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#### Essential information

Location: Utila

Depth: 18m

Diver level: Beginner to advanced

# The Oliver

It’s easy to be seduced by the clear blue warm waters of the Caribbean. And for good reason. You can experience pretty much every kind of diving there is, from stunning corals and beautiful wildlife to glorious drop-offs and haunting wrecks.

**B**ut a diver’s choice is often guided by personal passion, not least the chance to learn new skills that help take their experience to a new level. The tiny, sun-scorched Honduran island of Utila offers a rare opportunity to become an expert in the art of being a wreck detective through a unique course in diving archaeology – Wreck Hunters.

For here lies an 18th century wreck discovered by a pioneering treasure-hunting expedition in the 1970s. She’s become known as ‘The Oliver’, thought to be of British origin, and represents a time-capsule of great historical significance. This year, the team have been tirelessly preparing the site of the wreck, which lies in 18m of gin-clear tropical Caribbean waters, as an underwater classroom for a new course which begins in earnest in the summer of 2023.

Participants in the Wreck Hunters course will benefit from a masterclass in underwater archaeology skills, old and new. The

wide range of techniques on offer vary from the fundamentals of diving archaeology to the latest hi-tech methods deployed to investigate historical wrecks in minute detail.

The Wreck Hunters team has invested in state-of-the-art underwater metal detectors to help find the hidden clues to the Oliver’s past. Another valuable tool they use is the ‘photomosaic’, a software-generated image of the entire wreck site using multiple photographs ‘stitched’ together.

These skills in turn help answer pivotal questions about any sunken wreck - Where she was going? What was she carrying? How was she built? Who were the people on board? And what is her significance to the world of maritime travel?

The course is aimed primarily at recreational scuba divers with a passion for all things historical underwater. Other skills taught include the challenges of using lifting equipment to recover both small and large artefacts from the

seabed, as well as using underwater magnetometers to locate wrecks.

Not only are the lessons from Utila transferrable, like any great diving trip the bonding experience of being part of a tight-knit team can inspire memories that will live on.

Most divers will know the remarkable story of King Henry VIII’s warship the Mary Rose, as well as the recent triumphant discovery of Shackleton’s famous Endurance. Well, believe it or not, what divers will take away from being a part of the Wreck Hunters project is precisely the knowledge and expertise used in these and other momentous archaeological wonders of the deep.

Project Director Mike Haigh invites you to get in touch if diving archaeology is the sort of challenge you’d like to add to your logbook. •

Who to dive with  
Wreck Hunters  
[www.wreckhunters.co.uk](http://www.wreckhunters.co.uk)