

Day 1: We Welcome You Aboard MV REEF PRINCE in Geraldton

Your expedition vessel Reef Prince is awaiting you in the cray fishing capital of Geraldton. Make your way to the Geraldton Fishermen's wharf. Your crew will welcome you aboard between 4 and 5pm. If you wish to board outside these times please contact our office. We'll introduce you to your cabin and give you a detailed vessel induction. After dinner your tour director will give you a talk on The Arolhos Islands – our first destination.

We will spend the night on board in Geraldton ready for our early departure to our first destination - the Houtman Arolhos Islands. With 3 main groups at the islands and 3 days to explore, we simply spend a day at each group.



Day 1: Depart Geraldton – The Arolhos Islands – Southern/Pelseart group

We depart at 5:30am from Geraldton and steam 4 hours to the Southern Group.

Discovered by the Dutch sailor Frederick De Houtman in 1619, Arolhos means – “Keep Your Eyes Open.

Depending on the weather and the locals, there are lots of options for activities.

The Arolhos's premier bird walk is on **Pelseart Island** and in season (Nov-Feb) up to 2 million sea birds nest on the island. Up to 17 species of bird can be seen. The surrounding waters are aqua blue and worth a swim after the walk.

There are snorkeling locations right around the group that cater for most weather conditions.

Two of the areas highlights are a pearl farm tour and the local Italian crayfishing island of Basile Island.

Jane Liddon's pearl farm at **Post Office Island** grows black pearls and she gives an excellent tour and overview of how her pearl farm operates. We walk around the whole island looking at the history, Jane's unique home and the stunning outlook of the inner lagoon. Jane designs all the jewelry and an extensive amount of pearl jewelry is available for purchase.

Basile Island is home to a large Italian community including two colourful locals Peter and Nino. They welcome us onto their private island for a short black Italian coffee and a tour of the island which includes the only church in the Arolhos. For the adventurous there is the opportunity to snorkel under their jetty with the huge 20kg+ Sampson Fish that have been pets of the island's locals for years.



Day 2 The Arolhos Islands – Central/Easter Group

This morning we depart early for a 1.5 hour transit to the central or Easter Group. We arrive at Morley Island for a walk and snorkel. The island is home to one of the world's rarest birds – the Lesser Noddy. They are nesting during our time there so a sighting is almost guaranteed! The waters around the island are home to fantastic coral and fish life in the shallows and snorkeling is a highlight. The area is also popular with the local Australian Sea Lions and it is one of the best spots in the islands for an in-water interaction.

In the afternoon we can take a drive-by past the Rat Island group and your tour director will talk about the chequered history of the cray fishing industry in the area.

After arriving at Little Sandy Island, we can snorkel the pass that runs along the island. It is full of layered plate corals that cascade down the walls into the depths. There is tropical fish life all along the length of the wall.

If weather and time permits we can have a sunset drink experience on the tiny Little Sandy Island. This little gem is home to the largest Sea Lion colony in the Arolhos group and they love interacting during drinks on the beach.

The island also has up to 15 species of wading and sea birds including 5 tern species, sandpipers, plovers, cormorants and gulls.

For those keen fisherman, the central group is abound with lots of fishing locations. Popular catches in the area are Pink Snapper, Spangled Emperor and the iconic Dhufish.

Day 3 The Abrolhos Islands – Northern/Wallabi Group

This morning we depart early for a 1.5 hour transit to the Wallabi Group of Islands. If the weather is on our side we hope to have snorkel on the **Batavia** wreck. In 1629 this Dutch vessel on her maiden voyage hit Morning Reef. The events that followed make an unbelievable tale. After our discovery of the wreck site and with the right tides, we can steam to the nearby **Pidgeon Island** group and go for a walk on West Wallabi Island to the site of the earliest European structures on Australian soil. The soldiers of the Batavia built stone forts to protect themselves from the murderous Mutineers. We'll take you to the site of these forts and freshwater holes whilst looking for the Tamar Wallabi and pythons.

A drive by in the tenders is a must to view the camps on the **Pidgeon Islands**, which is now regarded as millionaire's row.

If the tide is too low for West Wallabi, then we can visit **Beacon Island** (The Island of Angry Ghosts) and hear the stories about the shipwreck, mutiny and massacre that took place on the island.

In the afternoon we visit the iconic **Turtle Bay** with its designated snorkel trail and a wildlife walk to north point and the northernmost tip of the **Abrolhos Islands**. The area has numerous lizards and skinks, wallabies and birdlife.

Departing the Abrolhos at 4pm, we enjoy our evening meal while we cruise through the night to arrive at our next destination – Steep Point, within Shark Bay at 6:30am.



Day 4: Steep Point & Dirk Hartog Islands within Shark Bay

This morning we arrive inside **Steep Point** at daybreak.

We head around the point past the land-based game fisherman that balloon fish off the rocks for large pelagic species. We have options such as a leg stretch walk on the sand spit, a snorkel around Monkey Rock or stay on the surface and try their luck for a mackerel – today's target species.

Depending on the weather we'll cruise north up the inside or outside of **Dirk Hartog Island** which is 80km long. The island was discovered in 1616 by Hartog on the Dutch East India Company (VOC) ship Eendracht that was transiting from Cape Town to Batavia (Jakarta).

We can troll up the coast of the island for pelagic species.

Mid-afternoon we'll anchor at the top end of the island at Cape Inscription just beside the site of Dirk Hartog's landing. The beach is wonderful for a walk and a swim and for the adventurous, we can climb up the steep sandy goat track to the top of the bluff and enjoy the fantastic views of the lookout.

If time permits we can move the Reef Prince a few hundred meters further out to a reef system and try our luck at bottom fishing for Pink Snapper and other reef species.

We'll enjoy our chef's delights here then perhaps a drink or two before we depart at 8pm for an overnight steam.



Day 5: Red Bluff, Maude's Landing and Norwegian Bay

We arrive at Red Bluff at 6:30 am and enjoy sunrise as it comes up over the camping area and bathes the bluff in light and colour. We stay here for breakfast and watch the local surfers carving up one of the most iconic waves on the WA coastline.

We then continue north until 2pm to Maud's Landing in Coral Bay where we can have a snorkel on a spot called "The Lumps" or do a drift snorkel along the sloping coral walls of the main channel. The quality of the coral and diversity of the fish life – both large and small is outstanding.

At 4pm we continue for another 3.5 hours to Norwegian Bay where we arrive at 7:30pm for a late dinner in the calm conditions of the bay. We stay overnight in the bay for a well-earned rest stop.



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Day 6: Norwegian Bay to Exmouth

This morning go ashore to **Norwegian Bay** to view the old whaling station ruins. The station was constructed by a Norwegian Whaling company in 1912 and ran it until 1916 when it was purchased by an Australian company that ran it until 1929. It reopened again in 1949 but only ran until 1957. It was WA's first modern shore based station to be constructed. The longest wharf was 53m long. The remains make for an interesting walk around the site.

After the walk we steam 9 hours north to **Exmouth**. On the way we transit along the edge of the **Ningaloo Reef** and can even troll a lure. Before rounding the cape we pass the iconic Vlamingh Head Lighthouse (named after Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh), the Mildura shipwreck and the Harold E Holt Naval Communication Station with its 13 super tall towers that for many years were the tallest man-made structures in the Southern Hemisphere.

We generally arrive at Exmouth just as the sun is setting and pull alongside the commercial wharf and spend until midnight refueling Reef Prince.

There are lots of options for what to do. We can spend a full day the next day in Exmouth or simply re-fuel and leave.

Either way if the weather is great and no tours are run, then we may leave at midnight straight after re-fueling and head 4 hours to **Serrurier Island** – arriving before daybreak.



Day 7: Exmouth tours or Serrurier Island

Some options in **Exmouth** are Whale Shark swims, Exmouth scenic tour or paragliding with Birds Eye View Ningaloo.

Snorkeling with whale sharks is available only if the season has commenced. It is an amazing opportunity but expensive of course. We'll get you the latest group discount price closer to the time, but expect to pay around \$400 for the day.

An alternate option is a scenic town tour showing the best of Exmouth. It is around \$80 for 3 hrs. This tour has been suspended since the Covid-19 outbreak and we are unsure whether it will run during the 2023 season and onwards. We will know closer to the time.

Serrurier Island:

An early morning beach walk and swim on **Serrurier Island** or a fishing expedition for reef fish – the choice is yours. Serrurier Island offers some great beach combing too.

The snorkeling around the points of the island offers stunning coral and immense fish life.

In the late afternoon we depart this little island paradise and sail through the industrial islands of the Pilbara and numerous rig platforms on our way to the Montebello Islands.

We typically arrive early morning and anchor within the shelter of 174 beautiful little islands. This is the crew's favourite destination.



Days 8,9 &10: Explore the Montebello Islands

Three days is just enough time to give us a great taste of the Monties.

These islands were significant for pearling from the end of the 19th century until recent years when the farms were disassembled.

The **Montebello Islands** were the site of three nuclear weapons tests by the British military: one in 1952, and two in 1956. A bay on Trimouille Island was the site of Operation Hurricane, the first ever atomic weapon tested by the United Kingdom on 3 October 1952. In 1956 there were two further tests, on Alpha and Trimouille Islands.

Your Tour Director will tell you about the history and take you on tours of the blast sites and see the tonnes of infrastructure that was left behind such as recording instruments, bunkers, rail lines and even a large command centre.

Be it fishing, snorkeling, climbing to the peaks for stunning views or just strolling the perfect isolated beaches, the Monties are our playground for the next few days before we cruise further north to **Bedout Islands** – which takes approximately 22 hours.



Day 11: Arrive Bedout Island

Sometime late on Day 11 we will arrive at Bedout Island. Fishing, beach combing/walking, snorkelling and bird watching are highlights here. The island is an A-class nature reserve due to its immense bird life. It supports over 1,000 nesting pairs of brown boobies making it one of the largest colonies in Western Australia. It is also home to over 1,000 nesting pairs each of Common Noddies and Crested Terns, 500–1,000 Lesser Frigatebirds, 100-500 Masked Boobies, as well as many others. Many of these do not breed elsewhere in the Pilbara.



Day 12: Snorkel, Fish or enjoy great beach combing and bird watching

In the early morning you may wish to join a fishing expedition, beach comb the sandy bay or enjoy more amazing snorkeling at **Bedout Island**. Depending on the weather we will typically leave mid-morning for a 24 hour steam past eighty mile beach and onto Roebuck Bay & Broome.



Day 13: Arrive Broome

We've shared some amazing experiences together. We've made some great new friends. Today we disembark in **Broome** at around 11am. We will arrange transfers to your local hotel in Broome.



Please note: This itinerary is subject to change. The Captain and Tour Director will customize your cruise depending on weather, tidal conditions and your feedback from the tour itinerary talk with your Tour Director on the first day.

We promote an active cruise and to undertake some of the shore based excursions you will need to have a moderate level of fitness. You are however, quite welcome to enjoy the views from the vessel without going ashore. It's your cruise so you can do as little or as much as you would like

