



10 Minutes with Herbert Nitsch

We speak to the freediver dubbed The Deepest Man on Earth to find out about his dream diving destinations.

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Herbert Nitsch, dubbed The Deepest Man on Earth, was featured in Back from the Abyss, a documentary that was recently screened on all Singapore Airlines planes. RACHEL AJ LEE plunges in to find out how he prepares for each dive, and his dream destinations.

1. Which destinations have offered you the best freediving experiences so far?

If you wish to see great marine life, both Palau and the Marquesas Islands (French Polynesia) are fantastic. If you want to dive deep, there is the Blue Hole in the Bahamas. If you want to go even deeper, then Santorini in Greece is ideal. Usually, places with more infrastructure are not so deep and have less exciting marine life.

2. Name your dream freediving destination.

My dream destination is the Galapagos Islands. I'd love to see animal species that I have never seen before. It would be wonderful to see a rich and intact underwater world that is not so much affected by environmental factors as we see in most of the world.

3. What is your latest world record depth and time?

My last No Limit (the most extreme type of freediving for depth) world record was at a depth of 253.2m on June 6, 2012 in Santorini, Greece.

4. Your own record for breath holding is nine minutes. How do you do it?

I no longer participate in static breath holding competitions since my record, but I could probably hold my breath longer now. I am continuously learning how to control my body in the most efficient way. For example, I do cardio training on a stationary bike and practice breath holding on the couch (to get used to higher carbon dioxide levels, thus learning to suppress the urge to breathe). I also do specific weight training for each freediving discipline (such as for distance and for depth), and I also incorporate particular stretching exercises for the lungs and diaphragm.



5. How do you mentally prepare yourself for each dive?

Mental control is the key factor to succeed in freediving. Any stress or anxiety would cause more oxygen consumption, and would therefore reduce performance, whether it is for recreational or competitive freediving. I try to overcome mental obstacles beforehand by dealing with them well ahead of a dive. During the dive itself, I try to focus only on what is essential, and I try to avoid distracting thoughts.

6. What is your greatest fear when freediving?

My greatest fear is decompression sickness. It actually happened to me on my last record dive in Santorini. The type that I had was equivalent to several brain strokes. After months of being unable to see, speak and walk, I eventually got out of my wheelchair. Now, two years later, I am doing fine and have been freediving again. I will start serious training soon to see how I feel at depth.

7. Where do you do when you want to take a break from freediving?

Freediving is not only a sport for me, but it is also a way of life. I cannot imagine taking this passion out of my life. I also enjoy other water sports such as yachting, windsurfing and kayaking.