



Discovering the Costa Brava

AS DIVERS, WE DREAM OF EXPLORING

tropical places and underwater environments full of colour and life without a huge price tag. Our club diving expedition to the Costa Brava ticked those boxes without breaking the bank.

Members of Thurrock Aqua Club 0608 took our RIB – towed by the motorhome – as well as a car and caravan to the Mediterranean to explore the unfamiliar waters of Spain's Costa Brava, from L'Escala to the well-known Medes Island of L'Estartit. Our group consisted of Diving Officer Darren Gibbs, Training Officer Maria Steer, Callum, 14, plus Krzysztof and Agnieszka and their daughter Nela, plus non divers Oliver, 16 and six-year-old Louie.

We set sail from Newhaven to Dieppe and made our way through France. After some hairy moments on the roads through the Alps, we arrived at Lacus campsite. [On the return journey we took a slightly longer route home via Toulouse, to avoid the mountain region].

This was an ideal spot, five minutes from the beach and marina, on the edge of a small carp fishing lake with views of a bar and supermarket, which ensured evening activities were sorted!

We launched our RIB at a 'turn up and pay' slipway adjacent to the marina, and moored up at Club Nautica, L'Escala. The marina



had a well placed docking area for pumping the cylinders next to the very helpful and knowledgeable Orca Dive Centre (orcadiving.net) which made filling our cylinders for the next dive a real breeze.

A quick stop at the marina petrol station for fuel and we were ready to explore the coastline and the national marine parks. All the dive sites were buoyed, indeed use of an anchor was prohibited. The water temperature of 24°C and with viz up to 20 metres made the reef diving a pleasure; you could pick your depth from 5 m to 30m. The reefs were thick with colourful sponges, coral and schools of different fish; and there were wrecks ranging from 12 to 40m.

I dived in a 3mm wetsuit and while the thermoclines could be a shock, they remained manageable. For the non-divers, snorkelling was excellent and cooling off in the water from

the 35°C heat was much appreciated.

Our visit to the Medes Island allowed us to dive with inquisitive groupers, who loved to pose for the camera; there were also walls of different coloured fan corals.

I found four different species of nudibranch, plus several golden moray eels and octopus. The area suited us all, from snorkellers to Advanced Divers with reefs, walls, tunnels, caverns and caves, as well as the wrecks. We visited 21 different buoyed dive sites, with more to return for in the future.

We would recommend the beauty of the underwater environment of the Costa Brava to any diver. Here's our handy checklist for those wishing to do the same.

MARIA STEER, Thurrock Aqua Club

Photographs by Maria Steer, taken on GoPro hero 7 black with macro lens and lighting rig

Checklist ✓

For the RIB

- International certificate of competence (RYA powerboat level 2 provides you with the qualification to apply for this).
- SSR (Small Ship Registration) boat registration
- Boat Insurance
- Ensign flag

For diving

- Dive qualification cards
- Dive insurance
- 5mm semi-dry (hood and gloves for the wrecks)
- 3mm wetsuit for shallow divers
- If diving with a centre you need to show a logbook

Costs (approximate)

Ferry: £450 for motorhome and RIB

Tolls: €250

Camping: €350 per week

Marina: €40 per night for a 6m RIB

Launch: €22 per day

