

ALEXANDRIA - ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PARADISE UNDER THE WAVES



Most visitors to Egypt have one of two aims in mind; either to visit the Pharaonic wonders or to enjoy world-class diving and windsurfing on the Red Sea coast. However, few tourists and tourist agencies realise that another Egyptian wonder, Alexandria, is able to cater for both of these tastes. After an earthquake 1600 years ago, most of Alexandria sank into the sea and the ruins of the ancient city can only be viewed from beneath the waves. This perhaps explains why Alexandria is such a neglected place. The ancient city gained its name from its founder, Alexander the Great, yet in historical terms it is more famous for being the home of Queen Cleopatra and the venue for her love affairs with Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony.

Alexandria has nothing on Cairo in terms of ancient buildings, indeed the city's most attractive building is just 5 years old, the \$220 million library designed by Norwegian architects. The other once imperious buildings are simply rotting away sadly on the waterfront. The remainder of Alexandria's interesting sites, besides those dug up for museums, are under water.

The popularity of diving has been increasing rapidly in recent years, no more so than in Egypt. Diving centres and clubs have begun to emerge at a stunning rate. Indeed, where else can divers study a whole underwater ancient city? Alexandria provides one of the most fascinating diving sites on the planet. The water contains over 7000 monuments belonging to Pharaonic and Roman dynasties. Furthermore, there are wrecks dating back to 300 BC, certainly not typical sightings on regular diving trips. Alexandria has far more to offer than what meets the eye from above sea level and from the point of view of ancient history. If correctly and skillfully marketed, it could become one of the diving capitals on the planet.

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