

What Lies Beneath

Don't just read history, live it below the waves on a wreck dive

By **Sharon Loh** PADI Diving Society Marketing Executive, PADI Asia Pacific

I RECENTLY DIVED the wreck of the SS Yongala in Ayr, off the Coast of Cape Bowling Green in North Queensland, Australia. This 109m-long vessel sank in 1911 and is one of the most popular wrecks to dive in Asia Pacific. The dive got me thinking about what happened to the ship: Why did it sink? What's in it? Who were the people sailing her, and what happened to them?

That dive opened up a hidden fascination with shipwrecks. Some wrecks, being the only solid structure to be found for miles, become artificial reefs that attract aquatic life. The SS Yongala in particular is covered in a concentration of brightly coloured soft and hard corals, hydroids and sea fans. Even the marine creatures seemed to be on steroids – everything was huge! From large and friendly groupers, trevally, turtles and batfish to large pelagic like barracudas, kingfish, mantas and the occasional minke whales and humpbacks.

Diving alongside the Yongala you'd see the rudder, engine and steam rooms, toilets, portholes and most of the ship's nameplate even after almost 100 years underwater. This historic wreck is a cultural landmark, and is registered on the Queensland National Estate as a heritage site. Today, divers are no longer allowed to enter the wreck, as the air bubbles trapped inside would corrode it.

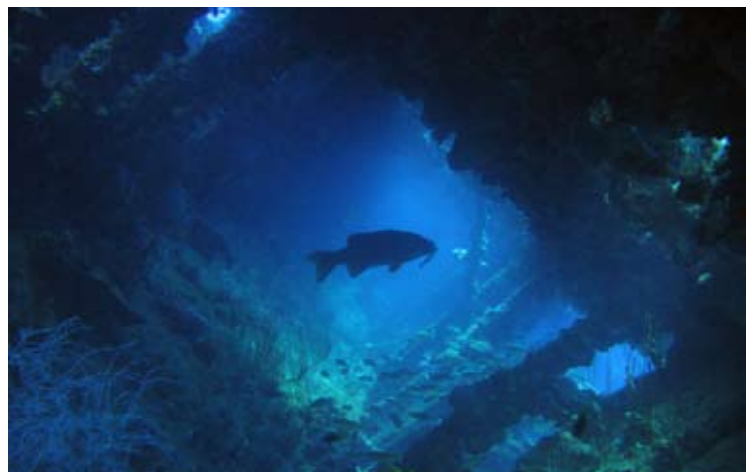
Back on the boat, our dive guide debriefed us and took us back nearly a century in time. I could nearly imagine the mayhem on the Yongala where she sank during that fateful cyclone. It was such a humbling experience and a sense of honour to have just experienced diving on the magical site.

Thankfully it's possible to experience wreck diving safely and have lots of fun too! The PADI Wreck Diver Specialty Course helps you to get the most out of wreck diving. If you're looking to experience another realm of diving in underwater exploration I'd strongly recommend taking the PADI Wreck Diver Specialty Course – your key to knowing the ins and outs of discovering a wreck safely. I can't wait to be a better-trained wreck diver through the PADI Wreck Diver Specialty Course and open up endless opportunities to other maritime history.

HOW IT BENEFITS YOU

Wreck diving heightens your personal diving experience and is all about fun, adventure, and skills. You'll be able to satisfy your curiosity and experience firsthand what's in the wreck. Wrecks attract an abundance of marine life generally as they are artificial reefs, presenting amazing photo and video opportunities.

Some divers have strong interest in history or they are engaged in research or work with archeologists and historians; whereas some divers are simply fascinated by wreck diving skills and techniques. Regardless of the reason, divers have always



congregated in and around wrecks. You only need to look at the number of dive travel packages that include wreck diving to see how popular it is. Wrecks are tangible historical resources that you have direct access to.

WHAT YOU LEARN

The PADI Wreck Diver Specialty Course teaches you all the fundamentals of wreck diving and explains techniques to help explore a wreck safely. The course contains four scuba dives for practising these skills in the open water.

SPECIAL SKILLS

One of the great things about wreck diving is that you don't necessarily have to travel any farther than your local lake, river, or nearby coastline to find some really interesting wrecks – presenting you invaluable opportunities to appreciate history. A wreck worthy of a dive doesn't have to be a battleship, freighter or even a boat. You can have exciting dives on wrecks such as sunken airplanes or automobiles.

The PADI Wreck Diver Specialty Course will provide you with the formal training to truly enjoy the wonder of wreck diving because safe wreck diving requires some unique procedures, techniques and specialised equipment. Signed up yet? Use the grid below to find out what's involved and to help you plan for your next diving adventure. Don't forget, the PADI Wreck Diver Specialty Course counts toward your PADI Master Scuba Diver rating!

PADI WRECK DIVER SPECIALTY COURSE AT A GLANCE:

PREREQUISITES

Be certified as a PADI Open Water Diver or have a qualifying entry-level certification from another training organisation. Minimum age requirement: 15 years.

DIVE REQUIREMENTS

Four open water training dives over two days.

For more information on the PADI Wreck Diver Specialty Course, visit your nearest PADI Dive Centre/Resort, or PADI.com