

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: Jeff Lindsay talks about shipwrecks in the Great Lakes at the Diving Talks conference, which took place in Portugal in October 2021; Mark Powell giving his presentation; Aqualuz Troia Mar & Rio Hotel at Tróia Resort complex; Immi Walling talks about her ongoing search for WWII wrecks in the Gulf of Finland (below)

Dive Shows Are Back

Text and photos by Peter Symes

Dive shows and events are back after a long hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It felt a bit surreal heading to the airport again for the first time in almost two years. I used to frequently attend various dive shows, events and conferences and go through the airport as a matter of routine. But that was before the pandemic shut everything down some 21 months ago.

For the duration, I have felt relatively safe from Covid-19 by staying put in my office and residing in a country exercising responsible and effective handling of the pandemic, but now I was once again on my way to another country, passing through airports and was about to become exposed to crowds of people from all over. Ah well, I thought, one cannot sit caged up forever.

As I was on my way to Diving Talks in Portugal and boarded my flight to Lisbon, I also felt excited about attending the first dive event since January 2020

and interacting with the dive community again. I also plainly looked forward to visiting Portugal.

The flight from Northern Europe was straightforward and uncomplicated. It took a little over three hours, and upon arrival, I was greeted by members of the event's organising team who transferred me, and some other attendees, to Tróia resort, which is located about an hour's transport south of Lisbon. This was where I was going to spend the next two days and nights.

Since I was not an exhibitor or a presenter, I had no responsibilities or tasks to perform other than to network and catch up with industry colleagues I had not seen in a long while. Thus, I could take it a bit easier this time around and mostly just observe things, which I appreciated.

The Tróia resort, with its big and

spacious hotel complex, seemed quite well suited for hosting an event of this type and size. It had a conference centre in an annex on the premise, placed on the opposite side of the spacious outside pool area. The hotel rooms were also nice and quite spacious, albeit I found mine a tad too impersonal to be cosy. On the upside, the

whole resort complex is surrounded by beaches and a nature reserve, which I however did not have time to explore much this time around, aside from a short walk on the beach behind the ho-

tel. I did, however, have a direct view to the crescent moon rising on the western horizon.

Inaugural event

As this was an inaugural event,



Landing in Lisbon offers a perfect view of the downtown area and historic centre.





A taste of Portugal (top row left to right); Ahmed Gabr going through his depth record dive (below); Divers heading out of Peniche, towards the Berlengas (centre)



I could not help wondering how many teething problems would appear, as putting on a conference with international attendance and a string of presenters, some of whom had to give their presentations via video-link due to the pandemic, is a complex endeavour. There was just such a myriad of potential disconnects, coordination challenges or technical hiccups that could throw a spanner in the works, but I found that the event ran smoothly, at least from a casual observer's point of view.

During post-event conversations with the organiser, Arlindo Serrao, he related to me that there were various aspects that did not quite go as planned, or that there were some parts of the event and choices made with which



he was not all that pleased. While I applauded his striving for perfection and a mindset of looking into how matters could be improved. I also felt he was a tad too

harsh on himself.

Again, with a complex arrangement, it is quite difficult to ensure every detail and process unfolds to perfection, and to have the foresight to anticipate and pre-empt every combination of issues that may arise, and get every arrangement just right. Most often, potential improvements are at best, or only, spotted in hindsight. More importantly, I do not think anyone took notice of any imperfections. The bottom line, as far as I am concerned, is that the organisers did a pretty good job, and the event unfolded as smoothly as could be reasonably expected.

Unlike several other conferences, there were not any parallel sessions but just a single string of presentations. This was a deliberate choice, Serrao explained, to not force attendees to choose.

As I understand that this single line of sessions will be a policy carrying over to



Sylvia Earle was one of several overseas presenters who was prevented from being present in person this year because of the pandemic but instead gave a talk via video-link during which she expressed her desire to take part in person next time.



Sami Paakkarinen, a technical, cave and rebreather instructor based in Finland, gave a talk on exploring a cave on northern Norway.



Diving Talks organiser Arlindo Serrao



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Berlingas Island as seen from Peniche; Cobble streets in Obidos; Town of Obidos; Lisbon tram; Although the origins are difficult to trace, Fado is a musical genre that can be traced to the 1820s in Lisbon.



the next event, which is going to be held next year, I find there are both benefits and drawbacks to this approach. The main challenge I foresee is that a single line of sessions will require that every single presenter is both top class and the topics of their talks is of general interest. It was not quite the case this time around.

The line-up of presenters covered various topics, including technical diving, dive medicine, ecology, NGOs, destinations and some new equip-

ment. Also, some public agencies such as the Portuguese Navy and Search & Rescue organisation gave overviews of their organisations.

As such, the event was not a tech conference such as EuroTek, DiveTekUSA or OZTek, and although the format was similar, it covered a much broader variety of topics.

While there were some stellar presenters and crowd-pleasers, such as Sylvia Earle giving a presentation via video-link, and many others were quite good too, there were also a couple of talks I found either uninteresting or just poorly performed. Presenting is a skill, and while some are natural entertainers and excellent teachers, there are others who either struggle with the format or are, dare I say, outright boring to listen to. Having said that, I would like to stress that most presentations, including those who had to be conducted via video-link because of travel restrictions, were of high quality and well worth attending the conference for.

Presentations aside

What also made this event extra

pleasant was the great food, and that the temperature outdoors was very comfortable and balmy. When compared to so many other conferences, which are often held during late fall or winter in colder and darker regions, being able to sit outside and dine in pleasant temperatures and still be able to walk around in shorts and short sleeves was a real bonus.

After the event, we were given the opportunity to go on a tour for a couple of days to see more of the country before we returned home. This tour, guided by Serrao, took us up to the seaside municipality of Peniche, a fishing town also known for its long beaches and watersports, where we spent a couple of days. Just some 10km off the coast of the Peniche, the Berlengas Islands form a nature reserve where there is also good diving, which I hope to try some other time.

Before returning to Lisbon, where

we were given a guided tour courtesy of the city's tourism authority, we stopped at the historic town of Obidos, which could trace its roots back to a Celtic settlement, and later, to an ancient Roman one. ■

Text and photos
by Michael Menduno

What do you get when you bring together a group of 60 enthusiastic technical divers from a dozen countries; provide boats and beach access, rebreathers, doubles and scooters; ply them with plenty of helium, nitrox, oxygen and sorb; supply nightly brain food and then turn them loose—sans gloves—on some of the most bodacious reefs on the planet? An epic week of unforgettable diving and community!

Masks off to Buddy Dive Resort and especially, German Arango, aka "Mr G," and his tech team for making the tenth-anniversary edition of Bonaire Tek (sponsored by AP Diving, Buddy Dive, DAN World, Dive Rite, Halcyon, O'Dive, SANTI and Sub-Gravity) a huge success.

Attendees were not only treated to some amazing reef and wreck diving—with water temperatures at 28°C and visibility of 30m or more—but fed a diet of heady nightly talks on subjects ranging from human factors in diving to an inside look at DAN World and their new incident reporting system, as well as algorithmic implementations



Bodacious Bonaire Tek 2-9 October 2021

in dive computers, creating custom decompression protocols, and the use of hydrogen for über-deep dives. We also paid a tribute to the irrepressible and much-loved anesthesiologist and hyperbaric physician, Dr Fiona Sharp, who died in a solo rebreather diving **accident** at Bonaire, three days after Bonaire Tek 2019. She will be sorely missed.

The theme of this year's event was improving diving safety, which was the focus of most of the talks. As part of the program, DAN World Research Director Frauke Tillmans and team monitored and collected bubble data from willing participants as part of a

research study. A representative from Azoth Systems, which make the O'Dive connected (Doppler) sensor, was also there to demonstrate the O'Dive sensor and software and take diver bubble measurements. The good news: No one got bent—though several people,

including myself, adjusted their gradient factors as a result.

We wrapped up the event with a kilometer-long afternoon swim to Klein Bonaire, the island just across the channel from Buddy Dive Resort—a perfect ending, at least for a swimmer like me.

Events like Bonaire Tek remind one of how much fun technical diving can be and the joy of being part of the community. I will definitely be back for more.

Here is a little taste of the event, created by photographer, filmmaker and diver Lorenzo Mittiga. Check it out at: **Bonaire Tek 10th Anniversary** ■



Click on the screenshot to go to Lorenzo Mittiga's video of the event



THIS PAGE: Scenes from Buddy Dive Resort in Bonaire



Edited by
G Symes

View over
the Malaysia
International Dive
Expo in Kuala
Lumpur in 2019



COURTESY OF MIDE

Malaysia International Dive Expo is back!

After a break of over 20 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, MIDE is finally back on 3-5 December 2021 at the World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur. It will be the show's 15th year of exhibition, given 2020 was a write-off.

The show's focus will be on reconnecting Malaysian dive businesses with the local dive community, encouraging fellow underwater enthusiasts to visit the many local dive destinations found in Malaysia. Hence, this year's theme will be "Let's Meet & Dive Locally."

In a press release, the show organizers wrote: "As we know, the pandemic has crippled the economy and destroyed many businesses. Without a doubt, this has been one of the most challenging times for us in the dive industry. The rollercoaster of 2020's standard operating procedures saw many stop-starts across every industry, including ours, taking a toll on all aspects of running a business."

"Indeed, it has been a long and weary road for everyone, but the light at the end of the tunnel is bright, and we look forward to end

2021 with a bang! Welcoming back our dive community of water lovers, businesses, underwater experts and partners, we look to spearhead our beloved industry into 2022 with sheer excitement and enthusiasm!"

What to expect at MIDE 2021
Due to the standard operating procedures and concerns throughout the pandemic, MIDE will be presenting more of a boutique show. Visitors will discover and enjoy a balanced mix of exhibitors from dive operators and destination tourism bureaus to dive equipment suppliers and more.

A variety of presenters and speakers will share their knowledge and expertise on various topics, including marine life, sustainability, photography, diver health and more.

Once again, with a minimum spend at the expo, there is a chance for attendees to win some fabulous prizes, courtesy of the exhibitors.

Health and safety

Responding to the new norms while adhering to strict guidelines laid out by the Malaysian health and security authorities (MKN and KKM), the show's setup and thorough screening facilities will assure the health and

safety of all staff members, crew, exhibitors and attendees.

Visitors will need to check in with the MySejahtera QR code, and temperatures will be taken before admittance into the exhibition hall. While attending the expo, physical distancing among visitors, exhibitors and team members will also need to be observed, in accordance with the guidelines.

Since visitor numbers are limited, team members at the door will maintain proper order of all visitors entering the exhibition hall, while keeping track of the number of attendees inside the show at all times.

About MIDE

Since 2006, the Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) has been a very popular international event, drawing over 10,000 recorded visitors every year. With 95% of MIDE attendees being divers with backgrounds in recreational, technical, occupational and commercial diving, the expo has become a platform that connects and welcomes divers and major industry players to Malaysia and the world of dive business.

For more information, please visit: mide.com.my.

MIDE 2021 - BACK IN ACTION



MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL
DIVE EXPO
3-5 DEC 2021
WORLD TRADE CENTRE, KUALA LUMPUR



“ LET’S MEET & DIVE LOCALLY ”

Mark your calendar! We will see you very soon!



For more information, contact us 603 7980 9902 or email info@mide.com.my

