



Deep Descent: Adventure and Death Diving the Andrea Doria

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On a dense, foggy, late July evening in 1956, the Italian-flagged cruise liner "Andrea Doria," bound for New York, was struck broadside by another cruise ship. After an agonizing eleven hours, the relentless sea would drag her down, settling the "Doria" uneasily into the murky Atlantic ocean floor nearly two hundred and fifty feet below. Amazingly, due to a daring and fevered rescue operation by her oceangoing brethren, only fifty-one of the more than 1,700 people on board both ships were killed in the collision. Years have passed since that tragedy, yet the "Andrea Doria" is still taking lives. Deep Descent

Drawn by the sirens call of adventure, a small but fanatical group of extreme scuba divers has long challenged the "Andrea Doria," pushing themselves far beyond the limits of recreational divers, up to the very limits of human endurance. Not all of them have succeeded. In "Deep Descent," an author and frequent Doria diver Kevin McMurray takes you inside this elite club, offering an unsparing and unsentimental exploration of those men and women who dare to go deeper, farther, and closer to the edge than prudence or common sense might allow.

Considered the Mt. Everest of diving, the "Andrea Doria" is the ultimate deepwater wreck challenge -- lying in an area long known as the Bermuda Triangle of the Northeast, some fifty miles south of Nantucket Island and two hundred miles east of Sandy Hook, New Jersey. This region, no stranger to disaster, is fog-shrouded and prone to sudden changes of wind, weather, and tide. In addition to many shipping disasters, it has borne mute witness to such recent tragedies as the fatal crash of John F. Kennedy Jr.'s small plane and the mysterious downing of EgyptAir Flight 990. It is an area that guards its secrets well, only surrendering its treasures to the bravest and most determined seekers.

Told with a vivid and startling clarity, "Deep Descent" is a story of courage and bravado, of the human spirit overcoming human frailty, and of fearsome risks traded for a hardwired adrenaline rush. With each page, McMurray draws us deeper into the cold heart of the unforgiving sea, giving us a powerful vision of a place to which few will ever have the skills or the daring to go.

Deep Descent: Adventure and Death Diving the Andrea Doria Details

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From Reader Review Deep Descent: Adventure and Death Diving the Andrea Doria for online ebook

Matthew says

Fascinating look at the sport of wreck diving. It is cautionary without being preachy. It doesn't take sides in what are often a very emotional and political issues; especially involving the deaths of multiple people. The analysis of the accident that sank the Andrea Doria, the history of wreck diving and the accidental deaths while diving on the wreck of the Andrea Doria are described well and make an enjoyable read. This is not just for SCUBA Divers.

Noel says

Great insight to deep sea wreck diving. The author concentrates mainly on the Andrea Doria then dives into the parties and wrecks known to the tourist diving industry. The final third covers the ongoing entanglement relationship with two diving vessels the "Wahoo" and the "Seeker". Highly recommended for anyone looking for adventure or interest in wreck diving. I found myself researching other wrecks mentioned in the book and only wish the book had an updated edition c.2001.

Barbara says

The author of this book is a deep-wreck diver, a member of an elite group of enthusiasts that push their bodies, and fate, to extreme limits. Known as the "Mount Everest" of wrecks, the Andrea Doria is a powerful magnet for these men and women; lured by the prospect of touching down on the magnificent liner's deck, and the hope of carrying home an artifact, they dive more than two hundred feet down in cold, murky waters - and sometimes pay the ultimate price for the experience.

McMurray gives a vivid recounting of the collision between the Doria and the Stockholm, and the eleven hours before the liner slipped beneath the waves, which allowed for what is considered to be the greatest sea rescue of all time. He describes the unique challenges faced at such depths, the early attempts to dive the wreck, and the ever bolder explorations of her interior.

Not surprisingly, much ink is devoted to detailed explanations of what can, and does, go wrong; one chapter is dedicated to several divers who lost their lives during the summers of 1998 and 1999. The wreck has been thought both evil and cursed. The author discusses the history of diving, both as a recreational and extreme sport, the cliques and snobbery that exist, and the competition between dive boat operations. He also explains evolving technology and gas mixtures, which are considered both boon and bane.

At times very technical, at others simply fascinating, the author navigates issues of risk and liability, and considers all possible factors in the fatalities, never resting blame on any individual. He writes with passion for the sport and respect for its dangers.

Jonathan says

Along with what I consider it's sister book, "Shadow Divers", Deep Descent is an engrossing, riveting, and ultimately terrific book about diving the wreck of the Italian Luxury liner Andrea Doria. The book profiles the liners demise, and also the demise of some eight people who had died to that point (2001) diving her wreck. I for one cannot fathom a more horrible way to die than being lost in an underwater maze, panicked and running out of air. It's a scenario that repeats itself all too often in these two books. We learn about the men who had their lives ended in pursuit of their dreams: To dive the Mt Everest of scuba. An utterly fascinating read, which helps the reader understand why these men suffered the same fate.

Along with many pictures, the writing is very good, albeit a bit technical for the non scuba diver but, easy enough to get around. What makes otherwise intelligent and sane men dive 230ft below the North Atlantic to grab a souvenir when any mistake can be fatal is a mystery to me, but it makes a great read. Highly recommended.

Dagmar Belesova says

I'm sure this is an interesting book for a diver to read, but for me as a non-diver it fell short. I was hoping to get some insight about what it is that makes the wreck diving so appealing, especially diving this particular one. However, very little page time is devoted to this (presumably because the divers would already know?) and I am still not sure what it is that makes the Doria so uniquely challenging as presumably there are other wrecks lying just as deep presenting similar dangers. Nevertheless, it is an interesting insight into the world of deep diving.

Silvana says

Reading this book makes me want to get a wreck diving specialty course but at the same time it got me scared shitless. The author laid out his stories really well - despite some typos - and the first chapter - one of the deaths - hooked me. Most if not all deaths on the Doria dives seemed to be the divers' fault whether they realized it or not. It shows that a diver really need to be responsible, don't rely on others, listen to advice and triple check everything and KNOW YOUR OWN LIMIT. Physical health is as crucial as ever and the examples of divers not really paying attention to their health (with fatal results) are described here.

There are tons of requirements you need to be able to meet the Doria. The book has lots of descriptions on this. Since this book was published in 2001 and I want to know the current condition I went and asked one dive shop in Instagram (@urbanmanta) who just recently dived the Doria. Here's what they said to me: "Trimix training for a level head, deco procedures training to learn how to sling bottles (huh?), advanced wreck class, solo diving class, limited viz training, and years of practice doing skills and diving in crap Northeast conditions and Crossfit to be able to pull across the Granny line in a strong current". Hooo boy...

Ok. Back to the book. I like the stories about the captains of the boats catering for Doria dives. These are the legendary trailblazers, the dive gods. The rivalries were described in details especially following the catastrophic '98-99 seasons. Interesting that Doria wreck site actually is not the US authority since it is on international waters so obviously noone can ban any diving activities there. The fact that all dives are done aboard US vessels make a technical leeway for the Coast Guard to 'interfere' but efforts to curb the dives apparently went nowhere. As it should be.

I also love reading about the history on using various gases, from helimix to trimix, which is apparently the highest level of certification you could get as a technical diver. Looks wayyyy too complicated for me, I understand how some people still prefer using the good old compressed air.

Also interesting is the fact that the buddy system is actually not used in Doria (deep wreck dives). I was fuming inside when reading about these deaths (where the fuck were their buddies??) but apparently solo dives are normal practice since buddy dives are considered useless and potentially more dangerous. As a recreational diver the buddy system was ingrained to me from the start so reading this book was quite shocking.

Diving has been indeed a new hot hobby for lots of people and I have seen dive centers lowering their standards to cater for these new, enthusiastic, no-holds-barred and money-laden divers. There are several who did not ask and read my log (let alone ask for my certification cards). They were lucky most of Indonesia's waters are considered 'easy' dives - a far cry for the Doria's Northeast Atlantic waters. Then again, I still feel divers should really know their own limit and not push their luck. Logged dives - experience - and a level head will save you, not your dive guides.

SP says

I've read this book probably four to five times, so it's five stars under my idiosyncratic rating system.

Very interesting book about technical wreck diving on the *Andrea Doria*. McMurray covers everything -- basic diving science (nitrogen narcosis, "the bends," oxygen toxicity), the sinking of the *Doria* itself, the dives to visit her that began just a week later. But far too common are the stories of the deaths. The *Doria* is so deep that dives are extremely dangerous. As McMurray comments at one point, by the time you know something is wrong, you're probably already as good as dead.

McMurray gives a good sense of the personalities involved and (for those who didn't make it) the best guesses as to what went wrong. Good writing and a fascinating subject make this a great book, one that's stood up to repeated rereadings by me.

Peter Pecksen says

If you are a diver, I believe in my humble and limited experience this is a book that should be read. An excellent glimpse into the forbidden world of deep diving. Even if you have no desire as a recreational diver to go deeper than the prescribed limits, this book provides many examples of why you need to constantly have your wits about you and be situationally aware. The penalty for failure to have your s&t wired tight is severe in diving. Take the time to learn from those who have paid the ultimate price.

Traummachine says

This book is both exciting and depressing. On the surface it's a book about the adventure of diving deep wrecks, specifically the *Andrea Doria*. But it's also a giant warning label about the dangers of this. There's lots of death in this book, and don't forget that it's non-fiction.

But it's a good insight into the history of wreck diving, what drives a lot of people to pursue it despite the dangers, and the various personalities and drama among this fairly small diving community.

I'm still excited to start scuba diving someday, but this book convinced me to still keep things fairly shallow.

Dawn says

As an avid recreational diver I love reading these stories, as I won't ever be going down to those depths! This was an interesting and well written read. Even if you aren't a diver but you enjoy extreme adventure stories (i.e. climbing Everest), this might be interesting to you. I've also read Shadow Divers and it was fun to see some of the overlapping characters between the two books.

Christina Flux says

I enjoy reading about diving, especially more technical diving than I would ever do myself. I appreciate the stories and history included in this book, and I would have rated this book a 4. However, there were several sections that were disjointed or had difficult transitions which confused the timeline for me, and therefore, made this book more difficult to read. For example, I thought Lawrence died in 1998 the way the book read, but the chronology of deaths at the end of the book shows he died several years earlier. Therefore, I've rated the book a 3 based on the readability of it and comprehension of facts and timelines.

David says

A sobering look at many of the deaths that occurred in the 1990's by divers searching the wreck of the cruise ship Andrea Doria. As a casual diver, it certainly made me realize that deep sea wreck diving will never be something on my agenda. A very entertaining and interesting book and I'd recommend it to any diver considering doing such a trip.

Janet says

The ocean spray stings my eyes, the breeze whips my hair about, the sweetness of salt tingles my tongue, as this history of the Andrea Doria reaches out to grasp me firmly in a tale of travel, tragedy, adventure, rescue, and deep sea daring. I originally purchased this book as an accessory to Shadow Divers (5 Stars). The two books are somewhat intertwined by a deep sea skin diving rivalry decades old between the boats Seeker and Wahoo, told from different decks as it were. As an added bonus are the photos, and the epilogue, excellent both.

<http://www.wahoo2001.com/>

<http://deepexplorers.com/>

<http://www.johnchatterton.com/>

Robert Melnyk says

Being a SCUBA diver, I really enjoyed this book. It was fascinating (and in many cases sad) reading about all the diving adventures to the Andrea Doria. As a diver who has done many fairly deep dives myself (although none close to the depth of the Doria), I could understand and relate to much of what was being discussed in the book. My guess is that if you are not a diver, you would not enjoy this book as much as I did. I also dove myself on a lot of the other wrecks talked about in the book; The U.S.S. San Diego, The Stolt Digali, and a few of the wrecks off Morehead City, NC (I dove with the dive outfit mentioned in the book - Olympus Dive Center). Reading this gives me the urge to get back into diving again, and maybe try a dive on the Andrea Doria...but then again, maybe not :-). If you are or have been a SCUBA diver, you will enjoy this book.

Jeff Williams says

This was a really good book on the cautionary tale of deep sea diving. As one feels the lure of discovery and potential treasures (in the way of dive mementos, not so much chests of gold), the book tips more towards the dangers and pitfalls from early technical diving and how many fell to the siren song of the Andrea Doria. The lives of several legendary technical divers and their unfortunate ends are chronicled here in matter-of-fact yet dignified detail.
