

Shore Diving Tips

Although we don't get to practice it often in the Great Lakes, shore diving can be challenging and tough, especially if you've never done it before with any serious surf. Here are some tips to help you through it.

- Unless you leave someone on shore, theft can be a risk. Take only minimal gear and valuables to be left in the car, and find a way to take your car key diving with you. Tie or pin it to your bathing suit inside your wetsuit or skin to ensure it doesn't get lost. Plus, it'll encourage your dive buddy to at least recover your body to get back into the car.
- Wear a wetsuit/skin and gloves to prevent abrasions and cuts.
- Seriously study water conditions before you start getting ready. If it looks rough, it probably is, and you should think about diving somewhere else.
- Be prepared to do a lot of climbing and hauling of gear up and down cliffs. It's usually better to gear up at the top, but if you can't walk far with your full setup, then carry your gear down one piece at a time. This'll take a while, and remember to rest afterwards before gearing up and starting the dive.
- Gear up with everything except your fins before you get near the water's edge. Once in the surf, you'll have little control or time to finish putting on your mask or gloves.
- Make sure everything - especially your octopus and console - is clipped and tucked. This will prevent snags, prevent sand from getting into your equipment, and protect your equipment from being damaged.
- Study the water before entering. Get a compass bearing for the directions parallel and perpendicular to the shore. Wait for a lull in the waves if you find one.
- When you enter the water, enter quickly and put your fins on in waist deep water. Don't dawdle in the surf zone. Submerge to the bottom and swim out beyond the surf as far below the waves as possible.
- Keep your dive simple and memorize landmarks near your starting point so you can easily retrace your steps to find your way back. This is especially true if the coast is rugged and there are few entry and exit points.
- Turn back at 1800-2000 psig to leave enough reserves to retrace your steps and get out with some air left.
- Before reaching the point where waves are breaking, surface and check your position relative to your exit point. Take a compass bearing and note if surf conditions have gotten bigger since you started the dive. You won't be able to do anything about it, but at least you'll be ready for it.

- Start working your way in along the route you remember or the bearing you took. If confused about your location, reverse course until waves are not breaking immediately nearby, surface, and check your position again.
- Stay as low as possible on the bottom as you work your way back in. Travel with the waves when they wash in, and try to hold station as they wash out. If blinded by foam while traveling in, put your hands in front of you to prevent rocks from finding your face.
- Once in shallow water that you can't easily swim in, quickly stand up, remove your fins, and walk out. Again, don't dwell in the surf zone. If you find standing up or removing your fins in the waves to be impossible, crawl on your hands and knees until you are out of the water, then stand up.
- Expect lots of sand in your equipment at the end of the dive. Try to minimize it by not falling in the surf or laying your gear on the beach. Be prepared to thoroughly rinse your gear afterwards to get rid of it. This includes disassembly of consoles, cleaning of compass bezels, flushing of 2nd stages, emptying of BC pockets, and cleaning BC Velcro.

Sounds like fun, doesn't it? If you're looking for a new challenge, then shore diving in California or Hawaii might be for you! The scenery can be gorgeous, and you may be one of only a few people to have dove a particular site.