



MANIFEST

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Wheelhouse

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THE LOOKOUT

Published by:

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Expeditions, Inc.

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A Message From the Wheelhouse

Thanks for checking out
Issue #16 of The
Lookout.

2023 was a great year
for diving and we were
fortunate to have some
great opportunities to
dive throughout the US as well as internationally with a trip to
Budapest, Hungary - long on our dive destination list!

As we look to evolve this newsletter and introduce different forms
of media, we would welcome any input about what might be
interesting and engaging!



Gauntlet News

Gauntlet is docked in our winter slip at Glover Wharf Marina in
Beverly, MA. We plan to **resume charters in March 2024**.

We have several technical diving classes confirmed for 2024 with
limited space remaining:

- NAUI Introduction to Technical Diving - Spring 2024
- NAUI Technical Diver (Decompression Techniques, Helitrox to 170 ft) - Spring 2024
- Dive coaching - resumes May 2024

Please contact us as soon as possible. Scheduling will begin in
late January for April/May starts.

Budapest, Hungary Cave & Mine Diving

Long on our dive travel adventure list has been Budapest, Hungary to dive the both the Kobanya mine and Molnar Janos cave. In 2023 we had the opportunity to circle back on this one and make it happen. We were able to get connected with an excellent guide within the NAUI network to support all our diving logistics with tanks and gas. In addition, we were afforded the unique opportunity to dive a private site, a former bunker.



Kobanya Mine. Yes, it was creepy.

the cellars is crystal clear, with water temperatures in the 50s. The diving largely consists of swimming down corridors to large rooms with stairwells, platforms and other equipment within them. It is a very unique environment and unlike other mines we've visited. The diving involved bringing a vehicle as far up in as possible, then walking to a staging point with equipment, then descending down steps into the water. It was definitely dark, slippery, and hazardous in some areas with poor footing. Two days was definitely enough to see everything interesting. The rooms are quite small so while the network is large, the linear distance is limited.

From there, we moved onto [Molnar Janos cave](#), another very interesting place. This is a thermokarstic cave system off the Danube River. Budapest sits on a geologic fault line, allowing for thermal water flow, which carved out the cave system. This cave is quite unique in that it sits within an urban area of Budapest. A tunnel was cut into the hillside enabling easier access to a pool (prior to ventilation it was called the CO2 chamber) where the dives begin. The dive center opened in 2015 and enables all diving access. The dive center provides guides, can support rentals, fills for open-circuit and CCR diving.

Our trip began with a two days of diving in Kobanya Mine, which is more accurately known as [Kobanya cellar](#). This is an extensive network of underground spaces with its origins as far back as at least the 13th century as a limestone quarry. Later, around the 17th century it became a site for wine and beer brewing and storage, accessing the ground water within the cellars. Still later, during WW2, the dimensions of the cellars enabled it to be used as a covert aircraft engine assembly plant and a civilian hideout from bombing.

Today, the partial flooding of the cellars allows for diving while still being able to access the network by vehicle and by foot. The water inside



A large room with spiral staircase in Kobanya mine.

The tunnel space is hot and humid, almost intolerable fully suited up and the long corridor to reach the diving pool requires moving equipment by cart. However, once inside the facilities are excellent with ample bench space and storage. There is a lot of paperwork to do, and all dives must be guided with specific routes covered as part of familiarization.



Steps down to the entry pool in Molnar Janos cave.



Molnar Janos Cave.

The cave itself is very warm - both topside as previously mentioned, and below the surface. The cave has several thermoclines with water temperatures ranging from 20-28 C/ 68-82 F. At points, it was truly uncomfortably warm at the start of the dive! The first thermocline around 6 m / 20 ft was a relief! Visibility was very good, but the cave is extremely silty with very little flow so anything stirred up significantly reduces water clarity.

We dived at Molnar Janos cave for two days and we absolutely could have spent many more days there. The cave is large and there are many areas to explore as one is able to venture further. The line system is quite unique. The line is heavy and bolted into the limestone. Because the cave is large vertically, there is an intricate navigation system (e.g., A line, B line, C line, etc) since there can be multiple levels of line in a single space. The lines are very well labeled with location and point information. Cookies and line arrows do not fit on the thick line so most divers use clothespins as markers.

Overall, Molnar Janos cave alone is worth the trip to Budapest. The dive operation is also the Hungary distributor for iQsub and can fully support anything one may need for the X-CCR (or other iQsub CCRs).



Swimming down the stairwell to the lower level in a bunker outside of Budapest, Hungary.



Climbing up the stairs after a great dive in the bunker shelter.

The bunker-shelter was discovered in 2012. A good write-up and site map is shown on this [website](#). The bunker was used as a bomb shelter during WW2 and later during the cold war. There is approximately 300 meters of passage.

The space is quite tight and claustrophobic feeling. The long corridors are also a bit disorienting as things look very similar regardless of where you are (until arriving at a bend, corner or room). It was definitely one of the most unique places we've dived! Overall, we would highly recommend Budapest for unique, diverse and excellent mine and cave diving! Huge thanks to our guide Tamas Miklos for showing us all these great dive sites!

However, we were not done! We had one more adventure in store, and this was to a private dive site, a bunker. The bunker is a somewhat well kept secret and dived by invitation only. Visiting it involved driving outside of Budapest about an hour and entering a random looking parking lot in an industrial area! Yes, always an adventure!



The final photo of a great dive trip!



Launching the Gauntlet 2 in Lake Champlain.

Gauntlet II Adventures

The Gauntlet II saw some action this summer on Lake Champlain with several trips to favorite sites such as the Cornelia, Wreck F and the US La Valle tug. We also dived some that were new to us, such as the William McAllister, Roosevelt II and a few others.

We teamed up with our friends Gary and Ellen Lefebvre on the RV Amazon to either raft up our dive from their vessel. They have a great set up for accessing the wrecks.

The huge amounts of rain definitely impacted what is already generally challenging visibility but we made the best of it! Diving in Lake Champlain enough will make you appreciate how good 5 feet of visibility is!



Video of Wreck F in late September. This was about as good as visibility got this year.

2023 Diving Highlights

Local diving featured some great dives to North Carolina, Lake Champlain, Stellwagen and seldom visited wrecks.

Technical Dives - Mass Bay Deep Wreck Series

This year we experimented with bringing a renewed focus on visiting the less frequently visited deeper shipwrecks with a series of dives that included the Northern Voyager, Bone Wreck and YF-415. Visiting these wrecks has been challenging due to declines in technical divers interested in these types of dives (also known as the deep, dark, scary ones). Despite the usual challenges with weather, we managed to visit each wreck once. Overall it was a success and we may continue in 2024 provided we have sustained interest.



Video of the Bone Wreck, known for having a whale skeleton within the hull.

North Carolina

We decided to break up some of our usual Memorial Day weekend travel with a trip to North Carolina to dive the amazing Graveyard of the Atlantic shipwrecks. Unfortunately we caught an incredibly bad week of weather and spent more time sleeping and eating than diving.

Our limited diving was excellent and despite frustrations (which are to be expected diving off NC) we will try again. This is the nature of offshore wreck diving, as we know.

We would highly recommend Cape Al Vogt, Mutiny Dive Charters—excellent dive operation and crew!



Diving the NC offshore wreck of the Hutton (aka Papoose).



Diving Mainland at Ginnie Springs, FL.

Florida Cave Diving

We made 3 trips to cave country this year, which included Marianna and some dives on the Mill Pond as well as in our usual stomping grounds in the High Springs area.

Although we still use our Dive Xtras Piranha scooters as all-purpose boat and shore diving modular scooters, we decided the Suex XJS scooters better suited our needs for cave diving. We're very happy with our choice and definitely put some miles on them this year!

As our 2023 dive season wound down, we had some really great dives, which included an adventure diving Telford Spring cave and a few at Esperanza mine here in New England. As most know, Telford is no longer accessible by land so one must get creative to dive there. We opted for a scooter up the Suwannee River!

Thanks to everyone who helped make 2023 a great year of diving!



Video of diving Telford Spring cave via river access!