

South Australia's shipwrecks offer a wealth of recreational diving experiences for beginner and advanced divers and are enjoyed by both local and international visitors.

The types of shipwreck sites and the surrounding sea conditions can vary greatly, so careful planning and an appropriate level of experience are essential to ensure a safe dive.

Divers exploring historic wrecks should be familiar with the legislation which protects these sites.

Careless actions, such as excessive finning or grabbing the structure in strong currents, can cause irreversible damage and should be avoided.

Anchors are a major threat to historic wrecks, tearing the structure, accelerating corrosion and destroying marine life. Boat operators should follow recommended anchoring procedures, ensuring that anchors are not dropped onto a wreck. (Refer to *Shipwreck Guidelines 1 – Anchoring on Shipwrecks*).



▲ Willyama, Marion Bay

#### Heritage South Australia

Level 8 Chesser House  
91-97 Grenfell Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 1047  
Adelaide SA 5001

Phone (08) 8204 9245  
Fax (08) 8204 9455

Email: [heritage@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:heritage@saugov.sa.gov.au)  
Web: [www.heritage.sa.gov.au](http://www.heritage.sa.gov.au)

#### Publications available from:

The Environment Shop  
77 Grenfell Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

#### Cover photograph:

Eleni K, Goat Island



# Diving Shipwrecks



*Shipwrecks – unique archaeological sites*



Heritage South Australia



Government  
of South Australia



## Diving South Australian shipwrecks

More than 800 vessels are known to have been wrecked along South Australia's coast and inland waters, with approximately 200 of these sites currently located and identified. While most were lost in catastrophic circumstances – driven ashore, smashed on reefs or foundering at sea – other vessels were simply abandoned when they were no longer valued.

South Australia's shipwrecks are impressive dive sites. They are mini-reef systems, rich in colourful marine life, and archaeological sites offering rare evidence of past technology, trade and shipboard life.

Shipwrecks are fascinating to all, but divers have a special opportunity to explore, document and protect these fragile reminders of our maritime heritage.

▲ *Songvaar*, Wardang Island

## Historic Shipwrecks are protected

Under the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* and the South Australian *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981* interference with Historic Shipwrecks is prohibited.

Wreck material must not be damaged, moved on site or taken from a wreck. Relics associated with an historic wreck are also protected.

The *Zanoni* shipwreck, south-east of Ardrossan, has a Protected Zone which can only be entered with a permit issued by Heritage SA.

Penalties for breaches of the Acts are severe and include confiscation of boats and equipment, fines and jail terms.

It is a requirement of the legislation that Heritage SA be notified of any new shipwreck discoveries and that all relics recovered from historic wrecks, irrespective of how long ago, be registered by Heritage SA.



▲ Bow of the *Zanoni*, Ardrossan

## Be a responsible visitor

Dive shipwreck sites safely. Do not interfere with the site and avoid accidental or deliberate damage to the wreck with your dive vessel's anchor or dive gear.

Report newly discovered wrecks or the possession of a shipwreck artefact to Heritage SA, and obtain permits when necessary.

## Take only bubbles ...

Removal of wreck material and other disturbance are very real threats to the preservation of many of South Australia's shipwreck sites.

Thoughtless probing and fossicking on wrecks inevitably leads to extensive damage, depriving the site of its archaeological value and diminishing its potential for tourism and recreation.

Uncovering parts of the wreck site by digging or 'hand-fanning' exposes wreck material and accelerates corrosion and decomposition.

Deliberate removal of parts for souvenirs and other disturbance of shipwrecks are illegal and cause irreparable damage so 'look and leave intact'. This will ensure that shipwrecks remain available for everyone's enjoyment and interest in the future.

## Time capsules

Shipwreck remains are the archaeological record of a precise moment in time. They are time capsules preserving the physical evidence of a distinct period, culture and locality.

Maritime archaeologists examining South Australia's shipwreck sites have discovered valuable information about ship construction and life at sea. The remains of cargoes and crew or passenger possessions have provided rare insights into aspects of the State's settlement, development and trade.

Shipwrecks are fragile, non-renewable heritage resources. Once damaged or disturbed they cannot be replaced.



▲ *Geltwood*, Southend

## Heritage South Australia

Heritage SA is the government agency responsible for the management, protection and promotion of South Australia's maritime and terrestrial heritage. The organisation encourages the responsible enjoyment of shipwreck sites throughout the State and has produced many trails and publications specifically for divers.

Underwater interpretive plaques have been placed adjacent to historic wrecks in popular dive locations as part of *Adelaide's Underwater Heritage Trail* and the *Wardang Island* and *Kangaroo Island Maritime Heritage Trails*.

Guide books and brochures provide further information about the history and significance of these vessels. The *Wardang Island* and *Investigator Strait* books are very popular, being printed on waterproof 'paper' as an underwater guide for divers.