

Tour Itinerary
Especially Prepared for
The Stephen Waters Group
05-12 May 2018

Day 01

Saturday, 05 May 2018:

On arrival at King Shaka International Airport – Durban (DUR) off flight SA 2053 arriving at 11h00 from Johannesburg (Paul, Susan, Abigail, Kyra, Chris & Phil), and off flight TK 42 arriving at 12h40 from Istanbul (Stephanie) you will be met by ATM Tours for the 1-hour road transfer to the coastal town Umkomaas. Rest of the afternoon/evening free. Overnight at Agulhas House on a full board basis (light continental breakfast, hot “brunch”/lunch & dinner).

Please note that Agulhas House is not licenced to sell liquor. Please advise us in advance of the Group’s first night’s liquor requirements, and we will arrange for Agulhas House to purchase it on their behalf.

Included:

“Meet & Greet” on arrival at King Shaka International Airport – Durban; road transfer from King Shaka International Airport – Durban to Agulhas House in Umkomaas; dinner; accommodation at Agulhas House.

Excluded:

International and domestic air into King Shaka International Airport – Durban; breakfast; lunch; additional touring & entry fees; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day’s 02 & 03

Sunday, 06 May 2018 & Monday, 07 May 2018:

After an early wake-up call, at about 06h30, you will have a light continental breakfast before being transferred to the Umkomaas River mouth lagoon to launch the "Duck" (Zodiac/ RIB) for your combination “baited” shark dive which is followed by an Aliwal reef / wreck dive, weather permitting. All diving in South Africa is best done early in the morning, at dawn, as this is when there is no wind, no swell, no currents, and definitely the best time to dive. As the morning wears on, the winds tend to pick up causing a chop on the water, large swells, which result in unpleasant diving conditions.

On a baited shark dive on Aliwal, in addition to your “target” species, if you have one, you can also expect to encounter Dusky Sharks and Black Tip Reef Sharks, as these two species are present on Aliwal all year round. Sand Tiger Sharks (Raggies), Zambezi (Bull) Sharks and / or Tiger Sharks are present on the Shoal depending on the time of the year, as all Shark Diving on Aliwal is seasonal, as it is everywhere else in South Africa. The modus operandi of a baited shark dive on Aliwal follows the same procedure as a “baited” shark dive that takes place anywhere in South Africa.

Please be advised that the above-mentioned sharks have not read the following Shark Time Table and therefore do not know where they are supposed to be, and when.

<http://www.divethebig5.co.za/shark-timetable.html>

Once we arrive at the dive site, we start chumming to attract the sharks, and put out a buoy with the bait, which is contained in a stainless steel “box” with holes in it so that the “smell” and oil from the mashed sardines in the “box” permeate into the water. When the first sharks appear, the DM assesses the situation, and if he is of the opinion that the sharks are going to stay around awhile and that they are not aggressive, the divers may enter the water. Either you can view the action from the “safety” of the boat, or for non-certified divers, on snorkel. Certified divers drop down to about 10-meters and follow the action from below. This is a “drift dive” as the boat, chum, and bait is drifting with the wind and surface current, as are the divers at 10-meters. Should the sharks disappear, the

snorkelers and divers climb back onto the boat and we move to another location and start the process all over again.

And the most asked question!!! Why do we use a cage when diving with Great White's, yet not when diving with Tigers, Bull Sharks etc? Are these Sharks not as dangerous? All wild animals in their natural environment are dangerous, but unlike Great Whites, who prey on live animals, Tiger and Bull Sharks are scavengers and prefer to eat something that's already dead, rather than to hunt live prey. Let's hope the Tiger Shark and Bull Shark agrees!!!

After your "baited" shark dive, you will spend the surface interval time, which is not much, as your average dive depth is only 10-meters max, out at sea, on the boat, before commencing with your single tank reef / wreck dive on Aliwal Shoal. Water and light refreshments are provided on board the dive boat in between dives. Please remember "Raggie" season is from July to October. I think.....! As this itinerary is based on May months diving, you are not likely to encounter "Raggies," sorry.

The reef at Aliwal Shoal is fossilised sandstone, almost 80 000 years ago. The area around the shoal consisted of sand dunes and with heavy rains, the sand and shale dissolved forming a compound of calcium carbonate, which today forms the main body of the shoal. These reefs are covered with both soft and hard corals and have an abundance of fish life that is normally associated with coral reef diving.

Aliwal is about 2½ km's long with a width averaging 150 meters. Depths vary from 6 to 27 meters (19 to 88 ft.) and the shoal offers a tapestry of diversity. The Cathedral area of the reef is one of the more spectacular dives. Its inhabitants include the Ragged Tooth Shark (in season), Loggerhead Turtle, and Ribbon Tailed Rays.

In addition to the reef itself, there are also two good wrecks on which to dive. The *Produce*, an 18 000 ton Norwegian tanker that hit the Shoal and sank in 1974 and the second could be on the *Nebo*, which struck the shoal in May 1884 and sunk almost immediately with its cargo of railway material. Both wrecks lie at approximately 30 meters and are fairly intact, which makes for great wreck diving.

Aliwal offers some of the best diving on the South African coastline. After the combination "baited" shark & an Aliwal reef / wreck dive, depending on shark activity, you will return to Agulhas House at about 13h00 for a shower and a hot "brunch"/lunch. The rest of the afternoon is free. Brett, the owner of Agulhas House, will be more than happy to "point you in the right direction" of the many local places of interest in and around Umkomaas. Such as Croc World, Tala Game Reserve, a Durban City Tour, a visit to uShaka Aquarium in Durban, a visit to the Natal Sharks Board also in Durban, a Zulu Village cultural Tour, or an Oribi George tour. The costs of these tours have not been included in the cost of this itinerary, and would be for your own account. Overnight at Agulhas House on a full board basis.

Included:

Light continental breakfast; road transfer to the launch site; combination "baited" shark dive and Aliwal 1 tank reef / wreck dive; hire of tanks, weights, and air; Nitrox airfills, if Nitrox certified; services of a qualified dive master to lead all dives; MPA dive permit; return road transfer to Agulhas House; hot "brunch"/lunch; dinner; accommodation at Agulhas House.

Excluded:

Gear hire other than tanks, weights, & air; additional dives; additional touring & applicable entry fees; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day 04

Tuesday, 08 May 2018:

Unfortunately only time for a baited shark dive today, weather permitting, as after the dive you will check out of Agulhas House and transfer to Shelly Beach. Depending on shark activity, you will return to Agulhas House at about 13h00 for a shower and a hot "brunch"/lunch. After the "brunch"/lunch, at 15h00, you will be collected from Agulhas House by ATM Tours for the 90-minute road transfer to the St Michaels Sands Hotel & Timeshare Resort (St Mike's), via Aqua Planet's Dive Centre, in Shelly Beach. Here you will meet with Aqua Planet's dive crew, unpack your dive gear to let it dry, and select your tanks and weights before the following day's dives on Protea. We suggest that you do this

immediately upon your arrival in Shelly Beach, before going onto St Mike's. Why go via Aqua Planet's Dive Shop you may ask? Firstly, to dry out your dive gear and select your weights and tanks, and secondly, the following morning's Protea pre-dive activities are usually hectic and rushed. After you've met the crew, and selected all your gear and weight requirements, you will then be transferred onto the St Michaels Sands Hotel & Timeshare Resort. Overnight at the St Michaels Sands Hotel and Timeshare Resort (St Mike's), in a sea-facing room, on a bed and breakfast basis.

Included:

Light continental breakfast; road transfer to the launch site; 1 x "baited" shark dive; hire of tanks, weights, and air; Nitrox airfills, if Nitrox certified; services of a qualified dive master to lead all dives; MPA dive permit; return road transfer to Agulhas House; hot "brunch"/lunch; road transfer from Agulhas House – Umkomaas to the St Michael Sands Hotel & Timeshare Resort – Shelly Beach, via Aqua Planet's Dive Centre; accommodation at the St Michael Sands Hotel & Timeshare Resort.

Excluded:

Gear hire other than tanks, weights, & air; additional dives; additional touring & applicable entry fees; dinner; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day's 05, 06, & 07

Wednesday, 09 May 2018, Thursday, 10 May 2018 & Friday, 11 May 2018:

At a time advised the previous day, when you stopped by Aqua Planet's Dive Shop, you will be collected from St Mike's by Aqua Planet, for the 10-minute road transfer to the Sonny Evans Small Craft Harbour where you will kit-up in Aqua Planet's "private kit-up area" in the Sonny Evans Small Craft Harbour car park area.

Your first dive of the day on Protea Banks is **scheduled** as a "baited" shark dive, followed by a deep, Protea Reef Dive, as the second dive, weather permitting. **Please note that all Protea Reef dives are deep dives, in excess of 30-meters, and are restricted to advanced divers only.** We say "**scheduled**" because weather conditions may force the skipper and DM to change the order in which we do baited shark dives and the deep reef dives on Protea.

The modus operandi on Protea Banks for a "Baited Shark Dive" is:-

After meeting the Aqua Planet dive crew, at a time confirmed the previous day, in the parking lot in the Sony Evans small craft harbour, which is also the base for the local NSRI (National Sea Rescue Institute), you will kit-up and have the pre-dive briefing. Your dive gear will be stowed on-board by Aqua Planets crew, and the 4x4 pick-up (bakkie) will reverse the dive-boat as close to the water as possible. Everyone then assist the Aqua Planet crew launch the dive boats, which are either a 7.5 meter "duck," or a 8 meter "duck or RIB, or semi-inflatable, nose first, into the surf. On the skipper's instruction, the ladies board first, after which the men clamber into the "Duck", placing themselves opposite their gear, which was been stowed down the centre of the "Duck." You then quickly put on your lifejackets, place your feet in the foot-straps, and off you go..... The launch itself is an exciting experience, and is likened to "white water rafting in a wetsuit". After punching your way through the pounding surf, on reaching the calmer waters, the skipper pauses to see that all is ok, before you continue on to the dive site. On arrival at the dive site, we start chumming to attract the sharks, and put out a buoy with the bait, which is contained in a "shark friendly" round "camo" drum with holes in it, so that the "smell" and oil from the sardines in the "drum" permeates into the water. When the first sharks appear, the DM assesses the situation, and if he is of the opinion that the sharks are going to stay around awhile, and that they are not aggressive, the divers may enter the water. You either view the action from the "safety" of the boat, or, for non-certified divers, on snorkel; you float on the surface of the ocean and watch the action as it unfolds, 5 meters below you. Surface viewers and non-certified divers pay the same price for going out on the dive boat as divers pay. The certified divers, already kitted up, descend to about 10 meters, to the depth of the camo drum, and follow the action from there. This is a drift dive, as the boat, chum, and bait, is drifting with the wind and surface current, as are the divers at 10 meters below.

After the baited dive we return to the Sonny Evans Small craft Harbour, swap tanks, and immediately re-launch the boat for the second scheduled dive of the day, a deep Protea Reef dive. There is no SIT required between the first baited shark dive and the second deep Protea reef dive, as a "baited shark dive" is not a deep dive, more like a 10-meter "bounce" dive at most!

The modus operandi for a deep Protea Reef Dive is:-

Once over the dive site, the skipper cuts the motors and the divers, as well as the DM, kit up, on the boat. This is a fully guided reef dive with the DM leading the dive. Once every diver has kitted up the Skipper repositions the boat over the reef, and on the DM's signal, all the divers do a backward roll, simultaneously, into the water. All Aqua Planet's Dive Masters, who have dived Protea for years, have mastered the art of safe diving on Protea. The DM first descends to 5 meters and waits at 5 meters until all the divers on the boat get down to him/her. Once all the divers are at 5 meters, the group descends together, to the bottom, which is at about 30 meters. Those divers that are heavy breathers are buddies paired off, so that when they get low on air, they surface together as a pair. After the Protea Reef dive, you will return to the Sonny Evans Small-craft Harbour where the boat is winched out of the water. All your dive gear will be taken back to Aqua Planet's dive shop to be washed down, rinsed, and dried for the following days diving. After the dive, Aqua Planet will transfer you back to St Mike's and the rest of the afternoon / evening is free. On a combination baited shark dive / Protea reef dive, breakfast is either had before you leave St Mike's for your first dive, or St Mike's will give you a packed breakfast to take with you to be enjoyed on the boat, at sea, in between dives, or you can elect to have breakfast back at St Mikes, after both dives have been completed. Up to you. The local places of interest in and close to Shelly Beach include, Pure Venom Reptile Park, Crags View Wild Care Centre, the Margate Art Museum, Uvongo River Nature Reserve, Oribi Gorge, which is a 20 km drive from Shelly Beach, The Wild Coast Casino, which is nearby, a coffee farm in the neighboring town of Ramsgate. If you are a golfer..... lots of top-class golf courses in the vicinity, surfing, fishing etc. etc. The folk at Aqua Planet and at St Mike's will be happy to point you in the right direction. Any additional dives and local touring would be for your own account. Overnight at the St Michaels Sands Hotel and Timeshare Resort, in a sea-facing room, on a bed and breakfast basis.

Included:

Breakfast either before you depart St Mike's for your first dive of the day, or it could be a packed breakfast to be enjoyed on the boat, supplied by St Mike's, or it can be enjoyed in the restaurant at St Mike's when you return to the hotel after your dives; return road transfer from St Mike's to the launching area at the Sonny Evans Small Craft Harbour, back to St Mike's; hire of tanks, weights, and air; services of a qualified dive master to lead all dives; 1 x baited shark dive followed by a guided Protea deep reef dive, weather permitting; accommodation at the St Michaels Sands Hotel and Timeshare Resort.

Excluded:

Gear hire, other than tanks, weights, & air; Nitrox fill are available at an extra charge of ZAR 100 per fill, Nitrox fills should be ordered in advance; additional dives, touring & applicable entry fees; lunch; dinner; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.

Day 08

Saturday, 12 May 2018:

After a leisurely breakfast, at 11h00, you will be collected from St Mike's by ATM Tours for your 2.5-hour return road transfer to King Shaka International Airport – Durban in time for Stephanie to check-in at 13h55 for flight EK 43 departing at 15h55 to Istanbul. At 16h40, Paul, Susan, Abigail, Kyra, Chris & Phil will check-in for flight SA 578 departing at 18h40 to Johannesburg. If you are connecting to an international flight, check-in is 2-hours before scheduled departure time; if you are connecting to a domestic flight check-in is 1-hour before scheduled departure time. End of services.

Included:

Breakfast; return road transfer from St Mike's – Shelly Beach to King Shaka International Airport – Durban (DUR).

Excluded:

Lunch; additional touring & applicable entry fees; dinner; onward international and/or domestic flights; accommodation; bar; items of a personal nature; gratuities.