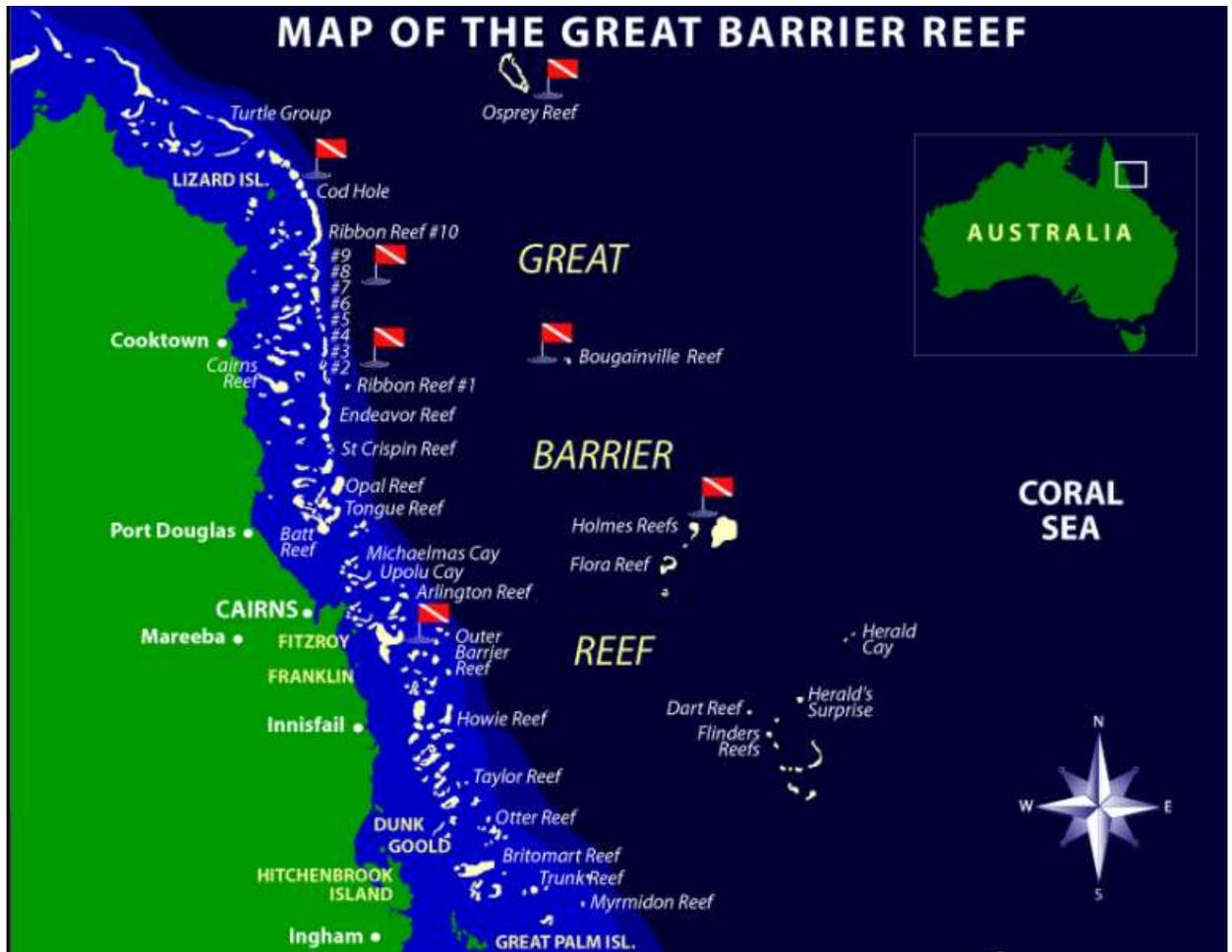


The Northern GBR is for the True Explorers on a Superyacht. It's David Attenborough Country...

- The reefs and islands north from Cairns to Torres Strait are some of the most pristine and unvisited in the world; one of the few places to see reef sharks, seasonally to see Minke whales, and to be in reef waters where you just don't see other yachts.
- Lizard Island is a perfect fly in/fly out point with a 5-star lodge, spa, restaurant and excellent anchorage.
- A trip to Coral Sea reefs such as **Osprey Reef** is close by and still in Australian waters; unforgettable ocean seamounts with Pelagics and coral walls.
- Laura dance festival is a unique indigenous cultural celebration of aboriginal dance and art that can be accessed by helicopter from Cooktown or Portland Roads.
- the Torres Straits offer a labyrinth of islands and a unique heritage of seafaring Polynesian and Melanesian culture
- For those who want to experience the best diving holidays that Australia's Great Barrier Reef has to offer, there is no substitute for a diving tour of the Coral Sea regions of the Ribbon Reefs, Osprey Reef and Bougainville. Experienced scuba divers must accept nothing less.
- Running along the northern edge of the Barrier Reef in north Queensland and holding such famous dives as the Cod Hole and Steve's Bommie, **the Ribbon Reefs** consist of long, thin reefs ranging in depth from 5-20 metres and usually no wider than 450 metres.
- Due to Queensland's tropical climate, **any time of the year is a good time to dive the Ribbon Reefs. Water temperatures fluctuate between 22°C in winter and 29°C during summer.** Thanks to the absence of human activity in the area, **visibility is good year round, with best vis from September to November.**
- During the wet summer months rainfall is moderate but usually limited to early mornings and later afternoons. The dry winter months see little rain. December to February are the rainiest months although the rainfall is often confined to night time. Surface conditions are most often calm but can become moderately rough during winter, although in and around the reefs there is plenty of shelter from the ocean swell.
- **In the winter months of June and July, dozens of dwarf minke whales can be seen on their migratory path around the Ribbon Reefs.** The famous giant potato cod are present all year round.



- Characteristically covered in colourful coral, the Ribbon Reefs teem with marine critters, large and small. The further north one travels in Queensland the better visibility one encounters, due to changes in the land and decreasing agricultural run off. This means the Ribbon Reefs often enjoy excellent visibility.
- The Australian North Coral Sea contains an isolated reef system located off the coast of Cairns to the very far north. **Osprey Reef** and its lesser known neighbours to the south, **Holmes Reef** and **Bougainville**, represent world class diving and the best tours that Australia has to offer.
- The distance at once spells one thing: an abundance of unspoilt marine life. As a remote oceanic reef, not part of the continent of Australasia, there are deep water upwellings here, meaning plenty of nutrients that support an abundance of life. Visibility here ranges from the impressive to the incredible.
- Home to large schools of pelagic fish, bigeye trevally, bronze whaler sharks and barracuda, it also features plenty of moray eels, exotic cuttlefish and sea hares. Gorgonian fans, sea whips and beautiful, bright yellow soft corals flourish in the crystal clear waters and on the mountain pinnacles and sheer walls that disappear in the depths far beneath the Coral Sea. More detail on these dive sites:

Osprey Reef: Admiralty - Osprey Reef is generally considered to represent the best diving in Australia's Great Barrier Reef area. Since it is further offshore and not part of the continental shelf it enjoys clear and rich waters, 2 key factors needed for excellent diving conditions. Admiralty showcases both factors well. There is a steep drop-off where nutrient-filled currents rise up against the solid structure making the area rich in food and therefore rich in feeders. Visibility here is often phenomenal, rising above 60 metres, and the topography of the site means there is often plenty to see in the distance.

*...**Highlights:** shark action, turtles, schooling fish & big pelagics...*

*...**Diving environment:** healthy reefs, wall diving, drift diving, advanced divers, off the beaten track...*

The name Admiralty comes from the centuries old admiralty-style anchor that sits in a cave which provides an entertaining (if a little narrow) swim-through and gives the reef a focal point. Otherwise this reef is characterised by healthy hills of coral interspersed with sandy channels. Visually it appears like a coral village and you can spend the whole dive touring around the sandy roads and lanes.

The slopes, pinnacles and mounds feature a lot of stony, leather and staghorn corals as well as crinoids in hues of yellow and black. Marine life includes schools of midnight snapper, red-tailed wrasses, goldstripe wrasses, lyretail hogfish and lyretail sandperch. More obvious highlights include diving with whitetip and grey reef sharks, and the occasional passing eagle ray in the deeper sections.

Incredible visibility, pristine reefs, clean sandy channels and plenty of fish action, Admiralty is one of those Australian dive sites that you don't mind to visit several times over.

Around the Bend - Where you begin this dive depends on which route you choose: it can be either a long deep drift or an easy exploration of the lagoon area.

Coral Canyons - Some dive site names offer little in the way of information about the site. The name Coral Canyons on the other hand, tells the story: large and long canyons dividing large coral outcrops.

False Entrance - False Entrance earns its name from appearing like the safe, navigable entrance to the lagoon, which in fact lies a few kms to the north. In strong current this can be a great drift dive and in slack water conditions, a normal reef dive with multiple bommies for investigation.

North Horn - There are several ways to dive this site which is located at the northernmost tip of Osprey Reef, part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It can be done as a drift when current is present or as a deep dive running down to 40m+. However, North Horn is best known as the site for a famous shark feed that you'll remember long after your Australia diving trip is over.



[VIEW VIDEO GALLERY](#)

Often there is an orientation dive here before the actual shark dive. On these, you will be taken down as far as perhaps 30 metres to where a bommie rises covered in soft corals, fans and whips. Many sites around Osprey Reef are known for healthy hard coral coverage so it is nice to see colourful soft corals represented here. Tracey's plaque, affixed to the reef, is in memory of a well-known local dive instructor.

North Horn Wall is practically a dive site in its own right with lots of ledges and gorgonian fans and the bigger pelagics in the blue. Eagle rays and manta rays often cruise around the vicinity and it has been known for divers to spot sailfish at this site, although more than a spoonful of luck is required for such a thrilling encounter. Just make sure that your camera batteries are fully charged and that the memory stick has plenty of room.

As you stride in here and begin to make your way down a line, you will be under no illusions as to why this site is used for a shark feed. You will likely see many of the main players before the action has begun.

You and your fellow scuba divers will be seated in a natural coral rubble amphitheatre, where up to all 26 guests can sit in a semi-circle at around 12 metres deep. Between 10 and 15 metres from the viewing area, a drum of fish heads is released. Then the action begins and the sharks come in to feed. White tips, grey reef and silky sharks (grey whalers) jostle for the spoils. Silvertips lurk in the background where even the occasional [hammerhead shark](#) can be seen.

You can expect a potato cod or two to be involved in the mix, rubbing shoulders with the sharks and a few dog-toothed tuna. Smaller Great Barrier Reef opportunists are on hand to sweep up the scraps with yellow-tailed fusiliers and red bass living off the smaller chunks dislodged by the sometimes violent feeding frenzy.

This dive is conducted under the strict guidelines of the Queensland government. The feed is sealed in a bin and the tender has to be removed before the feed is released, so the sharks do not associate flesh coming off the boat with a feeding frenzy. Only once the bin is gone and the sharks' attention is elsewhere will you be invited to move around.

The environmental management fee that you pay contributes to the creation of no-take zones and this area is one which, at the time of writing, is under consideration. Without doubt the images of diving with sharks in Australia at North Horn will live long in your memory.

Holmes Reef is a remote spot in the Coral Sea west of Cairns. It is much further from shore than the Outer Barrier Reef and is, along with Osprey Reef and Bougainville, among the Great Barrier Reef's most world-class dive sites. It can only be visited by Australian liveaboards that venture to the Coral Sea, and only when weather conditions permit.

...Highlights: whale sharks, shark action, turtles, great macro life/ marine diversity, schooling fish & big pelagics...

...Diving environment: healthy reefs, wall diving, drift diving, caverns, advanced divers, off the beaten track...

Holmes Reef is named after the young Captain Henry Holmes whose ship, the Thomasine, sank here en route to Hong Kong at a time when the reef was uncharted. Happily Holmes and most of his crew survived. They would certainly not have appreciated the splendour of the undersea world on these reefs, which would come to immortalise their struggle.



The diving in this, one of Australia's remotest reefs, is highly rated with excellent visibility and a wide range of topography. You can expect **shallow reefs with silvertip sharks and grey reef sharks, wall dives, caves, drift dives, and some of the best night dives** the barrier reef has to offer. **Caverns** are covered in bright and colourful soft corals, tall bommies are patrolled by **an impressive array of sharks**, and there are large archway swimthroughs.

Holmes Reef is **known for its array of large pelagic life as well as small creatures** including myriad crustaceans. Also despite bleaching events in the past, this Australian reef appears resilient, boasting an impressive number of both hard and soft corals.

Amazing - This site has a difficult name to live up to, but as a shallow wall teeming with sharks, soft corals and swim-throughs, it somehow manages it! You can expect to see grey reef sharks, silvertips and white tips numbering in the dozens.

The wall itself is home to a number of large cavernous archways and swim-throughs between around 10 and 20m depth. Many are easily penetrated despite the thick bushy covering of soft corals. Within the caves and caverns look out for lots of lobsters and other crustaceans in the nooks and crannies, where a keen eye might also spot a stubbytail eel. Meanwhile, as you are poking around in the recesses, turtles and potato cod are always likely to put in an appearance, cruising by, casting a curious glance or two in your direction.

Where the wall gives way to the sea floor the white sands slope away to a flat bottom where innumerable garden eels crane their bodies vertically in the quest for a passing snack.

Nonki Bommie - This is a big bommie, or pinnacle, that rises from 35 m depth to 4m from the surface and has split in 2, creating a canyon between the 2 fingers. The crack is full of vibrant and huge orange and yellow sea fans and all sort of soft corals.

The Abyss - Unsurprisingly this Australia dive site features a deep drop-off. This steep wall plummets to mysterious dark depths of over 1km! Sticking to the sun-drenched shallows you can enjoy the myriad reef life on a very pleasant drift dive.

Cathedral - Another Holmes Reef dive site with a rather dramatic name is the impressive Cathedral. Similar in profile to The Abyss, the wall here sinks down several hundred metres to the sea floor. Impressive hard and soft corals are matched by the meaty pelagic encounters likely here.

Turtle - No prizes for guessing the creature that this site promises more than any other Holmes reef dive site. Different in profile to some of the other sites here, Turtle is a series of shallow bommies on the edge of a reef.

The sandy floor from which the bommies rise, is home to garden eels and resting white tip reef sharks. Potato cod and turtles are on the menu especially in the shallower sections. There is also plenty to see in terms of macro life and around the reef. Crustaceans abound in this site which is 1 of several here that make great night dives (illuminated by flashlight fish). Cleaner shrimp, Saron shrimp and Bumble Bee squat lobsters are among the more interesting residents. Excellent visibility is common here making Turtle a favourite site for underwater photographers.

Bougainville Reef: Like Osprey, Bougainville is a Coral Sea reef in the middle of nowhere that enjoys a **proliferation of life** thanks to the deep ocean upwellings that bring nutrients into the shallows. The **coral here is in great condition**. Superb visibility and a lack of river run-off result in pristine reefs with some large areas of the finest plate coral imaginable.

*...**Highlights:** whale sharks, shark action, turtles, schooling fish & big pelagics...*

*...**Diving environment:** healthy reefs, wall diving, beginner and advanced divers, off the beaten track...*