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## THE LOOKOUT

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## A Message From the Wheelhouse

Thanks for checking out **Issue #18 of The Lookout**. The 2025 season was a great one!

This year we were very fortunate to do some fantastic dive travel with trips to Florida, Spain and Sardinia for some world-class cave diving. In the fall, Dave participated in

[Diving Talks in Lisbon, Portugal](#) where he presented on innovation in dive leadership education and the NAUI leadership conferences he conducted in 2024 and 2025.



Locally, we did some great dives on the Patriot, Pinthis, Talisman and the Bow of the Poling. Several students completed their training, advancing to the next level and achieving their personal goals. We're looking forward to 2026!

## Gauntlet News

Gauntlet is docked in our winter slip at Glover Wharf Marina in Beverly, MA. We plan to **resume charters in March 2026**. Dive training is available for the following courses in 2026:

- Dive coaching, personalized 1-1 or small group training
- NAUI Introduction to Technical Diving
- NAUI Technical Diver (scope: 21/35 w/ deco gases to 170')

Please contact us as ASAP as possible if interested!

## Cave Diving in Spain

We made a somewhat last minute trip to Spain in April to explore Cueva del Agua, a thermal cave in Isla Plana in the southern region of Murcia. We had been doing some research on cave diving spots in Europe and this one stood out. We reached out to a NAUI associate within our network and the next thing we knew, we had flights booked to Madrid!



El Escorial near Madrid, Spain - a 16th century monastery.

When we arrived in Madrid it was the Easter weekend which is a really fantastic time to be in Spain to celebrate the holiday. Spain has a rich history and culture and so it was a treat (despite being terribly jet lagged) to spend a day in Madrid sightseeing and spending a beautiful but cold day at El Escorial, a 16th century monastery just outside the city.

We packed up in a vehicle and headed 5.5 hours south to Isla Plana, Murcia in the southern part of Spain. This is a beautiful area with mountainous terrain right to the edge of the sea. There is also shipwreck diving in the area with a few WW1 era shipwrecks. We had tentatively planned on day of wreck diving if we could but the logistics and weather was challenging. This would be an excellent trip combining wreck and cave diving though and it is definitely worth returning!

Isla Plana is a small town along the seaside. There are a few dive stores in the area where it is possible to get rental equipment, fills and charters. Since we were with a small group of our own, all the arrangements had been made for us, which included CCR cylinders, sorb, bail outs and scooters. We also had an expert guide with us who could really show us how to dive in this beautiful and challenging cave.

Cueva del Agua is a limestone cave and has water temperatures of 29 C / 85 F below the thermocline making it quite a warm dive. Cool fresh water sits on top with temperatures of 22 C / 72 F until about 6 m / 20 ft after which it becomes incredibly warm, almost stifling at times. The cave has winding passage and beautiful galleries shaped over time from fresh and salt water with calcite formations. The colors are rich and vibrant.

The cave is extremely silty though and the lack of flow of water has resulted in an extremely delicate environment where percolation and any movement eddies can create a silt cloud that just grows and hangs in the water column. It is not uncommon to move through some passage especially on the exit in near-zero visibility.



A navigating a tricky climb down a rock slab to the cavern pool.



The cavern pool of Cueva del Agua. The mud got into everything!

13-26 m / 42-85 ft with some sections much shallower (as shallow was 3-4 m / 10-13 ft) which required some careful equalizing.

Entering the cave required tying off a primary line nearly at the surface since the initial descent was in near zero visibility from the murky, mud-stirred, cool salt water as it transitioned through the halocline into the clear, warm fresh water. From there the large cavern required knowing which direction to swim in to find the main line. Unfortunately this cave has had several fatalities which creates concern for the local municipality and can threaten access. It is a very challenging cave where small mistakes can snowball.

Inside the cave the depth, terrain and cave formations varied with shapes and colors. The cave line was a heavier line which was too thick



Huge thanks to our amazing hosts Alan and Carlos!

Getting down to the water's edge involves climbing down a rock slab with a roughly cut trail. There are some chains and hand holds but even those can be a hazard if not careful. Typically it involves three trips with a team of people ferrying gear down. In addition to the diving rig, each diver was carrying two bail-outs or stages, a DPV, and depending on the dive, we had a camera of some sort.

The primary reason for diving CCR was to avoid stirring up silt in the cave. It was quite impressive how easily the silt could be disturbed and without flow, the cloud would hang in the water column as fine particulate for a good while. The depths ranged from approximately



The cave environment was delicate and extremely silty making CCR best despite the shallower depths.

for arrows and cookies making the preferred method of marking the line clothes pins. This is a good example (and this is true of other caves) of where being versatile and knowing how to adapt to the cave and how it is dived is important—and doing so without departing from your own core training and knowledge. The permanent directional arrows and labeling was very good, but small differences in layout and how navigation occurs is critical to know.

We had a great week of diving and introduction to this area - and cannot wait to go back. There are other caves in a different area but the wrecks seem like they are worth doing for sure. Huge thank you to Carlos and Alan for arranging everything and such incredible dives!



Tucked within these beautiful coastlines are sea caves running thousands of feet underground.



Cave diving from a boat - it is a little different!

Base1's owners include the owners of Suex which meant we had some choice scooters available to use, including the flagship XK1 Goldfinder. It was really hard to not buy one! The dive facility is impressive with a full fill station, a large drying room with dehumidifier, work areas and a classroom. Many of the instructors and explorers associated with Base1 are involved in the exploration and conservation organization, [Phreatic](#), which is a not-for-profit organization based in Cala Gonone founded by a group of environment explorers, scientists, researchers and citizen scientists. Sardinia is quite an interesting place to explore underground, in addition to its rich culture and history. It was very cool to have a small group presentation where we could learn about it first hand.

## Sardinia Caves

Cave diving in Sardinia had been on our list since 2016 when we first visited Sardinia to dive the shipwrecks off Villasimius. Sardinia is absolutely beautiful and is a hidden gem off the beaten path of Italy-bound tourists (shhh!).

We decided to circle back and booked a trip for late August and early September to Sardinia to dive the caves through [Base1 Sardinia](#), a technical and cave diving capable facility right in Cala Gonone, a small village of Dorgali which is separated by mountains. This village is about 1 hour 45 minutes from the closest airport in Olbia. Getting there involved being transported by a shuttle driver arranged through the dive center for our round trip. Once in Cala Gonone, everything was close enough for walking and the dive store's van transported our gear to the boat.

Since we happened to be there when there was a decent sized group of divers from all over (always so fun meeting divers from different places), we were able to dive from the larger charter boat instead of the rib. This was especially nice for two reasons, the sun was quite strong so shade was nice and the seas were quite rough most days so having a bigger platform with a ladder made things more comfortable.



Learning about the Phreatic Project to explore Sardinia's caves and protect water resources.

We dived three different caves during our week. Unfortunately, one cave, Bue Marino (naturally “the” cave to see) was blown out and we were not able to do that one. There is quite a lot of salt water intrusion at the front of the cave, and entering the caves involves finding the entrance, swimming or scootering through surge from the ocean swells while running a primary line, moving through hydrogen sulfide layers from decomposing organic matter, and then halocline. It seems that sometimes that poor visibility can reach well into the cave versus just the beginning parts. This was the situation with Bue Marino, having to scooter through about 300 m / 1000 ft of very low/no visibility to reach clearer water.



Grotta del Fico cave.

We took the recommendations of those that knew best and decided to stick with two visits each to Bel Torrente, Cala Luna and Grotta del Fico - absolutely beautiful caves worthy of more than one dive.

This year has been the year of strobe problems, which sometimes just happens. Travel is tough on camera gear and sometimes gremlins hop in the bag for no good reason. Strobe issues impacted both the Spain and Sardina trips but we made the best of it with spares, and shifting to video with GoPro and a very cool and interesting camera, the Insta360x5. It helps to be versatile when on trips like this given the potential for things to break and having limited spares to repair things. When on dive travel, being flexible and going with the flow is a must.

Bel Torrente is a beautiful cave with haloclines similar to Mexico with dark fresh water giving way to bright clear sea water. Having a scooter in this cave was very nice because the fresh water portion goes a good distance. This was another place where water temperature gradients were a factor and made glove and hood selection a bit of a quandary at times! The warm ocean water was about 22 C / 72 F with the fresh water sections 13-15 C / 55-59 F. It was sometimes a bit of a shock to go into that cool fresh water! It also made the buoyancy of the scooters interesting to adapt to since they were optimally weighted for salt water (which makes sense). Diving in a drysuit is best despite temperature variations.



Bel Torrente cave - highly varied and beautiful.

Bel Torrente is unique in that there are air pockets within the cave and if the water is still enough, there can be some really cool photo opportunities to capture the surface from underwater. There are also monk seal bones that can be found in the caves and many of the formations have shells within the pattern. Cala Luna was another fantastic cave we dived. This one was the deepest cave we dived to a depth of 34 m / 114 ft. The caves were generally quite shallow, easily dived on backmount or side mount open circuit with little to no deco (except Cala Luna). Cala Luna also has quite a lot of halocline in the cave and with its ups and downs can be a challenge to take a clear

photo. Finally Grotta del Fico was truly a stand-out cave with its windy small passages, chimneys (the ears need to be ready for this dive) and beautiful colors. It was hard to pick a favorite but I think everyone would agree this one is an excellent dive. It was also quite interesting to dive since it involved a long-ish swim into the cave, and running a line for quite a long ways as well, including through some extremely shallow parts where the diver's body is nearly out of the water! And while this is all going on, there is a tourist exhibit topside where tourists can see the divers passing through!

Overall, it was a fantastic trip with wonderful hosts at Base1. Topside we enjoyed beautiful sunrises and sunsets, excellent food and plenty of gelato!



Grotta del Fico cave had many beautiful passages and chimneys to worm through!

## Diving Talks - Lisbon, Portugal

In October, Dave joined the 2025 cohort of presenters at the Diving Talks event as part of the Portugal International Dive Show in Lisbon Portugal. Diving Talks uses a 20-minute “Ted Talks” type format and hosts international diving leaders, experts and explorers to share their perspectives. Dave was sponsored by NAUI Worldwide to present on his innovative approach to dive leadership education discussing two leadership conferences conducted in 2024 and 2025. He also participated as part of an industry panel to discuss reinventing the diving training business. Click below to see the full length video.



## 2025 Diving Highlights

The winter of 2025 was a long one and it felt like forever before nicer weather arrived. And then there was the 6-weeks of rain that seemed to happen as well. Needless to say, it was a tough start to the season with weather pushing things out well into spring. We spent much of the winter shore diving off Marblehead and Nahant. Even Hathaway froze for a bit!

One of our favorite shore dive sites is Front Beach off Marblehead Harbor and winter is the best time for diving there with little boat traffic and great visibility.



Winter diving in New England is an adventure!



Dave and Heather presenting on the steamship Allentown at the 2025 Boston Sea Rovers Clinic.

In March, we presented at the Boston Sea Rovers Clinic on the [Steamship Allentown](#), which we have only sparsely presented at local dive clubs outside of the Explorers Club. It was great to share this remarkable story with the local community! In addition, the Boston Sea Rovers Clinic in 2025 was a great opportunity to conduct workshops and seminars and network with friends and diving colleagues!

Over the summer, we had the opportunity to take the 2025 Boston Sea Rovers summer intern, Sofia, on her first dive to the Poling. She is an excellent diver with a keen interest in shipwreck diving! We had a lot of fun and enjoyed showing her the ropes on this rite of passage!

We made a few trips to Lake Champlain this year but not as many as we would have liked. Our schedule became quite tight which made it hard to fit everything in. But we did enjoy trips to Vermont and NH to dive in the usual spots. We even got to dive on a friend's boat in Lake Sunapee! It is nice to be a passenger sometimes!

Gauntlet went into dry dock in August and spent a bit of extra time there having some major upgrades done. It is hard to believe we have been running the boat for 21 years! We needed to repair a few things and incorporate some improvements. More are planned to keep us going for hopefully another 20 years!!



Boston Sea Rovers 2025 summer intern Sofia and Heather after an awesome dive to the Poling.



The NAUI 2025 Technical Diving Summit in High Springs, Florida was a success!

Lastly, in November prior to DEMA, Dave headed to cave country with a team of NAUI leaders to conduct a NAUI Technical Diving Summit which offered seminars, leadership training, technical diving training and guiding as part of a multi-stage program. This program followed the previous leadership conferences which focused on dive leadership education in recreational diving. This summit had an expanded scope and focused on technical diving only.

The summit was hosted locally by [North Florida Cave Training](#) and conducted at local sites and caves. Numerous guest speakers participated and a number of new dive professionals and technical divers were minted over the two weeks!

## Dive Videos:

Here are a few highlights from some of our dives this year. These dives were filmed using the Insta350x5 camera on a 114 cm invisible selfie stick held by the diver. Click on the thumbnail to view.

### Sardinia



### Ginnie Springs



### Esperanza Mine



### Lake Champlain / General Butler Wreck

