



AquastarsDive Centres and Dive Safaris

What to bring/pack? Sorry this looks long but please read.

The timeless question, especially for girls! Here are some tips for what to bring and what not to bring. Remember it's hot and you are on a boat so you are really not going to need much more than you swim and sleep in (ok and possibly waterproof mascara if you really want). We have had some guests come with hair straighteners really these are not needed.

The only daft question is the one which isn't asked so please just send an email/facebook post through if you are not sure about anything.

HAND LUGGAGE

- Pen to complete your visa forms
- 25\$USD for your visa (current at June 2018)
- Check with your airline re tablets/laptops some have been a bit odd about what you can and cannot carry.

PAPERWORK

Valid Passport: It must be valid for 6 months after your return date. Visas are needed currently \$25 and you buy this ON ARRIVAL at the airport before you get to passport control – will send further instructions before you fly.

Photocopy of your passport photo/information page: We will take this from you at check in and give to the Coastguard. This so he knows who is on the boat.

Medical Forms: Everyone is expected to complete a medical questionnaire. If you have any health concerns or are aged over 55 and intend to dive please speak to your Doctor before you travel. If you have a medical statement/certificate from your Doctor please bring a copy with you.

You will be sent the medical form prior to departure and ask you to return completed before the trip. The Medical Form is a standard questionnaire from PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) even if you are not intending to dive we ask for this to be completed so we have a clear understanding of everyone's status. This is for a number of reasons:

- 1) A lot of people may not think they want to dive but end up having a go/completing a course.
- 2) We are a long way from land and if anyone has any medical conditions its best for the Instructor/Guide to be fully aware.
- 3) Medical Conditions are very unlikely to impact your full enjoyment of the trip but if in doubt please ask and answer the form honestly.

Travel Insurance: Travel Insurance is required and we will need a copy of your policy as part of the check in. If you don't have an annual policy you can use <http://www.divemaster.com> or <http://www.daneurope.org/insurance> for specialist diving insurance or quality travel insurance. Most standard travel insurance policies cover this kind of holiday and most travel insurances will cover recreational scuba diving but often have depth limits. Please be aware some standard policies do specifically exclude freediving so please check if that's on your agenda.

Dive Qualification:

Scuba/Techie – Evidence of your certification and log book will be needed. If you have lost your PADI cards we can make a check online for your certification but if you qualified with another organisation you'll need to contact them directly and bring that evidence with you. There are some sites, particularly in the Deep South e.g. Elphinstone/Daedalus where there are some very strong currents and are very challenging sites with other risks so depending on your certification and route planned we may need to insist on a private guide/instructor to accompany you on those dives at additional cost. Please discuss with us before your arrival.

Freediver - If you are freediving please bring your certification cards. On Freediving Safaris we can arrange counterweights for deeper line diving but off the line we will discuss and agree safe limits and buddy systems. This is all dependent on the route planned, number of instructors/guides and safety divers available.

EQUIPMENT

Divers If you have your own equipment bring it with you. Any questions on what to bring e.g. what wetsuit/drysuit just ask. If you are completing your Open Water Course the equipment will be provided. If you need to hire kit, please let me know in advance if you can but we'll check on the boat before we leave.

Swimmers/Snorkellers: Mask/Snorkel/Fins: If you have your own bring them, if not you can either buy in Egypt at good prices with advice from us or rent from us. Whatever you do though please don't buy cheap snorkelling packs. You will find it makes a real difference buying a decent mask with silicone not plastic. This is going to be attached to your face for a lot of the week so must be comfortable and not leak.

Wetsuits – if you have one and want to wear it, bring it. If you want to hire one let us know. It's advisable in winter and spring months when the water is cooler. If you are completing a long swim as part of your trip and intend to swim without wetsuit or buoyancy aid, we will ask for experience and if weather conditions indicate it would be required for safety, we may need to insist on wetsuit or short distance swims. Swimming Safaris will have additional information on this.

Freedivers: Bring your wetsuits. We don't keep freediving wetsuits but can always hire out normal wetsuits if you need one. Weights are on the boat but you'll want your weight belt – we can hire you one but it's webbing not rubber. If you are likely to scuba as well, you may want to bring some ordinary diving boots and fins or hire some. Freediving fins and certainly monofins are really not suitable for scuba.

Wet boots: (I hate seeing them referred to as reef shoes because that implies its ok to walk on a reef in them) We are likely to be spending an evening on an island (Northern Safaris and some South/Deep South Routes) so bring some sensible shoes/trainers/wet boots which you don't mind maybe getting a bit wet.

Camera: We have digital underwater cameras for hire. If you want a DVD of your time on safari we can get our videographer to come out to the boat for a few days and record your time on the boat, in the Red Sea, out with the dolphins, etc. but to be honest you can pick up a GoPro like camera from Amazon for £30/€50 these days. I will advise against taking your camera on some dives/swims/dolphin encounters because you can get a bit detached from the experience.

Binoculars: There is a lot to see at sea so bring them along if you have a pair. They certainly can help with spotting dolphins from a distance. Don't buy specially for this trip – only if you have some.

Personal Medication: We carry a well-stocked first aid box for accidents and emergencies and we do carry some medication for headaches/sea sickness and so on but if there is something specific you take please bring it with you. It may not be available here e.g. grapefruit seed extract also we'll be a long way from a pharmacy. Remember though the main cause of diarrhoea is dehydration, so keep drinking lots of water.

Towels – We provide each guest with a single towel, we suggest you bring one more with you.

Sun glasses: Polarised lenses help you to see through the glare into the water. It really does make a difference and protects your eyes. Don't ever be tempted to buy fake sunglasses because without UV protection you can permanently damage your eyes and you are going to see A LOT of the sun!

Plug adapters: Egypt uses European style sockets so bring an adapter for your phone/camera charger if travelling from the UK or USA.

Phones: For most of the Northern Routes there is phone signal across the sites we visit, but for many of the Southern and especially Deep South routes you will have peace and quiet and remember what life was like when we talked to each other 😊. We can arrange for a local data SIM which could be a lot cheaper than international charges. If you want one bring an old spare phone – you will need to make sure it is “unlocked”.

Equipment General – Please be aware you will be on a boat and so you will need to take more care of your possessions, of other people's and of anything you hire, than you might normally. Boats move, wind blows, and accidents happen. Phones have been dropped in the sea before now, wetsuits have blown away so keep this in mind when you think about what equipment you are bringing and your insurance cover.

OTHER STUFF

Sun protection cream WATERPROOF! – if it's not waterproof it will come off as soon as you get in the sea and the chemicals in it are really destructive to the marine life particularly the coral. Please don't bring non-waterproof with you – you never know when the dolphins will turn up and you'll need to jump in the water.

Clothing for the shore - Long sleeved items and longer shorts/skirt/trousers – not only for sun protection but when you are ashore please remember and respect local customs and cover at least the tops of your arms and make sure your shorts are not “Daisy Duke” length. Thank you.

Clothing for the boat – Most of the time people are wandering around in bikinis/swimsuits/shorts/t-shirts/sarongs. No shoes are worn on the boat. Pack light and leave your hair straighteners at home, the dolphins really do not care how your hair looks. If it's early spring or autumn, then pack a fleece too the nights can be chilly but May- Sept it is unlikely to be needed unless it gets really windy. There is no “dressing” for dinner so really one pair of shorts and t-shirt and a couple of swim suits is all you need. Topless sunbathing is not encouraged.

Duty Free – The boat sells local beer and can bring wine to sell if requested but if anyone wants spirits please bring them with you from the duty free. It is expensive and hard to find the spirits you might like here so we don't sell spirits on the boat.

Cash/Cards -We take debit and credit cards and pass on the charge levied by the bank of 3% for their use or we take Euros, Egyptian, Sterling and USD cash. In Hurghada/Marsa Alam/Sharm you will find all the shops restaurants will take at least Euros, USD and Egyptian. The fees for using cards for payment will vary from 3-10% Check before you hand over your card. Egyptian pounds are the local currency (LE), most places will also take Euros/USD and many take GBP.

Tips – If you have enjoyed your trip, it is customary in Egypt for the crew to be tipped. The boat/dive crew share equally any tips which are collected – as a guide we suggest 50Euros/10% per person per week.

Sleepwear – Most safaris find us sleeping under the stars on deck rather than in the cabins so if you are used to just sleeping as nature intended, please pack something to sleep in that you won't mind us all seeing!

Contact Lenses – Yes you can swim, snorkel and dive in contact lenses with a mask. If you need a prescription mask these can be hired but please let me know in advance, so I can make sure I have one available for you.

Tampons/Sanitary Towels – we only have a small emergency supply of tampons in the 1st Aid box so please make sure you bring these with you if you are likely to need them. Most importantly do not put these in the toilets.

Allergies – Please make it clear to us if you have any medical allergies and ensure the Instructor/Guide knows the location of your EPI Pen.

Food Preferences: If you have any particular requirements please let us know on the information form. We will accommodate this as best we can.

Food is as in season and as fresh as we can get it. Often evenings are spent, by those who want to, fishing for calamari off the back of the boat or for fish out in the zodiac. We always have some fishing lines with us. We will offer a range at breakfast, lunch and dinner and there will be biscuits and fruit available throughout the day and if anyone is hungry ask and we'll do what we can for you.

Please keep in mind that

- a) We're on a boat in the middle of the sea so there won't be any shops we can pop to
- b) Egypt does not have a wide range of gluten free/dairy free/other free options available for us to use
- c) Unless it's a special group booking (and we have had vegetarian weeks) there will be other people eating a full range of food on the boat.
- d) If you want to bring some of your own snacks please do and we can make room in the fridge/freezer but please avoid bringing any pork products.