

The Cement Wreck is so packed with sea life that one of its decks is often called the "Coral Garden."

ADVENTURE

Taking the Plunge

In one of the wealthiest countries in the world, you'll find some of the most unexpected treasure hidden at the bottom of the ocean. **Diana Hubbell** dives in.

Right as I was starting to wonder if this was a good idea, the parachute opened. A split second later, I was yanked off the boat deck and airborne, drifting 30 meters over ships bobbing near Serasa Beach, Brunei. The tiny affluent sultanate often lures travelers seeking out one of its many golf courses, or a safe family-friendly haven. Few people come here for adventure, but my first time parasailing certainly qualified.

I had an endless view of the ocean as I drifted

through the sky, and while this panorama was definitely worth my minor heart attack, even more awaited beneath the surface. Snorkelers can expect to see cuttlefish and sea eagles around coral-crusting Pelong Rock, while intrepid (and Open Water Certified) divers have the chance to explore some of the most accessible shipwrecks in all of Asia. Sunken ships act as artificial reefs, providing a habitat for a dazzling array of marine life. As their hulls rust and decay, corals take

root, drawing everything from brilliantly hued schools of rainbow fish to swarms of barracuda. Wrecks also tend to attract sea turtles, making them one of the best places to spot these gentle giants.

Brunei Bay features four capsized vessels at a depth of roughly 20 to 30 meters, each with its own historic and sometimes spooky back story—the Blue Water Wreck capsized on Friday the 13th, while the American Wreck is a mine-blasted warship now teeming with coral and

exotic, finned fauna like scorpionfish. Cement Wreck, originally a cargo ship from Japan, is so packed with sea life that one of its decks is nicknamed the "Coral Garden." In this lush, undersea landscape, octopi slink, batfish swarm and lionfish prowl. So follow the lead of these beautiful old boats, and descend into the deep. *Poni Divers offers guided dives of all of the wrecks; Serasa Watersports Complex, Serasa Beach; 67-3/223-3655; facebook.com/PoniDivers.* +