific spare parts.

## **Certification & Medical**

Divers need to bring proof of certification to be allowed to dive. However, those who have lost or forgotten their certification cards or log-books may be allowed to dive with a dive master to a maximum depth of 12 metres, at the discretion of the dive centre. Those planning to take a diving course who have had a previous medical problem, should obtain and bring with them a certificate from their doctor indicating that they are fit to dive. Local physicians in Seychelles are able to perform a diving medical if required.

## **Education & Courses**

Any medically fit person over the age of 10 and able to swim can learn to dive. Diver training is conducted by internationally qualified and insured instructors most of whom are members of PADI, the Professional Association of Diving Instructors, the world's largest diver training organisation. A non-certification "Discover Scuba Diving" introductory course for first timers is available leading either to the basic "Scuba Diver" qualification or a full certification as "Open Water" Diver. Experienced diver courses are available to instructor level with specialty certifications available from certain centres, such as underwater photography, wreck and night diving.





Photo: Henri Eskenazi



## **Equipment rental & purchase**

For visitors not wishing to bring their own, all licensed dive centres rent out properly maintained, modern diving equipment which is inspected on a regular basis. The centres also have a range of other beach accessories available, including snorkelling equipment.

## **Flying after diving**

To minimise the possibility of a decompression incident at the end of a diving vacation, the current recommendation is that divers should leave a minimum of 12 hours after a single non-decompression dive before flying and 24 hours after multiple non-decompression dives; whenever possible, a 24-hour period is recommended. Dive centres will not allow divers to dive on the morning of departure or prior to an inter-island or helicopter flight!

## **SUBIOS: Seychelles Festival of the Sea.**

SUBIOS (Sub-Indian Ocean Seychelles) is the country's annual underwater photo and film festival, with an aim toward showcasing the islands' extraordinary marine world and promoting Seychelles as an ideal diving destination, as well as to sensitise the local population to the beauty beneath the waves.

The festival includes not only its annual photographic and video competition but also features film shows, a triathlon and Cyber Treasure Hunt. SUBIOS promises dedicated events at hotels and a special schools programme to educate the nation's youth concerning the beauty and fragility of the islands' marine eco-systems.

For more information, please visit [www.subios.com](http://www.subios.com)











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