

Spearing at Wilderness is.....

The clear blue ocean and 100 metre dropoff with masses of coral and fish just 5 minutes swim from the Lodge. Willd, uninhabited islands with precipitous dropoffs, loads of pelagics and reef fish, and world-class coral just 5 to 20 minutes offshore in our longboat. A range of FADs in 1000+ metre ocean and Matikai ocean reef. The Lodge is the perfect swim-in, swim-out, boat-in, boat-out base for spearing.

Water, the hot and cold of it.....

Just 8 degrees south of the equator, the sun here is powerful year round even on cloudy days. Cover up in the water to avoid sunburn, and helps avoid coral scrapes too.

On sunny days October thru May with water temps 29-31C, long-sleeve and hooded heavier lycra rash shirts [O'Neill's Ozone 8 rashy is perfect, complete with a handy pocket for weights] are the go for keeping the sun off your top half, avoiding the hassle of plastering sunscreen every dive. Longer boardshorts are nice in the water, keep the sun off the backs of your knees [tho sunscreen still recommended there] and provide that tropical essential – ball room, but full leg suits advised if you're sun-sensitive or want to spend long hours in the water.

Cloudy days and June thru October a light wetty is needed to keep warm, and the Radiator full length, hooded wetty/rashy hybrids are the best thing, warm and ultra flexible. There's a wood-fired hot shower at the Lodge to get warm between dives if needed. Minimal rubber is the go to best enjoy the clear warm blue ocean here, and boosts your diving capabilities too.

Guns, the long and short of it.....

Visibility ranges from 15 to 50 metres, and with the warm ocean and equatorial sun, fish hang deeper than the Great Barrier Reef and equivalent latitudes. Add to this the fact that most of the country we spear in drops precipitously away to hundreds [in some cases a thousand] of feet, and you need a gun with range.

140cm or thereabouts railguns are the workhorse [I have used solely a Rabitech Stealth 140 for 6 years] for Spaniards, doggies, GTs barracuda, etc, allowing the flexibility to have a go at the big stuff out in mid-water, but maneuverable enough to hunt coral trout and the hundreds of other reef species we have here. Currents can be strong on the pelagic spots, so the maneuverability of railguns helps here too. A few people have brought short railguns with them and have expressed uniform disappointment with the lack of range for pelagics, but if you have a small railgun and can fit it in they are a lot of fun for stalking reef species [the favoured foodfish in the village] during the day, particularly in the endless caves and swim-thrus of Bulo Island. We have been using the Rabitech Tuna Line 150 railgun with a 7.5mm shaft for pelagics - excellent range from a railgun and pinpoint accuracy. Rigged properly sliptips definitely provide better holding than floppers on the softer-fleshed pelagic species.

Big Riffe and Alexander type cannons are obviously an asset for hunting big tuna, 'hoo and billfish with their superior range and penetration. Anyone who has tried to dig a cannon-powered shaft out of the coral will agree they're not the go for reef species tho! If you decide to bring a cannon, you'll want to shed some luggage weight in other departments as Solomon Airlines will charge excess over 20kg and offloading of heavier gear may occur on the domestic flights.

Summing up, a 140ish railgun or equivalent is essential, a cannon nice for bigger fish, ocean reef, and blue water work, and a short railgun if you're keen on hunting smaller reef species. Shafts get bent regularly, straightening skills are handy. Spare parts are essential as the nearest shop is in Brisbane! Floats are absolutely essential as big fish can swim past you at anytime, anyplace, and also allow our boat drivers to know where you are.

Other gear.....

Please note we have plenty of dive weights here – don't weigh yourself down unnecessarily by bringing your own. We also have a new pair of 100kg Salter scales for trophy fish. Berleying is effective for concentrating fish in shallower water - a comfortable, very sharp, dive knife is essential for berleying. Flashers work well in bringing up and in the Doggies, Spaniards, 'hoo and have raised solid blue marlin on several occasions whilst drifting in the blue out in front of the Lodge.

Other info.....

There is no ciguatera poisoning here, and with the Lodge situated next to a subsistence-living Melanesian village whose sole meat diet is fish, spearfishermen [and women!] are welcome and surplus fish are eagerly shared amongst the village. There are a few local artisanal spearfishermen, who spear to feed their extended families and whose skills, traditional fish knowledge, and handmade gear are a real eye-opener to dive with. With the village Sabbath observance from sundown Friday (approx 6:00PM) to sundown Saturday (approx 6:30PM) all boating, fishing, spearing, kayak and canoe use, and work in the village stops, and the Lodge does not provide boat trips or transfers. Guests are welcome to snorkel and freedive around the lodge area, swim, and there's a range of walks and hikes thru the gardens and rainforest and along the coast.

When.....

For reef species and photography, all year round. Pelagics are generally best April thru November and mid-April thru mid-June and early-October thru late-November are generally [this close to the equator climate is highly variable] the best weather windows within that period. For a full rundown refer to our website 'climate' page.

Wilderness.....

has a range of other things to do, from jungle hikes, village culture, headhunting history, birding, superlative scenery, to untapped sportfishing and relaxing under the coconuts on the lagoon shore, and lots more. Check out our website for more info and great photos. [See you in the water!](#)

www.thewildernesslodge.org