

Secca della Colombara

Barracuda clouds that explode when huge amberjacks pass through it; a lively shoal in open sea where a wreck rests on the seabed.

On the north-eastern side of the island of *Ustica*, about 3 miles from the coast, the shoal of the “*Secca della Colombara*” is located. This seamount has a top that reaches a depth of just 3m. Its western side sharply degrades to depths of about 30 while in northern direction it gently slopes down forming an elongated platform at 15 to 20m depth. This *dive site* has a few possible *underwater* itineraries, where the vertical wall, the bow of the *wreck*, the platform and the stern of the wreck offer the *diver* a completely differing environment to explore.

We start our *dive* at the top of the shoal, where heading in a northern direction we arrive at the top of the vertical *reef* wall of Colombara. We make a free descend in the blue on a valley that lies at a depth of 30m adjacent to the reef wall. Here we find an impressive number of big *dusky groupers* and *striped groupers*. The wall offers the usual colour spectacle with its decoration of bright orange *coral* and *yellow cluster anemones* and yellow *gorgonians*, while its cracks and crevices hide an occasional brown *hake*.

The *Colombara* shoal is also known for the presence of a *wreck*; a ship carrying marble blocks that sank in 2005 and broke into two sections. The bow of the wreck slipped toward the northern side of seamount, while the stern of the wreck sank further away in a south-eastern direction. Both parts of the wreck deserve a visit; the bow of the wreck is internally covered with *unicorn shrimps* and its surroundings hold groups of *snappers* and gigantic *amberjacks* that swim over. The stern of the wreck is surrounded by enormous *dusky groupers*. This side of the wreck has a striking appearance where a huge rope attached to the wreck floats just above it in midwater, tending towards the surface, as if to witness the broken link with the outside world.

Do not miss the search for shoals of *barracudas* around the platform of the Colombara shoal! *Barracuda* clouds that swim in unison forming a brilliant circle that explodes when huge *amberjacks* pass through it. The platform is a real “big-fish-hotspot”, where apart from the presence of *barracuda*’s, big *dusky groupers* and *striped groupers* occupy the seabed, while an occasional shoal of small *tuna* a solitary big *tuna* pass by in the blue.

The enchantment of this *dive* is interrupted only when looking at our computer or pressure gauge we realize that it is time to return. We head towards the top of the shoal, where we can explore the shallow rocks for *crabs* while groups of colourful *ornate wrasse* entertain us with their dances.

Characteristics of the dive

Secca della Colombara

Type: Shoal

Certification Requirement: OWD

Recommended Certification: Deep Diver

Difficulty Level: Medium

Depth: 25-40m

Duration: 50-60 min

Typical encounters: Grouper, amberjack, barracuda, snapper, tuna

Notes: Perfect visibility, possible current