

Trazeel TRAVEL.

THE TRAZEE BOOK

- THE TRAZEES p. 6
- THE ULTIMATE EUROPEAN VACATION p. 18
- HAUNTED TOURISM p. 24
- TINY VACATION HOMES p. 28
- BEST ADVENTURE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS p. 32
- LESSER-KNOWN PILGRIMAGES p. 38
- THE WORLD'S MOST UNIQUE VACATION RENTALS p. 42
- UNDERWATER ATTRACTIONS p. 46



Art of the Dive

Snorkel or scuba to admire these amazing underwater attractions. BY SUSAN B. BARNES

Circle of Life:

An underwater sculpture in Indonesia called Nest, envisioned by artist Jason deCaires Taylor

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According to DEMA, the Diving, Equipment & Marketing Association, there are approximately 2.5 million active scuba divers in the United States and as many as 6 million worldwide, not to mention 11 million snorkelers in the United States and about 20 million worldwide. That's a lot of people in and a lot of time under water!

While many of us divers and snorkelers happily explore coral reefs and walls teeming with marine life during our time in the water, others look for a bit more when it comes to exploring the undersea world. Fortunately, travelers will find plenty of underwater attractions around the world that add to any diving — and, in some cases, snorkeling — outings. Here we take a look at nine underwater attractions worth a visit.

MOLINERE BAY UNDERWATER SCULPTURE PARK

Scuba diving, snorkeling and glass-bottom boat tours are all terrific ways to experience the [Molinere Bay Underwater Sculpture Park](#) off the coast of Grenada in the Caribbean. Envisioned by artist Jason deCaires Taylor the park is considered the first of its kind, installed in 2006. Today the park displays 75 works of art at depths of 13 to 26 feet across more than 8,600 square feet of the ocean's floor. In addition to Grenada, Taylor created underwater sculpture gardens in the [Bahamas](#), the [Maldives](#), [Spain](#), [Indonesia](#), [Norway](#), [France](#), [Cyprus](#) and [Mexico](#).

MUSEO SUBACUÁTICO DE ARTE

More than 500 permanent, life-size sculptures by Taylor can be found

at the [Museo Subacuático de Arte](#) between Cancún and Isla Mujeres off the east coast of Mexico. The museum comprises three distinct galleries, each with its own works of art and accessible in different ways. For example, the Punta Nizuc gallery contains 33 sculptures submerged beneath between 6.5 and 13 feet of water, making it perfect for snorkeling tours, whereas Salon Manchones and its collection of 473 sculptures off the coast of Isla Mujeres reaches depths of about 26 feet — perfect for scuba diving. For those who'd rather stay dry, glass-bottom boat tours visit Punta Nizuc.

MUSEUM OF UNDERWATER ART

Created in an effort to inspire reef conservation, the [Museum of Underwater Art](#) at Australia's Great Barrier Reef is a must-see for avid scuba divers and snorkelers. A collection of sculptures combining human figures with natural marine forms known as Ocean Sentinels graces the seafloor. Created by Taylor and other artists such as Aliah Banchik, Matt Curnock, Kerrie Horrocks and Adam Smith, the

Sentinels "... represent influential Australians who have made significant contributions to marine science and conservation," according to the museum's website. In addition to the Sentinels, the Coral Greenhouse features works of art by Taylor, Banchik and a dozen other artists that combine marine science and coral gardening with environmental art.

UNDERWATER MUSEUM OF ART

On Florida's Panhandle the first permanent underwater sculpture garden in the United States made its debut in 2018 when the [Underwater Museum of Art](#) was unveiled. In the Gulf of Mexico, just less than a mile from the shores of Grayton Beach State Park near South Walton Beach, sculptures created by artists from around the world, submerged in about 58 feet of water, quickly transformed into a living reef and habitat for myriad forms of marine life. Since its inception, each year a group of artists is selected to create sculptures to add to the museum and become part of the ever-evolving seascape.

Sculptural Seascape:

Museo Subacuático de Arte, or MUSA, in Isla Mujeres near Cancún

PHOTO: @ROBATHERTON | DREAMSTIME.COM





Spiritual Depths:

Christ of the Abyss statue in the Florida Keys

PHOTO: © STÉPHANE ROCHON | DREAMSTIME.COM

ANCIENT WRECKS IN GREECE

In the fifth century B.C. a ship was delivering wine and other goods when it sank off the coast of [Greece](#). A few years ago the Greek government granted recreational scuba divers permission to dive down nearly 100 feet to see the remains of the wreckage on the seabed of the Aegean Sea. Though the ship itself washed away over the millennia since its wreck, more than 4,000 tall jars known as amphora remain, outlining what was once the ship in which they were transported. Greek officials have discovered four additional wrecks which they hope to open to the diving public in the years to come.

ALLEY OF LEADERS

The waters of Cape Tarkhankut off the coast of Ukraine are home to some of the region's history in its Alley of Leaders. Here divers will find dozens of busts of Soviet Union leaders, including those of Josef Stalin and Vladimir Lenin, the first of which was lowered into the sea in August 1992. Today the museum of sorts has grown to encompass more than 50 sculptures, including depictions of the Eiffel Tower and London Bridge.

CHRIST OF THE ABYSS

In 1954 *Christ of the Abyss* was placed on the seafloor at a depth of nearly 60 feet in San Fruttuoso Bay, exactly halfway between Camogli and Portofino, Italy. The statue was placed to honor Dario Gonzatt, the first Italian to use scuba-diving gear. Scuba divers, snorkelers and free divers can easily see the statue,



Between Two Continents:
Diving in Silfra fissure, Iceland

PHOTO: © ADAM ORLOWICZ | DREAMSTIME.COM

as can kayakers, stand-up paddlers and even casual swimmers. A replica of the statue stands in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo, Florida — it's actually the third one cast from the original mold.

UNDERWATER POST OFFICE

Imagine mailing a postcard from below the water's surface and it arriving at its intended destination. That's just what you can do at the [Underwater Post](#), the world's only underwater post office, located at Hideaway Island in Vanuatu, about 500 miles west of Fiji and 1,200 miles east of Australia. Snorkelers and scuba divers can visit the underwater post office, which opened in 2003, to mail special waterproof postcards. Rather than stamping the cards with ink, as is done in a regular post office, postal workers use a special embossed cancellation device to indicate the card has been mailed properly.

SILFRA FISSURE

To complement these manmade underwater attractions, our last pick is a natural attraction — the Silfra fissure in [Iceland](#). Found within [Thingvellir National Park](#), about an hour east of Reykjavík, the fissure created by a 1789 earthquake is the only place in the world people can scuba dive or snorkel between two continental plates — the Eurasian and North American plates. Though the water is frigid, to say the least, it is incredibly clear and provides perfect visibility to make the most of your submerged time.