



TRIP OVERVIEW

Discover the remote islands, colourful reefs and abundant marine life of Egypt's breathtaking Red Sea on this spectacular liveboard swimming holiday. Based on board the M/Y Contessa Mia motor yacht, this trip gives you the chance to explore some of the Red Sea's most remote and isolated destinations from a truly unique perspective.

The Egyptian Red Sea is a world-renowned open water destination which is located just a short flight from Europe's main international airports. Offering outstanding water clarity, year-round sunshine and an incredible variety of marine life, it is the perfect location to discover the magic that lives beneath the water's surface.

The Red Sea is defined by the sheer volume of colourful coral and marine life which exists around the islands and reefs that make up this corner of the world. Divers and snorkelers from across the globe have long travelled to this region to take in more than 200 types of hard and soft coral and a stunning range of fish species, sponges and crustaceans. Combining this marine life with the spectacular underwater vistas, which include caves, drop-offs and countless shipwrecks, makes this a unique and unforgettable swimming destination.

On top of the organised swims which are included in the trip itinerary, there is also plenty of time to take part in additional activities, such as snorkelling and scuba diving, over the course of the trip.

WHO IS THIS TRIP FOR?

This trip is designed for swimmers who enjoy exploring islands, reefs and marine life and are looking for a little spring sunshine. Swimmers should have a basic understanding of open water swimming and be capable of completing the average daily swim distance of around 4 km (split over a minimum of two swims) prior to the start of the trip.

LOCATION SUMMARIES

Ras Mohammed National Park

Situated at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, Ras Mohammed literally means 'Mohammed's Head', and it is said that the name derives from the side view of the headland's cliff, which resembles the features of Prophet Mohammed, who was believed to have visited the area in the 7th century. Its location at the juncture of the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba, has resulted in a spectacular array of diverse coral reefs, impressive sea walls and abundant marine life.

Strait of Gubal

This body of water separates the mainland part of northern Egypt from the Sinai Peninsula. Known for its beautiful islands and colourful reefs, the shallow strait is also home to some of the Red Sea's most famous shipwrecks, which are often visible from the water's surface.



Hurghada

Hurghada is our starting and finishing point for this trip and benefits from excellent transport links to a wide range of international destinations. It is ideally located close to some of the best swimming spots in the Red Sea, which helps to limit travel time at the start and end of your trip.

TRIP SCHEDULE

Start Point	M/Y Contessa Mia, New Hurghada Marina www.seaserpentfleet.com
Start Time	17:00 on Day 1
Finish Point	M/Y Contessa Mia, New Hurghada Marina
Finish Time	11:00 on Day 8

Please note that the below daily itineraries are an example of the swims that may take place during the course of your trip, however, actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions. Your SwimTrek guides and local boat pilot will determine the most suitable swim locations each day and will communicate the plan with all guests as soon as possible.

Day 1

Upon arrival at Hurghada International Airport, you will be met by one of our local representatives who will assist you through the immigration process before transferring you to your home for the week on board the M/Y Contessa Mia. If you are arriving in Egypt early, you can meet your SwimTrek group on the boat, which is conveniently moored at the New Hurghada Marina, at 17:00. Once everyone is on board, we hold a welcome meeting and safety briefing in which we will outline our plans for the week ahead. Afterwards, we sit down to our first group dinner, which will be prepared by our very own onboard chef.

Day 2

For our first swim we head to Sha'ab el Erg, a horseshoe shaped reef, with plenty of sea life including blue spotted rays and Napoleon wrasse. We carry out a swim along the reef's drop off. This is a fantastic first swim of the week.

After lunch on board, we head to Sha'ab Onghosh Reef, which is one of the reefs that surround Shadwan Island. The island is situated near a geological fault line which was at the epicentre of the 1969 earthquake which reshaped the islands and surrounding reefs. We carry out a shallow reef swim which offers varied underwater flora and fauna.

Day 3

The Siyul Islands, where we spend our morning, feature some of the most remote swimming locations that you will experience on this trip. Blue spotted rays and turtles can often be seen in this area. With currents often assisting with this reef swim, you'll be free to leisurely swim along whilst marvelling at the flora and fauna below.



The afternoon swim is along the coast of Small Gubal island with its tall lighthouse, a constant marker during our journey. The combination of desert sands fringed with turquoise reef make for a swim of contrasts. The drop off here falls away sharply adding to the sense of remoteness.

After the day's swimming we anchor just off the neighbouring Big Gubal Island, where the striking peak of Shadwan Island dominates the view.

Day 4

This morning we swim directly from the anchorage and follow the reef anti-clockwise around the southern section of Big Gubal Island. Our destination is the wreck of the British steamship Ulysses which sank in 1887. This swim features a multitude of Red Sea fish, such as antheas, bannerfish and hordes of butterflyfish which drift along. The coral reef here is also impressive with layer upon layer of stone corals, acropora table coral and raspberry coral.

Once everyone is on board we head across the Straits of Gubal towards the Sinai Peninsula. Once we are anchored up, we have lunch followed by time to rest and relax. Later in the afternoon, we have the opportunity to swim around the barely submerged reef at Shag Rock. The wreck of the Sarah H is a bonus for swimmers as it sits just beneath the water's surface. Dolphins are known also known to proliferate in this area.

Day 5

This morning features one of the trip's longest swims as we swim from the lighthouse at Beacon Rock down the reef of the same name to a naturally occurring crack which splits this reef into two. It's an excellent swim location offering dense and diverse coral growth and a host of reef fish species. Both stony and soft corals abound in this area, while the wreck of the SS Dunraven, which sank in 1876, lies on the seafloor beneath us.

After the morning's swim we head closer to the Sinai Peninsula and moor up at the unique site of the 7 Pinnacles, which are seven near perfectly circular reef heads. It's a unique swim for SwimTrek as instead of island hopping we actually reef hop between all of these miniature reefs. The swim is an interesting test of navigation for the swimmer but well worth it as each reef head is different from the last.

Day 6

After an early morning sail, we arrive at the Ras Mohammed National Park. The waters here are considered the jewel in the crown of the Red Sea. The National Park is characterised by vertical overhangs of over 100m deep. Yolanda Reef and Eel Gardens offer exceptional coastal swims, while most, if not all, of the Red Sea's 1,000 species of fish can be seen in the park's waters, including sought-after pelagics, such as manta rays and whale sharks.

Following lunch on board the boat, we go back across the Gulf of Gubal and arrive at Sha'ab Abu Nuhas; a triangular reef which sits northwest of Shadwan Island. The reef contains at least seven shipwrecks, some of which you can see from the surface, making it an ideal location for swimmers. This swim features a number of swim throughs as well.



Day 7

Today we swim in the western section of Sha'ab el Erg Reef. There is an abundance of marine fauna to view around these islands including wonderful fan corals.

After lunch, you have a chance to relax on board M/Y Contessa Mia as we head to the isolated Sha'ab Rur um Gamar reef, formed by an underwater mountain. On the reef's southeastern side, there is a very steep wall where Eagle Rays are known to congregate. You may be lucky enough to come across coral heads and giant clams. Once all are onboard we head back by boat towards the African mainland and our finish point in Hurghada. As we are moored in the local Marina, there is an opportunity to head ashore this evening if you wish.

Day 8

After our final breakfast on board the M/Y Contessa Mia, we all say our goodbyes at the end of an unforgettable SwimTrek adventure. Once we leave the vessel, you can be transferred to either Hurghada Airport or a local hotel.

TRIP INFORMATION

Equipment Checklist

In addition to your daily non-swimming clothes, we also recommend that you bring the following items:

✓	ITEM	✓	ITEM
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Costume (x 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small Daypack
<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming Goggles (x 2)*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rash Vest
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sun Hat and Sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweater / Fleece
<input type="checkbox"/>	Waterproof Sun Cream (Factor 30+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aqua Shoes / Sandals
<input type="checkbox"/>	Towel**		

*Try to bring one clear lens and one tinted lens for different light conditions.

**A towel will be provided on board, however, please do feel free to bring your own along if preferred. Please note that SwimTrek will supply swim hats and provide water and electrolyte drinks in shared water bottles on your safety boat. If you prefer to use your own drink bottle, please feel free to bring one along. If you would like to use a wetsuit, rash vest or fins during your swims, please ensure that you bring these with you.

Suncare

The Red Sea has a dry desert climate and the sun can be extremely strong, so please ensure you take the necessary steps to ensure you are well protected. High factor, waterproof sun cream, long sleeved clothing and rash vests, leggings, sunglasses and a good sun hat are all strongly recommended.



Swimming Distances

SWIM*	DISTANCE	SWIM*	DISTANCE
Sha'ab el Erg - Dolphin Reef	2½km	Sha'ab Onghosh	2km
Siyul Island Coastal	2km	Small Gubal Island	3km
Big Gubal-Ulysses	2½km	Shag Rock (Ras Mohamed)	1½km
Beacon Rock Lighthouse	4km	7 Pinnacles	1½km
Yolanda Reef (Ras Mohamed)	3km	Sha'ab Abu Nuhas	2km
Sha'ab el Erg West	2km	Sha'ab Rur um Gamar	2km

*Please note that these swims are an example of the what may take place during the course of your trip and should be used as a guide only. Actual swim locations and distances will vary according to local weather and sea conditions.

Swimming Conditions

Swimming in the sea is a fantastic experience but you need to be aware that marine life is abundant in the coral waters of the Red Sea. Stonefish, scorpionfish, rays, jellyfish, sea urchins and coral could be present during the swims. In all cases we will work on reducing your contact with these creatures, however, if you suffer from anaphylaxis, please consult the office prior to booking.

Temperatures

MONTH	WATER TEMPERATURE*	AIR TEMPERATURE*
March	21-23°C / 70-73°F	24-26°C / 75-79°F
April	22-24°C / 72-75°F	28-30°C / 82-86°F
May	23-25°C / 73-77°F	32-34°C / 90-93°F
December	23-25°C / 73-77°F	22-24°C / 72-75°F

*Please note that these temperatures are indicative and should be used as a guide only. The water temperatures in early March can feel colder than indicated due to the mixing of thermoclines and water, which reduces the surface water temperature. The Red Sea has a dry desert climate and is rarely humid.

Weather Caveat

For safety reasons, we rely on decent weather conditions when carrying out our swims. As a consequence, open water swimming holidays require a certain degree of on-trip flexibility which can result in changes to the planned itinerary. These changes often add a touch of uniqueness to your trip and will be communicated to you by your SwimTrek guides as quickly as possible.

Group Size and Boat Support

This trip has a maximum group size of 16. The trip will be split into a maximum of two groups based on speed, each of which is accompanied by own safety support vessel/escort.

Boat support on this trip includes two inflatable boats piloted by your SwimTrek guides and local boat crew. Please note that this boat support is subject to change without notice and cannot be guaranteed.



GETTING THERE

Our liveboard boat, the M/Y Contessa Mia, sails from Hurghada New Marina. Direct flights into Hurghada are available from various European destinations. If you are travelling from outside Europe, a connecting flight may be required in order to reach Hurghada.

Flights to Hurghada

To search for available flights into Hurghada International Airport, we suggest that you use www.skyscanner.net. We also recommend that you confirm your flights and other travel arrangements as early as possible in order to avoid price rises and availability issues.

Visa/Arrival Information

Guests who arrive on Day 1 of the trip will be met by one of our local representatives who will assist you through the immigration process. Please note that the US\$25 visa fee is included in trip price for guests who arrive on Day 1 only and will be arranged by our local representative.

If you arrive prior to Day 1 of your SwimTrek trip, you will need to make your own arrival arrangements, including purchasing a tourist visa (if available on arrival for your nationality) for \$US25 from one of the kiosks which are located prior to passing through immigration. For further information about visas, please see the 'Passports and Visas' section below. You will also need to make your own transfer arrangements to your accommodation. Some hotels may offer airport transfers, so we recommend that you enquire about this when making your booking. If a transfer service is not offered from your hotel, taxis are readily available at the airport at all times.

Transfer from Hurghada Airport/Local Hotel to Hurghada New Marina

Transfers from either Hurghada Airport or a local hotel to Hurghada New Marina on Day 1 of your trip are included in the trip price for all guests.

Guests who arrive in Hurghada on Day 1 of the trip will be transferred by one of our local representatives directly to Hurghada New Marina, where our boat, M/Y Contessa Mia, will be moored. If you arrive at the marina prior to the trip start time of 17:00, you will be able to leave your bags on board the boat or in our partner's marina office while you spend some time exploring the local area prior to meeting your guides and fellow guests.

For guests who arrive in Hurghada prior to Day 1, you will be collected from your accommodation and transferred to Hurghada New Marina on Day 1 of your trip. The exact time of your transfer will be emailed to you 24-48 hours prior to Day 1.

IMPORTANT: All guests must provide the SwimTrek office with their arrival details, including flight number and arrival time, as well as any pre-trip accommodation plans, at least two weeks prior to the start of their trip, so that we can arrange the necessary transfers.

Return Transfers

Return transfers from Hurghada New Marina to the airport or a local hotel are also included in the trip price. Please note that these transfers are available on the morning of Day 8 or your trip and will be arranged in location in order to group guests together, where applicable.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Accommodation

Our accommodation over the course of your trip is on board the motor yacht M/Y Contessa Mia, which consists of eleven air conditioned cabins. The 34-metre liveaboard features large deck areas and a comfortable lounge area to relax in at the end of each swim.

The M/Y Contessa Mia features ten twin cabins and one double cabin available on board our vessel. The eight twin cabins on the lower deck all have portholes, whilst the two twin cabins and one double cabin on the main deck include large picture windows.

All cabins are offered on a twin/double or single occupancy basis. The limited number of single supplement rooms can be reserved during the booking process, subject to availability.

IMPORTANT: For the trip running from 15 - 22 December 2018, the final night of your trip may be spent at a 4-star hotel in Hurghada, subject to local arrangements.

Meals

All breakfasts, lunches and dinners on your trip are included as part of your package and are prepared on board the M/Y Contessa Mia by our very own chef.

Mineral water, tea, coffee and soft drinks are also included in your holiday price. There is a fully-stocked bar on board M/Y Contessa Mia, with alcoholic drinks charged locally at the end of your trip.

Extra Expenses

You should bring extra money with you to cover such items as meals, entertainment and souvenirs whilst ashore prior to and after your SwimTrek trip. The local currency is the Egyptian Pound, however, Euros and US dollars are also widely accepted. Onboard extras, including alcohol, can be paid for with cash or credit card at the end of your trip. Please note that additional charges apply for credit card transactions. For optional tipping of crew members, we suggest that you budget an additional €35-50 per guest.

Passports and Visas

Non-residents of Egypt require a full passport to enter the country, which should be valid for six months beyond the expected length of stay.

Visitors from the vast majority of countries require a visa to enter Egypt, which can be purchased at the airport for all eligible passport holders. Citizens of the following countries can obtain a visa upon arrival at any of the Egyptian ports of entry: **All EU member states**, Australia, Canada, Croatia, Georgia, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Macedonia, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Serbia, Ukraine, United Kingdom and USA.

If your country is not listed above, please contact your local Egyptian Embassy or Consulate in order to enquire about the applicable visa requirements.

Please note that all visa regulations are subject to change and we advise that you check your own visa requirements prior to travel.



Health Information and Recommended Vaccinations

For comprehensive health information for people travelling to Egypt, including all recommended and required vaccinations, please visit www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries. Please note that this information is subject to change and you should re-check this site regularly prior to your trip.

Travel Plugs & Electricity

For a useful source of information on the different electrical outlets, electrical plugs, and electric sockets, please visit electricaloutlet.org.

Other Information

If there is any further information that you require before your trip, or if you have any questions whatsoever, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us using the contact details at the bottom of these Trip Notes.