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SeaLife SportDiver Smartphone Photo Workshop



Tobias Friedrich

Tobias Friedrich started taking underwater photos in 2007. Since then, his images have been published in prestigious scuba diving magazines such as Sport Diver, Unterwasser, Tauchen, Scuba Diver, Through The Lens and many others.

In 2018 he won the coveted Underwater Photographer of the Year competition.

Tobias is passionate about new challenges, and constantly explores new techniques and creative approaches to underwater photography. In this guide, Tobias focuses on the basics from composition to lighting, using SeaLife's SportDiver Smartphone housing.

You'll see, that you don't have to be a professional, or spend a fortune on an underwater camera, to get great results. Simply follow these basic steps for great results.

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SportDiver®



Red Sea, Egypt

Spread your light out for the complete picture

Illuminating soft corals in the Red Sea is ideal with two **Sea Dragon 3000F Color Boost** Photo-Video lights which each offer 120 degrees of beam angle. Position the lights on the left and right side of the camera or smartphone housing, creating a nice, even effect across the reef scene. The Flex-Connect system is perfect for positioning the lights for these types of scenarios. Add **Flex-Connect flex arms** for best results.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a **SeaLife SportDiver Ultra_housing**, 1x iPhone lens with two **Sea Dragon 3000F Color Boost** photo-video lights.

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Red Sea, Egypt

Stay low, aim high

When shooting sea creature portraits like this Lionfish, be sure to lay as low as possible without hitting the seafloor or leaning on coral. Reach out as far as you can with your arms; then, view your subject in the display while aiming upward slightly to capture a rich, blue water background. The smartphone's screen is bright and will allow you to compose and capture the image.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, 1x iPhone lens with two SeaDragon 3000F Color Boost photo-video lights.

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Galapagos Islands

Creating interesting diagonals

Diagonal images work well for artistic aesthetic as seen in this image of the Sea Turtle. If the animal swims towards you, be ready and line up the turtle diagonally in your frame. Don't wait too long, they tend to turn before you can capture a good shot. The 1x iPhone or smartphone lens will work well while the subject is further away.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver housing, 1x iPhone lens with one SeaDragon 2300F photo-video light.

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Channel Islands, California

Close-up Diagonals with the SportDiver

You can compose exceptional diagonals even on macro subjects, and this works especially well in the vertical growth of California's kelp forest. You can take your time since the kelp is steady and it's easy to find good spots to shoot. With the SportDiver lens adapter and a good macro wet lens, you can get very close and take a detailed picture.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, 1x iPhone lens with one Sea Dragon 2300F photo-video light, SportDiver Lens Adapter & AOI 67mm +6 macro lens.

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Channel Islands, California

Macro Imaging with the SportDiver

The new lens adapter for the SeaLife SportDiver housing will allow you to attach almost any external wet lens with 52mm & 67mm mounts. For macro imaging, be sure to position the macro lens exactly over the smartphone camera lens you want to use for your photo; for example, the 1x lens on the iPhone.

Equipment: SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, iPhone 14 Pro Max, SportDiver Lens adapter, AOI +6 67mm lens, SeaDragon 2500 photo-video light.

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Channel Islands, California



**Splits with the 15cm/6"
WA Dome lens**

The New SeaLife 6" Wide Angle Dome Lens for SportDiver Smartphone Housings are not only getting wider and closer high-quality images, but also making split shots much easier. When finding an opportunity for a split shot, it's important to include the blue water that's closest to you by partially tilting the lens down, submerging it, and choosing something interesting from the background to capture above the surface.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver housing, 0.5x iPhone lens and SeaLife SportDiver 6"/15cm Wide Angle Dome Lens.

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Channel Islands, California

Phone lens Selection with the SportDiver Ultra

Garibaldi fish are quite common subjects in the kelp forests off the California shoreline and tend to get close to the divers. For a good portrait shot though, it is recommended to use the 1x lens and not the ultra-wide angle phone lens. A portrait lens like the 1x iPhone lens will offer a focal length better able to frame the subject properly in the shot and get a good part of the habitat in the background.

Photo: [@tobias_friedrich_photography](#)

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver housing, 1x iPhone lens with one SeaDragon 2000F photo-video light.

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Egypt

Extra-Wide Angles with the SportDiver Ultra

The SportDiver Wide Angle Dome Lens dramatically increases the quality of images taken with wide angles lenses such as the iPhone's 0.5x lens. The new outer wide angle dome lens will help decrease the phone lens' softer distorted edges and create clearer images. The WA Dome Lens (SL053) mounts directly to the SportDiver housing and is ideal for subjects like this school of barracuda.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver housing, 0.5x iPhone lens and SeaLife 6"/15cm Wide Angle Dome lens with two SeaDragon 3000F photo-video lights.

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Egypt

Close-ups with the new SportDiver Lens Adapter for 52mm & 67mm threaded lenses. Position the lens before the dive, centered over the top of the phone lens you want to use during your dive. Most prefer the 3x tele lens, or the 1x main camera lens. The 3x iPhone lens should give you the best results, and it will also work at very short distances using an AOI macro 67mm +12.5 wet lens.

Equipment: iPhone 14 pro max in a SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, 1x iPhone lens with two SeaDragon 3000F photo-video lights, Macro Lens Adapter & AOI +12.5 macro close-up lens.

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Maldives

**The SeaLife SportDiver
6"/15cm Wide Angle Dome**

Lens allows you to easily take split shots like this at the water's surface. The lens is easy to attach and mounts directly to the SportDiver and SportDiver ULTRA housings. Set your camera lens to 0.5x or 1.0x for best results, you can zoom within these lens settings as well.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, 0.5x iPhone lens with SeaLife Wide Angle Dome Lens.

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The SeaLife 52mm and 67mm Lens Adapter for SportDiver allows you to mount lenses on the front of your SportDiver housing. In this case, I am using an AOI 12,5x lens over the 3x iPhone lens. This combination allows the working distance to be extremely close and ideal for less shy subjects like nudibranchs or this Christmas Tree Worm.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, 3x iPhone lens with two SeaDragon 3000F photo-video lights, Lens Adapter for SportDiver & AOI +6 macro lens.

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Channel Islands, California

When shooting a subject like this California Sheephead, finding variety in a background can create a dynamic image. The background is as important as the foreground subject and using artistic tricks like the Golden Ratio or interesting reef patterns will make a huge difference in the final result. In this case, the kelp forest suits the subject perfectly as a colorful background and part of the Sheephead's natural habitat.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, 1x iPhone lens with one Sea Dragon 2500 photo-video light.

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Observe, then Capture!

Coral groupers are one of the most beautiful creatures on a tropical reef, but they're usually quite shy and hide in small caves for protection. The trick is waiting and observing the animals swimming patterns. Normally, after the fish seeks shelter, they will become curious of you, and you'll have your chance for a great image.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver Ultra housing, 1x iPhone lens with two SeaDragon 3000F photo-video lights.

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Add a Color Boost

Large coral formations are great subjects for capturing colorful seascapes. To achieve these bright and vibrant colors underwater, the best method is to use as much light as possible – like the two Sea Dragon 3000 Color Boost photo-dive lights used here. They will generate enough light to illuminate larger corals and the corners and sides of the image, and to add warmth with the light's Color Boost feature to increase the beauty of the photo or video.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver housing, 0.5x iPhone lens with two SeaDragon 3000F Color Boost photo-video lights.

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Add some blue to the background

Closeups of clownfish usually display the symbiotic relationship between the fish and the anemone. By adding some blue water in the background, you can create an impressive image that captures the Clownfish swimming in and out of the anemone's tentacles. Use your lights to effectively illuminate the foreground.

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver housing, 1x iPhone lens with two Sea Dragon 3000F Color Boost photo-video lights.

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One Eye or two?

One of the rules of underwater photography is to have at least one eye in focus in the subject you want to photograph. It's always better to have two eyes since eye contact enhances a photo. In the first image of the stonefish sat on top of corals and had an ideal blue water background. The 2nd image has both eyes in frame with a weaker composition. Which do you like more?

Equipment: iPhone 14 Pro Max in a SeaLife SportDiver housing, 1x iPhone lens with two Sea Dragon 3000F photo-video lights.

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Photographing Mantas in Socorro

Oceanic Mantas, like this one near Socorro, usually display curious behavior with divers. Don't swim towards the animal when you want to photograph it, but rather wait until the Manta comes on its own - as they almost always will. An image of the front is usually the better angle to capture these beautiful and magnificent creatures.

Equipment: SportDiver
Housing with iPhone 12 Pro
Max using 0.5x iPhone Lens

Socorro, Mexico



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Red Sea, Egypt

Using a Narrow Beam for Creative Effects

The narrow beam "spot" function of the Sea Dragon Pro Dual Beam is much more than just a dive light; it's also a great imaging light. Focus the beam on a single subject, like an octopus, and only illuminate the animal and nothing else surrounding it. The spotlight effect will stand out well against a dark underwater background.

Equipment: SportDiver housing with iPhone 12 Pro Max using 1.0x iPhone lens, 1x Sea Dragon Pro Dual Beam photo-video light.

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**For Best Colors and
Even Coverage, use
Sea Dragon Lights**

It's essential to use underwater lighting to bring back and liven colors in images such as the beautiful Rainbow Reef in Fiji. For best results, use two SeaLife Sea Dragon Photo/Video lights with extended flex arms that will distribute light evenly across the corals, resulting in rich, vivid colors.

Equipment: SportDiver housing with iPhone 12 Pro Max, 2.5x iPhone Lens, 2x Sea Dragon 3000F photo-video lights.

Rainbow Reef, Fiji



Mangroves, Raja Ampat

Using your Smartphone's Abilities

Who said you can't take split shots with a smartphone? It's possible if the water is calm with no waves. Try to stay calm in the water with your BCD inflated, and carefully position the camera on the surface's edge until you can see the split in the screen. It takes several attempts to master, but the results are worth it. You can also practice these shots in a pool, and for easiest results - try the 6"/15cm WA Dome lens for these shots.

Equipment: SportDiver housing with iPhone 14 Pro Max, 0.5x iPhone Lens

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Add Contrast and Beauty with a Blue Background

When you're on your dive, look out for animals that hover a bit higher above the reef so that you can get lower and gain perspective. Photograph the subject against the blue water in the background. It's also crucially important to light up reddish subjects like a lionfish with a Sea Dragon light to get the red color of the animal into the image.

Equipment: SportDiver housing with iPhone 12 Pro Max using 1.0x iPhone lens, Sea Dragon 3000F photo-video light.

Red Sea, Egypt



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Socorro, Mexico

Capturing Incredible Underwater Scenes

Manta Rays follow each other to be able to maximize food intake or just to swim more efficiently. Make sure to capture a situation like this by observing the animals as early as possible and try to expect where they might be soon for a fly-by, then get ready and in position.

Equipment: SportDiver housing with iPhone 12 Pro Max using 0.5x iPhone Lens

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Creative Use of Ambient Light

Working with ambient light is a great way to add contrast to your image. In this case, it was a much better idea to give the light source to the diver, so they can have it in their hands, rather than using the light to illuminate the cave's interior. The light at the edge of the cave leads the viewer towards the diver.

Equipment: SeaLife SportDiver Housing with iPhone 12 Pro Max using 0.5x iPhone Lens

Red Sea, Egypt



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Striped Marlin: Composing the Perfect Shot

The Striped Marlin is a very fast hunter, especially around a bait ball. As you approach, stay calm and try to move the camera steadily with the animals to avoid motion blur. Also, try to get the schooling predator or bait fish, in one direction to make the image more powerful. In this case, the diagonals helped also.

Equipment: SeaLife
SportDiver Housing with
iPhone 12 Pro Max using
0.5x iPhone Lens

*Bahia Magdalena,
Mexico*



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Red Sea, Egypt

Using Sunlight for Best Color

When you're in a reef landscape without a photo-video light, it's especially important to shoot with the direction of sunlight and use it as best as you can. Photographing into the sun will result in harsh contrasts and overexposed areas. Photographing with the sunlight captures vivid colors. Make sure to use the correct white balance in the SportDiver app while shooting.

Equipment: SportDiver housing with iPhone 12 Max Pro using 0.5x iPhone Lens

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Rhinopias, Bali

Mastering Underwater Close-Ups with Your Smartphone

The newer macro function in iPhone13 and 14 will allow you to get very close to small sea animals when you switch to the 0.5x ultra-wide lens. Don't get too close to the subject. Rather keep a comfortable distance so you won't disturb it as you can always slightly crop the image on your phone later. The iPhone's high-quality lens will allow enlargement.

Equipment: SportDiver housing with iPhone 13 Pro Max, 2.5x iPhone Lens, 2x Sea Dragon 3000F photo-video light.

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SportDiver® S

Depth Tested to 100'/30m

Fits all iPhone and Most Android

Optional Filters Available

Includes Travel Pouch

Three 1/4-20 Accessory Mounts



SportDiver® ULTRA

Depth Tested to 130'/40m

Larger: Fits almost all Phones

Includes Red Filter

Includes Custom Fit EVA Case

Seven 1/4-20 Accessory Mounts



Fit & Compatibility Guide

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