



Another treat is the spinner dolphins who seem to recognise the sound of the dive boat's engine and come over to play in its bow wave, usually hanging around long enough for divers to grab a mask and snorkel and join them in the water.

REMARKABLE CAVES

Christmas Island has its share of caves, and some of these weave through the volcanic rock coming out into the ocean below the waterline.

One of the most remarkable is Thundercliff Cave, which is a completely submerged and is deemed to be a freshwater cave only accessible to experienced scuba divers with good torch light. It's reached by descending to 9m and swimming through the 6m mouth of the cave. Once inside, the span of the opening narrows to around 3m and masses of cave sweepers create a remarkable swim-through.

A SPECTACULAR SHOW

Surfacing within the air-filled cavern, stalagmites and stalactites cast silhouettes on the walls. A rocky platform serves as a handy exit point so that divers may remove their gear and walk through the underground cave, following a brackish water stream. After approximately 50m, there's a pool of water and, turning off the torchlight, a milky way of light is revealed within its depths. Lantern fish create a spectacular light show that makes it appear as if the night sky has been reflected upside down.

Returning to the cave entrance, the sun's rays can be seen filtering through the iridescent blue of the Indian Ocean, framed by the cave sweepers.

Experiences like this help make dives at

Christmas Island among the most memorable. Two full service dive centres offer double boat dives and shore dives daily, and the full gamut of training courses and gear hire.

GETTING THERE

Getting there is easy: a Garuda Charter operates weekly flights from Jakarta direct to Christmas Island.

Maldives' First PADI-Certified Free Diving Centre

The Maldives attracts travellers from around the world with a visual spectacle unlike anywhere else. Above the waterline and beneath the waves, unbelievable worlds await exploration. Anantara opens the door to new encounters with

a pioneering aquatic experience in a nation where the total area is 99.99% water. Available to guests at Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort and Naladhu Maldives, Aquafanatics is the first PADI-certified free diving centre in the island nation.

A LIBERATING SPORT

A multitude of water sports from scuba diving to surfing and deep-sea fishing to sailing connect visitors to the glistening lure of the Indian Ocean. As a country first, the free diving centre offers another dimension to ocean-based adventures on the islands.

The less explored activity of free diving strips many restraints attached with traditional scuba diving. A truly liberating activity, it relies on the diver to hold their breath, leaving them free to move unhindered through the translucent Maldivian waters.

DISCOVERING MORE

With no oxygen tank bubbles to distort vision, the vivid colouration of coral life glows brighter than ever. Devoid of heavy equipment, guests move at will alongside inquisitive fish, developing a sense of belonging. With every dive, guests acquire the ability to stay below a little longer, discovering more on each descent.

Free diving is entwined with the cultural heritage of the islands in the Indian Ocean. Since ancient times locals have harvested sponges and clasped gleaming pearls from beneath the waves. Anantara's professional free diving instructor, Mari Kagaya, reveals a peaceful, intrinsic underwater encounter. "The Maldives provide the pinnacle in free diving adventure," she explains. "Escaping the trappings of scuba gear, our