

More than Whites

Port Lincoln, South Australia

by Aengus Moran

Port Lincoln is a city of over 14,000 and not only the biggest fishing port of the state in South Australia, but the one of the biggest fishing port in all of Australia. In particular, it is known for Tuna and where there's Tuna, there's bigger fish that eat Tuna, and that's why I went to Port Lincoln, to dive with the Great White Shark.

There are two licensed operators conducting cage diving in the area, most frequently at the Neptune Islands, approx 2.5 hours south of Port Lincoln. I have just returned from a memorable 4 days trip with one of the operators, Calypso Star Charters.

MV Calypso Star, at over 17 metre's (55ft) comfortably accommodates eight passengers and two crew, a good number appreciating that you are looking for maximum time in the 3 man (2 with camera's) cage. Food is plentiful and the rooms comfortable, this is a typical Australian live aboard, relaxed yet experienced and professional.

In 2003, I had also gone in search of the Great White, that time it was a day trip from Gansbaai in South Africa. It wasn't fruitful so naturally a no show by White's was a concern of mine this time. Fortunately, while January is off peak in Gansbaai, that's not the case in South Australia and as a bonus or possible consolation, I'd also have the opportunity to dive with Australian Sea Lions and a shore dive with potential to see Leafy Sea Dragons.



Neptune Island

Getting to and from Port Lincoln

By road, Port Lincoln is 645km from Adelaide (7 hours driving), or 45 minute's by air. Adelaide Airport has several international connections, fortunately for me, it was a quick hop from Sydney.

REX Regional airlines, operates several flights a day to Port Lincoln from Adelaide. However



MV Calypso Star



"Kids" Canon EOS 350D with Canon EF-S 10-22mm lens at 17mm . Ikelite Housing. 8" Dome. Ikelite DS-125. 1/100th F/8 ISO 100

flights fill quickly and with full Saab 340 aircraft, excess luggage charges generally do apply and occasionally, excess luggage can be held over for a following flight.

Calypso Star Charters provide limousine (Yes...a limo in Outback Australia!) transfer from



“Hello”. Canon EOS 350D with Canon EF-S 10-22mm lens at 17mm . Ikelite Housing. 8” Dome. Ikelite DS-125. 1/100th F/8 ISO 100

and to Port Lincoln airport. Their rates also include accommodation for the nights before and after the trip in a lovely house located within walking distance of the departure Jetty.

Seals and Sea Lion's

The weather was favourable for diving with the Australian Sea Lions (**Neophoca cinerea**) on the outbound leg to the Neptune Islands. For the Great White virgins onboard, this sounded more palatable than a dive on the return leg.

Hopkins Island is half an hour from Port Lincoln and the only time I would require a BCD and tank as air to the Shark cage is surface fed to 3 regs.

My camera rig for the 4 days was a Canon EOS 350D, EF-S 10-22mm lens, Ikelite housing and 8” dome.

Maximum dive depth was 6 metres (20 ft) and I planned to shoot totally manually. In hindsight, with the excitement of the dive and the Sea Lions on my level, mid water and on the surface, starting in shutter priority, setting a shutter speed about



“Jane and scarback” Canon EOS 350D with Canon EF-S 10-22mm lens Ikelite Housing. 8” Dome. Ikelite DS-125. 1/160 F/6.3 and EV Compensation of -1

1/200th and letting the camera handle the aperture, would have been a better option. First new photo technique of trip learnt!

The primary visual difference between Sea Lions and Seals is that Sea Lions have ears. The Australia Sea Lions are Endemic to Australia with the most common sea in this area being the New Zealand Fur Seal.

Great White Sharks

Of the many encounters we had over the 4 days, approximately half

were shorter than 3 to 5 minutes, not nearly enough time to get into a wetsuit, don a weights harness, get in the cage and ready to shoot.

I say you have to be in it to win it. My solution was to do some “Guard” duty in the cage and fortunately, it paid off, despite a nippy 16c water. All gear can be hired but standing in the cage for extended periods does call for a good fitting wetsuit, hood, boots and gloves and I found it worthwhile bringing my own.

That time in the cage let me work out my “wedge position’s”, because



“On top” Canon EOS 350D with Canon EF-S 10-22mm lens Ikelite Housing. 8” Dome. Ikelite DS-125. 1/160 F/6.3 and EV Compensation of -1

with the top of the cage sitting on the surface, the cage is rolling with the swell. Some form of tie to attach your camera to yourself would be recommended...you don't want to drop that rig outside the cage!

The openings on the cage will comfortably allow an 8 inch dome through and in our cage we had a lower opening as well to provide alternate shooting angle.

This is wide angle shooting, strobes have minimal effect and are a nuisance in the rolling cage, pieces from the bait may also be in the water

and you probably don't want to light these.

Sun glare and small air bubbles coming off the boat can hinder photo opportunities, but fortunately Calypso Star throws a good shadow and the crew are keen to get instructions on best side to bait.

First dive in the cage, maybe 4 hours after arriving and we meet a 3.5 metre shark we go to know as Scarback. We had a 10 minute photo session where I realised our interest in him was being reciprocated (Gulp).

It was good to go shutter priority,



Nikon Coolpix 5000 / Ikelite Housing 2 Ikelite DS-125's, F/7.1, 1/2000th sec

but being only a metre below the surface and having a cloudless sky, dropping the Ev to -1 was a photo saver not just for me and my EOS 350D but also for the Nikon D200 and Olympus E330 that were also on board.

We had two other White sharks over the following days but alas the Mako's that had visited a couple of weeks prior, didn't show...now that would have been a bonus!

Leafy Sea Dragon's

North of Port Lincoln is Tumby Bay, and its jetty presents an opportunity to dive with the Leafy Sea Dragon (*Phycodurus eques*), Seahorses and if you have your corrective lens in, you may also spot some Sea Moths.

Of course, as with the Great White diving, no guarantee that you will see a Leafy but the probability is quite high. Calypso Star Charters can assist and organise diving at Tumby Bay Jetty.

There are several more “Leafy” dives available in South Australia, as well as some excellent fresh water and cave dives. For more details on diving in South Australian why not visit www.diveoz.com.au or www.southaustralia.com

Aengus Moran
www.aengusm.com



www.uwpmag.com

Nexus.

The Best Value Aluminium Housing For Your D200



- * Professional level specification**
- * Alloy for durability**
- * Lightweight for travelling**
- * Includes genuine viewfinder magnifier**
- * Two strobe outlets**
- * Specialist split level and super macro ports available**

Introductory price £1699.00

OCEAN OPTICS

7 Bush House Arcade, Bush House
Strand, London, WC2B 4PA
Tel 020 7240 8193 Fax 020 7240 7938

www.oceanoptics.co.uk
optics@oceanoptics.co.uk

Mauritius

by Gerald Rambert

Since “Cousteau” and “The big blue” appeared on our screen, an irresistible urge of discovery started to touch many people around the world to discover for themselves life under the ocean. They dreamt about being weightless and making bubbles. It looked so free and cool...

And most headed off to the Red sea and the Maldives to take their plunge. But they were forgetting Mauritius, this jewel in the Indian the Ocean which too has some stunning sites which, once dived, reach way beyond expectations.

Of our many advantages as a diving destination, including the fact that Mauritius can be dived all year around, is that we dive in small groups compared to the better known locations where you often see more divers and bubbles than fish and marine life.

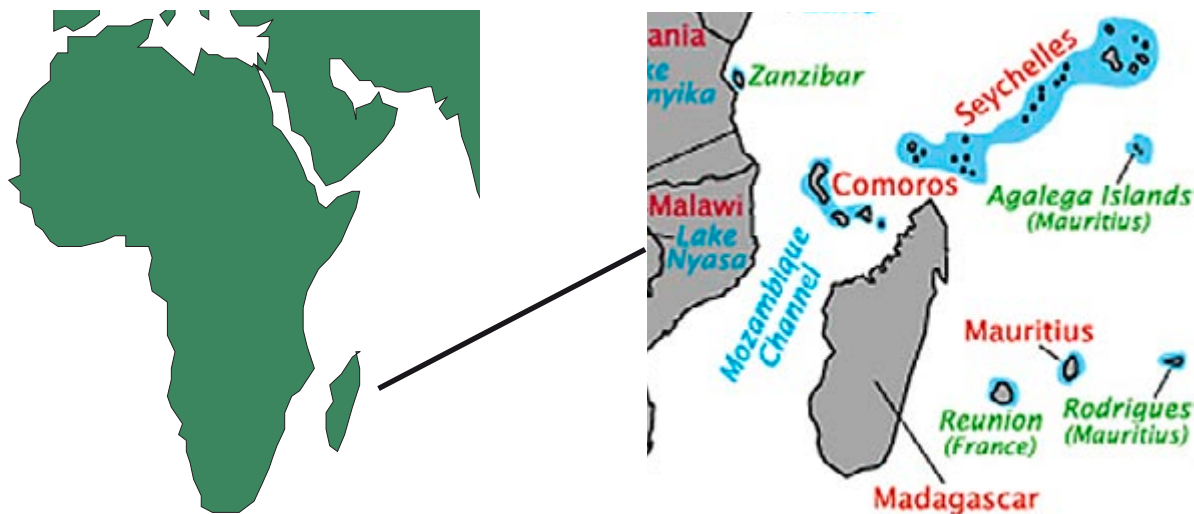
The conditions are also kind to the diver with temperature in the sea nearly 30 degrees in summer dipping only to 21 degrees at worst in winter. Combined with the fact that whatever time of the year you visit, surface conditions are very good and the dive sites easily and quickly accessible from the many diving centres situated all around our coast. Diving here is always a pleasure.

Most of the centres are affiliated to the MSDA (the Mauritian Scuba Diving Association) and teach PADI as well as CMAS offering between them a huge variety of diving experiences.

As the island is volcanic, layers of larva have created magnificent rock structures underwater. Arches, caves, drop-offs are found all around our



Le Morne Mountain Has got a great history behind it. When slavery was abolished, the slaves escaped and were hiding on this mountain. When the Whites were climbing behind them to announce them they were free, they were so scared to get caught again, that they jumped the high cliffs and died.



waters with exceptional dives including the breath-taking Cathedral on the west coast, Whales Rock in the north to Colorado in the south east.

It is hard not to feel in total awe as you find

yourself among these astonishing forms of natural architecture when surrounded by the special light effects found underwater. As you descend next to these walls that can sometimes reach 30 to 40

meters high, you really have the feeling that you are flying, hovering, weightless in suspension. Add the changes in light intensity, and the endless blueness and you soon realise that you do not have to have big fish to feel great about your diving day.

As you fly over Mauritius you can clearly see how our inner lagoon is separated from the deep sea by a reef barrier, which with a closer look you can find is made of coral formations.

For the less experienced underwater adventurers just a basic pair of fins, snorkel and mask are enough to see these wonderful corals. Like trees, they need sunlight for their growth and since sunlight is more powerful near the surface, coral flourishes in the shallow waters which are ideal for snorkelling. The Blue Bay marine park in the south of the island is a proof of the diversity of our seas offering a wide variety of coral species as well as many stunning reef fishes including of course, Nemo and his friends.

For those who want to scuba then you must adventure beyond the reefs. To get out to the open ocean, dive boats must go beyond the coral through openings in the reef known as passes. It is in these stretches of water where all the exchange of water between the lagoon and the open sea takes place.

At the right time of tide, these passes can offer very good diving opportunities, but 'sporting'. Mainly offering a drift type of diving, the current can be quite strong giving even experienced divers a good challenge.

Such dives begin when the boat drops you inside the lagoon just by the opening of the pass and ends when it delivers you outside the reef. As you whiz through the pass itself you can expect to see big fishes like barracuda, king fishes and sharks plus a good number of rays.



Wreck of the Saint Gabriel, old fishing boat laying at 38 meters – Nikon D70 in Seacam housing- Fisheye Nikon 10.5 mm - Iso 200 – Sb 800 in Seacam housing – 1/60 @ f6.3

The very nature of the pass means that they can be full of sediments in suspension, coming from the erosion of the island and rivers which means that visibility tends to be no more than 10 meters. Dives like this can be done on the west side at Bel Mare



A Grouper comes out of his hole to have a look at the diver – Nikon D70 in Seacam housing- Nikon 12-24 mm - Iso 200 – Sb 800 in Seacam housing – 1/125 @ f8

and on the south part of the island at the Morne.

But diving in Mauritius offers more than awe inspiring rocks and fast track passes. What about wrecks? Of course we have wrecks! Not the type on which pirates set sail however. Instead we are lucky