

# Wreck Diver



## HILMA HOOKER

The Hilma Hooker was a 236 foot long cargo vessel weighing 1,027 gross tons registered in San Andres, Columbia. She was originally named the Midsland when she was built in Holland in 1951. The vessel was later renamed Mistral, William Express, Anna, Doric Express and finally Hilma Hooker.

The Hilma Hooker ran into some mechanical rudder difficulties while passing the island of Bonaire. She was taken in tow and brought to the town pier, where customs immigrations officials decided to search her after discovering that she carried no papers. It was soon learned that the FBI had been tracking the vessel by satellite on the suspicion that she was transporting illegal drugs. What they found on the Hilma Hooker was over 25,000 pounds of marijuana hidden behind a false bulkhead. The marijuana was confiscated, taken out of town and burned.



The Hooker remained tied up to the town pier for months while officials tried to locate the vessel's owner. After a while she was moved and moored just offshore. Her hull, which was not in the best condition, began to take on water, and her pumps eventually gave out. On the morning of September 12, 1984, at approximately 9:00 AM, the vessel rolled over and sank.

Not too long after her sinking, local dive operators got together and took actions that made the Hilma Hooker a safe wreck for sport divers. They opened doors, cut cables, and drilled holes into the wreck's port side. The holes provided a way for air, generated from divers breathing on scuba to escape. This was done so no one would be tempted to remove their regulator while in a trapped air pocket, since air in these pockets is usually oxygen depleted from the rusting steel. Al Catalfumo, owner of a local dive operation, says that he and his partner cut a cable that was holding the vessel's cargo door open; if left alone it would have deteriorated and snapped, possibly when divers were under these huge doors. Al went on to say that the door fell with such force that visibility was instantly reduced to zero as the wreck was enveloped in a cloud of sand.

The Hilma Hooker now sits on her starboard side in 90 feet of water. She is completely intact and absolutely beautiful to dive as well as to photograph. Her large bronze propeller sits in 65 feet of water. She has a stern helm which is excellent for photos and, due to the usual amount of good ambient light, wide angle photographs result in nice bow and stern shots. The Hooker has also turned into a good fish haven. Get there early in the morning and you can spot a school of large tarpon resting under her bow. Her rusting structure is refuge to all types of sea creatures, large and small alike.

As a side note, the Hilma Hooker wreck is lying just next to a coral reef. This is an ideal location because divers can spend a good amount of time on the wreck, and then slowly ascend while exploring the reef. This extends bottom time exploration, while divers are still out gassing. Please do not penetrate the Hooker.



## **Scuba Courses Available in Bonaire**

**I will be conducting Specialty Certification dives every morning.  
Please consult your Dive Itinerary for scheduling.**

\$99 Open Water Diver Check-Out- Dives

\$125 Advanced Open Water Certification. (Advanced diver you may try any 3 specialties. You will also have to navigate using compass headings while maintaining neutral buoyancy. The Max depth for your deep dive is 100 feet)

### **Specialties;**

Each Specialty Certification counts towards your PADI Master Scuba Diver rating. All you need is 5 specialties and Rescue Diver. You may sign up for any of the Specialties anytime.

- Free Reef Navigation tutorial
- \$95 NITROX. (Please get study materials and take test before Bonaire)
- \$75 Night Diver (3 flashlights required, Main backup and tank light)
- \$75 Deep Diver (max depth 150 feet)
- \$75 Wreck Diver (You will need a wreck reel)
- \$75 Underwater Navigation
- \$250 Underwater Digital photographer (with professional Michael Bowman)
- \$75 Peak Performance Buoyancy
- \$75 Dive Propulsion Vehicle (Addition rental fees may apply)
- \$75 Boat Diver (Addition Boat fees apply)

**Don't forget your Log Book.**

**Log all your dives. A good diver is always learning.**