

and environmentally conscious shark diving. I'm talking about the impact that a shark dive can have on a 'regular Joe' client. Effectively transforming them from someone who is motivated by fear and the opportunity to face a "vicious man-eater", to a person who has the deepest admiration and respect for sharks."

"This transformation can occur in a matter of minutes when a shark majestically glides past the human diver. The shark does not try to attack, it may look, it may circle, but the interest is little more than curiosity. What is apparent is that the human is witnessing one of nature's true masterpieces, a body type and structure that has successfully swum the world's oceans for over 400 million years and counting. Adding to this experience is the passion and knowledge of shark diving guides which is passed on with the fervour of a true shark nut."

South Africa has its fair share of passionate and charismatic shark diving guides. Well-known names such as Mark Addison, Andre Hartman; Stephen Swanson; Steve Benjamin; Chris Fallows and many others passionately -some may say- rantingly- disseminate information on the truth about sharks, rather than the hype. It's impossible for shark divers to walk away without a vastly altered image of one of nature's most misunderstood animals. One advantage of having your clients on a boat is that you do have a captive audience.

Unique Shark Route

It was through Ryan's work with South Africa's shark divers that the idea of a 'Shark Route' evolved. Ryan started devising a route that could take travellers the length of South Africa and much of Mozambique to experience top shark dives with passionate and knowledgeable dive guides.

South Africa has the world's most respected shark scientists and conservationists, at almost every shark diving location is a PhD student ploughing away on a shark thesis or a shark conservationist who has been waging a war with limited resources against the unsustainable exploitation of sharks.

Ryan feels that the knowledge possessed by these passionate people is the information needed to ensure the future conservation of sharks. These are the people who know the threats to the regions sharks; whether the populations are declining or increasing; what are the critical habitats for sharks and how sharks and humans can co-exist together. Collectively these people possess a huge wealth of untapped knowledge that would fascinate any shark enthusiast for hours upon end. **W**



ADVENTURE of a lifetime

Out of this knowledge the Shark Route was launched in 2011. It's a road trip of Southern Africa's top shark dives that clients can enjoy without having to make any arrangements themselves. At each stopover clients can enjoy a unique dive or encounter with sharks, and each evening they enjoy a meal, as one of the most knowledgeable experts share stories of their research, experiences, and adventures derived from a lifetime spent interacting with, and fighting for the protection of sharks.

The total route takes in two countries; 4 weeks; 14 towns; 20 shark species and 26 shark dives.

The route is divided into 3 zones and clients can decide to visit just one zone if time constraints do not permit them a full month. The three zones are:

Zone 1- Cape Town to Port Elizabeth

Zone 2- Port Elizabeth to Durban

Zone 3- Durban to Inhambane

There is a premier and an economy category.

- The price for the three zones on the premier options is R115 000 and includes absolutely everything in luxury for the full month including all luxury accommodation, meals, transport, land adventures. One zone on premier is R40 000. Two zones on premier is R80 000.
- The economy package takes in all the same dives but the accommodation is basic and is not catered. The 3 zone price on economy is R55 000; 2 zones R40 000 and one zone is R20 000.
- There's a range of one week tours which focus on specific areas from R15 000- to R20 000.

Each person who takes part will leave enriched and changed by all the interaction with sharks and the experts who host them. Whilst shark diving will always evoke passion both positive and negative, the reality is that responsible shark diving is one of the most powerful tools available to ensure that sharks may stay in the waters where they belong.

For bookings and more information: www.shark-route.com or email j.fridmond@oceans-initiative.com