The Cedar Pride wreck, Aqaba: a Lebanese cargo ship scuttled at 25 metres

A 74-metre cargo ship that caught fire in 1982, was towed to Aqaba, and scuttled in 1985 as an artificial reef. Now lies on its port side at 25 m, fully intact superstructure, with two decades of coral growth.

Anas Hu · May 5, 2026

In 1982, a Lebanese cargo ship called the Cedar Pride caught fire in port and burned out. The Jordanian government acquired the hull, and in 1985 it was towed to a sheltered cove south of Aqaba and intentionally sunk on its port side at 25 metres. Forty years later, the ship is still recognisable — masts, bridge, lifeboat davits, cargo holds — but encrusted with the soft and hard corals that have made it the most celebrated wreck dive in Jordan. It is the Red Sea's answer to the Thistlegorm.

You need an Advanced Open Water cert to do it justice. Penetration is possible with proper training but most divers stay outside.

1. Why dive Cedar Pride
2. The wreck: history + dimensions
3. Dive plan
4. Marine life on the wreck
5. Practical tips
6. References

1Why dive Cedar Pride

Wreck diving is a different discipline from reef diving. The reef rewards drift and gentle movement; the wreck rewards stillness and the willingness to look at one rivet for a long time. The Cedar Pride is the right introduction to wreck diving for travellers in Jordan because it sits in calm, sheltered water with predictable conditions, the entry is straightforward boat-based, and the depth (25 m) is within Advanced Open Water limits. There is no current to fight, the

visibility is the same 18–25 m as the rest of Aqaba, and the structure is intact enough to be unambiguous.

2The wreck: history + dimensions

The Cedar Pride was a 74-metre Lebanese cargo ship — a small bulker by modern standards, large for a recreational dive site. Acquired by the Jordanian government after the 1982 fire and intentionally scuttled in 1985 as part of an artificial-reef programme. Now lies on its port side, with the bow pointing north. Distinctive features:

- **The masts.** Two masts, both intact and standing perpendicular to the seabed. The taller one reaches 8 m off the wreck.
- **The bridge.** Open and accessible from outside; instruments are gone but the wheel is recognisable.
- **The cargo holds.** Two main holds, the forward one open to the sea (penetrable with training), the aft one partially closed.
- **The lifeboat davits.** Eerily preserved — the boats are gone, but the davits frame the empty boat decks.
- **Coral growth.** Forty years of soft and hard coral on the upper-side surfaces; the keel side is barer.

> A Lebanese cargo ship, scuttled 1985, now home to forty years of coral growth.

3Dive plan

The standard Cedar Pride profile:

- **Boat entry.** Most dive shops run a 10-minute RIB ride from the South Beach to the mooring buoy.
- **Descent down the mooring line.** The line goes to the wreck at 25 m. Equalise on the way down.
- **The route.** Drop onto the bridge at 18 m, swim along the upper-side of the hull to the bow at 25 m, swim back along the keel side at 22–18 m, and finish at the stern with safety stop on the mooring line.
- **Bottom time.** 25–35 minutes at depth depending on consumption.

- **Penetration.** Possible in the forward cargo hold and bridge, but requires Advanced + Wreck specialty + a guide. Most recreational divers stay outside.

4Marine life on the wreck

The Cedar Pride attracts species that aren't common on the open reef:

- **Lionfish.** Resident on the bridge and in the cargo holds. Don't touch.
- **Schools of glassfish.** Filling the holds in dense clouds.
- **Moray eels.** In the structural crevices.
- **Soft corals + sea fans.** On the upper-side superstructure, brightly coloured.
- **Hard corals.** Acropora and Pocillopora colonies on the bridge and masts.

> **For solo travellers**
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> You'll be paired by the dive shop. Most operators run the Cedar Pride as a 2-tank day with a shallow second dive for nitrogen offgassing.

5Practical tips

- **Certification minimum.** Advanced Open Water (or Open Water with a Deep Adventure dive logged) for the 25 m profile.
- **Gear.** A torch is essential for the bridge interior and for inspecting the holds. Wreck divers often bring a reel.
- **Best season.** Year-round; visibility is best in summer (May–October).
- **Combine with.** Power Station (deeper, advanced) for a 2-tank day, or Japanese Garden (shallow) for a relaxing second dive.
- **Hyperbaric chamber.** Princess Haya Aqaba — 15 minutes by car from any Aqaba dive site.

References

1. Wikipedia — Aqaba (Marine Reserve, Gulf biodiversity)

Verified by locals: TBD — this article will be reviewed by a PADI Wreck Specialty instructor based in Aqaba before final publication. Drafted from reader-diver experience and the Aqaba dive community's published guides.