

Diving the Yongala with Yongala Dive of Alva Beach

By Howard Warren
Subaqua Photographics

The Yongala is coming up for its one hundredth anniversary of its tragic loss in 1911 dubbed Townsville's titanic this once impressive addition to the Adelaide shipping company was lost with all passengers and crew in a category 5 cyclone on March 23rd of that year. I went to dive it all over again. This time I went with Yongala Dive who operate out of Alva Beach near Ayr.

The service this dive shop offers is as impressive as the dive itself.

The Yongala wreck is recognized as being one of the top 10 dives in the world and after all the dives I have done on the wreck I still come away after a dive trip stunned that any dive site can have such an impressive amount of fish and coral life that changes every time you dive it. On any dive day some new fish or ray takes the place of what was in that exact spot yesterday. One large potato cod there one dive, gone the next take his image or you miss out. The wreck has changed a bit since my last trip but its all for the better.

My dive buddy became my model for the days diving and was always in a perfect position. Paddy is the representative for Poseidon dive equipment in Britain and we dropped down to the stern for a few photos.

The huge corals made him stand out and we moved along the top of the wreck taking more photos as he changed position. Its very hard to get images of single fish as there are too many



whole schools of most reef fish many coral fish, the odd nemo, large trevelly, coral trout and cod, four lined scnapper lots of different rays and Queensland grouper. Several species of sea turtles are found here too.

Lots of sea snakes fossic across the wreck looking for food and large batfish cruise up and down the hull.

After the dive we changed tanks re loaded the cameras yes I still shoot film underwater and waited for surface interval to pass grabbing cold drinks. Dive 2 was a bit different this time we went to the bow first and made our way back along the deck taking more pics on the ships mast and foredeck.



The crew served us well with a dive and boat brief. The Yongala Dive crew ensured that everyone was looked after with personal service. The staff at the dive shop take great pride in customer service.

Guests are shown the lodge which has several rooms all with air conditioning a large dining room TV room/ lounge and a fully equipped kitchen. A briefing on the wreck follows breakfast. We piled into cars and were driven to the beach a few photos later and the boat is launched and true to their statement it is only 30 mins to the dive site. The dive boat is 10 meters in length and can charter 12 divers and 4 crew featuring all modern safety equipment with dive instructors and dive guides available. The Dive shop operates dives 7 days a week weather permitting.

The Yongala Dive shop is only 15 minutes from Ayr and 1 hour south of Townsville

Or 2 hours north of Airlie Beach. For caravan travelers there is a caravan park nearby.

You can google the location on GPS and find the shop easily.

The Yongala Dive shop is owned by Heather and staffed by her crew. They go the extra mile to ensure you get the best Yongala experience. After the dive and arriving back at the shop a BBQ lunch is served with all the trimmings.

The best time to dive the wreck is around Sept- Dec. During winter the odd whale cruises by.

Heather's dive shop also offers training under the PADI banner, including nitrox and specialty courses. Dive equipment sales, cold drinks some basic food supplies and frozen meals towel hire and sunscreen. Tee shirts, souvenirs are for sale too. The dive lodge is often described by the divers as a home away from home with TV room, polished floors, A few minutes walk from the beach, fully equipped kitchen, bathrooms and several dorm rooms to ensure everyone gets a good nights sleep. The dive lodge can accommodate 12 divers in comfort. Most sit up talking about their diving adventures and sinking a few beers at night.

Heather works with the local tourist region to promote the area there will be an event day BBQ when the anniversary falls for the 100th year the Yongala was lost.

To dive or organize dives with Heather and her crew call 07 4783 1519
E mail info@yongaladive.com.au
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