

## **Blancpain supports the Gombessa V "Planet Mediterranean" expedition**

**Continuing its partnership with Laurent Ballesta, Blancpain is backing the fifth Gombessa expedition, a new exploration mission taking place in the Mediterranean off the French coast throughout July. For the first time ever, the expedition combines saturation diving with scuba using closed circuit rebreathers. The objective is to reveal the still well-kept secrets of a Mediterranean that we believe we know well, but which remains full of mysteries.**

Laurent Ballesta is a marine naturalist, renowned underwater photographer and pioneer in the use of innovative diving equipment. Since 2012, Blancpain's support has enabled him to put his talents to good use within the framework of the *Gombessa Expeditions* project, designed to promote a better understanding of deep ecosystems, until now inaccessible and unknown. The project has already resulted in four major expeditions, as well as additional missions to Reunion Island, the Philippines and Polynesia. Laurent Ballesta thus contributes significantly to the activities of the *Blancpain Ocean Commitment* (BOC) around the world.

Each Gombessa expedition is characterized by a scientific mystery, a diving challenge and the promise of unprecedented images. Gombessa V is no exception to this rule. In order to allow the time to perform a whole series of scientific protocols commissioned by research centers and to illustrate these deep ecosystems, the Gombessa team has developed a world first: the combination of saturation diving with scuba using closed circuit rebreathers. Saturation diving enables professional divers to work on underwater construction sites by connecting them to the surface with an umbilical that both provides them with respiratory gas and allows them to communicate. The length of time they spend underwater is theoretically unlimited, but they can only move a few meters around the area in which they are working. Scuba diving, as its name suggests, allows free movement, but is characterized by strict time constraints. Indeed, for a few minutes spent at great depth, it is necessary to undergo several hours of decompression in order to avoid any risk of accident. The combination of these two techniques makes it possible for the first time ever to avoid any need for decompression during the expedition and to conduct a single four-day session at the end of the mission. Laurent Ballesta and his three companions will thus be able to perform explorations lasting up to eight hours a day in order to achieve their ambitious objectives.

As with previous expeditions, Gombessa V will be the subject of a feature-length documentary film, an exhibition and a book, which in 2020 will reveal the discoveries made by Laurent Ballesta's team to audiences all over the world. At a time when there is indisputable evidence of climate change and the process of extinction of species, the discovery of new rich and unspoiled territories offers a resounding message of hope.

**Blancpain invites you to follow the daily video blog of the expedition on:**

<https://www.blancpain-ocean-commitment.com/gombessa-v>