

Sodwana Bay



Sodwana is situated 400 km north of Durban near the Mozambique border and as such enjoys a tropical climate. The combination of tropical sunshine and the warm Agulhas current which flows over the reefs, has allowed the formation of a unique coral reef dominated by colourful soft corals. Over 1200 species of reef fish have been identified in the area and the reefs are often visited by the animals such Mantas, Whale sharks, Zambezi sharks, Humpback whales and dolphins.

Some sightings are seasonal, such as the Whales, which are only seen during their migration from June to September. Loggerhead turtles are common year round, but from November through to January they can be seen laying eggs on the beaches at night. During this time you can also see the elusive giant Leatherback turtles.

Sodwana also has safe beaches for swimming in the sea. Weather wise the best time to visit Sodwana is from March through to June when the weather is mild. July to September is regarded as the windy season, although pleasant. Although October through to February is hot with thundershowers, if you can handle the heat it is also a good time to visit as this is when the visibility is best.

Sodwana Bay is one of the most popular of the dive sites – means "little one on its own" in Zulu, is easily accessible, only three and a half hours – 4 hours drive from Durban by tar road. Temperatures are always above 21°C (70°F) and average 24°C – 28°C. There are many shallow coastal pools, which are suitable for snorkeling with interesting reef formations and fish life.

Anton's Reef – 2 Mile Reef

Average depth is 15m. A fantastic variety of residential tropical fish and dense shoals of Big-eyes, Moorish Idols and Snappers hover above the coral. Scorpion fish, moray eels, big potato bass, marbled rays and triggerfish are a common sight. The coral is dense and varied, excellent for photography.

Pinnacles

Average depth 10 -15m. The formation of the corals resembles that of gullies and caves, sandy patches flanked by over-hangs, walls and swim throughs. Occasionally a visit from a passing shoal of dolphins, whale shark or large pelagics may be seen.



Gullies, Caves and Overhangs

Average depth is 10 -15 m. Resident potato bass are up to 1.5 m long. Sea turtles and rays are often seen here. A wide range of coral and invertebrates occur in this zone because of the shallow depths and good light penetration. Small sharks can be sighted.

Seven and Nine Mile Reef

The drop-offs and mushroom-shaped pinnacles, characteristic of this wonderful reef with its great diversity of marine life, make it a favourite among divers.



ACCOMMODATION

Sodwana Bay resort is set back from the forested sand dunes. Your accommodation will be in a private house. There is a restaurant with a pub and swimming pool in the resort. Lunch snacks can be purchased at the beach between dives, but it is better to bring your own sandwich lunch. One or two of the evenings we will have a braai. Otherwise bring breakfast and snacks for lunch, bottled water.

Diving MPA licence

As per the Department of Environment and Tourism, all divers will be required to have a marine park diving licence to dive in a marine protected area. Obtain yours from your local Post Office prior to arriving in Sodwana. Nominal fee, we can arranged is organized well in advance.

WHATS INCLUDED:

Accommodation
Dives to 2 Mile Reef, Air-fills

WHATS EXCLUDED

Excess reef fee to 5; 7; 9 mile reefs – nominal fee
Daily entrance ticket to the Marine Reserve – nominal fee



The Dive Sites of Sodwana Bay are named in accordance to their distance from the launch area - from Quarter Mile to Nine Mile Reef. Most of these sites boast a number of separate dive options on the same site.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Dive planning – On arrival go straight to reception to book in. Then proceed to your accommodation.

Dive equipment – this can be arranged before hand with us so we can ensure you have your equipment ready on arrival at Sodwana.

The Dives - all the dives conducted at Sodwana Bay are drift dives. A predominant current that flows from north to south is noticeable. Depending on the strength of this current, more than one dive site may be covered. Occasionally a reverse current develops. The Dive masters and/or Barry who lead the dives will choose the best dive sites according to the conditions to ensure a comfortable dive.

Kitting up – Each morning we transfer ourselves to the beach. This is about a 20 minute drive, through the boom gates of the national park. Have some small cash ready to give to the car guards!

We can't drive onto the beach to offload, so park in the car park and the dive operators collect us/kit with their tractor.

Divers must kit up and check their equipment during the 30 minute period before their launch. (Remember we are used to one hour pre-kit up time at Aliwal Shoal!), so have to make sharp! The beach controller co-ordinates the launches and dives of the day and will inform you of the procedures to follow. Your guide/Barry is also there to assist you and will brief the group with regards to diving before setting out.

The boats - we use 8m semi-rigid inflatables with twin outboard motors. They carry a maximum of 11 divers including the Divemaster and have sufficient space for cameras and video equipment. Divers are to kit up in their wetsuits and assemble their gear before the boat launches. The equipment will then be secured into the boat, which is then pushed off the sand into the water by the divers. From here the skipper navigates his way through the breakers to the respective dive site. When the diver's surface, the skipper will pick them up and once all are onboard, return them to shore. Medical oxygen is available on all the boats and under the gazebo for emergencies.



Freelance beach assistance can be hired at our gazebo on the beach to carry and wash your equipment. They are experienced, reliable and trustworthy. However, please ask first which are their beach assistances, and there are 100's who offer!!

Tips – At the end of the dive holiday the divers generally tip the “guys’ who have been helping load and carry equipment etc. There is a going rate per dive per helper, TBA.

Dive excesses are charged for the further reefs over and above the ‘2 mile’ reef price.

- The ‘5 mile’ reef area (including Hot spot, Ribbon and Pothole)
- The ‘7 mile’ reef area (including Northern wall, Amphitheatre, Mushroom rocks and Ramsey’s)
- The ‘9 mile’ reef area (including Green tree and Breaking waters)



Excesses are charged per person per dive.

The Beach Shop – this is located near the air filling stations on the main beach. It has a gear hire facility and a range of diving equipment and accessories for sale. Clothing, cold drinks, tea and coffee are also available. The beach shop is open from 7am to 3.30pm daily.

At the resort, there is a safe in the office for customers to keep their valuables.

There is a swimming pool which can be used throughout the day. Please provide your own swimming towels.

The Silversands shop is the only convenience store located within the park. It is situated opposite the fuel pumps near the KZN Wildlife reception. It is open from 8am – 5pm Monday to Saturday and from 8am – 1pm on Sundays. The nearest bank is First National in Hluhluwe, although there are ATM facilities inside the Silversands shop and outside the Spar in Mbazwana.

Check in time is 2pm and check out time is 11am.

☺ Look forward to seeing you all on another fun-filled

MERIDIAN DIVE ADVENTURE ☺

