



General Information

DIVING IN MALTA

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New regulations governing scuba diving in Malta were passed in 2004 and the Malta Tourism Authority governs scuba diving. Prior to the current legislation, diving was previously regulated by the Department of Health. The principal changes involve the introduction of sensible health and safety regulations designed to ensure the high standards of dive centres.

Also included in the legislation are important issues that will be of great interest to visiting divers:

Maltese Diving permits

There is now no longer the requirement of divers needing a current medical certificate signed by a doctor. Divers self-declare their fitness to dive on arrival at a dive centre in Malta. If a diver declares certain conditions, a medical examination will be required (a similar process to the BSAC system). Divers will also need to complete a form stating qualifications, experience, together with personal details (name, address, passport or other photo ID). Some dive centres may also ask for a photocopy of qualifications. Both these completed forms are required to be kept by the dive centre for six months. The previous issuing of the Maltese Sports Diving Card and associated cost, is now discontinued.

Instructors also no longer require an instructor's c-card, but they must register a photocopy of their qualifications with the dive center they are using and obtain the approval of that dive centre.

In the case, for example of BSAC divers diving as an independent group rather than with a dive centre, the forms must still be completed for the dive centre where cylinders are being filled

Nitrox and Trimix

These diving gasses are now sanctioned by the authorities in Malta for recreational scuba diving and many dive centres have installed the necessary blending equipment.

Minimum age revoked

The previous minimum age regulation of 14 to dive at Malta has now been revoked - the limitation now only being that dive centres can provide suitable equipment for young people. Under 18s will still need written approval of a parent or legal guardian.

Boat licences

Currently, anyone wishing to drive a boat with more than an 80hp motor must have a licence issued by the Malta Maritime Authority. This is set to change over the course of the next two years so that eventually, ALL powerboat users will be required to have a licence, including jetskis and 3hp runabouts. Foreigners wishing to obtain a licence can either:

1. Apply to the MMA and sit the entire two week course or
2. Bring their qualification (BSAC Boat Handling is fine) and sit a one-hour orientation course. This can be arranged in advance.

The responsible Dive Centres in Malta have welcomed these new regulations. Although the health and safety requirements are stringent, the more professional centres already meet and exceed the necessary standards.

There are a few areas of the Maltese Coast where diving is prohibited because of heavy shipping, environmental or archaeological reasons. It is the divers' responsibility to ascertain whether their intended site is permitted. Ask at the dive centre. The removal of archaeological artefacts is a criminal offence, as is breaking the diving regulations. The use of a spear gun (which is classified as a weapon) without a licence is also a criminal offence.