

ScubaSafariSodwanaBay



URC7R: 7-night package – Sodwana Bay + Zululand Safari

Day 1

You will be met at **Richards Bay Airport** and transferred to **Sodwana Bay Marine National Park** in the Greater St Lucia Wetlands, a scenic 2-hour drive through rural **Zululand**.

Sodwana Bay is South Africa's premier scuba diving location and recognised for its importance in marine conservation as a **World Heritage site**. This southern-most coral reef in the world, which stretches down from Mozambique, may be dived all year round although the best conditions are during the warm summer months (November to May).

Choose between a local dive resort, comprising simple but comfortable log cabins situated in the indigenous coastal forest, or upgrade to a luxury dive lodge situated right on the beach.

Check in, settle in and relax in your remote surroundings, where monkeys and antelope roam free.

Days 2 to 5

Rise early each morning, to be on the beach by 06h30 when underwater viewing conditions are at their best. From the wide beach, expect an exhilarating surf entry into the clear warm waters of the **Indian Ocean**. Water temperatures average 20-25°C and visibility is excellent at 30-50 ft, as no major rivers flow into the sea at this point

Depending upon prevailing weather conditions, you have a choice of over 20 different dive sites, with the reefs named after their distance from the launch site. Their hard and soft corals, canyons and caves are teeming with a huge variety of sea life, including over 1,200 species of fish, turtles, bottle-nosed dolphins, moray eels, ribbon tail rays, mantas, butterfly fish, angelfish, sharks, migrating whales (April to July), whale sharks (January to February) and much more.

After breakfast there is time for a second dive, but as the North-Easter tends to blow after 10h00, all dives should be completed by midday.

Spend the afternoon relaxing by the lodge swimming pool or on the pristine beach, surrounded by the highest naturally vegetated sand dunes in the world. Alternatively enjoy one of the optional activities that can be arranged for you or your non-diving partner, including a late evening marine trail to see the remarkable spectacle of the egg laying and hatching of loggerhead and leatherback turtles (November to January).

Day 6

Today you will be transferred to your luxury **Private Game Reserve**, a scenic drive of just under 2-hours.

Check in to your luxury game lodge, relax and settle in to your African bushveld surroundings. In the afternoon enjoy your first thrilling **safari drive in an open-top game-viewing vehicle**, accompanied by an experienced lodge ranger.

We hope to see several of the **Big 5** – lion, elephant, buffalo, rhino and leopard – as well as many other species before returning to camp and dining in the boma, a unique African experience.

Day 7

Up early today for a dawn **open-top game drive**, when game viewing conditions are at their best. We expect to see giraffe, wildebeest, zebra, the endangered white rhino and many other interesting species in addition to the **Big 5**.

Return to the lodge for a sumptuous breakfast, then relax by the swimming pool or enjoy a guided walk with a ranger to view the smaller trees, insects and flora of the region.

In the afternoon enjoy another exciting open-top safari drive with your lodge ranger, searching for game in their natural surroundings in one of the world's greatest conservation areas. If you have not yet seen lion, today you hope for success!

Whilst the sun sets over the park, enjoy sundowners in the scenic hills and in the evening dine in the atmosphere that only the African bushveld can provide.

Day 8

Time permitting, this morning enjoy another **open top safari game drive** with your ranger before breakfast.

Return transfer to **Richards Bay Airport** (45-minutes).

[NB: Remember that it is essential that you do not fly within 24 hours of your last dive]

ITINERARY HIGHLIGHTS

SODWANA BAY

- ❑ 5 nights dive lodge accommodation in Sodwana, with en-suite facilities
- ❑ 7 boat dives at Sodwana Bay with dive master, including cylinders and weights
- ❑ English breakfasts daily
- ❑ Dinners daily

ZULULAND SAFARI

- ❑ 2 nights luxury game lodge accommodation, with en-suite facilities
- ❑ 2 open top game drives per day
- ❑ Guided walks also available
- ❑ All game park fees and local taxes
- ❑ English breakfasts daily
- ❑ Dinners daily

WHAT IS INCLUDED:

All airport and ground transfers in air-conditioned vehicles
Accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis
Activities specified in itinerary, including transfers and entrance charges

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED:

International & domestic flights (quoted separately)
Lunches & dinners (unless specified)
Drinks & refreshments
Tips for porters and restaurants
Telephone calls, laundry & other incidental personal expenditure
Visa fees, in countries where these apply
Airport departure taxes, in countries where these apply
 e.g. Victoria Falls: currently US\$20 per person
 Mozambique: currently US \$10 per person
Please ensure you take the necessary US dollars for this purpose

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Malaria tablets are recommended for Zululand
All activities are subject to prevailing weather conditions

DIVE SITES - SODWANA BAY

All dives are priced to two mile reef, as diving further out is dependant upon weather conditions and cannot be guaranteed. A small supplement (approximately £2 to £5) will be charged locally for dives to the outer reefs.

Quarter Mile Reef

About 12m, loggerhead turtles are frequently seen here. From October to March, ragged tooth sharks come to gestate and manta rays come in summer. A very exciting dive site, but the sea must be calm as it can be affected by surge

Stringer Reef

Comprising Stringer small and large, best dived in calm seas. Lots of rays and juvenile fish

Two-Mile Reef

At an average depth of 12m, this main Sodwana reef extends for 2 km making it ideal for the student diver. Teeming with large shoals of fish, it has a magnificent range of coral, invertebrates and rock formations. It includes Anton's Reef, Chain Reef, Pinnacles, Gullies Caves and Overhangs, Four Buoy, Potholed and Sponge Reefs.

Five-Mile Reef

At 21m, a large delicate pristine flat reef with spectacular plate & stag horn corals. Abundant tropical fish

Seven-Mile Reef

From 17 to 22m this reef is densely populated with multicoloured tropical fish, big moray eels, rays and turtles. Also well known for bottle-nosed dolphin, sharks and passing big game fish. Perhaps the most scenic of all the reefs, it is very popular with divers. Coral heads, canyons and pinnacles can also be seen

Nine-Mile Reef

From 2 to 19m, the most dramatic reef with spectacular caves, overhangs, pinnacles and green coral

Sponge Reef

From 18 to 35m, you can see sponges up to 600 mm high. Due to its depth, this reef is popular with advanced divers

Big Blue

Diving off the continental shelf, which drops off about 5 miles out to sea, at depths of up to 40m

**Remember to bring your open water dive certification with you:
PADI, NAUI, CMAS or equivalent**

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES - please enquire for supplements

SODWANA BAY

Scuba Diving – additional dives (maximum of two dives per day)

Pool Dive – useful refresher course, if you have not dived for over 6-months

Discover Scuba Course – introduction to scuba, including educational session and pool dive, followed by a full assessment and first sea dive the next day (3-hours per lesson: two recommended)

Quad Biking – 1-hour fun ride through the coastal forest and sand dunes

Lake Sibaya Sunset Drive – view hippos, crocodiles and prolific bird life, whilst enjoying a spectacular South African sunset over the lake (2 hrs)

Marine Walking Trail – late evening walk to see the remarkable spectacle of the egg laying and hatching of loggerhead and leatherback turtles (November – January)

Bird Watching – study the endemic South African birds of the Lake St Lucia Wetlands, with over 600 species, the premier bird watching holiday destination in South Africa. Species specific excursions available to a variety of habitats. Viewing is generally best during the breeding season - Sept to early Dec

Rock Fishing – enjoy a wonderful fishing holiday in South Africa, with guide. Catch kingfish, queen fish, kob, shad, stumpnose and pompano

Tiger Fishing – including the opportunity to rent a houseboat on Pongola Lake

Deep Sea Game Fishing – pre-dawn departure for big game fishing holiday some 40 nautical miles out to sea, including all tackle and light lunch. Black and striped marlin are best in the summer months (November to May). Full day (weather permitting).

ZULULAND

Night Drive – in an open-top game vehicle, accompanied by a park ranger, to search in the beam of a powerful spotlight for the seldom-viewed nocturnal birds and animals of the park such as nightjars, owls, genet and leopard

Zulu Village – learn about traditional Zulu life and culture, including Zulu dancing and visit to a Sangoma traditional healer

Spa Treatments – treat yourself to some relaxing spa treatments at your lodge