



TRAVEL

# Record-breaking free-diver leads guests on ocean adventures



When Ms Hanli Prinsloo started diving 18 years ago, she was not interested in competitions, yet she went on to smash 11 national records in her home country of South Africa.

It was the experience of being underwater that got her hooked.

In 2012, the free-diver stopped competing to focus on teaching her craft to the world.

Ultimately, Ms Prinsloo's life mission is to save oceans - she founded the non-profit I Am Water Ocean Conservation in 2010 - and free-diving is her tool to spread the message.

Ms Prinsloo, 39, previously collaborated with travel companies such as Extraordinary Journeys from the US and Steppes Travel from Britain.

For the first time, she is focusing her work in South-east Asia. Teaming up with luxury tour operator Jacada Travel - which is headquartered in London - on its new Departures To The Last Wilderness journeys, she hopes to get more travellers involved in ocean conservation.

She will lead guests on free-dive adventures in the oceans of Niue in the South Pacific, Madagascar and the Sea of Cortez in Mexico, where one can expect to encounter marine life such as humpback whales, dolphins, whale sharks and sea lions as well as witness fish tornadoes.

Ms Prinsloo, who was in town on Wednesday to launch Departures, told The New Paper: "It is important to partner with like-minded organisations, and Jacada is already focused on responsible sustainable travel and personal experiences.

"I believe people in this region are curious about the different ways to travel and experience the world."

The way Ms Prinsloo travels has changed too.

She added: "I used to travel for cultural reasons, but now I have become more about the blue stuff (ocean conservation). I remember my first trips were to Ibiza, not for the partying but for the free-diving, and to the Red Sea, not for Egypt or the pyramids but for the ocean.

"I started travelling to places I could dive deep."

## HUMPBACK WHALE

One of her best memories was from Niue, when a mother humpback whale brought its baby close to Ms Prinsloo's group and they played with it.

She said: "When you have that kind of experience, it not only changes how you look at nature but also how you look at yourself, and how important it is that we should be there for these animals and how we should take care of the environment."

Ms Prinsloo encourages those interested in Jacada's itineraries to not shy away, as those three regions are some of her "favourite places to encounter big animals" and were picked for being "good for beginners".

She said: "The water is blue and clean, and the animals are playful and close to the surface... We recommend people have a basic knowledge of swimming... because then they have greater confidence in the water.

"But you absolutely do not need to have any experience in scuba diving or snorkelling.

"Our trips are seven to 10 days, so we can take someone from being a beginner to being comfortable with the animals."

<https://www.tnp.sg/lifestyle/travel/record-breaking-free-diver-leads-guests-ocean-adventures>