

MEET YOUR FREEDIVE NINGALOO INSTRUCTOR - JOSH STEPHENSON

Who are you and how did you get into freediving?

Hi. My name is Josh and I will be your freediving Instructor here in Coral Bay. I first started freediving whilst living on a small island in Thailand where I was working as a scuba diving instructor for a few years. Although already an avid ocean explorer, freediving captured my imagination immediately and soon became my focus over scuba. I soon realised that our bodies are capable of exploring and discovering the oceans secrets without the need for heavy and expensive equipment; 'you' are all the equipment you need.



It's hard to compare scuba to freediving because they are so different. Freediving is an experience within itself, regardless of where you are or what you see. My favourite thing about freediving is becoming part of the marine environment, and not just a noisy visitor. James Nestor explains this perfectly in his book 'Deep' -

"Scuba diving in the ocean is like going birdwatching with a leaf blower. You are not only disruptive, but you are a menace to everything around you. If you want to connect with animals and study life in the ocean, free diving is the only way to go."

What brought you to Coral Bay?

There are many things that currently make this my favourite place on the planet, but first and foremost is the UNBELIEVABLE marine life and the unparalleled access to that marine life. Within 5 minutes of waking up, you can snorkel the densest coral garden I've seen anywhere in the world. Within 10 minutes you can be on a boat, and 10 minutes later you have a likely chance of seeing (*clears throat*); dolphins, turtles, sting rays, manta rays, eagle rays, dugongs, reef sharks, leopard sharks, whale sharks, minke whales, humpback whales, and EVEN ORCAS! The Ningaloo Reef has incredible, diverse populations of marine mega fauna and it's right on our doorstep here in Coral Bay.



What was your experience prior to Freediving?



I grew up in a landlocked town in the UK which had little aquatic opportunity and even less marine life. Fortunately, it did have a pool. My first memory of that swimming pool was being screamed at by the swim teacher after lying on the bottom holding my breath until she had to jump in for fear I'd drowned. I was fine, but it was clear to my parents they had a water baby leading us to holiday on the coast as much as possible growing up.

Fast forward 20 years and a BSc Degree in Psychology, I left the UK to pursue a water-based career and landed in Thailand with more dreams in my head than dollars in my pocket.

Favourite marine life?

It's impossible to pick a favourite, but incredible animals you may not have heard of yet and should look up: Flying Gurnard, Blue Dragon Nudibranch, Leopard Sharks.

Special Power?

I can levitate 98% of my body apart from my tip toes.

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