AUSTRALIA

Home

The Commonwealth of Australia is the largest island of Oceania. It consists of mainland Australia, Tasmania and some smaller islands. It is the sixth-largest country in the whole world and has the sixth-longest coastline of the world. Australia is surrounded by 35.877km/22.293mi of water, part of it the Indian and the Pacific Ocean, the Timor Sea, Arafura Sea, Coral Sea and Tasman Sea.

Australia is home to the most famous reef of the world: The Great Barrier Reef! Because of its fame, it attracts lots of tourists: snorkelers, divers, day boats and liveaboards… It is very busy. In the GBR, you can also find one of the most famous wrecks of the world: the SS Yongala, a passenger and freight steamer that sunk in 1911.  
If you want to have calmer dives with lesser people, you can go and visit Ningaloo Reef instead. It is on the opposite site, in Western Australia, while the GBR is in the East. So, choose a direction!

GBR

The Great Barrier Reef is located in the Coral Sea, Queensland, Eastern Australia. It is the largest coral reef system of the world. It consists of 2.900 separate reefs and 940 islands. The whole reef is around 2.300km/1.400mi long.

A big part of the reef is protected by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and was selected in 1981 as UNESCO World Heritage Site. Unfortunately, lately there are big environmental pressures on the reef. There is land-based runoff from farms, pollution from mines, Crown-Of-Thorns Starfish try to take over the reef and there is a massive coral bleaching going on due to climate change. It is said the reef lost half of its corals since 1985.  
The Queensland government tries to protect the reef and installed the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. They try to do as much as they can, but coral bleaching won’t be stopped in a day.

The Reef has a big marine biodiversity. There are whales and dolphins, different types of turtles, dugongs, crocodiles, heaps of sharks, rays, seahorses and over 1.500 types of reef fish…. Some species are endemic to the island the live near to. Sadly enough, these species became vulnerable and endangered.

Diving the Great Barrier Reef, you can do on day trips from Cairns, or, as the GBR is so big, go on a liveaboard and try to see as much as possible. You can dive the reef the whole year round, but most people prefer to go in between July and December. After this, there will be more rain. Remember Australia is on the southern hemisphere so the seasons switch. Water temperatures are between 23C/73F in winter and 30C/86F in summer. The Minke Whale season runs from June to August and the Humpback Whale season from August till November. Coral spawning occurs in October and November.  
Currents and visibility depend on where you are diving. The dive spots further away, so for liveaboards, have better vis but can also have stronger currents.