

SPIRIT OF FREEDOM - CAIRNS
Exploration Expedition - Far Northern Great Barrier Reef

14 DAY SPECIAL- 23 Jan – 06 Feb 2012

Cairns to Ashmore Reef

Join Spirit of Freedom for a rare opportunity to dive the remote Far Northern Great Barrier Reef. Departing on 23 January 2012, the 14 day expedition will traverse the coastline from Cairns to Ashmore Reef, lying well to north-east of the tip of Cape York. One of the last totally pristine areas of the Great Barrier Reef, the Far Northern reefs are seldom visited by any boats, and many of the hundreds of reefs in the region, are yet to be explored.

The summer months of January / February are the best time to dive the outer walls of the Far Northern Reefs, offering a great chance of encounters with megafauna – Tiger Sharks, Manta Rays and Whale Sharks are all regular visitors to this region, as well as even the occasional marlin. Divers can also expect a lot of shark action with Silvertip, grey reef and whitetip reef sharks commonly coming in close. The region abounds with masses of pelagic and reef fish and an incredible variety of colourful corals and invertebrates.

This time of year is also the nesting season for the Green Sea Turtle and the waters around Raine Island will be alive with turtles as they descend on the small coral sand cay. The first turtle hatchlings will also be making their way into the ocean, from the eggs of those turtles that nested earlier in November and December. Raine Island is the largest and most important green sea turtle nesting area in the world, and while the island is totally protected from access, the diving in the deep oceanic waters surrounding the island is superb. Divers should keep an

eye out for tiger sharks as they also frequent the area to feed on the turtles.

The nature of this special trip is 'Exploratory' and due to the remote destination, many of the reefs may never have been dived before. These dives will be interspersed with known sites at reefs such as Great Detached Reef, Ashmore Reef, Pandora's Entrance, Wishbone Reef, and Tijou Reef. The more well visited Ribbon Reefs will also be included in the itinerary, with 3 or 4 days at iconic sites such as the Cod Hole and Steve's Bommie. With around 50 dives scheduled in 14 days, in a diverse range of habitats, in some of Australia's most remote regions, this is a unique opportunity not to be missed.

ITINERARY OVERVIEW

DAY 1: MONDAY 23 JAN 3.00 PM BOARDING. NO DIVING TODAY

Overnight steam to the Cod Hole.

DAY 2: DIVING THE COD HOLE AND VARIOUS SITES ON NUMBER 10 RIBBON REEF

DAY 2: DIVING TIJOU REEF REGION

Overnight steam

DAY 3 – 5: DIVING GREAT DETACHED AND RAINE ISLAND VICINITY

Overnight steam Day 5

DAY 6 – 8: DIVING ASHMORE REEF REGION

Overnight steam Day 8

DAY 9: DIVING PANDORA'S ENTRANCE REGION

Short Overnight steam

DAY 10 – 11: DIVING YULE AND WISHBONE REEF VICINITY

Overnight steam

DAY 12: DIVING TIJOU AND BLACK ROCK REGION
Overnight steam

DAY 13: DIVING NUMBER 9 AND 10 RIBBON REEFS
Short Overnight steam

DAY 14: DIVING NUMBER 5 RIBBON REEF INCLUDING STEVE'S BOMMIE.
Overnight steam

DAY 15: ARRIVE BACK IN CAIRNS 6 – 6.30AM LIGHT BREAKFAST AND HOTEL TRANSFER AT 07.30AM

Itinerary notes: This itinerary is travelling to some of Australia's most remote reefs and will cover a distance of approximately 1000 miles (500 miles each way). Be aware that the boat will be travelling many nights of the 14 days, with some stretches that may be as long as 15 or 16 hours. The above itinerary plan is purely a rough guide with exact reef locations and timings to be fully flexible, and determined by the Captain on the day. The itinerary is also weather dependent and may be changed to allow for the conditions at the time. Changes to the itinerary, including delayed departure or early return, may be required in the event of a cyclone in the region.