

## Scuba Diving South Africa

June 10 -26, 2011

### Itinerary

Friday, June 10, 2011 – Depart for South Africa

#### **An Introduction to Scuba Diving in South Africa:**

South Africa is well known for some of the best shark diving in the world. Although this is true South Africa boasts with some of best reef dives and some of our well known reefs such as Sodwana, Aliwal-Shoal, and Protea Banks.

Sodwana Bay is situated in the heart of the Zulu-kingdom, and is one of the premier sport diving destinations in the world. It offers many popular dive sites with a great diversity of underwater seascapes and marine flora and fauna including branching, table and plate corals, beautiful overhangs, drop-offs and mushroom rocks, as well as spectacular night dives. Scuba diving equipment is available for hire.

In summer, loggerhead and leatherback turtles come out of the sea to nest on the Sodwana beaches. Aside from Sodwana's wealth of opportunities for diving, boating and angling a five-km self-guided trail is available for the enjoyment of nature lovers and bird enthusiasts. Malaria precautions are necessary though.

The World Famous Aliwal Shoal (quoted as being one of the top ten dive sites in the World) was formed thousands of years ago from fossilised sand dunes during the times when sea levels were much lower than they are today.

The Aghulas Current which runs south along the East Coast of Africa brings with it warm water and a huge diversity of tropical sea life.

Protea Banks is a unique reef system along the Kwa-Zulu Natal coast which offers diving experiences second to none. The pelagic life is the main attraction with schools of yellow tail, kingfish, tuna and barracuda attracting a variety of top predators. The reef is especially known for its large "Zambezi "(Bull Shark) populations and has been rated as one of the world's top shark dives.

Daily shark diving/sighting tours (weather permitting) are done off Gansbaai, a mere stone-throw away from the most southern tip of the African Continent. Approx. 12km offshore from Gansbaai (2hrs drive from Cape Town) there are two islands situated next to each other.

Due to a number of geographical reasons - one being the shallow and narrow channel that runs between these two islands - Dyer Island has become known as one of only two unique areas in the world, where the chances to view the great white shark, rises exceptionally high. Other wildlife species such as Cape Fur Seals, Cape Gannets, Cape Cormorants, Jackass penguins, whales and dolphins are also likely to be sighted.

Gansbaai is a little holiday and fishing village situated 160km from Cape Town. The area has several attractions for the nature lover with whale watching being the most popular.

<b>Summary</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Day 0 – Part 1</b>	Arrival day, sleep at guest house
<b>Day 1</b>	Sodwana Bay Departure
<b>Day 2-5</b>	Diving and exploring Sodwana Bay
<b>Day 6</b>	Leaving Sodwana to Umkomaas
<b>Day 7</b>	Diving Aliwal Shoal
<b>Day 8</b>	Shark frenzy baited dives
<b>Day 9</b>	Wreck diving Aliwal-Shoal and Crocodile Farm visit
<b>Day 10</b>	Diving Protea Banks, then driving back to Aliwal
<b>Day 11 – Part 2</b>	Ushaka diving, Transfer from Durban to Cape Town <b>OR</b> Return Home
<b>Day 12</b>	Great White Cage Diving Gansbaai
<b>Day 13</b>	Diving Hout Bay
<b>Day 14</b>	Transfer to Cape Town International Airport – return to the USA

### **Day 0: June 11 - Arrival day: Part 1**

Arrive at King Shaka International Durban. Flight arrival times to be confirmed in advance. Be met at the airport and transferred to our guesthouse for check in. We will have the evening at leisure meeting everyone, relaxing and discussing the trip around a good old South African braai.

### **Day 1: June 12 - Off to Sodwana – Kwa-Zulu Natal**

We will be departing at 06:00 in the morning from at the Guest House, heading for Sodwana. We will be covering the Mpumalanga and Kwa-Zulu Natal provinces and the views are amazing. Stops will be made when you require viewing the beautiful landscape of South Africa.

On arrival at Sodwana, We will settle in at Sodwana Bay Lodge where we will be staying, this 4 star accommodation in Sodwana will get your feet in the air and your dive spirit rocking.

Sodwana Bay Lodge and Hotel Resort is placed in the heart of Maputaland on the western shore of Lake Shazibe, bordered by the worlds highest naturally vegetated dunes which shelter the golden beaches of the lush interior. The area is surrounded by fertile swamps and sand forests with rare and protected animal and plant species, as well as wide lakes and extensive river estuaries which are full of life. The careful design of the lodge has been done in order to match the rustic, Eco-orientated nature of the Kwa-Zulu Natal region.

The warm Indian Ocean currents of the Mozambique Channel washes onto the shores of Maputa land, a timeless realm of astounding bio-diversity and beauty. Here on the relatively untouched eastern seaboard of southern Africa, wide lakes and extensive river estuaries shimmer with life; fertile swamp and sand forest abound with rare and protected animal and plant species, while towering dunes shelter golden beaches from the lush interior. Venturing oceanwards, the seabed is bejewelled with coral reefs and formations of dramatic splendour, staging an unceasing pageant of every imaginable kind of marine life.

### Day 2-5: June 13-16 - Diving in Sodwana

More diving will take place on different and exciting new reefs. Everyday will be early morning dives, waking up at 06:00 and departing to the Dive centre for a 07:00am kit up. We will dive the local reefs, which is bursting with all kinds of marine life including whale sharks. When you are on the boat keep your eyes open for whale sharks, whales and dolphins. If you spot any you will have the opportunity to snorkel with them, an experience you won't forget.

The afternoons will be yours to spend at your own leisure. You may relax on the beach or enjoy some of the local beers in South Africa. We will take the 4x4's and head into the bush for sundowners from where we will then depart to the destination of choice for Dinner. Dinner will be served by friendly locals and stories of the day can be shared. Comfortable accommodation will be followed by more exciting dives.

### Reef information

The coral reef complex of Sodwana Bay is positioned 27 degrees 33' 28" S and 32 degrees 41' 10" E, making this reef system one of the most southern in the world. The majority of these reefs are named according to their distance from the Jesser Point launch site.

### Water Temperatures

**The average water temperature is 23 degrees C with the maximum being 28 degrees C between March and April. The minimum is 20 degrees C between August and September.**

<b>Raggie Reef</b>
This is Sodwana's closest and shallowest reef. It has an average depth of 9, a maximum of 13 m and lies a quarter of a mile from the launch site. In summer the female Ragged-tooth sharks congregate here in their hoards to gestate, and this offers divers an exciting diving experience.
<b>Stringer</b>
Between Quarter mile and 2 Mile reef lies the small but captivating Stringer reef. It consists of 2 rocky outcrops close together at a depth of 12 – 14 m. You are likely to come across a variety of large and small critters such as Frogfish, Anemone fish, Ghost Pipe fish, rays, eels and turtles. Not only do large game fish frequent this area, but it also acts as a nursery for juvenile fish. This is a truly world class dive on days when a strong current is not present.
<b>2 Mile</b>
This is the largest reef in Sodwana, being over 1.8 km long and 900 m wide. The average depth is 12 m, the shallowest being 8 m and deepest 18 m. 2 Mile often has the best visibility since it is the shallowest of Sodwana's 5 major reefs. It has amazing topography that consists of gullies, overhangs and swim-throughs. Dives can take place from one site to another.

### Northern 2 Mile

Wayne's World – A slightly deeper dive on 2 Mile at 16 m. It is relatively flat in comparison to the other sites on this section of the reef. A large variety of soft coral can be found. There is amazing color on this dive.

Pinnacles – Just south of the actual pinnacles lies a sand patch with a fixed buoy line at 12 m of depth. There is a small cave on the western side of the sand patch that sometimes houses White Tip Reef sharks. Up to three have been seen in the cave together.

4 Buoy – Large gullies are found from Pinnacles leading to 4 Buoy where they open up into a sand patch. All around this sand patch you will find groups of fish hiding under overhangs and in swim-through. Honeycomb Morey Eels are commonly found around the 4 Buoy areas where they find security in the many small caves.

Cat Reef – This reef is similar to that of Wayne's World but is slightly deeper at 18 m. Game fish are commonly seen coming through from the seaward side. The diversity of hard and soft corals provide shelter for small fish like Chocolate Dips, Goldies and Juvenile Butterfly fish to name just a few.

### Central 2 Mile

Coral Gardens – Coral Gardens is known for the variety of hard and soft coral that carpets the reef. It is rather flat with a maximum depth of 12 m. Brightly colored nudibranchs are plentiful and sighted rather easily by observant divers.

Arches – This site consists of sand patches with boulders that form arches in a variety of shapes and sizes. One arch in particular is large and quite spectacular. The maximum depth on this dive is 13 m on the sand.

Deep Sponge – Deep Sponge lies parallel with 2 Mile but 500 m further out to sea. The depth ranges from 20 - 35 m. A lovely deep dive, offering divers' massive vase shaped sponges and interesting marine life. Game fish are common over and around this area. A good option when a strong surge is present on 2 Mile, however, only open to more advanced divers.

### Southern 2 Mile

Caves & Overhangs – Caves and Overhangs offers incredible coral formations consisting mostly of Plate and Stag Horn Corals, which together with the rocky substrate form numerous small caves. The fish life is abundant making this site a very colourful dive.

Chain – This reef attributes its name to a ship's anchor chain that lies across it. This chain has become part of the reef and is now difficult to spot. This reef has a vast number of Carpet Anemones as well as the elusive Razor Wrasse around its edges.

Zambi Alley – Zambi Alley is a sand channel that separates Antons from Chain. This channel owes its name to spear fishermen who observed Zambezi sharks there in the past. It has a maximum depth of 16 m.

Antons – This is a very well built up reef that is popular with divers. There is a larger amount of coral life on the out-to-sea side. This is where you will find great numbers of schooling fish and bait balls of many species. Turtles are commonly seen around the whole southern region of 2 Mile. The maximum depth is that of 16 m.

### 5 Mile

This reef lies at a depth of 18 - 22 meters. If it is coral life that you want to see then 5 Mile is for you. This reef has the most diverse coral communities at Sodwana making it the most fragile dived site. The extensive beds of Stag Horn, Mushroom and Plate corals are staggering as are the tiny colourful creatures living in them. Leopard sharks, White Tipped and Black Tipped Reef sharks are occasionally seen. The flat bed of coral is dotted with a few craters and potholes. One pothole in particular contains a variety of interesting marine life.

### Ribbon

Ribbon lies a few hundred metres from the shore beside 5 Mile reef with a depth of 20 m. It consists of 2 small reef systems similar to that of Stringer reef. This reef attributes its name to the uncommon Ribbon eel found around its edges. Devil-fire fish are sighted regularly, especially on its northern point. Diverse, large groups of fish are found in abundance and because of this, as well as the geography of the reef, large predator fish make appearances such as Barracuda, King fish and a variety of sharks. A very interesting dive offering great opportunities for photographers.

### 7 Mile

This is the most popular of the further reefs and lies at 24 m at the bottom and 15 m on the top. Most dives will be lead at a depth no deeper than 20 m to ensure a longer bottom time. What makes this reef so popular is its ability to produce the biggest variety of fish species including Black Tipped Reef sharks, schools of pelagic fish, huge Moray eels and plenty of turtles. With the amount of fish species, spectacular drop offs and coral formations, abundant soft coral life and the chance to sight some incredibly large fish make 7 Mile reef listed on the worlds top dive sites.

### Ramsey

This pristine reef is named after Dr. Ramsey who conducted research regarding coral growth on the Maputoland reef complex. Diving on this reef has only recently been re-opened and not many people know of its whereabouts. It sits at a depth of 20 m, relatively close to the shoreline. Large rays, Devil-fire fish, an array of Nudibranches, spectacular coral formations and Morey Eels make this a fantastic dive when the conditions are good. Another reef that offers great photographic opportunities.

### 9 Mile

This reef is the furthest limit in the Sodwana reef complex being 14 km north from Jesser Point and lies 500 m offshore. The boat ride to the reef takes between 20 and 40 minutes and for this reason is not always accessible due to weather conditions, making the boat ride uncomfortable. The highlight of 9 Mile is the huge Green Tree coral that is surrounded by hundreds of Goldies, a spectacle for any diver. The "Green Tree" stands about two and a half metres high and is situated on an outcrop of rock. Just south of the Green Tree coral is a spectacular system of swim troughs, overhangs and caves. The reef in this area drops off on the seaward side from about 14 - 21 m. From the drop off there is a gradual slope to "Breaking Waters" which is at a depth of around 6 m.

### Hotspot

Here the flat reef at 25 m drops off shear to 30 m, making a spectacular ledge to dive on. The diver's chance of seeing big game fish is increased, as these fish prefer to patrol along a ledge such as this in search of prey. Not a well-known dive site but popular among anglers who know the sights well.

## **Day 6: June 17 - Leaving Sodwana Bay for Umkomaas, Durban**

This will be a relaxed morning. We will enjoy breakfast and then hit the road. From here on we will be traveling together in a bus to Umkomaas. We will cross the Kwazulu Natal wetlands and it promises to be a spectacular road. Crossing the great Tugela River, the Sugar cane fields and Durban itself.

## **Day 7-8: June 18-19 – Umkomaas, Kwa-Zulu Natal**

You will be booked in at Agulhas House in Umkomaas. We will be treated with a real South African spitbraai to get ourselves in to the south coast vibe. The team from the dive centre will meet up with us collecting all our gear for the next mornings diving and brief us on the diving that awaits us. Agulhas House is centrally located in the centre of Umkomaas. Nothing is more than 5 minutes away.

The rooms are decorated in neutral colors to create a harmonious atmosphere with an emphasis on comfort. All have their own entrance from the light and airy hallway. Large wooden sliding doors allow access to each room's private patio area where seating is provided to allow a quiet space for sitting back and relaxing.

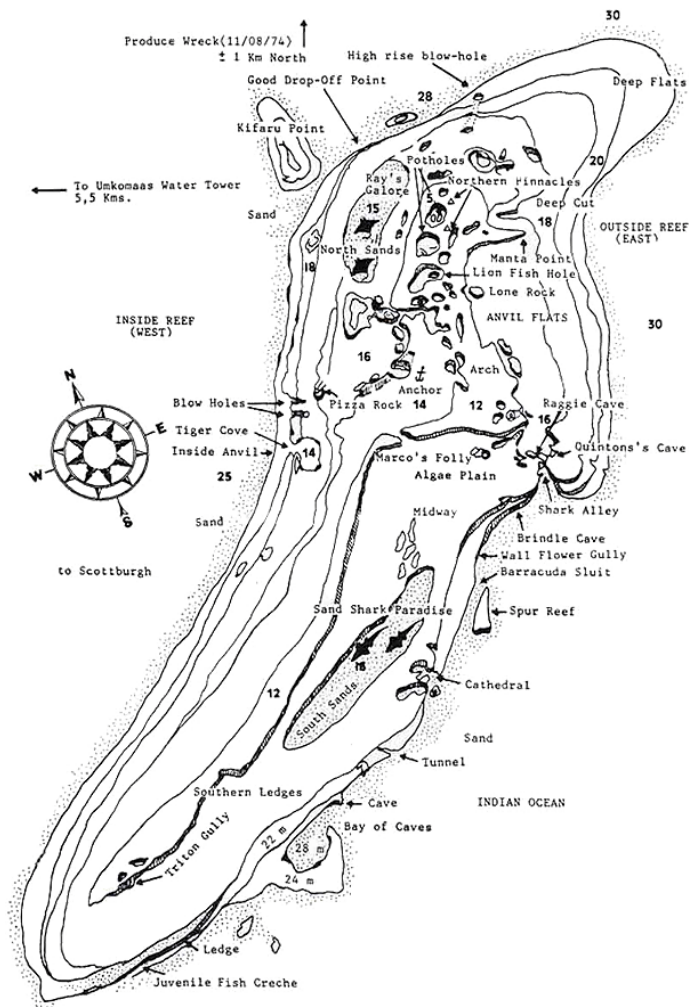
Each room is equipped with ceiling fans and heated bathrooms, bar fridges, Mnet TV, hairdryers, and tea/coffee making facilities, with movies available on request. . For added piece of mind each room has an independent alarm system.

A wide and varied freshly prepared substantial cooked breakfast is provided. Freshly prepared fruit salads and baked muffins are provided daily. Breakfasts are guaranteed to satisfy even the heartiest appetite. Special dietary requirements accommodated for. We are able to take advantage of the sub-tropical climate by dining 'al fresco' under the cover of a large thatched gazebo that forms the centre piece for the garden. A large C shaped 13m swimming pool, Pool lounges are provided for you to sit by the pool and soak up the Durban sunshine. The underwater pool lighting and subtle garden lights provide a truly tropical island atmosphere to the place after dark.

The World Famous Aliwal Shoal (quoted as being one of the top ten dive sites in the World) was formed thousands of years ago from fossilized sand dunes during the times when sea levels were much lower than they are today.

The Aghulas Current which runs south along the east coast of Africa brings with it warm water and a huge diversity of tropical sea life.

One day will be a shark frenzy as we will do a drifted baited dive with Tiger, black tip and white tip sharks.



### Cathedral

Maximum depth Depth 27m - Advanced divers

A very popular dive for the Ragged Tooth Shark enthusiast. During the "Raggie" season it is possible to see up to 40 of these placid sharks resting within the amphitheatre. A fantastic photo opportunity! Please read the "Raggie Etiquette" information at the bottom of this page. During the summer months look out for hammerheads above, and see the stingrays which take up residence when the Raggies depart.

### Raggies Cave

Maximum depth Depth 18m - Open Water divers

The most popular dive site here on Aliwal Shoal. As its name suggests this is the best place to view the Ragged Tooth Sharks during the shark season. Entry into the cave is not permitted when the sharks are here but there is an excellent viewing area at the entrance where divers can safely kneel and watch the shark's activities. When the sharks have departed this is a very good place to hunt for sharks teeth in the sand. Please note that teeth are the only items that divers are permitted to take from the Shoal. The sand patch in front of the cave is a good place for Instructors to take students (out of shark season of course) for skills practice as it is quite sheltered from the overhead currents. There are many resident potato bass found in the surrounding overhangs as well as many types of moray eel.

### Howards Castle

Maximum Depth 27m - Advanced divers

This recently discovered and pristine site is not often dived as it requires a longer boat ride and sea conditions need to be calm. There are loads of interesting gullies and overhangs as well as a wide diversity of marine life.

<b>Inside Edge</b>
<p>Maximum depth 22m - Open Water divers</p> <p>This section of the reef encompasses the entire inshore edge of the shoal. Although many large species of fish, sharks, dolphins and rays may be found here, it is particularly good for finding smaller things such as octopus, cuttlefish, scorpion fish, fire fish, cowfish, nudibranchs and eels. The top of ledge is at about 14 to 16m and open water divers can therefore enjoy this dive site providing they level off.</p>
<b>Outside Edge</b>
<p>Maximum depth 27m - Open Water to Advanced divers (depending on the area)</p> <p>This is the dive site for viewing the big stuff, and it is always a good idea to keep an eye out at midwater where schools of hammerheads, game fish or the odd tiger shark may be found.</p>
<b>Eelskins</b>
<p>Maximum depth 18m - Open Water Divers</p> <p>This dive site is superb example of the fossilized rock formations. Situated near the south western tip of the reef there are lots of clusters of reef with plenty of sand gullies and lovely swim throughs. Many cowries can be found here and as the gullies offer shelter from the currents you will often find Raggies during the season and lots of shoaling tropical fish.</p>
<b>North Eastern Pinnacles</b>
<p>Maximum depth 14m - Open Water Divers</p> <p>A very easy and gentle dive site for open water divers and beginners. Lots of potholes forming sheltered nurseries for small fish. Many anemones with clown fish to watch, also a good site for octopus. You may see some large potato bass sheltering from the current.</p>
<b>North Sands and South Sands</b>
<p>Maximum depth 15m - Open Water Divers</p> <p>These two large sand patches are an ideal location for students to practice their skills and for divers to descend and pause to adjust buoyancy before exploring the reef. An ideal place to find sand sharks and often groups of dolphins can be found playing and rubbing themselves on the sand. Truly an amazing sight!</p>
<b>Manta Point</b>
<p>Depth 15 – 22m - Mainly Advanced Divers</p> <p>Lots of nooks and crannies where crayfish and cleaner shrimp hide. Good area to find rays of all varieties especially Manta Rays during the season.</p>
<b>FOR THE WRECK ENTHUSIAST:</b>
<b>MV Produce</b>
<p>Maximum depth 32m - Advanced Divers</p> <p>This steel cargo ship was carrying molasses when it hit the reef and sunk in 1974. It is lying on its hull in 3 sections. The stern and bow are more or less intact but the centre section has collapsed. A favourite haunt of Lion Fish, and everyone who dives here is hoping for a glimpse of the two giant Brindle Bass which are rumoured to weigh around 400 Kg. Look out for the big moray eel which lives in the wreck toilet. The very rare Harlequin Goldie (which is indigenous to this area) has been seen here. You may be lucky enough to see a Tiger Shark if the visibility is good.</p>
<b>Nebo</b>
<p>Maximum depth 27m - Advanced Divers</p> <p>The wooden wreckage of this old steamer which sunk in 1884 lies approximately 1 Km north west of Aliwal Shoal. It is still possible to see the propeller and the boiler on the wreck. There are many eels and large shoals of baitfish at all times of the year. You will see many different species of shrimps around the boiler area. Keep an eye open for Barracuda and Tuna which are hunting the smaller fish which shelter here. There have been sightings of paper fish and frog fish on the wreck</p>
<b>Shark Frenzy</b>
Tiger Sharks, Black tips, White tips

## **Day 9: June 20 - Wreck diving Aliwal-Shoal and Crocodile Farm visit**

After breakfast will we go to the dive centre for the days diving. This will be an early morning start and we will enjoy breakfast before diving. We will finish our last day at Aliwal-shoal with some wreck dives.

We will then go to the Crocodile farm where we will treat ourselves to a feast in the crocodile restaurant eating away on all the exquisite South African dishes.

To end our Aliwal visit in the perfect style we will be having a sea food dinner which will include fresh fish Cray fish and Crab.

## **Day 10: June 21- Diving Protea Banks**

This will be an early morning start where we will drive to Protea Banks at 5:00am for the days diving.

Protea Banks considered amongst the top shark and big game fish dives in the world, Protea Banks is not short of excitement. Situated 7.5 km straight out to sea from Shelly Beach, it has been a favorite dive spot of the area since 1991 when it was first recognized as a prime dive site.

The reef lies between 27m and 40m and is approximately 6km long and 800 meters in width. Exploring the northern and southern reef will bring you into contact with Bull Sharks, Tiger Sharks, Guitar Sharks and Hammerheads. Huge shoals of up to 10 Raggies appear between June and September. Other sharks often sighted are the Copper Shark, Mako and oceanic reef sharks. For those who are not shark enthusiasts, you will not be disappointed, as the spectacle of huge shoals of Kingfish, Yellow Fin Tuna and Barracuda will enchant you. Magnificent and various coral ledges play home to numerous colourful residents, while Potato Bass, Giant Manta Rays, Sting Rays and Marble Rays cruise around surveying the scene!

After our diving at Protea Banks, will we be transported back to Agulhas House, Umkomaas, where we can spend the rest of the day at your own leisure.

### **Protea Banks, Northern Pinnacles**

**Depth: 33-40m**

This is an ideal area for nitrox diving and has a magnificent topography. This part of the reef is only dived in winter and only a few dive masters know how to dive the Northern Pinnacles properly. Most people don't even find this location, the reef is virtually untouched and undamaged. It has two large cave systems which are used by the Ragged Tooth Sharks as resting zones on their annual migration and congregation route. On a good day, the diver can encounter up to 200 sharks in an area smaller than half a rugby field. We start our dive at the large cave, looking in from the top and observing Raggies interacting peacefully with each other. Often we find the caves so full of sharks that we can hardly see the bottom. We respect their resting zone by merely observing and not disturbing them. We then pass the tunnel which we can swim through if it is not occupied by sharks, swim past the coral garden and get to the second cave. This cave is also open on top and features several chambers, each one with a wide opening at the top ceiling. If there are no Raggies in the caves, it is much fun to explore around in the chambers, looking for sharks' teeth which are generally plentiful. This is the only souvenir we allow the diver to remove from the reef. As spring goes into summer, large shoals of Hammerhead Sharks frequent this part of the reef. The best months to dive the Northern Pinnacles are June to November. It truly is the best dive on earth.

## **The Southern Pinnacles**

**Depth: 26-40m**

This area is home to the Zambezi Shark (Bull Shark) which is what Protea Banks has initially become famous for. From Oct to May, some very large specimen can be encountered here. In the beginning of the, they tend to keep a safe distance from the divers which gets reduced as time goes by. Towards Easter, Zambies often get so inquisitive and used to encounter divers underwater, that they can come really close up, ideal to take this award winning photo. Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks are also seen shoaling at this time. They can come past in as many as several hundreds on a good dive. Hunting packs of Great Hammerheads check out who makes all that funny noise and Blacktips dart in and out of the diver's vision like a bunch of playful puppies. We start the dive at the Southern Cave which is a buzz of all sorts of game and reef fish, often so thick that it is hard to see one's buddy. Thereafter we reach Kingfish Gully, an overhanging rock which is home to large shoals of Kingfish, Yellowtail, Kaakap, Sea Pike Tunny, Potato Bass and many more species. The current then takes us to a large sandy patch we call Sand Shark Gully. It lies at exactly 40m depth and is home of the Giant Guitar Shark. At times we see them lined up like planes at the airport, 50 to 60 of these magnificent creatures is not uncommon.

The best months to see Tiger Sharks are April and May, although we see Tiger Sharks right through the year. The lucky diver may even encounter the odd Great White which is an absolute privilege. Roland Mauz: "It took me over 500 dives to get that lucky and despite everybody's totally unfounded fear, the Great White behaves just like any shark, swims past, looks what's going on and carries on his mission. The feeling is indescribable!!"

Protea Banks has been rated by many divers from around the world as the best shark dives. Many divers are scared of sharks due to horror stories and myths created by the movie world, but their fears are totally unfounded. Sharks are intelligent animals, do not recognise us as a food source and generally tend to be shy and respectful towards the divers. Roland and we quote "I have done over 1250 dives at Protea Banks and never have once felt threatened by any shark or groups of sharks."

## **Day 11: June 22 - Ushaka Marine World diving.**

**EITHER: Fly from Durban to Cape Town for Part 2 – Optional Add-On**

**OR: Fly from Durban to Johannesburg for flight back to the U.S.A.**

Breakfast will be served at Agulhas House, and then we head out to spend the day at Ushaka Marine World.

Durban's world class saltwater aquarium, Ushaka Marine World will have young and old delighted! With over 30 indoor and outdoor exhibits, Ushaka Marine World includes a variety of marine life - see a dolphin, penguin and seal show, and marvel at the intelligence of these animals.

Enjoy a full tour at Durban's favourite family attraction: Ushaka Marine World. Your tour of this world class facility will comprise a saltwater aquarium with over thirty indoor and outdoor displays, and exhibits of South Africa's unique Indian and Atlantic Ocean marine life.

At the end of Durban's Golden Mile, is the beginning of a new world of fun, entertainment and excitement. Ushaka Marine World, spanning over 15 hectares of prime beach front, is Africa's largest marine theme park. Incorporating fresh and sea water, lush vegetation, natural materials and the recreation of a 1920's cargo ship wreck, Ushaka Marine World had created a magical world of sea and marine life.

The park is made up of 5 zones:

### **Sea World**

Aquarium, dolphinarium, seal pool, dive tank, snorkel reef and lots more

### **Phantom Ship**

Culinary delights at the Cargo Hold and Upper Deck

### **Wet 'n' Wild**

A fun fresh water world of slides and pools for the adrenaline junkie

### **Ushaka Beach**

Non-stop beach and surf action

### **Village Walk**

There's nothing to beat the marine theme shopping adventure

With shark cage dives, ocean walkers, helicopter rides, surf lessons and scuba diving options at an additional cost at the park, there is plenty to keep the whole family busy for the day! Enjoy some of what uShaka has to offer here are a few activities to choose from.

### **Shark Dive**

If you love sharks - then this is the one for you. The Shark Dive Experience gives you a chance to experience the wonder of sharks as you are lowered in an enclosed cylinder into the Large Shark Exhibit. No scuba diving experience needed, but you need to be over the age of 12 and reasonably agile.

### **Ray Feed**

For a unique close up encounter with the amazing rays and fish in the Open Ocean Exhibit join us for a Ray Feed. Waist deep in the exhibit with a bucket of fish in one hand and a joyous smile on your face, the fish and rays will nudge you gently as you hand feed them.

You need to be over the age of 12 and reasonably agile

### **Ocean Walker**

Have you ever wanted to walk on the ocean floor? Then join us for the Ocean Walker experience. Here you will walk in the Open Ocean Exhibit amongst the pelagic fish and rays. You need no diving experience as you are provided with breathing helmet but you need to be over the age of 12 and reasonably fit.

### **Snorkel Lagoon**

Discover life on a shallow reef. Regardless of your age or fitness level you will enjoy snorkelling in our Snorkel Lagoon. Snorkel gear is provided, as is a floatation jacket which keeps you buoyant. Submerge yourself amongst the fish and discover the wonders of life beneath the ocean - it's a very beautiful, colourful and intricate world. No age limits but you need to be able to swim.

### **Meet a Dolphin**

If you would like to learn more about our dolphins and get a little closer to one of them, then join us for a Meet a Dolphin session. This is not a swim programme but you will get wet so bring along a change of clothing.

uShaka Sea World is a world class marine theme park that provides a 'window' into the Western Indian Ocean. Sea World is home to a large and diverse collection of marine life, representative of our local seas. The spectacular aquarium, dolphin and seal stadiums and penguin rookery are open throughout the year to promote conservation awareness amongst guests, as they experience close contact with some of nature's most amazing marine creatures.

After an action packed day we will be travelling to Durban Airport and we're off to the Mother City "Cape Town".

## **Day 12: June 23 - Gansbaai Great White Cage Diving**

Today we meet the Great White and there is no need for an introduction.

Gansbaai, 2 hours from Cape Town, is the great white capital of the world! Transport will be arranged. Trips are weather dependent and approximately 4 hours.

Your launch time will be confirmed well in advance before your trip. We meet for breakfast, and then enjoy a picnic lunch and soft drinks on board. Towels and dive equipment are provided and hot shower facilities at the crew house.

You DO NOT need to be a qualified diver to enter the cage as we use a simple breath hold technique. Experience the thrill of being underwater and surrounded by great white sharks. Feel the exposure of free diving while remaining safe inside the cage. Dive with great white shark expert Michael Rutzen world famous for free diving with great white sharks.

The vessel that we will be doing the cage dives from is "BARRACUDA ", 12.5m Lee Cat and was purpose built for great white shark cage diving. Her twin hull makes her extremely stable - something to consider if you are prone to sea sickness!

The back deck is spacious and the upstairs viewing deck offers an awesome vantage point to watch the action. On board we have all your diving equipment, towels and picnic lunch. Barracuda also carries all the required safety equipment including two 15 man life rafts.

### **GREAT WHITE SHARK - General Information**

Carcharodon Carcharias

Great White Sharks are a protected species along the coasts of California, USA, and Australia and have been a protected species in South Africa since April 1991.

They average between 3.5 - 4.9 meters. Females are larger than males as with most sharks.

Scientists believe that White Sharks give birth to 2-14 pups and are around 1, 5 meters long The eggs are fertilized and hatched within the female and are nourished by eating unfertilized eggs and smaller siblings in the womb. They have no placenta so the babies must fend for themselves, before birth. No maternal instincts are shown they swim away immediately after birth

Great Whites use their powerful tails to propel themselves through the water. The fins are only used for balance. They need too stay moving as they will sink, they have no gas filled bladder to keep them afloat, they are heavier than water and their large oily liver provides some buoyancy. White Sharks cannot swim backwards. To do this they first need to stop swimming, fall backwards to propel themselves backwards.

Great Whites swallow their food whole, their teeth ripping prey into mouth sized pieces. Sea lions and seals are part of their diet.

The life span of the great white is not yet known.

### **Interesting Facts**

- Scientists date ancestors of the shark back 420 million years.
- Sharks sink if they don't swim
- Most sharks have 5 to 15 rows of teeth in each jaw. A tooth usually lasts a week before it falls out.
- Sharks keep replacing their teeth all their lives.
- Most sharks give live birth.
- The thresher shark has the longest tail. It grows to 11 feet, half its length in its tail.
- Baby sharks are called pups
- Most sharks are cold-blooded. Their inner body temperature matches the water temperature.
- Some sharks (like the Great White) can elevate their body temperature above that of their environment.
- Hammerhead sharks are born with their heads bent backwards so they don't get stuck in the birth canal.

### **Day 13: June 24 - Hout Bay Wreck and Seal Dive**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> day we head to the beautiful harbour of Hout Bay where we will do some wreck dives in the chilly waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Cape Town has access to two oceans, and as such has a great deal to offer the keen snorkeler or scuba diver. There is a tremendous range of diving to be enjoyed, both in the Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean: from shipwrecks to reef diving, seals to shark diving, shallow to deep or technical diving.

There is quite a list of ships that went down near and even in the harbour to make Cape town live up to its other name "Cape of Storms" named by Bartolomeu Dias in 1488, The first European to reach the cape. But never the less it makes up for some great diving and a total different dive than the Indian Ocean. With Kelp around some of the wrecks, Massive Lobsters and Seals, this dive is a must if you come to South Africa. Hoodies and Chicken vest will be provided. Water temperature will average at 11 degrees so prepare yourself with these cold water, we know it's cold but it will definitely be worthwhile.

Some Basic info of the wrecks at Hout Bay:

### The Astor

AVERAGE DEPTH: 20m

MAXIMUM DEPTH: 30m

This 360-ton crayfish boat was scuttled on 9 August 1997. All the doors were removed before scuttling so it is possible to do a deep penetration and swim the entire length of the boat (BUT ONLY IF YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING!). A swim line is recommended. An interesting feature is the lobster net chute on the starboard side. The Astor lies upright on the sand and has a lovely super structure.

LOCATION: 20m north of the Katzmaru (wreck) in the middle of Hout Bay.

ACCESS: By boat from Hout Bay harbour - 15min boat ride.

CONDITIONS: It is usually calm inside the bay. Despite concerted resistance by local divers, residents and environmental groups, a sewage pipeline has been constructed with the main outfall just metres from the Katzmaru - and this is 20m away from the Astor.

### The Katzmaru

AVERAGE DEPTH: 29m on the deck

MAXIMUM DEPTH: 32m on the sand

The Katzmaru, an Oriental trawler that sank in the 1970's in Hout Bay, lies on a stark sandy bottom and is in a virtually intact condition. A multitude of fish and other marine life typical of the Atlantic Ocean can be seen here. This is a popular and easily accessible deep wreck, often used for advanced training.

LOCATION: In the middle of the mouth of Hout Bay.

ACCESS: This is a boat dive. The boat is launched from Hout Bay harbour and it is a very short trip to this wreck. The Katzmaru lies 15m from the Astor.

CONDITIONS: It is usually calm inside the bay. Despite concerted resistance by local divers, residents and environmental groups, a sewage pipeline has been constructed with the main outfall just metres from the Katzmaru - and this is 20m away from the Astor.

### Vulcan Rock

Vulcan Rock (Reef)

AVERAGE DEPTH: 25m

MAXIMUM DEPTH: 40m

Vulcan Rock is a large pinnacle rising to 5m below the surface. It is covered in colourful marine growth - Hard and soft coral, box stars, nudibranchs, deep water cowries and crayfish. Many playful seals are present and fish such as hottentot, galjoen and other species are plentiful. There is a large tunnel running through the rock at the bottom..

LOCATION: A blinder off the Karbonkelberg, to the south-west of Hout Bay.

ACCESS: The blinder breaks at all except the highest spring tide and can be seen from the sea. It is a short boat trip from Hout Bay harbour (20min boat ride). Most of the dive shops and charter boats run trips to this spot in the summer months.

CONDITIONS: It can be very clear but icy cold after a good up welling. There can be a strong surge if there is a swell running. You should always check conditions carefully before exiting the boat as there is sometime a 4-5 knot current, either on the surface or at a depth. Even if there appears to be no current, a drift line of a few hundred metres is strongly recommended.

## The Maori

AVERAGE DEPTH: 20m

MAXIMUM DEPTH: 25m

The Maori, a British cargo steam ship of 5317 tons, was carrying a cargo of explosives, water piping and crockery from London to New Zealand, when it was wrecked. It struck a rock in thick fog and drizzle on 5 August 1909. 32 lives were lost. It lies in the protection of the well-sheltered Maori Bay and the waves break over it only in the worst storms. For this reason, it has remained remarkably intact and was declared the most well preserved wreck of its vintage by Jacques Cousteau when he visited the site. Local divers have since then blasted thorough some sections. The total length of the wreck is approximately 175m. Marine life is not particularly colourful as most of it is dominated by kelp, fish and crayfish. This is a historical wreck and nothing should be removed.

LOCATION: North of the Oakburn, approximately 75m offshore, directly in front of the large, flat cleft rock.

ACCESS: It is only a short trip from Hout Bay harbour and is probably the most popular charter destination in the summer months.

CONDITIONS: The bay is well protected so it is usually calm. In summer, after a few days of south-easterly wind and strong upwelling, it can be crystal clear but icy cold, and the wreck can be seen from the dive boat. Be very careful of sharp, protruding bits of metal, particularly when there is a surge. The wreck has become unstable over the last few years, so divers should exercise caution when swimming under the structures.

## Seal Island

Depth: 6m to 10m

A dive with the Cape Fur Seals at Seal Island near Hout Bay is an absolute must for visitors to the Cape. Depending on the time of year there are between a few hundred and a few thousand seals crammed onto the island. We dive right next to the island in only 5m of water. Divers just stay on the bottom in one spot and observe the seals darting all around.

Young seals are very inquisitive and will come right up to your face. This dive is a great chance to photograph seals so remember to bring your camera!

We will enjoy these dives without a doubt but the Cape of Storms can change in an instant so this will be weather depending. If we can't dive Hout Bay, we will enjoy the day at the Two Oceans Aquarium.

## The Two Oceans Aquarium

The southern tip of the African continent is the meeting place of two mighty and bountiful oceans, the Indian and the Atlantic. The Two Oceans Aquarium on the V&A Waterfront, Cape Town is ideally positioned to showcase the incredible diversity of marine life found in these two oceans. The Aquarium is one of the top tourist attractions in Cape Town and over 3000 living sea animals, including sharks, fishes, turtles and penguins can be seen in this spectacular underwater nature reserve.

We will be doing 2 dives at the Aquarium if we can't launch at Hout Bay - shark dive and a Kelp dive.

### Shark Dive

Experience an adrenalin rush with our ragged-tooth sharks as they glide past. This close encounter will leave you with greater appreciation for these sleek, bronze predators. The two million-litre I&J Predator Exhibit is also home to an impressive collection of other large predatory fish from our coast.

Open Water or Discover Scuba qualification required.

### Kelp Dive

Feed hundreds of fishes in one of the world's best kelp forest displays. You will be overwhelmed as the expectant fishes swarm around you. This is as close as it gets!

Containing 800,000 litres of water, this exhibit is typical of the Cape's west coast.

Advanced scuba qualification required.

We end our diving adventure in Cape Town, V&A waterfront where we will look back on the trip with some sundowners and one of the best views in the world.


## **Day 14: June 25 - Transfer to Cape Town International Airport - Return to the U.S.A.**

**Please note that due to a chance of bad weather, there will be a few optional add on activities.**

- Ushaka Marine World
- Street Markets
- Flea Market
- Exploring Durban/ Margate
- Oribi Gorge bungee jump/ wall swing
- Rhino Park
- Crocodile Park
- Robben Island tour
- And many more...

**Sunday, June 26, 2011 – Arrive back in the U.S.A.**

*Thank you for traveling with*

**Ntaba Tours** 

## **Prices of Scuba Diving South Africa**

### **Part 1: Scuba Diving Kwa-Zulu Natal – Day 0 to Day 11 of Itinerary (11 nights)**

#### **DIVERS:**

Cash/Check Price: \$ 3755.00 per person sharing

Credit Card Price: \$ 3870.00 per person sharing

#### **NON DIVERS:**


Cash/Check Price: \$ 1975.00 per person sharing

Credit Card Price: \$ 2035.00 per person sharing

**NOTE: Non Divers' prices include transfers, accommodation (bed & breakfast) and visit to Crocodile Farm only**

### **Included in Part 1 - Scuba Diving Kwa-Zulu Natal:**

- 11 Nights' bed and breakfast
- 16 reef dives
- 2 wreck dives
- 2 Protea shark dives
- 2 baited shark dives
- 1 Aquarium dive
- All transfers except flights

**Ntaba Tours** 

## **Excluded – Part 1:**

- All International and domestic airline tickets and applicable airport taxes
- Extra Entrance fees to tourist attractions, activities or attractions not mentioned in itinerary
- Any other tours or tourist entrance fees not mentioned in itinerary
- Extra transport or transfers, taxi fares, after hours transport
- Personal, Medical and Travel Insurance
- All costs of a personal nature: Telephone calls, bar bills, drinks, room service, portorage, laundry, refreshments, snacks, curios, gifts, tips or gratuities etc.

## **Part 2: Scuba Diving Cape Town – Day 11 to Day 14 of Itinerary (3 nights) – Optional Add-On**

### **DIVERS:**

Cash/Check Price: \$ 820.00 per person sharing

Credit Card Price: \$ 850.00 per person sharing

### **NON DIVERS:**

Cash/Check Price: \$ 330.00 per person sharing

Credit Card Price: \$ 340.00 per person sharing

**NOTE: Non Divers' prices include transfers and accommodation (bed & breakfast) only**

## **Included in Part 2 - Scuba Diving Cape Town:**

- 3 Nights' bed and breakfast
- 1 Great white shark dive
- 2 wreck dives
- 2 Aquarium dives
- All transfers except flights

## **Excluded – Part 2:**

- All International and domestic airline tickets and applicable airport taxes
- Extra Entrance fees to tourist attractions, activities or attractions not mentioned in itinerary
- Any other tours or tourist entrance fees not mentioned in itinerary
- Extra transport or transfers, taxi fares, after hours transport
- Personal, Medical and Travel Insurance
- All costs of a personal nature: Telephone calls, bar bills, drinks, room service, portorage, laundry, refreshments, snacks, curios, gifts, tips or gratuities etc.

*Thank you for traveling with*