



الجمعية الملكية لحماية البيئة البحرية  
THE ROYAL MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF JORDAN  
JREDS

# Diver's Guide

## For Aqaba's Dive Sites

Aqaba - 2015

## Promoting socio-economic sustainable development through innovative technological actions for Mediterranean tourism-heritage and landscapes protection clusters (HELAND)

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# Diver's Guide for Dive Sites in Aqaba, Jordan

Aqaba is situated on the northern edge of the Red Sea and it is considered a home for more than 300 species of hard and soft corals, 512 species of fish, and 1000's of mollusks and other Invertebrates.

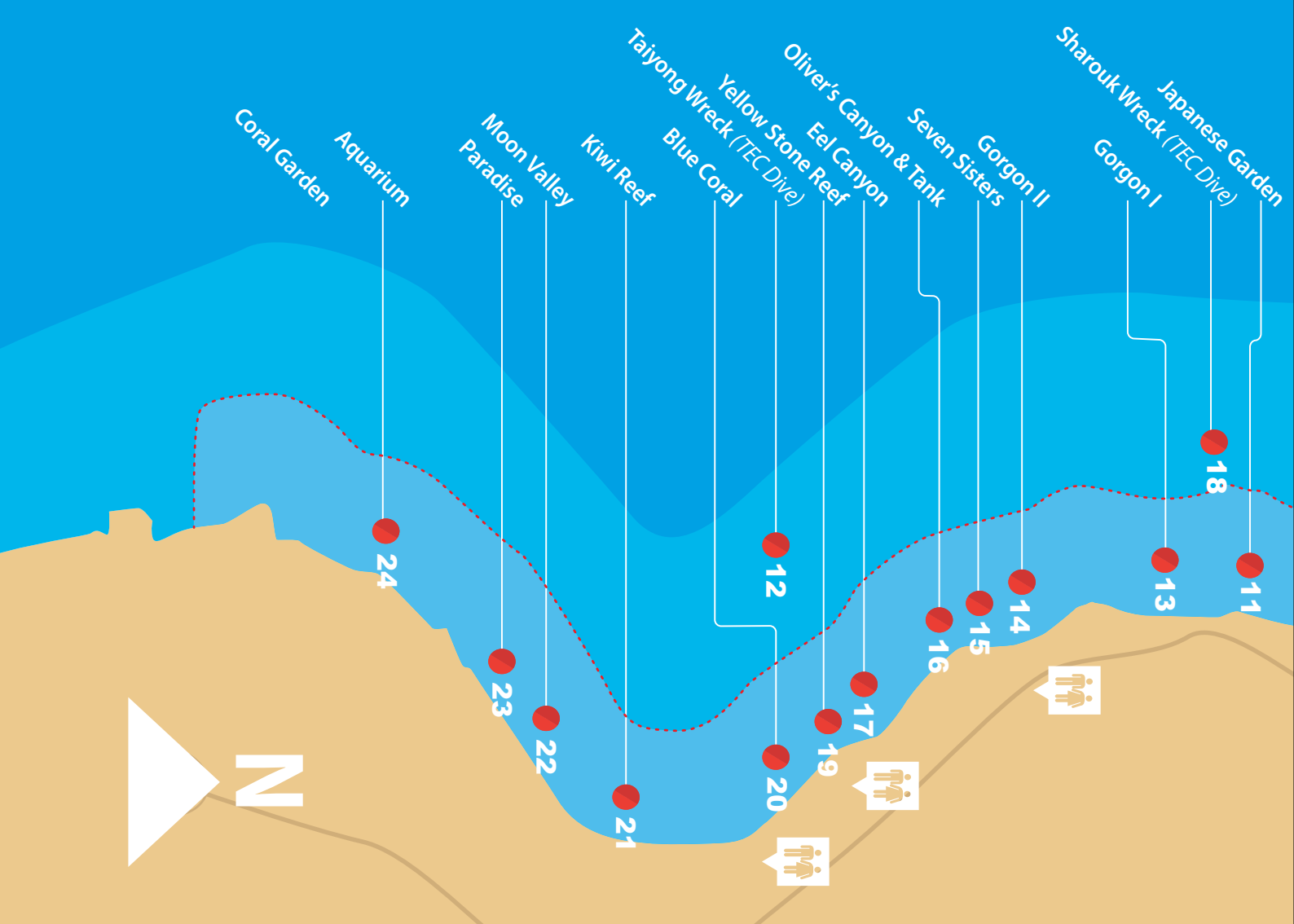
Aqaba is well known for scuba diving, with easy access to some prominent and interesting dive sites. Aqaba's mild climate makes it an ideal location for year-round scuba diving. The water temperature during the summer is about 26 degrees Celsius, dropping to 20 degrees Celsius in the winter, and in the summer there are over 12 hours of sunlight every day.

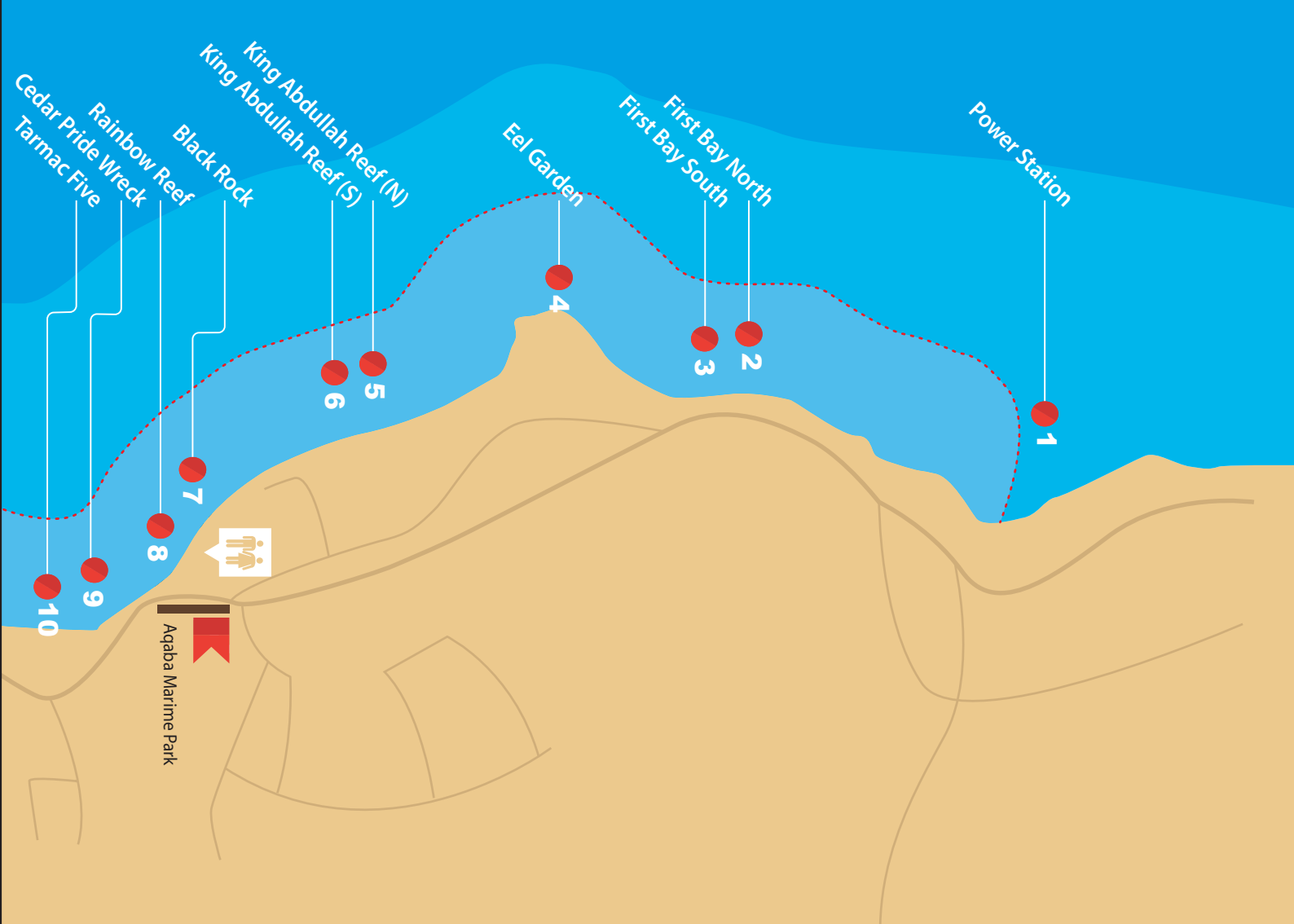
We have over 20 sites along our coastline most of which are in the protected Aqaba Marine Park. Each site varies in shape and inhabitants from slopes to drop-offs, canyons to flat bottoms, veiled completely with flourishing corals.

One of Aqaba's most famous dive sites is the wreck of the Cedar Pride, a Lebanese freighter sunk in 1985. At a maximum depth of 26 m, it provides a wreck dive that divers with all levels of experience can enjoy. The second most famous dive site is an M42 American anti-aircraft tracked vehicle (The Tank), lying in just 5m this is great for snorkelers.



*Abdullah Al-Momany*





Power Station

1

First Bay North  
First Bay South

2

3

Eel Garden

4

King Abdullah Reef (N)  
King Abdullah Reef (S)

5

6

Black Rock

7

8

Rainbow Reef

9

Cedar Pride Wreck  
Tarmac Five

10



Agaba Marine Park

# POWER STATION

Accessibility: Boat Only - Dive: Wall

Depth: Max – 50 meters / 130 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29° 26.536' N Longitude 34° 58.166' E

The Power Station dive site has a very lively coral plateau sloping from a depth of 12 – 20 m with a steep wall drop-off dropping to deeper than 100m. Several large hump-head wrasse and moray eels are often sighted here. Nearer to the actual Power Station than the famous wall dive we find a gentle coral slope from 5m down to 50m interspersed with coral pinnacles abounding in small fry providing a feeding ground for all kinds of predators and great digital photo opportunities for divers. The Power Station is actually named after the small oil fired power station on the coast road to the North of the dive site. This is the place where, on the chart, the one hundred and two hundred meter contour lines hit the coast. Good tec diving here to 100m plus at Aqaba Blue Hole to the North and Dorit's Deep to the South.



Ahmad Sari





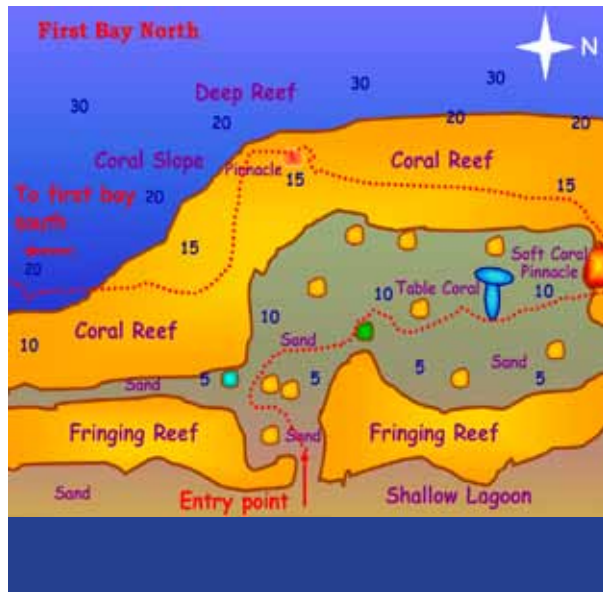
# FIRST BAY- NORTH

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: Max – 30 meters / 100 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°26'55.7"N Longitude 34°58'07.7"E

This is the first dive site located within the Marine Park, and a great dive from 6m down to 30 m. The site starts with a fringing reef between 2 – 5 m depth and has a wide sandy plain at 9 m depth with intermittent coral clusters. There is a pinnacle with a banana shape to the west of the mooring at 15m. This is a good reference point if diving deeper on this site as it is opposite the shore entrance through the fringing reef.



# FIRST BAY SOUTH

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: Max – 30 meters / 100 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°26'55.7"N Longitude 34°58'07.7"E

This site has an easy entry from the beach. The site has many black coral trees and usually has a large number of coronet fish hunting smaller glass-fish. The site also has a large number of colorful Parrot-fish. Good tec diving here to 75m and deeper in Death Valley named after the strong down current sometimes encountered here. A great dive if done with an experienced technical guide with a crazy amount of white whip corals up to 3m in height!



*Omar Madain*





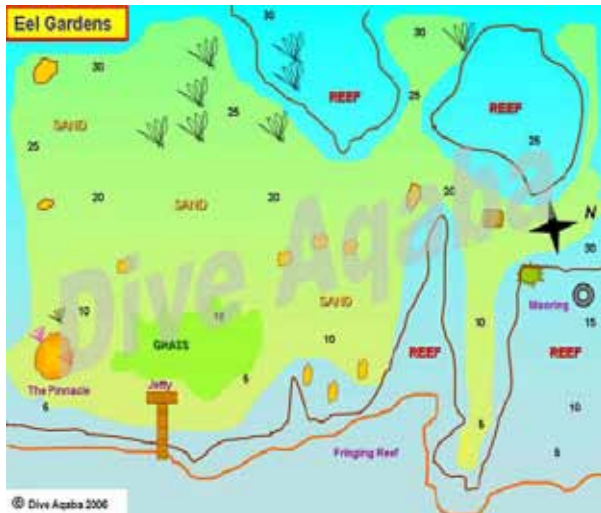
# EEL GARDEN

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: Max – 35 meters / 115 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°26'41.9"N Longitude 34°58'01.5"E

With an easy shore access, the Eel Garden offers a number of surprises. As well as the obligatory garden eels, this site is home to an assortment of other interesting critters. Crossing the sand and heading left from the shore, there are several coral heads hosting yellow-mouthed morays and anemones. A sea grass bed offers a hiding place for many young fish and eels, but keep an eye open for the numerous scorpion fish and lion-fish that can be found here. However, the most outstanding feature is the pinnacle at just 7 m. This is truly a photographer's paradise. Surrounded by Anthias (Gold fish) and black corals, the pinnacle is a busy cleaning station managed by a family giant morays and manned by their team of banded boxer shrimp. Look carefully, because a galaxy of creatures can be seen here including frog fish. If you dive this site at night, you are likely to see resident toad fish and the red swimming crabs that hide within the pinnacle's recesses during the day.



Omar Al-Momany

# KING ABDULLAH REEF NORTH

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

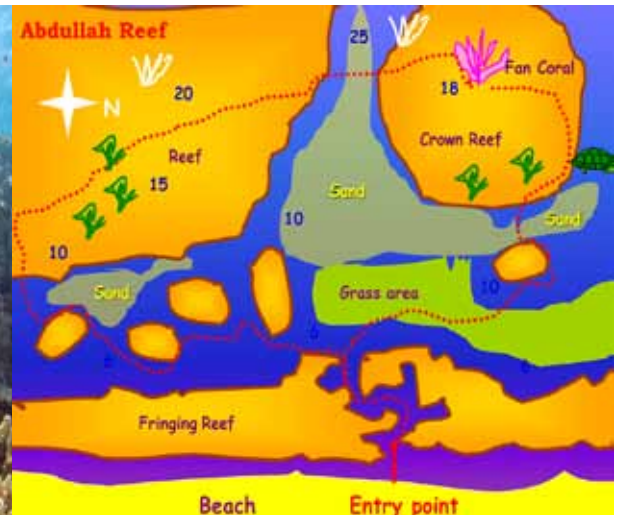
Depth: Max – 40 meters / 130 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29° 26.536' N Longitude 34° 58.166' E

One of the longest dives and a very popular dive. The reef has some very beautiful fan colors and a large shoals of pennant fish. Torpedo Rays and Hawksbill turtles are also a common sight. The site has very high densities of coral coverage and is ideal for underwater photography.



*Omar Madain*



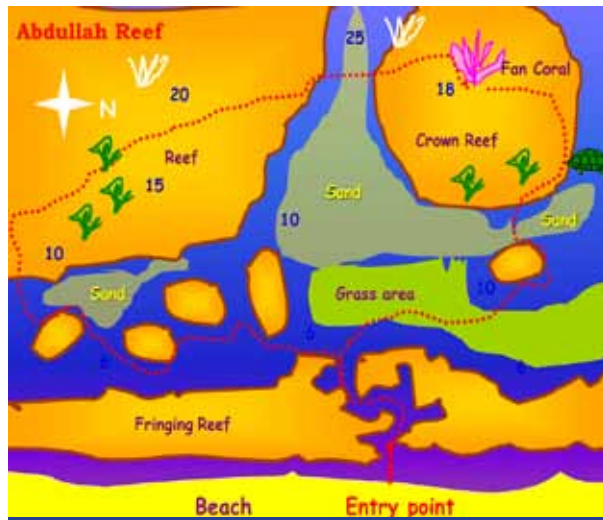
# KING ABDULLAH REEF SOUTH

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: Max – 40 meters / 130 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29.441847, 34.968752

Explore further south on King Abdullah reef from this new mooring installed by the Aqaba Marine Park. There is a lot to explore here with a good variety of flora and fauna.



*Omar Madain*



# BLACK ROCK

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

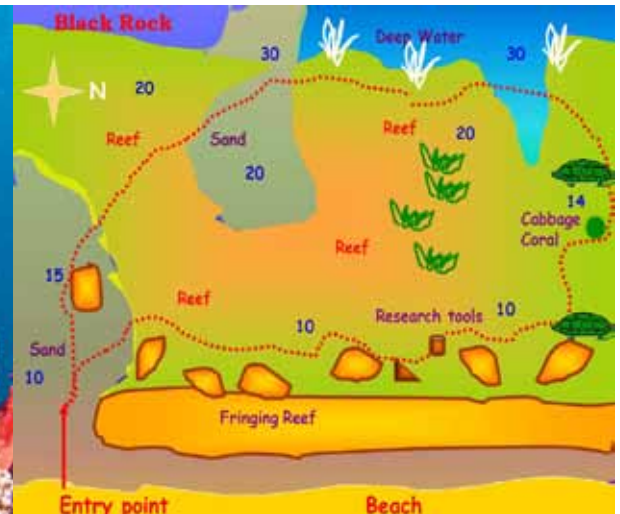
Depth: Max – 45 meters / 150 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29° 25.971' N Longitude 34° 58.419' E

This site provides very easy access and is ideal for snorkelers and anyone who is new to the area, as a coral garden starts just below the surface and extends outwards for approximately 30m when it drops away steeply. The reef has a prolific number of fish and if you are lucky you may see one of the turtles that frequent this site. A new highlight of this dive is the area beneath the new jetty at Club Berenice where shoal of small fish gather providing food for many predators such as lionfish and barracuda. Look carefully and you will find several frogfish perched on pier legs. The sea grass area to the south is worth a visit where one can find many grey morays and the occasional seahorse.



Omar Madain



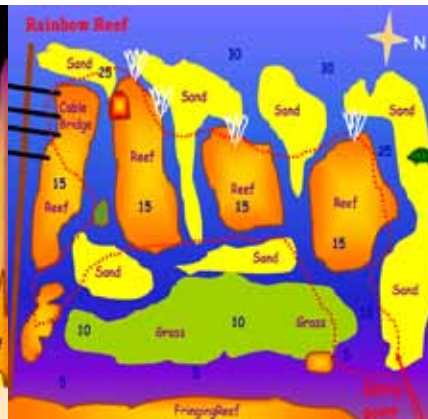
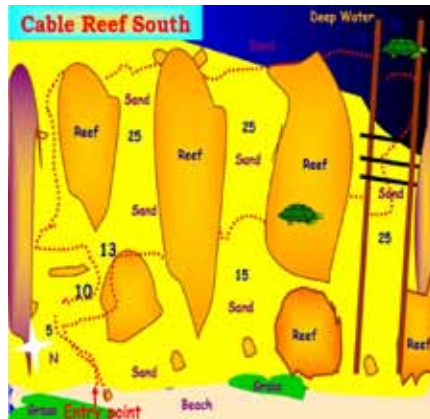
# RAINBOW REEF (Cable Area)

Accessibility: Boat or Shore Dive: Reef

Depth: max – 18 meters / 60 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29° 25.971' N Longitude 34° 58.419' E

Named because the reef is shaped like a rainbow. Starting at a depth of 6 m extending to 18 m. The site makes a good night dive, when you can see large Spanish Dancers, lobsters, Feathered Starfish, moray eels and Lionfish. Here you can see the telecommunication cable that connects Egypt and Jordan. Also you can follow this reef to the Cedar Pride Wreck when diving from the shore. In 1996 electrical cables were laid to Egypt. There are four cables running out over the seabed, the two cables to the North run through a deep canyon. Here the reef has been shored up on either side to prevent it collapsing on the cables. Large steel netting covers the reef to the North and South, coral is now growing through this. Large metal tubes straddle the canyon preventing collapse. These are now a habitat for soft corals and sponges, you might also spot an octopus or Spotted Eagle Ray here.



Ahmad Sari



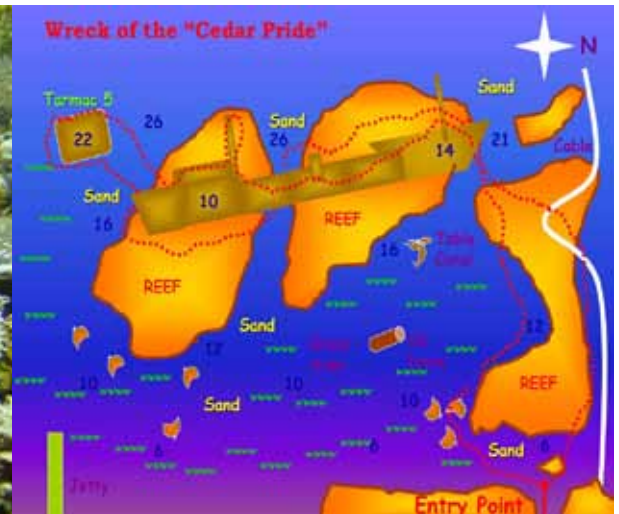
# CEDAR PRIDE WRECK

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Wreck

Depth: max – 26 meters / 90 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°25'51.0"N Longitude 34°58'25.8"E

The Cedar Pride wreck is one of Jordan's most popular and celebrated dives. A former Lebanese freighter, the ship sustained extensive damage during a fire in 1982. Following a request from King Abdullah, the ill-fated vessel was deliberately sunk approximately 150 m offshore as an artificial reef for divers. Lying on its port side at a maximum depth of 26 m across two reefs, the wreckage has been colonized by numerous hard and soft corals. Marked by a surface buoy, the Cedar Pride can be dived from boat or shore. The uppermost starboard side is at 10m, and so provides a great site for both novice and experienced divers alike. The wreck is largely intact and 78m in length with the most interesting diving on the seaward side, where you can see the deck and superstructure. The outstanding feature is the crow's nest, which is covered with a profusion of colorful soft corals and stands out against the clear blue water. As you continue



further towards the hull, you pass mushroom ventilation shafts and the main mast. Here in the deeper water, the soft corals are more dispersed but are replaced by hard corals and schools of fish, including the odd barracuda. As you swim back along the uppermost starboard side, you can find plenty of hard corals and small animals that have made their home on the hull, including anemones, table corals, pipefish and clusters of Acropora. This makes for an excellent night dive. The deck is smothered with lots of critters, including urchins, shrimps, Spanish Dancers and soft coral crabs. For the experienced wreck diver and photographer there are many penetration opportunities within the light zone.



*Alexander Mustard*



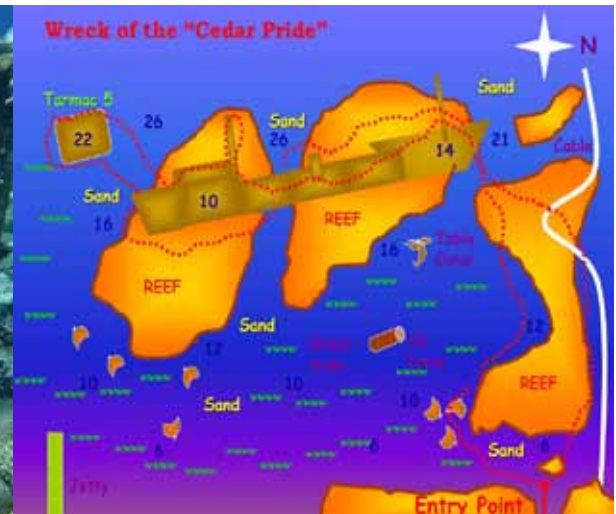
# TARMAC FIVE

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Wreck

Depth: max – 27 meters / 90 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°25'51.2"N Longitude 34°58'24.6"E

This wreck was scuttled in 1996 after Alcatel had finished laying the electrical cables to Egypt. She lies not far from the Cedar Pride and when she went down she landed over the corner of an old sunken fishing boat that has been there since the 70's. It is host to a good variety of marine life, Blue Spotted stingrays, frogfish and coral shrimps. This can be combined with a dive to the Cedar Pride especially if boat diving. Also a great deep technical dive can be done here down a gulley starting at 40m dropping to 75m plus, this site is known as Kleta's Wall (named after a German divemaster who explored it in 1996) There are many large gorgonian fan corals here and some fantastic gullies to explore. Large tuna fish and other pelagics are often spotted at depth here.



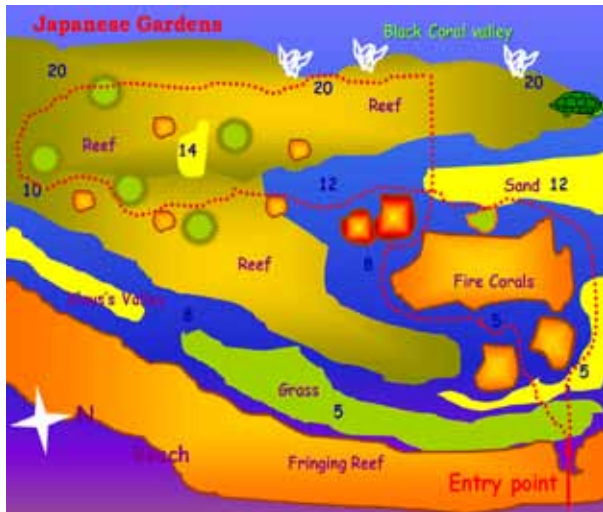
# JAPANESE GARDENS

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: max – 30 meters / 100 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29° 25.759' N Longitude 34° 58.347' E

Located just to the south of the Shipwreck. One of the best dive sites worldwide with very good conditions for diving and snorkeling. The reef begins in shallow water and then gently slopes to the magnificent colorful reef bed where very large schools of Anthias (Gold fish) play with the golden sun beams while getting their snack of plankton around the pinnacles. Lyre Tail Groupers, Royal Angelfish, Moray Eels, big Clam Shells are also very common here. In 2013 many corals were placed here from the Saudi Border to save them from destruction due to development of a new port facility there. You will see many tagged markers. They are now starting to flourish and become part of this great reef again. There are two boat moorings on this reef one nearer the shore and another on the outer reef.



# TAIYONG WRECK

Accessibility: Boat - Dive: Technical wreck dive

Depth: 36 – 57metres / 120 -170 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29° 25.803' N Longitude 34° 58.169' E

This wreck was discovered by technical divers in 2004. She lies on her starboard side in 50 to 55 meters of water off the dive site known as the Japanese Gardens, the maximum depth on the wreck is 57m and the top of the wreck is 36m. She was bought by the Aqaba port authority in 1974 and was used for off-loading ships coming to Aqaba. An accident led to the jib of the crane dropping and damaging the hold, this was then repaired with a concrete plug. The plug kept leaking so it was deemed uneconomical to repair and scuttled in late 1999. Her number can be made out on the bow C486B. Shoals of fusiliers now patrol this pristine red sea wreck which has now a profusion of colorful soft corals growing on her. The A frame of the crane is fantastic for photography - if your camera can go that deep! On the bow there are shoals of glass fish being hunted by many large lion fish.



Abdullah Al-Momany



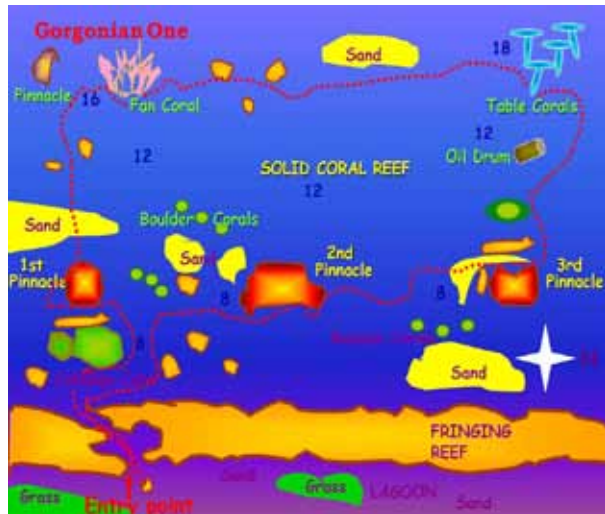
# GORGONE I

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: max – 18 meters / 50 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°25'29.9"N Longitude 34°58'19.0"E

The reason it was given this name is because it has a large Gorgonia fan coral at 16m depth. Maximum depth of the site is 18m and is excellent for newly certified divers. It has an entry access from shore of 3m wide and 4m deep, after passing through this wonderful passage (various uncommon shy creatures hiding in caves all the way along) the diver is met with a vast cabbage coral. This dive provides examples of a fantastic array of the different varieties of the coral of the Red Sea. The site has three large pinnacles extending from the bottom to near the sea surface, inhabited by unique soft and hard corals forming a safe and wealthy home for many kinds of beautiful invertebrates and fish. The boulder, fan and table corals complete the coral packed tour!



Abdullah Al-Momany

# GORGONE II

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

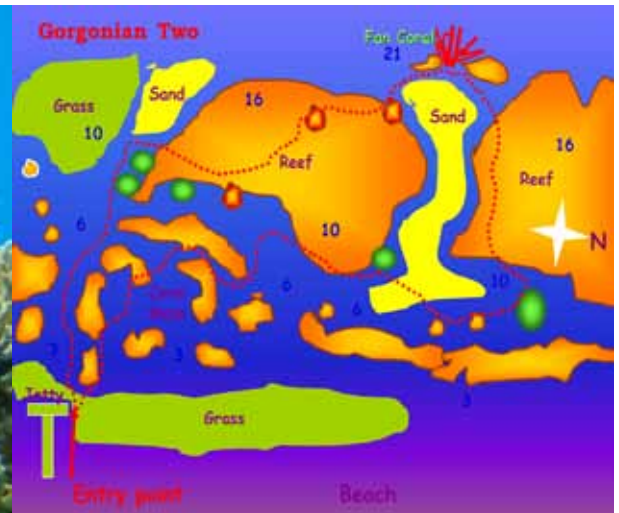
Depth: max – 21 meters / 63 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°25'22.0"N Longitude 34°58'16.9"E

This site is very similar in the richness of its corals to Gorgon One. The site is named after Gorgonia fan-coral that used to sit at 22m depth and is sadly no longer there. Here you can see Moray Eels, Lionfish, Blue Tangs and other surgeon fish. Multiple coral clumps create a small maze giving the diver something to wander leisurely through on their safety stop.



*Abdullah Al-Momany*



Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef, Wreck

Depth: max – 12 meters / 40 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°25'11.9"N Longitude 34°58'19.4"E

A map of the Seven Sisters and the Tank area. The map shows a coastline with several reefs and sandy areas. Key features include:
 

- Seven Sisters Pinnacles:** A group of seven small, yellow, pinnacle-shaped reefs in the upper right, enclosed by a red dashed line.
- Reef:** Several larger, yellow, irregularly shaped reefs scattered throughout the area.
- Sand:** Yellow areas representing sandy bottoms, labeled 'Sand' in three locations.
- Fairy Ring:** A small, circular, yellow feature in the center-left.
- Fringing Reef:** A long, yellow, irregularly shaped reef along the bottom edge.
- Grass:** Green areas representing seagrass, labeled 'Grass' in two locations.
- Depth:** Numbers indicating depth in meters: 8, 10, and 15.
- Compass:** A white compass rose in the upper left with 'N' for North.
- Legend:** A small legend in the bottom left corner showing a yellow square for 'Reef' and a green square for 'Grass'.
- Labels:** 'Coral slope' near the top left, 'Entry Point' at the bottom right, and 'Beach' at the bottom center.



# NEW CANYON / OLIVER'S CANYON

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

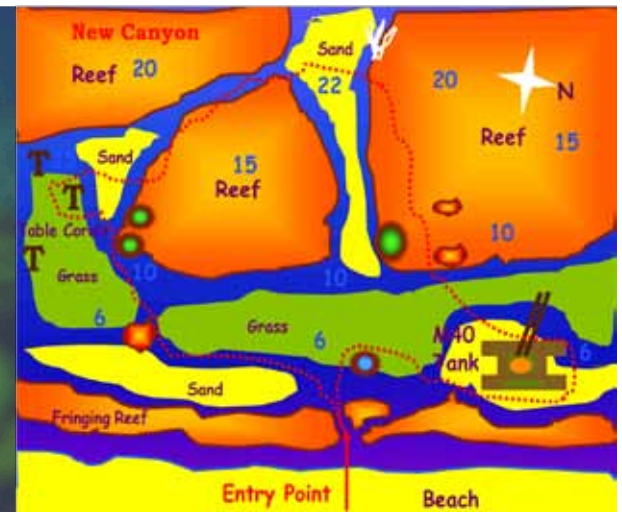
Depth: max – 40 meters / 130 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°25'08.1"N Longitude 34°58'19.6"E

The dive usually consists of a route around the canyons with a tour around a series of table corals at varying depths. The site has a wide array of coral species and fish including lots of Scorpionfish, Frogfish and Stonefish in addition to the odd Octopus and large Eel. You can conclude the dive with a safety stop at the famous "tank" M42 American Anti-aircraft tracked vehicle scuttled by the Jordan Royal Ecological Society in 1999.



*Omar Madain*





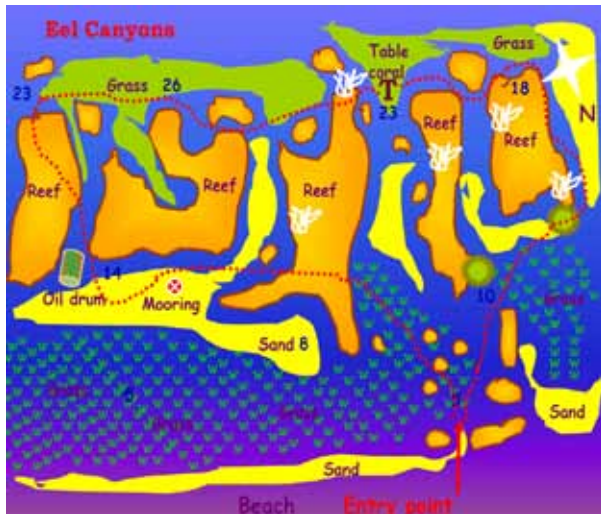
# EEL CANYON

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: max – 30meters / 100 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°25'02.2"N Longitude 34°58'23.9"E

Eel Canyon is named after the garden eels that protrude from the sand in the bottom of the canyons. (There are also some nice morays here). You can use the table coral and oil drum as navigation points so you know where you are in the area. There are many lion fish under coral ledges and some nice black coral bushes. There is a nice swim through at the bottom of one spur of coral - be careful with you fins though!





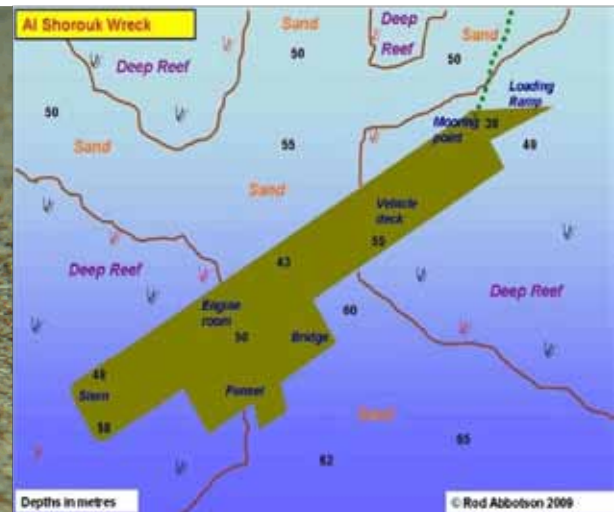
# SHOROUK WRECK

Accessibility: Boat - Dive: Technical wreck dive

Depth: 38 - 60 meters /125 - 200 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°24'55.8"N Longitude 34°58'21.1"E

This wreck lies deep off the Eel Canyon dive site, to the West of Kirk's Forest in 38 - 58m. The ship is lying on her starboard side across two reefs lying West to East (bow to the East) this means that depths of over 60m can easily be achieved under the wreck. She was scuttled by the Aqaba Marine Park on 18th June 2008. As she started to sink she started to drift and could have easily ended up in over 100m of water, they managed to push it back to dive able depths just before she slipped beneath the waves creating a new exciting site for technical divers. The engine room and bridge are easily accessible. There is a buoy on the bow of the wreck leading to the shallowest point at 38m. Travel to the north for decompression and up to the famous M42 tank in 6m or travel east finishing at the Eel Canyon dive site avoiding long blue water decompression hangs.



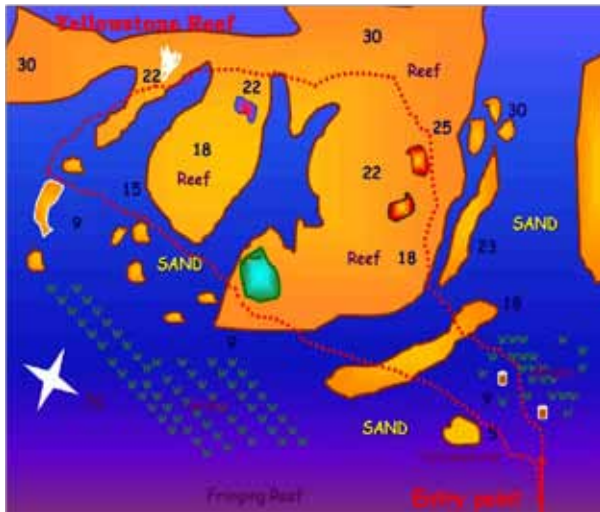
# YELLOWSTONE REEF

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

Depth: max – 90 meters / 300 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°24'59.9"N Longitude 34°58'26.9"E

This site is named for a large coral boulder which looks yellowish when viewed from the surface. The site lies just north of the Tala bay hotel development. With the deeper depths of this reef at over 30m, deep divers may experience some of the larger sea life we have here such as stingrays and Napoleon Fish.



*Amer Al Momany*

# BLUE CORAL

Accessibility: Boat - Dive: Reef

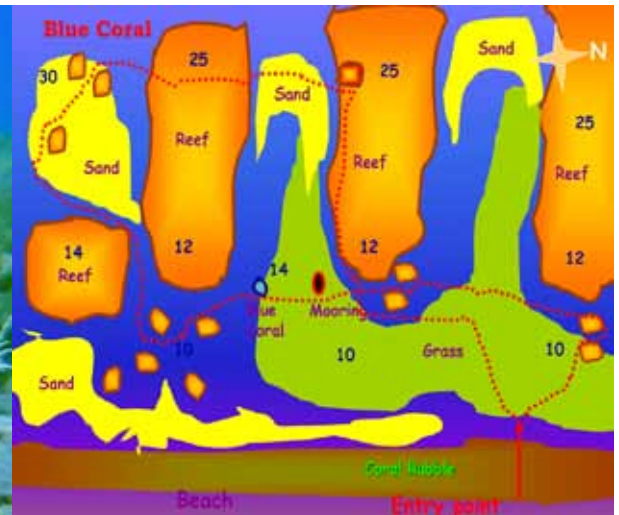
Depth: max – 36 meters / 120 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°24'54.0"N Longitude 34°58'30.3"E

This site is named for the abundance of blue corals found here. The site has a nice mix of sea-grass beds and sandy patches with three main spurs of coral reefs running to shore starting at 10 m and extending to 50 m. This site is opposite the Tala bay hotel and marina complex.



Amer Al-Momany





# KIWI REEF

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: reef

Depth: max – 18 meters / 60 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°24'20.2"N Longitude 34°58'29.0"E

Named for a diver from New Zealand who discovered this dive site. The site consists primarily of dense sea-grass beds along a steep slope. At a depth of 12-20m a series of small coral pinnacles litter the bottom creating small clusters of self-contained ecosystems. Here you can see Moray Eels and Lionfish. This site is very popular for underwater photography. There is also a great place here for tec diver through an underwater arch, Kiwi Arch, or course! This area is 48-75m after a swim to the West of the boat mooring.





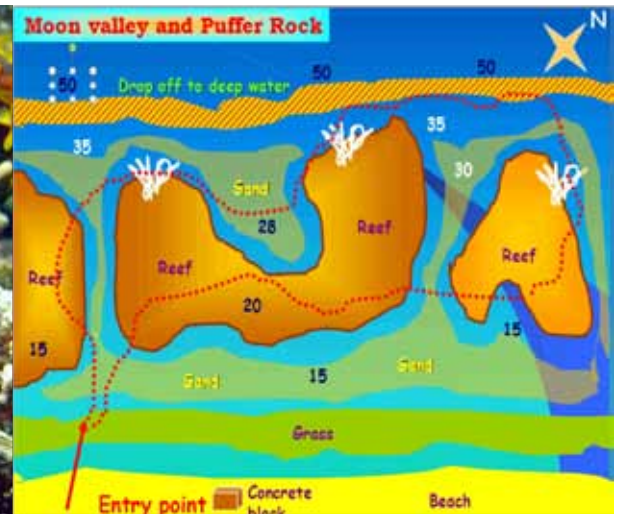
# MOON VALLEY and PUFFER ROCK

Accessibility: Boat - Dive: Reef

Depth: max – 40 meters / 130 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°24'16.4"N Longitude 34°58'19.9"E

Named after a famous valley in Wadi Rum, this site drops off steeply. Lots of Unicorn fish, some large Napoleon Wrasses, large shoals of sardines and fusiliers are common at this site. The site also has lots of nice soft coral in addition to the heavy coral coverage. Puffer rock to the East is named after the abundance of small puffer fish in the grass there.



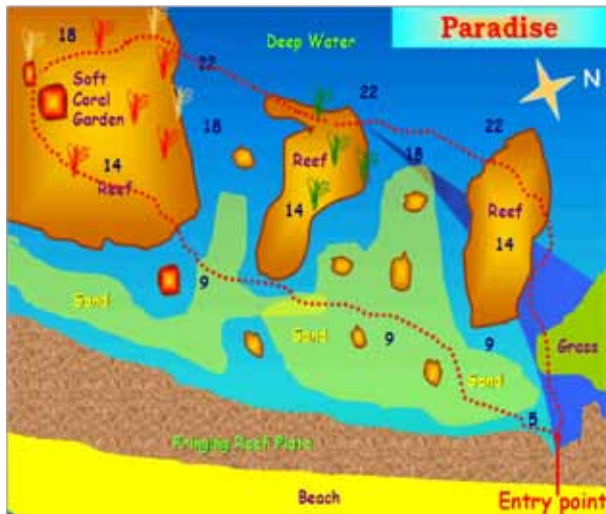
# PARADISE

Accessibility: Boat - Dive: Reef

Depth: max – 30 meters / 100 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°24'13.0"N Longitude 34°58'10.1"E

A gentle slope with patch corals leads to a pinnacle and cave at the edge of a wall at greater than 40 m. Working back up to the south we encounter soft coral gardens at 10-15m. Stingrays and Eagle Rays are common in this area. Another good technical dive can be done here starting at Ashrafs Grotto at 30m down to 100m plus! Nice at 55-80m though shoals of barracuda are common.



Abdullah Al Momany

# AQUARIUM

Accessibility: Boat or Shore - Dive: Reef

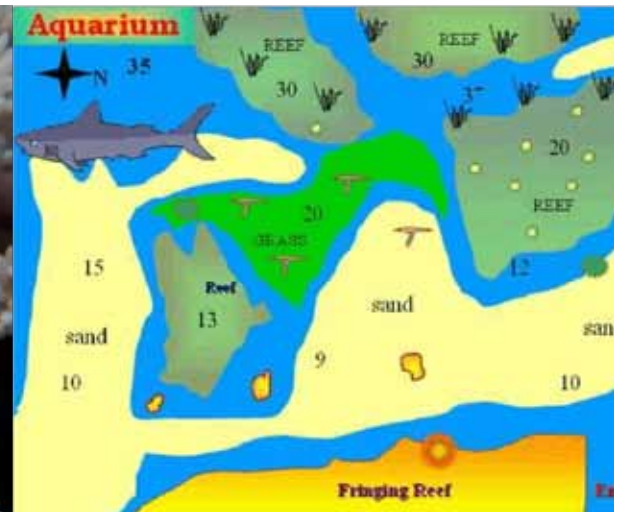
Depth: max – 40 meters / 130 feet

The Geographical Location: Latitude 29°24'01.6"N Longitude 34°57'59.5"E

A new mooring in place now opens up this site for boat diving. This dive site is known as the Aquarium because on the North East side of the central reef the dive guides used to take bread down and feed the fish (this is no longer allowed as it is against the Aqaba Marine Park rules). The fish still gather in great numbers here. You will see barracuda over the deeper reefs lots of unicorn fish and fantastic displays of red soft corals that catch the currents between the reefs.



*Rod Abbotson*



## Acknowledgment

JREDS would like to express sincere thanks to Mr. Rod Abbotson, for reviewing the draft material and providing the necessary maps related to diving sites, which was used in this guide

Our sincere thanks also goes to Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), and specifically the Aqaba Marine Park, for providing the necessary information about diving sites at Aqaba.

Gratitude is extended to the Dive Centers, and the Aqaba Diving Association; our partners in Aqaba for their great contribution in providing photos and information. Without this partnership, our work was not achievable

Last but not least, JREDS would like to thank the Royal Department for Environmental Protection and the Royal Jordanian Naval Force for their extraordinary role in security at Aqaba.

## Prepared by:



### **Mohammad Al-Tawaha**

Mr. Mohammad Al-Tawaha is working with JREDS as the Marine Program Manager since 2011, and he was the coordinator of HELAND project. Mr. Al- Tawaha holds a master degree in marine science and he have an extensive experiences working at Aqaba's marine environment. He is considered an activist in the conservation field, and he have several publications in peer-reviewed articles.



### **Ehab Eid**

Mr. Ehab Eid holds a Master degree in conservation, access and management of species in trade. He is working in the field of marine and terrestrial biodiversity conservation in Jordan since more than 14 years and currently working in the Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan as the Programs Director. Mr. Eid published several peer- reviewed on the marine and terrestrial fauna from Jordan.



