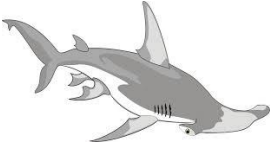


Hammerheads



DEEP REEF DIVES - NO CAGES

Protea Banks, Shelly Beach

Protea Banks, Shelly Beach is only one hour's drive south from Aliwal Shoal & Umkomaas.

Protea Banks offers the experienced advanced certified diver (minimum 20 logged dives) an unforgettable experience. We dive completely unprotected with wild sharks in their natural environment.

Our diving at Protea Banks is conducted to the highest standards of safety and professionalism. Our boats carry oxygen as well as highly skilled skippers and dive leaders.

The reef is situated 8 km offshore from Shelly Beach. We dive to approximately 100-125ft / 32-38m depth

Protea Banks has been rated by many divers from around the world as one of the best shark dive. 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: *"I have done over 2500 dives at Protea Banks and never have once felt threatened by any shark or groups of sharks."*

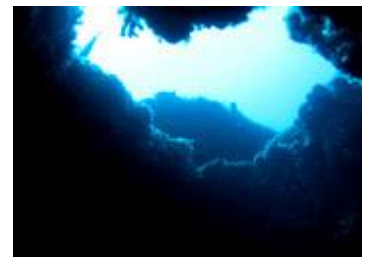
The Northern Pinnacles

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 during our raggie season, very few divemasters know how to dive the Northern Pinnacles properly. Because 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 100 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. 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 Zambezi season, 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 hundred 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 an airport, 50 to 60 of these magnificent creatures is not uncommon.





We encounter the following sharks during different seasons of the year:


	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	█	█	█	█	█					█	█	█
Great Hammerhead (Sphyrna Mokarran)												
<p>Average size: 11.5 ft / 3.5 m Maximum size: 20 ft / 6 m Colour: grey-brown, pale below Note: known to use its head to pin a fleeing ray to the bottom; can sometimes be seen on Protea Banks where they come single or in small hunting packs.</p>												




	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	█	█	█	█	█					█	█	█
Scalloped Hammerhead (Sphyrna Lewini)												
<p>Average size: 9 ft / 2.7 m Maximum size: 13.8 ft / 4.2 m : olive bronze, light brown, white belly Note: tends to form large schools at certain times; can make use of the earth's magnetic field during migration.</p>												


	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	█	█	█	█	█					█	█	
Black Tip Shark (Carcharhinus Limbatus)												
<p>Average size: 5 ft / 1.5 m Maximum size: 9 ft / 2.7 m Colour: grey, white belly & anal fin, subtle white band along the side; black tips on fins tend to fade with age. Note: species different from Black Tip Reef Shark.</p>												


	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
					█	█	█					
Copper Shark (Carcharhinus Brachyurus)												
<p>Average size: 9 ft / 2.7 m Maximum size: 11 ft / 3.3 m Colour: grey to bronze above, brighter on the sides. Note: a.k.a. Bronze Whaler; often confused with the Dusky Shark.</p>												

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	█	█	█									█
Guitarfish (Rhynchobatus)												
<p>Average size: 7 ft / 2.1 m Maximum size: Bowmouth Guitarfish: 7.8 ft / 2.4 m (photo) Giant Guitarfish: 10 ft / 3 m Colour: olive-green above with rows of small white spots, white below. Note: we encounter both Bowmouth and Giant Guitarfish, a.k.a. Giant Guitar Shark.</p>												



	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
						■	■	■	■	■	■	
Sandtiger Shark (Carcharias Taurus)												
<p>Average size: 8.3 ft / 2.5 m Maximum size: 10.5 ft / 3.2 m Colour: light brown, bronze-ed back, white belly. Note: a.k.a. Ragged-Tooth Shark or Raggie; known to surface and swallow air to regulate its buoyancy; often found in large groups.</p>												

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
			■	■	■					■	■	
Tiger Shark (Galeocerdo Cuvier)												
<p>Average size: 10 ft / 3 m Maximum size: 18 ft / 5.5 m Colour: dark grey, white belly Note: spots fade into stripes as they mature; Galeocerdo means <i>cunning</i>.</p>												

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	■	■	■	■	■					■	■	■
Zambezi or Bull Shark (Carcharhinus Leucas)												
<p>Average size male: 7 ft / 2.1 m Average size female: 11 ft / 3.3 m Colour: dark grey, white belly Note: females need fresh water rivers to give birth to their offspring.</p>												

Happy Holidays and look forward to hearing from you ☺

At your service,

Best regards

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