



GO

Swim with wild dolphins in Adelaide

WORDS: CATHERINE BEST; PHOTOS: TEMPTATION SAILING

"Go, go, go!" I slide feet first into the sea, clutching a rope line as the boat's motion forces a cold surge of water through my wetsuit. A fin breaks the surface, framed by the aperture of the catamaran's twin hulls, and then slips silently into a tableau of blue. If this was a *Jaws* flick I'd have about three seconds to live. But the fin belongs to a pod of bottlenose

dolphins, not man-eating sharks, and the accompanying screams are of delight not terror. I'm swimming with dolphins off the coast of Glenelg, and the playful mammals are putting on a grand show: silver crescents orbit the boat, performing a belly roll here, flipper slap there and the occasional pirouette in the sky. We'd gathered at Marina Pier not long after sunrise for a



THE POINTY END



7.40am departure with Temptation Sailing. There was a short briefing on the deck while the vessel motored out of the harbour and into an ocean lit with the amber varnish of a sublime autumn morning. Don't swim if you have a pacemaker, we were warned (you might die), don't touch the dolphins (you might get arrested) and do pay attention (you might not see them otherwise).

Our guides Andro van der Westhuizen and Lewis Beaumont, both marine biologists, have binoculars and are bleating directions to the skipper: "Eleven O'Clock, I can see a tail. Pod over there."

"THESE ARE WILD ANIMALS, WE DON'T DO ANYTHING TO ALTER THEIR BEHAVIOUR"



People overboard

Soon the throttle eases off and we're mustered to the stern and seated in fours on a platform, where we grab hold of the rope and slip from our backsides unceremoniously into the water. We spread down the line, spray washing over our masks, rope tugging at arm sockets, as the boat drags us forward. I plunge my face into the water, eyes darting into a galaxy of blue, the odd wisp of weed whips past. I can't see anything except occasionally the toes of a fellow snorkeller. Andro is waving furiously from the deck, motioning to my left: "Look there guys!" But I miss it and seconds later he calls us in and we scramble up a ladder back onto the deck.

The process is repeated several times as the crew seeks out new, more playful pods, mindful of not imposing our posse of humans on any one group for too long. "These are wild animals, we don't train them, we don't bait them, we don't do anything to alter their behaviour," Andro says of the dolphins, which are inquisitive by nature and attracted to the sound and movement of the boat. Temptation has a 100 per cent success rate (up to 400 common dolphins have

The details



TEMPTATION SAILING offers dolphin cruises from September to May. Prices from \$98 for adult swimmers and \$68 for non-swimmers. Kids are \$10 cheaper. dolphinboat.com.au

SEAWALL APARTMENTS offers stylishly restored family and couple's accommodation in a row of ocean-facing, heritage-listed buildings on the esplanade. Once home to a posh boys' school, the complex now boasts waterfront balconies and luxurious spa baths overlooking the sea. One-bedroom apartments from \$199. seawallapartments.com.au



THE DOLPHINS ARE CURIOUS ENOUGH TO CHECK SNORKELLERS OUT



"I get greeted with squeaky salutations"

been spotted during the summer migration) and we've seen plenty of bottlenose above water, but I'm hankering for an underwater encounter. It comes soon enough. Two adults and a baby glide past, bodies rolled inwards towards us – eyes sizing me up, rostrum in a permanent smile – so close I can see the abrasions on their skin.

Later a pair sidles up, greeting me in a squeaky salutation that roughly translates to: "You're a funny-looking seal, what are you doing out here?" The below-surface theatrics take my mind off the fact that I'm bitterly cold and quite vulnerable floating in open water off a coastline renowned for its Great Whites. There's a Shark Shield in between the two swimming lines that emits an electrical field to repel any unwanted predators (hence no pacemakers are allowed). Lewis says he's never seen a shark out here during a dolphin swim, but I'm grateful for the precautions.

As the catamaran nears the marina, two dolphins leap out of the water, serenading us with a finale of aqua acrobatics.

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