

Diving and Snorkelling

Diving the wreck's stern section, marked with yellow buoys, is NOT recommended due to the depth at that location, except for qualified PADI technical divers.

Astrolabe Reef has always been regarded as an advanced dive site, therefore divers wanting to inspect the wreck site are encouraged to dive sites 1 and 2 only – marked by the orange buoys.

Do NOT attempt to dive the wreck unless you have the right experience, training, equipment and fitness. Divers should hold, as a minimum, a PADI Open Water certificate and be suitably experienced for an advanced dive site like Astrolabe Reef.

Skippers can moor at the orange mooring buoys while divers are in the water.

- Divers are encouraged to dive the two dive sites marked with orange buoys.
- Ensure your boat is flying an A Flag (dive flag) and stay within 200m of the flag.
- All divers must carry a whistle, inflatable safety sausage or similar device to alert your skipper to your whereabouts on the water's surface.
- Due to the strong currents, plan to be collected by the skipper immediately following your ascent and hold onto the float line while waiting.
- Always dive with a buddy and adhere to safe diving practices, including planning your dive and diving your plan.
- Check the currents, including their strength, before entering the water. Anything greater than 1m in swell, 1 knot of current and / or 15 knots wind is considered unsafe for diving.
- Water temperatures generally range from 20-22° in summer and 12-13° in winter. Due to water clarity and the gradual incline of wreckage, judging depths can be difficult. Take care not to exceed your safe depth.
- Be aware of potential snagging obstacles and always carry a knife.
- Do NOT remove cargo or objects – some may be heavy and compromise your ability to resurface safely.
- Safety stops at -5m have been marked on each buoy line – these should be used for your ascent but not relied upon.
- Snorkelers should have an A Flag attached at all times.

Dive Site 1

This is marked by an **orange mooring buoy** with the label '**Dive Site 1 -18m**'. It is an advanced dive site, but is in an area that is subject to less surge as it is in a sheltered bowl of the Reef.



Dive Site 2

This site is also marked by an **orange mooring buoy** with the label '**Dive Site 2 -14m**'. Due to its location near the peak of the Reef, it is in an area subject to surge that divers should be aware of. It is set into three loops, with each beginning and ending at the shotline and divers are encouraged follow the order of trail 2A (deepest first), then trail 2B and finally 2C. Please note that you may not be able to complete all three trails in one dive.



Astrolabe Reef / Otaiti

Guidelines for Safe & Responsible Boating & Diving



Planning a Trip

Astrolabe Reef / Otaiti is 12 Nautical Miles or 22 kilometres from the entrance of Tauranga Harbour. It takes just under an hour to reach the Reef, depending on conditions and boat size / speed.

GPS coordinates for Astrolabe Reef are 37° 32.439' south and 176° 25.692' east.

- Always check the marine forecast before setting out.
- Boats less than 5m in length are not encouraged to visit Astrolabe Reef due to the conditions being unsuitable for a small boat.
- All vessels should carry a 406MHz EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon).
- Ensure you have enough life jackets / flotation devices of the right size for everyone on board.
- Inform someone onshore of your trip, including your return time.
- Skippers can report trips to the Coastguard on Channel 83.
- Boats with divers in the water must fly an A Flag (diver's flag).
- No person shall propel or navigate a vessel (including a vessel towing a person or an object) at a speed exceeding 5 knots:
 - Within 50 metres of another vessel, raft, floating structure or person in the water; or
 - Within 200 metres of any vessel or floating structure that is flying an A Flag of the International Code of Signals (diver's flag).

Useful Information

- Channel 83 Tauranga Coastguard.
- Seacoms channels 3 and 24 and VHF Channel 6 are also used by many local skippers.
- VHF Channel 16 is the international channel for maritime disasters and hailing (calling).
- Notices to mariners for the area:
www.linz.govt.nz/sea/maritime-safety/notices-mariners
- Harbour Master: 0800 884 880 or duty officer 07 928 3385.
- For further information visit www.astrolabereef.co.nz
- Maketu Coastguard (vessel – Reef Watch) will be the onsite advisor at the Reef, when conditions allow, during the initial opening stage. The advisor can provide information, monitor activities and assist visitors as needed.

What to Expect Onsite

There are a number of potential and significant hazards that visitors to the area should be aware of.

There will be many visitors to the Reef, including competing interests. Skippers should always look out for surrounding boats, the Reef and also the likely presence of divers and snorkelers in the water.

The tip of the Reef is a rocky pinnacle which rises up 75m from the surrounding seabed, breaking from the surface at low tide. The Reef has varied underwater topography and is regularly subjected to a prevailing strong northerly swell, currents are unpredictable, and wind conditions can be strong and change rapidly (particularly the prevailing west and southwest winds).

The Rena wreckage is fully submerged and occupies 2% of the total Reef area.

Fishing

The wreck no longer poses a risk to navigation, however along with the rocky structure of the Reef, it does pose a potential snagging hazard for anchors and fishing lines.

Four orange and yellow buoys have been set up to indicate the position and depths of the Rena's stern and bow sections, including two dive sites. **The stern section is marked by the yellow buoys** and the **two dive sites are marked by the orange buoys**. A voluntary dive zone extends 200m around the buoys.

Onsite, skippers must keep a vigilant watch for divers in the water and remember not to exceed 5 knots in this area and within 50m of any other vessel and within 200m of boats flying an A Flag.

A request for a 2-year temporary closure to the take of all fisheries resources on Astrolabe Reef had been made at the time this flyer was published. For more information about this please visit the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) website.

