

Australia's Great Barrier Reef: A dive and snorkel adventure

With Brad Climpson, Rich Pagen, and Mike Murphy

AUSTRALIA | 13 DAYS | JULY 31 – AUGUST 12, 2024

With optional post-trip extension:

The North Queensland Rainforest | August 11 – 18

Join us!



Brad Climpson

EXPEDITION LEADER & MARINE BIOLOGIST

Brad was born in Sydney, Australia and has lived for the last 25 years in North Queensland, on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef. With the reef serving as both his playground and laboratory, Brad enjoys sharing his knowledge of this complex reef system with others.

ORNITHOLOGIST, MARINE BIOLOGIST & SNORKEL MASTER

Rich's career as a biologist has involved an array of fascinating wildlife fieldwork, both on land and at sea. Through it all, exploration and sharing nature with others has been his central passion.



Rich Pagen



Mike Murphy

DIVE MASTER

Murf seems to have done it all. He spent 11 grueling years as a deep-sea commercial diver, then sailed the icy waters of Alaska and Antarctica and the emerald seas of the South Pacific. He's dived in almost every sea, including 8 years in the Arctic and Antarctic. His passion for diving is still going strong (although he now prefers warmer water).

Adventure highlights

- Discover the underwater wonders of the legendary Great Barrier Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Enjoy daily excursions to explore pristine reefs and islands far from the tourist track, including remote Osprey Reef.
- Come face-to-face with massive potato groupers at Cod Hole.
- Take nature walks on Lizard Island, keeping an eye out for Australian monitor lizards and a variety of seabirds.
- View fascinating Aboriginal art on remote Stanley Island.
- Join an optional post-voyage extension to explore some of Queensland's wildest places.

This trip will be led in the true spirit of adventure and exploration. Our plans are subject to change, depending on current weather and tide conditions to maximize our sightings and experiences on each day of the program.



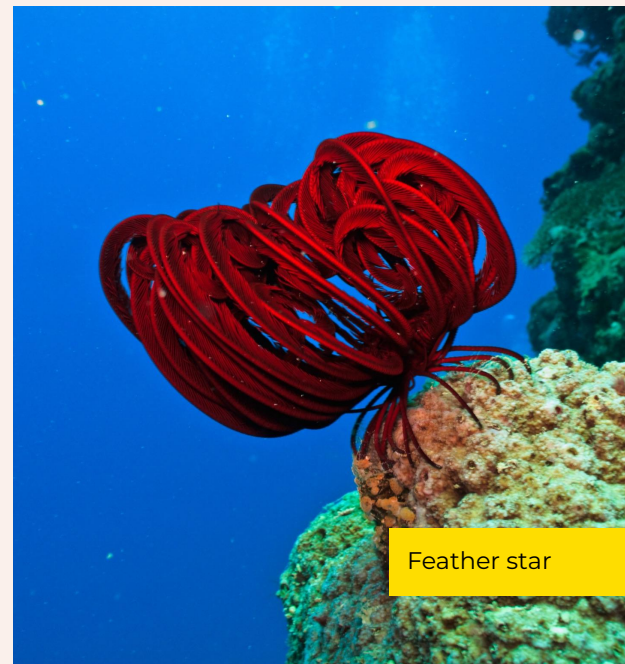
Great Barrier Reef diving



Bridled terns



Australian monitor lizard

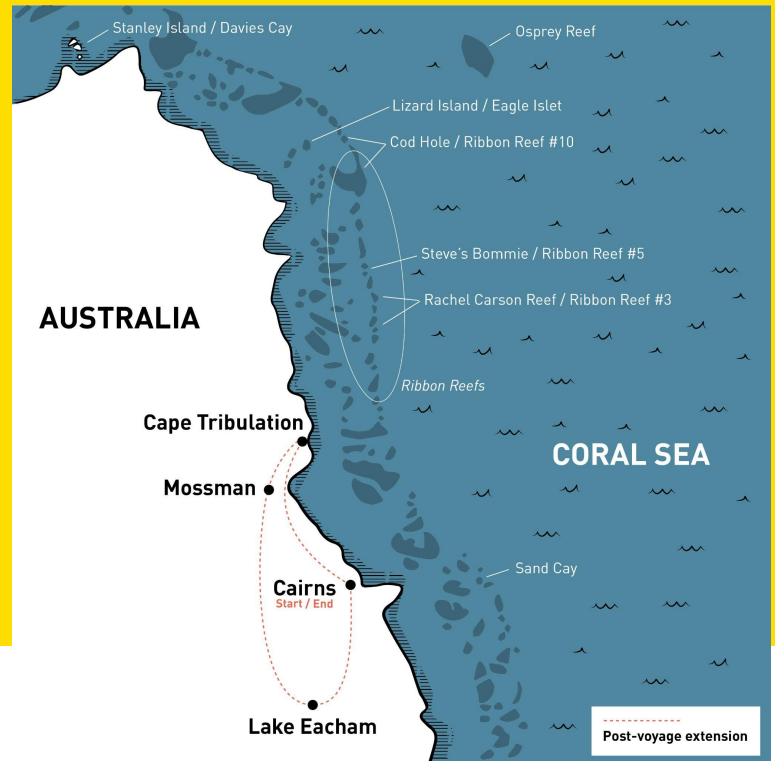


Feather star

Australia's Great Barrier Reef

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Great Barrier Reef makes up about 10 percent of the world's coral reef ecosystems and stretches over 14 degrees of latitude; from shallow estuarine areas to deep oceanic waters many miles from shore. Roughly the size of Italy, the Great Barrier Reef is one of the best known and most complex natural systems on Earth. The warm, clear waters of north Queensland teem with marine life and are home to the world's largest coral reef, making this a paradise for snorkelers and divers. Some 1,500 types of fish, 4,000 types of mollusks, 350 types of echinoderms, and over 600 types of coral, attract divers and snorkelers from around the world each year.



Itinerary

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31 2024

Cairns, Australia

Arrive in Cairns and transfer to our hotel, The Shangri-La The Marina, with the rest of the day at leisure. This evening, gather with fellow travelers and your expedition team for a briefing, followed by a welcome dinner.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1

Cairns / Embark Spirit of Freedom

Spend a relaxing morning at the hotel before transferring to the *Spirit of Freedom*, your home for 10 nights. After a chance to settle in, enjoy lunch as the ship cruises toward the Outer Great Barrier Reef for our first opportunity to look beneath the water's surface.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2

Rachel Carson Reef / Ribbon Reef #3

The Ribbon Reefs are long, thin strips of reef that form the outer edges of the Great Barrier Reef and lie on the edge of the continental shelf, an average of 30 to 60 miles away from the coast. Covered in colorful corals, these reefs attract a

plethora of marine life. We begin our underwater explorations at the well-protected Rachel Carson Reef, (named after the famous American conservationist). At Ribbon Reef #3 we will explore such sites as the sensational Temple of Doom and Flare Point.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3

Steve's Bommie / Ribbon Reef #5 / Lizard Island

Drop in for sunrise at Steve's Bommie, an isolated pinnacle which offers a wealth of macro life, such as nudibranchs, pipefish, anemonefish, mantis shrimps, and flame files shells, just to name a few. After lunch, explore Ribbon Reef #5 to discover a variety of healthy corals including brain, staghorn, boulder, and mushroom, as well as colorful soft corals. Emperor angelfish, blueline demoiselle, hexagon grouper, bird wrasse, yellowmargin triggerfish, and slingjaw wrasse are frequently spotted in this area. In the evening, cruise to Watson's Bay, Lizard Island for a sunset BBQ dinner on the top deck.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4

Lizard Island / Eagle Islet

After breakfast, dive or snorkel among legions of colorful tropical fish and check out the giant clam gardens near the beach. Other activities include walking along Lizard Island's powdery white sand beaches, or hiking up to Chinaman's Ridge to search for wildlife. In the afternoon, step ashore on Eagle Islet to observe a variety of seabirds.

MONDAY, AUGUST 5

Stanley Island / Davies Cay

Take a short walk to view several spectacular Aboriginal rock art sites on Stanley Island. Spend the afternoon at a nearby reef.

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6 & 7

Ribbon Reef #10 / Cod Hole

Spend two full days exploring the most northern of the Ribbon Reefs. While dive and snorkel sites depend on weather and sea conditions, we hope to come face-to-face with massive potato cod, which often swim right up to inspect those in the water with child-like curiosity. Other sites may include Wonder-wall, Pixie Pinnacle, Challenger Bay, Two Towers, Lighthouse Bommie, and the Snake Pit. If the current is right, we may also visit Dynamite Pass, a well-known as a channel for sharks to pass through.

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, AUGUST 8 & 9

Osprey Reef

Conditions permitting, venture to remote Osprey Reef, a large, submerged atoll with a shallow central lagoon. The most northerly and isolated of all the reefs in the Coral Sea, the almost vertical reef walls rise from a depth of over 3,000 feet and offer some of the best diving in the region. If weather and sea conditions do not allow for a visit to Osprey Reef, continue exploring along the protected Ribbon Reefs.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 10

Ribbon Reefs / Sand Cay

Continue to explore some of the sensational sites along the Ribbon Reefs. A second option for this day, in special weather conditions, is to head south from Osprey to Bougainville Reef, known for its unusual underwater landscape or caverns, and its partially submerged wreck. This evening, enjoy sunset cocktails and a farewell dinner on the beach of Sand Cay.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11

Cairns / Disembark

Disembark this morning and journey overland to the Atherton Tablelands, a fertile plateau with several stands of protected rainforest. On nature walks, search for a variety of wildlife among the giant trees, such as musky rat kangaroos, wallabies, wallaroos, and 12 endemic bird species. Along the pristine shores of Lake Barrine, you may spy eastern water dragons, bearded dragons, and saw-shell turtles or choose to take a ride along the Kuranda Scenic Railway, passing spectacular tropical forest, majestic mountains, cascading waterfalls, and dramatic gorges. Then visit the Kuranda Koala Gardens. Check in to the Shangri-La The Marina for dinner and overnight.

MONDAY, AUGUST 12

Cairns / Depart

Board your independent flight to the USA, arriving the same day.



Brown booby



Abundant reef life



Anemonefish



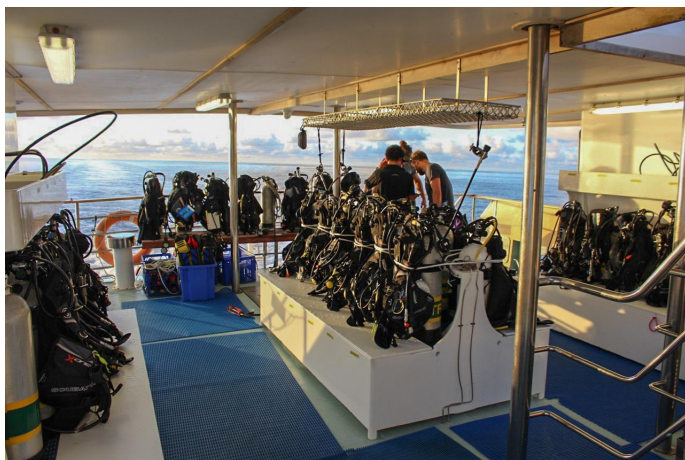
Green sea turtle

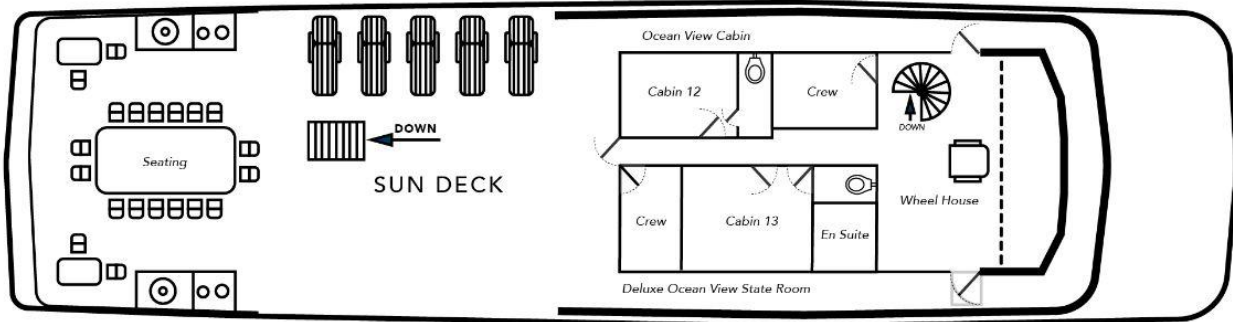


More than 600 species of coral

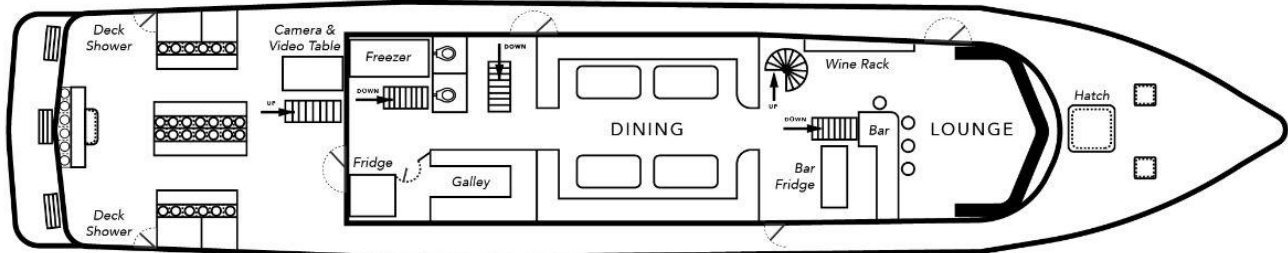
Onboard the Spirit of Freedom

The Spirit of Freedom was custom-built in 1992 and specifically designed for cruising the Coral Sea region. All 11 guest cabins are air-conditioned and include en suite facilities. Public areas include the dining room, forward lounge, and bar. The top deck is a great place to relax between your dive or snorkel excursions, with undercover and open areas containing timber tables, chairs, comfortable lounge seating, and sun loungers. The dive and snorkel deck offers individual stations for all guests, with dry storage above and a storage box under. For photographers, there is a camera washtub, a small camera table, and an air gun. Freshwater showers are located on deck, and towels are provided after each outing.

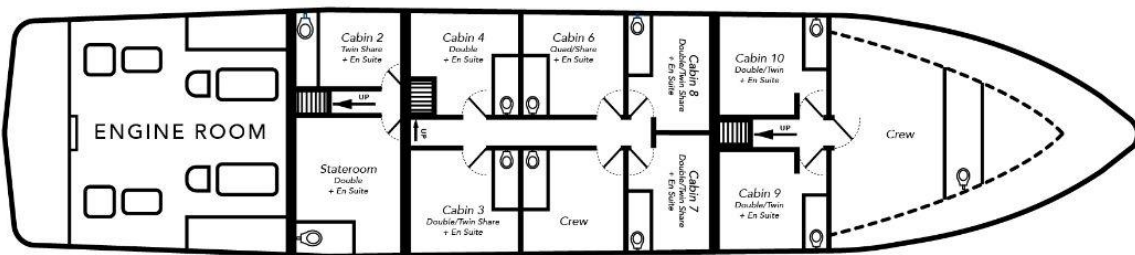




Bridge Deck



Main Deck



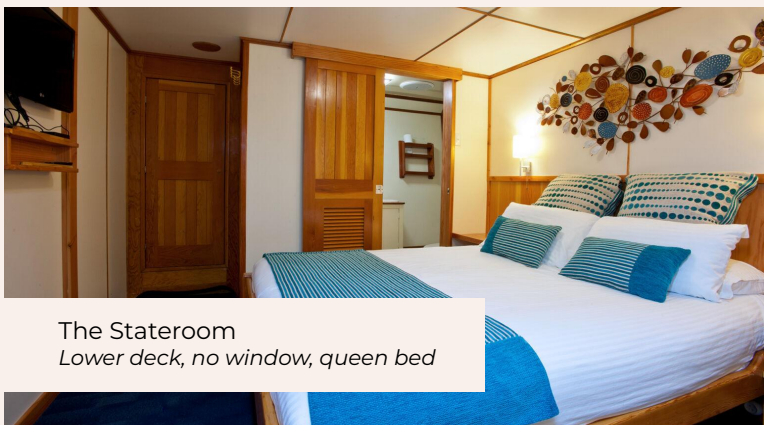
Below Deck & Accommodation



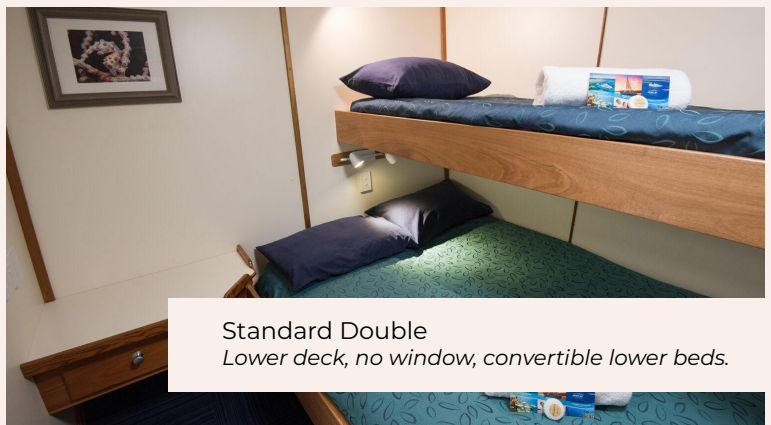
Ocean View Standard
Exterior cabin, double bed



Ocean View Deluxe
Exterior cabin, double bed



The Stateroom
Lower deck, no window, queen bed



Standard Double
Lower deck, no window, convertible lower beds.

The North Queensland Rainforest

POST-VOYAGE EXTENSION

With Rich Pagen & Brad Climpson

AUGUST 11 – 18, 2024

The second-largest commonwealth of Australia, Queensland is located in the northeast region of the continent. Discover this state's true wilderness, including Crater Lakes National Park, home to two volcanically formed lakes; and Warrigal Highland Rainforest Preserve, where you'll find rare, nocturnal wildlife including a variety of possums, swamp wallabies, and Lumholtz's tree-kangaroo. You'll also meet members of the Kuku Yalanji people, who are indigenous to Australia.



SUNDAY, AUGUST 11 2024

Cairns / Lake Eacham

Transfer to the Cairns Railway station for a trip on the Kuranda Train to the Atherton Tablelands. Then, visit Crater Lakes National Park and Fig Tree National Park before checking in to Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodge. Enjoy dinner in nearby Yungavurra, followed by an excursion in search of nocturnal wildlife.

MONDAY, AUGUST 12

Lake Eacham

This morning, drive into the Misty Mountains to visit a private highland rainforest preserve. After lunch at a working cattle station, drive through 'billabong' wetlands and savanna woodland to search for wildlife. Continue to the Ravenshoe Hotel for dinner, followed by a spotlighting excursion to search for rare, nocturnal wildlife.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13

Lake Eacham / Mossman

Rise early to search for wild platypus. Then depart overland, passing through Granite Gorge, an impressive landscape of boulders stretching for nearly a mile. Check into Daintree Eco Lodge. After settling in, walk with the traditional owners of this land, the Kuku Yalanji people.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14

Mossman

Today, depart on a Daintree River cruise followed by lunch in Mossman Gorge. Then, set off on a Ngadiku Dream Walk with a member of the Kuku Yalanji People. Return to the Daintree Eco Lodge for dinner and overnight.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15

Mossman / Cape Tribulation

After breakfast head for the Daintree River and cross via cable ferry where we'll travel through the lowland rainforest. Talk a walk on Maardja Boardwalk in lowland swamp forests and mangroves before an afternoon visit to the Fan Palm Forest. Check in to the Daintree Heritage Lodge for dinner and overnight.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16

Cape Tribulation

Today, explore the Coopers Creek Wilderness and lowland swamp forests of the Greater Daintree National Park. Take an afternoon mangrove cruise around the Cooper Creek estuary. Return to the lodge for dinner and overnight.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17

Cape Tribulation / Cairns

Depart Daintree National Park and return to Cairns via the scenic Captain Cook Highway. Stop at the Cattana Wetlands and Flecker Botanical Gardens before continuing to the Shangri-La Hotel Cairns for dinner and overnight.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18

Cairns / Depart

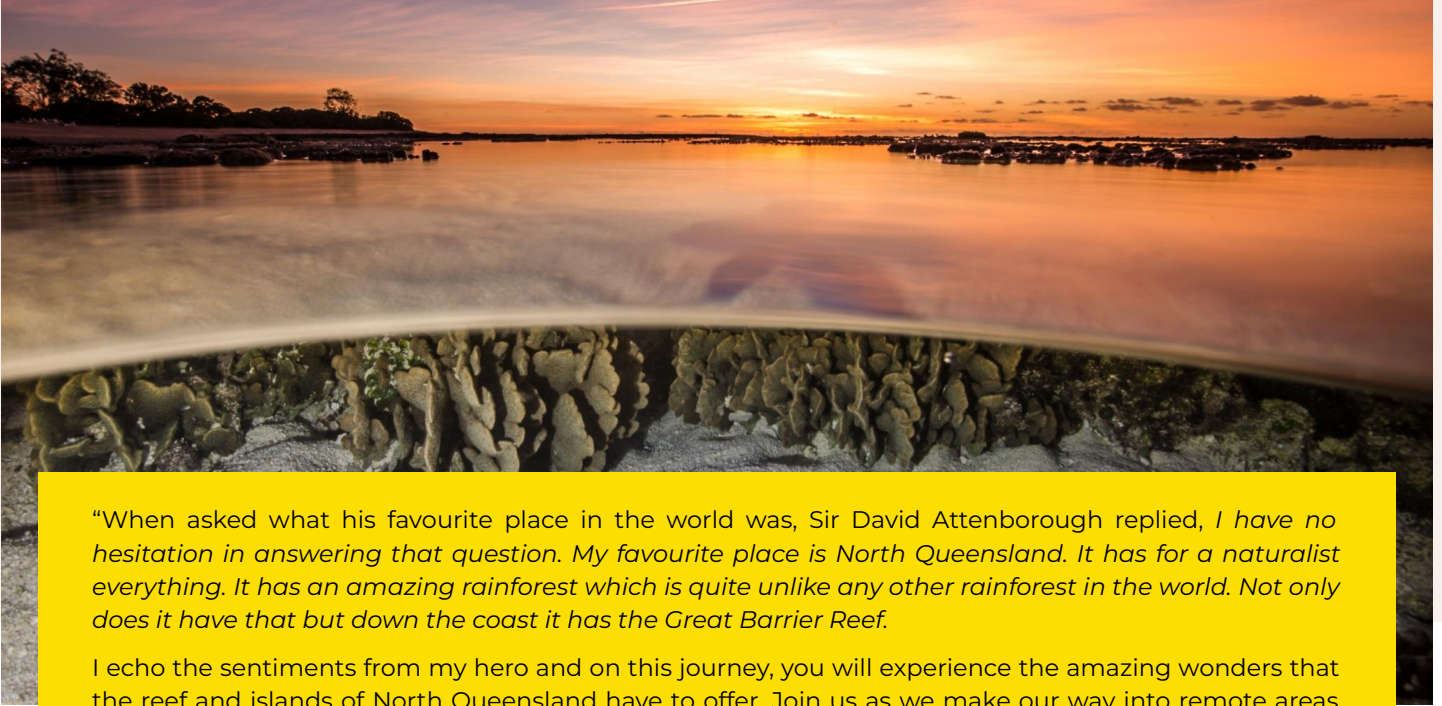
Board your independent homeward flight.

PRICE –

\$6,490 per person

add \$990 for a single room

Why we love this trip



"When asked what his favourite place in the world was, Sir David Attenborough replied, *I have no hesitation in answering that question. My favourite place is North Queensland. It has for a naturalist everything. It has an amazing rainforest which is quite unlike any other rainforest in the world. Not only does it have that but down the coast it has the Great Barrier Reef.*

I echo the sentiments from my hero and on this journey, you will experience the amazing wonders that the reef and islands of North Queensland have to offer. Join us as we make our way into remote areas that are only accessible on expeditions such as this. Spectacular reef systems teeming with life and ancient granite islands steeped in traditional history. This trip is a visual and visceral feast for those yearning to explore remote, unchanged lands and seas. I hope you'll join us."

-Brad Climpson

PRICE

Ocean View Deluxe

\$14,990 per person

Ocean View Standard

\$13,790 per person

The Stateroom

\$12,690 per person

Standard Double

\$11,490 per person

INCLUSIONS

- 2 nights at The Shangri-La The Marina in Cairns
- 10 nights on board the *Spirit of Freedom*
- All meals plus non-alcoholic beverages with lunch and dinner
- All excursions, transportation, and local guides
- Park fees, taxes, and permits
- Gratuities
- Arrival and departure transfers

Dive Package = \$450 per diver (rental gear & nitrox excluded). Please inquire for more details.

Group size: 20 travelers

Due to limited capacity, single rates are not available for this trip. Please inquire for more details.



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