

Budleigh Salterton

For those of you that don't know, I thought that I would put some of my knowledge of this dive venue down on paper for your info

ACCESS BY ROAD

About the easiest site you'll ever have to get to from Gloucester. Straight down the M5 & turn left @ Exeter. 1 hour 45 mins usually does it. Great car park @ the Eastern end of the beach & you can always (providing you're there before 10 am), park exactly where you want (at the front nearest the beach)

ACCESS TO WATER

Not bad, down a shingle beach @ any state of the tide. Makes you puff a bit getting out especially if you've come up a long way from where you went in (& of course you won't do that)

NAVIGATION

Easy. South out, North in; get that wrong & you're in trouble & I hope you speak French. Once you're on the reef, it runs East West

DEPTH

9-10 meters, quite easy to get 70 mins on a 10 litre

WHAT'S THERE TO SEE

Well here's where it gets like chalk & cheese, if you stay within about 250 meters of the shore, there is a sandy bottom & there ain't much to see, but it's ideal to get your sea legs & do a bit of training. If you go out a little further you get onto a reef that runs parallel with the shore. It starts as shale then turns into small upstands of rock, at places (towards the West) there are rocks & overhangs up to 3meters tall. Some of which, you can get under. Actually quite mind blowing when you get it right.

GENERAL

No air, without going a long way.

Good toilets.

Something for the family as they can walk into the town & spend your money (Budleigh is very attractive & with good luck all the shops will be shut)

If the wind is blowing from the South more than 3 or 4, go somewhere else. Blowing from the North is ideal

There is a fresh water outlet there & you get a haze when the fresh water mixes with the salt (not a problem provided you know what it is & you'll swim through it)

I've done this one once with a person who will remain nameless & found the most fantastic part of the reef, (huge overhang) where you virtually have to force the fish out from; they then hang around in the open waiting for you to leave, the overhang is as big as a room, quite exhilarating!!

UPDATE

Having learnt a bit more about the underwater topography, I think that there is an opportunity to enter the water from along the main seafront road, as near to the car park mentioned above as possible (by a telephone box). The reef straight out from there is better than farther East & the swim out is between 5 & 7 minutes, as opposed to @ least 10 mins.

On Springs, just after high tide there was a strong current running parallel with the beach, West to East

UPDATE 1

Dived this reef Sept 2004 (low tide), before entering the water we walked about 200m West before entering the water, then we swam out @ about 70 degrees to the shore. Shortly past the large yellow swim buoys, we located the start of the reef (could see it from the surface). This was obviously a good part of the reef with some good overhangs & ledges, at one point we found the reef on both sides of us (shore side & seaward side)

I have now had the benefit of looking at aerial photos of this region & see that the reef stops @ approx the telephone box & looks like a large island (it doesn't look as though it is connected to the exposed reef to the East. There also looks like there is a small sandy part in the middle & I guess this was the part that looked like a reef either side of us. There was a tremendous amount of large Wrasse around, plus shoals of Pollack & a couple of Bass

UPDATE 2

Dived this again in Oct 2004 (high tide neaps) & walked West again & entered the water opposite the toilets, again swam out @ approx 70 degrees. Firstly got on to shale & then onto proper parts of reef. I found the best part of the reef (after a bit of time, some swimming West, but also East) with a 3m wall facing South, a few meters East of this was what I think is the part of the reef that I have referred to previously as having the large overhang, there was certainly a large overhang, but I'm not 100% convinced it was the same overhang that I have referred to previously. When I had investigated this overhang, I swam back to shore, taking a bearing about 10degrees. I was surprised how far East this took me, inferring that I left the reef (& an exceptionally good part of the reef), a lot further East than I had thought----- This is also leading me to think that here are at least a couple of good bits to this reef!

UPDATE 3

Dived this in Aug 2005 (low tide springs). I didn't walk as far as the toilets, but entered the water about 80m before the toilet block, swam virtually straight out (slight current running West to East), went down after approx 10 minutes on surface, another 3 mins & I was on the shale part of the reef, I kept heading out to sea & started coming across rocky upstands, when I was on these I turned & swam West, after only a minute or so I found the spectacular overhangs referred to previously. At this point in the summer it is deceptive, as long lengths of weed obscure the overhangs.

The smallest part of the overhang runs N to S, the larger overhang which you can swim underneath, is slightly (only about 3m) SE of this. It appears to be all one rock (10m by 10m) that has overhangs on almost 3 sides. Underneath parts of this overhang live a pair of Wrasse, the biggest I have ever seen, even allowing for magnification they were 600mm long & 300mm deep, they were so big they reminded me of the Napoleon Wrasse that you see photos of from exotic destinations.

I looked for the 3m wall mentioned above, but this has to be further East. I swam East for 5 mins & did not see any sign of it. I swam back heading due North (slight bias to East) & finished up approx 200m East of where I had entered, after 18 mins swimming (no noticeable current)

Paul Cooper