

Location	
Location	Isola delle Femmine, Sicily
Date(s)	July 13 2019 (Saturday)
Partner(s)	Kyle Finnegan <i>Always Kyle</i>
Total Number of Divers	3 divers (the other diver had ear trouble and bailed on first descent)
Trip Duration	Approximately 5 hours. We enjoyed a bit of relaxation in the sun.
Gear Notes	Rented BCD - My Mares Abyss 22 regulators, Orange Apollo BioPro fins with booties, Mares XVision Mask, Patagonia long sleeved neoprene jacket, Steel 12L tanks and 4lbs of weight (belted), Olympus TG4 Tough Camera
Dive Operator	Evasioni Blu Diving
Accommodations	AirBnB – Industrial Apartment, Palermo
Tourist Attractions	N/A
Motto for the day	N/A

Dive 1	
Site Name	Grotta delle'Olio (Cave of Oil)
Individuals Stats	Used Kyle's stats as one of the computer batteries died.
GPS Coordinates	38°13'14.8"N, 13°18'16.8"E
Dive Master	Rino Amodeo
Max Depth	46 ft / 14 m
Bottom Time	51 minutes
Start PSI	3174 PSI
End PSI	1712 PSI
Visibility	Great (approx. 50+ feet)
Conditions (Current etc.)	Slight current
Water Temperature	72 F / 22.2 C
Outside Temperature	82 F / 27.7 C
Surface Interval	First dive – no previous interval
Notes	Definite thermal cline at about 25 feet and again at 40 feet.
The Story	

Feeling only incrementally more settled, but still better than that time in Mexico, I kitted up and we loaded all the gear on the boat. There was another young man there, who was Italian, but spoke perfect English, as he had grown up in the international school program. We briefly chatted while we boated out of the harbor and over to our first dive site. And that is when it became apparent that we were complete bumbles today! It was a whole bunch of little things, like, “where is this?”, and, “where is that?” And trying to get situated. I’m sure we were worrying Esther. She was probably concerned we actually didn’t know what we were doing. And this go ‘round I didn’t have my diver computer as one of the batteries had died in Baia. Kyle had a dive watch and I was relying on the good old physical gauges. Kyle being a sweetheart helped get me sorted, so then I just sat down and waited for him to get ready and in first. Once Kyle was in, I rolled back and joined him in the water. Rino and the other young man joined us, and we began our descent. There boat was getting jostled around by some currents and light waves, but it wasn’t too strong. Kyle and I immediately began our descent. Instantly, it was obvious that



the waters around this area were going to be much clearer. It was lovely. Kyle, Rino and I made a pretty quick descent, but it was clear the other diver was struggling, so Rino signaled for us to stay put while he went to check on what was happening. It seemed to take a while.

Clearly something was going on. So naturally, I took the opportunity to goof off and make funny poses underwater! Eventually, the other diver, who could not have been more than ten or fifteen feet below the surface, returned to the boat and Rino came down and we started our own privately guided dive excursion.

I saw the tell-tale shimmer of water at about 25ft where we hit our first thermocline. *Yikes! That was a temperature drop!* Esther had asked us several times if we thought we'd be okay, and we assured her we would be, but that temperature drop gave me a moment's pause! It wasn't too bad but shocking to get through. I was hoping we'd either drop below it or raise up slightly but moving helped keep me warm. We

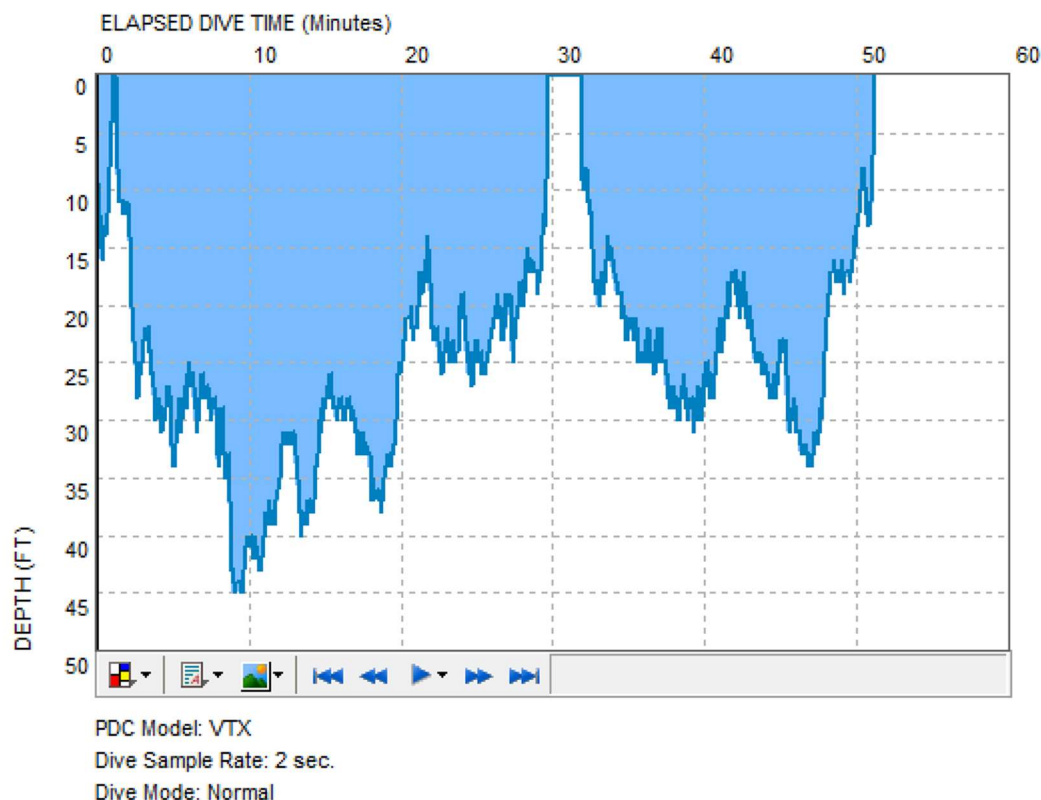
weaved in and out of some rock formations until eventually Rino disappeared into a black hole. *Really now? Was this the cave? Oh crap! I didn't know it was going to be like this! This was tight!* I ducked down and looked in, and for a moment I wasn't sure what I was seeing. My brain had to translate all the different pieces of incoming data. But on second look, it appeared this was more of a swim through than a cave. It was darker to the right but Rino veered left where there was some light coming in from an overhead hole and it looked light at the end. *Okay. I was doing this!* I made some crazy hand gestures for Kyle and then ducked down and in. I thought I was low enough. I mean my stomach was nearly on the ground, but still I was jolted to an abrupt stop as my brain registered the *tink* of my tank hitting the rock formation above my head. *Ah. So, it's that narrow.* I squeezed myself in and hastily made my way through the swim through. I did enjoy it, but I was also touching some pretty weird things that I wasn't so sure I wanted to look at. Best to keep moving. Truth be told - I really enjoyed it!

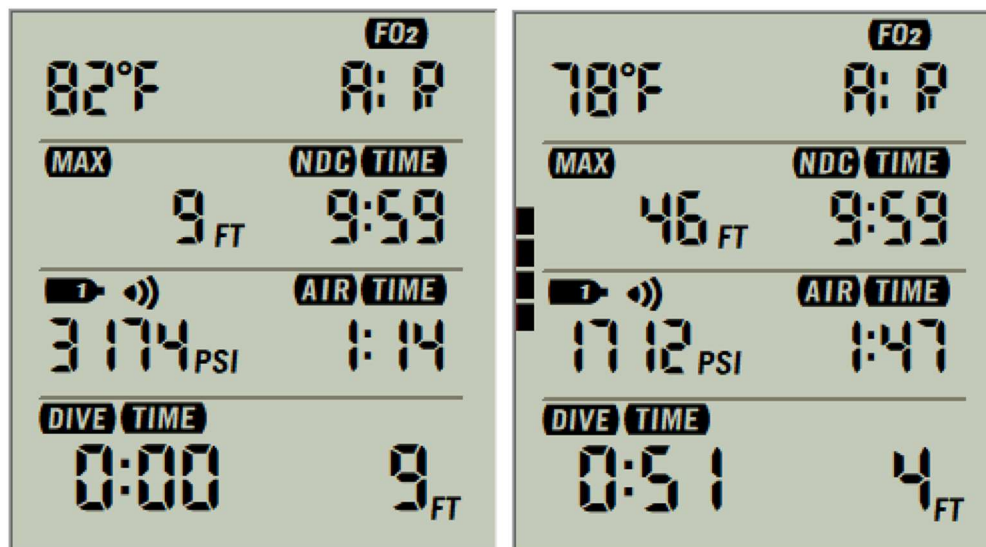
From there, we wove in and out through a couple arches and rocky sections, then into the wide mouth of a cave. Ah! This was the cave I remember Esther talking about! It was so beautiful. The entrance is large so one can swim in underwater or on the surface. We swam in underwater and then surfaced in the cave. And, Surprise! There was a gent who had swam in there just sitting on a rock. Rino exchanged a few words with the gent while I snapped a few photos. The light was coming in and striking the water just right, so it looked luminescent blue. The camera was not capturing it the way I wanted to, but it was stunning, bordering on magical. It was a place I could see visiting frequently if I lived in the area. Alas, we do not, so we again dipped below the surface and followed the wall of the cave out and around. While we explored the local area, we came across a fair amount of garbage. It wasn't the worst I've seen, but still sad to see. At one point I looked over and Rino was pulling on a rope. It kept coming and coming



until it appeared to get stuck. Then he yanked on it a couple of times and an anchor popped out. *I did not see that coming!!* We later learned that they find several a month and they let local skippers reclaim and reuse them. Still, first time I'd seen that. Kyle and I found a net attached to a wall, so we peeled that back and began collecting our own trash! Not long after that it was time to ascend. I was kind of curious to see if the anchor would slow up Rino, but if it did, it wasn't noticeable. We had a kind of raising decompression

stop... I usually like a little bit more of a stable stop, but Kyle and Rino seemed okay with it. After we surfaced, we climbed back up into the boat and Esther took Kyle's picture with the netting as they support Project Aware and they'd like to start doing more clean-up actions in the area. Esther is involved with a group dedicated to getting out with disabled divers as well, which I thought is pretty amazing. I love the spirit of courage and ingenuity required to make sure we can all be involved! After that we made a quick stop back at the dock to switch kit out, grab a snack, and enjoy a small bit of sun while we let the residual nitrogen off gas.





Dive 2	
Site Name	Punta Malese
Individual Stats	Used Kyle's stats as one of the computer batteries died.
GPS Coordinates	38°12'13.6"N 13°16'02.0"E
Dive Master	Alberto Colombo
Max Depth	44 ft / 13.4 m
Bottom Time	46 minutes
Start PSI	3026 PSI
End PSI	1536 PSI
Visibility	Great (approx. 50+ feet)
Conditions (Current etc.)	Calm
Water Temperature	73 F / 22.8 C
Outside Temperature	83 F / 28.3 C
Surface Interval	1h 15m
Notes	Definite thermal cline at about 25 feet and again at 40 feet. <i>I was a good five to ten feet below Kyle half the time as he was freezing. It was a cold thermocline!</i>
The Story	

While briefly back at the dock we were offered pastries and drinks. After loading up the kit, both Kyle and I went to get on the boat at the same time. Alberto was standing on the far side looking at us. I didn't know Kyle was stepping on at the same time, causing the boat to tilt way more than I thought, and I ending up smacking my head on the metal arm of the boat's sunshade. *Damn!! That might actually leave a mark! I think I heard the impact!* Kyle let out an Ooooh! and that was about that. Esther and Rino boarded again and were headed out towards Punta Malese. It was only a ten-minute zip and we were there. I was wondering if I should be concerned that no one bothered to check and see if I was capable of diving after hitting my head. *Shouldn't someone look in my eyes and check for a concussion or something? Lord!* We arrived at the site and Esther told us that Alberto was going to be our dive guide this go around. Okay. Interesting. He didn't appear to speak a lot of English, or maybe he didn't want to,



but we were going to be using hand signals and he had an Aquaman look about him (the Jason Momoa version) so it'd probably be okay! *But what would I know, I was probably concussed!*

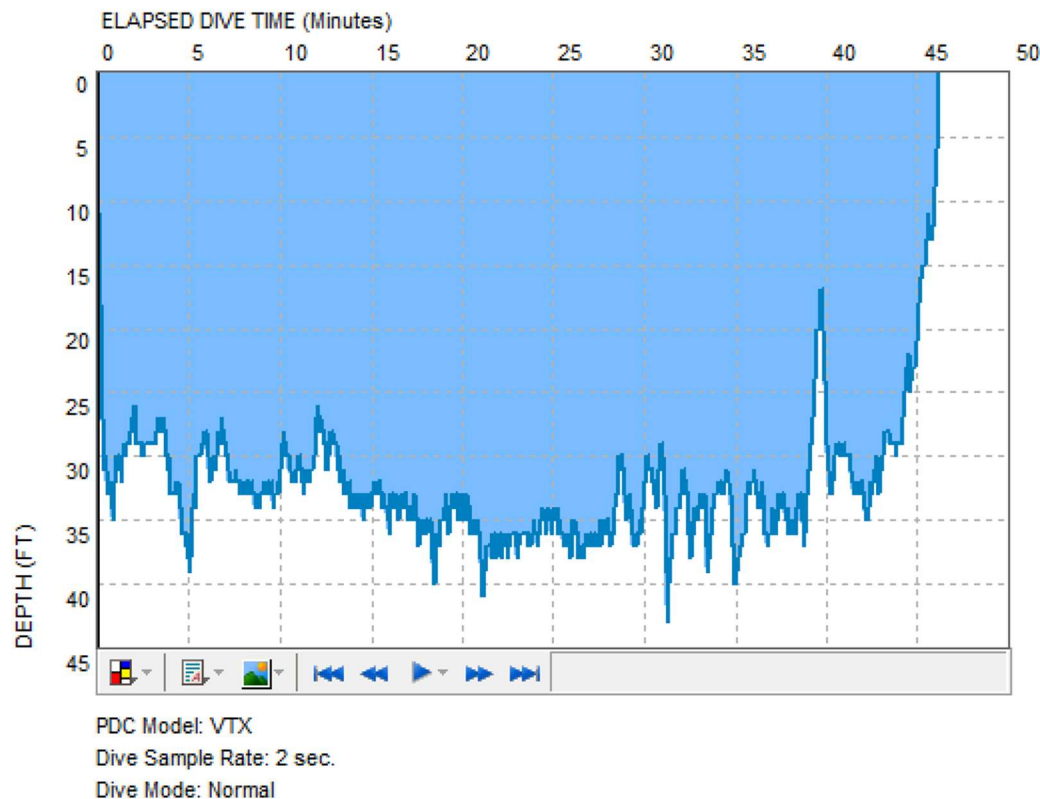
Again, we got kitted up and rolled back into the water. It was a quick and easy free descent. There was really no current, so we didn't have to hold anything. The water was clear enough we could see the bottom as we dropped. Very straight-forward. There was a serious thermocline at about 40ft on this dive. It was quite cold. I knew I could last the length of the dive, but if we stayed in this temperature zone the whole time it might get uncomfortable. To be honest there wasn't a lot to see here. It was really an out and back on a rocky spit of land. There wasn't much life so I amused myself with taking pictures and soaking in the general underwater beauty. Kyle hovered above me at about 35ft for most of the dive – just above the thermocline. He told me later he was really cold! As we made our way back towards the

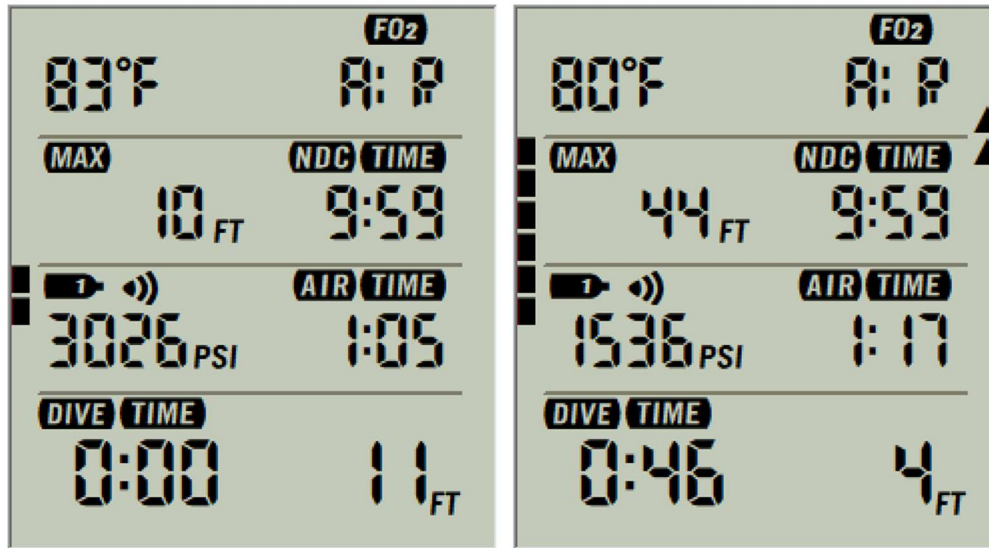
boat, I briefly dropped down low enough to run my hands through the white sand in a section. I fell behind a bit but soon caught up. I saw that Alberto was rising so I figured this must be the conclusion of our dive. Kyle and I started to rise a little, but he indicated we should stay down. *Umm okay?* He then joined us a little bit later and kept moving forward. I kind of shrugged it off and followed behind him. Again, lost in my own world of wandering thoughts and appreciation. Next thing I knew Alberto had turned around to face me. He was about ten or twelve feet away from me and he was signaling. Initially I couldn't tell what he was asking but figured it must be about the O2 because he hadn't checked in. I grabbed my meter and signaled I was fine as he stayed put, facing me and he kept signaling. I then hesitantly thought he was saying his air was out. In hindsight I think he did make the cut off at the neck symbol. But this hadn't happened to me before. *I mean if you were out of air wouldn't you reach for an octo? Or at least move closer to the person?* I went to pull my Octo off and hand it to him, and since he took it, I figured that was what was happening. *Okay. This is new.* I don't think I'd ever really practiced this with someone, and the hose wasn't as long as I'd want it to be. Now I really didn't know what he wanted to do. *I figured we'd start to go up, right? I mean, someone is out of air, it is time to go!* But he kept swimming. *What is actually happening? Is this a test?! Was I asleep for this part of some training?* It was hard to swim side by side with two tanks and my short octopus hose. Eventually, we did start to rise. *Thank goodness! I think words were needed here!* We surfaced and all had a good laugh about it. Alberto teased me a bit for not getting it right away! But it was my first, and completely unexpected, O2 emergency! We got there in the end!



It was a hop, skip and a jump back to the dock where we started to unload and rinse off. There was an outdoor shower that we made extensive use of. While we were washing our kit and our clothes, it turns out Alberto had somehow managed to step on a rather large splinter and got it right up into his foot! Ouch! Esther had gone off to buy some tweezers or something. When she got back, I told her I had a mini first aid kit in my bag with some antiseptic

cream and some surgical grade tape that might hold better in the water. BAM! Second time I used the first aid kit this trip! It has proven itself useful! But man... there has been a lot of little things happening. *And I don't want to point fingers... but Alberto had been involved or present for all of them. Haha! Poor guy!* Since we didn't have to rush off, we sat around enjoying the sun and sharing a beer. *Ah. It is a wonderful life.*





Lessons Learned
1. Even instructors and guides run out of oxygen!
2. I really need to brush up on my hand signals!!

