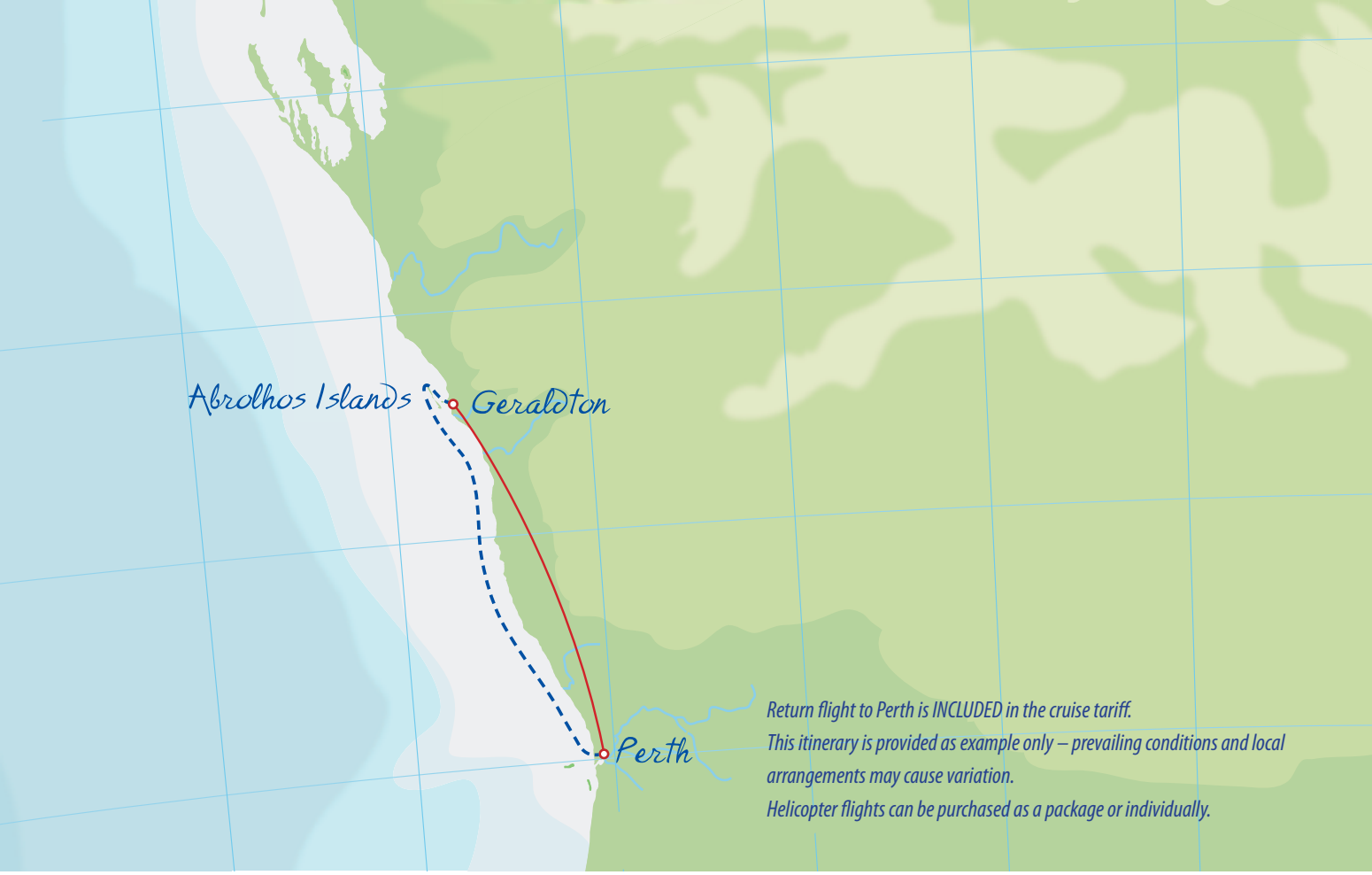


Batavia Bound

Fremantle – Abrolhos Islands – Geraldton/Perth

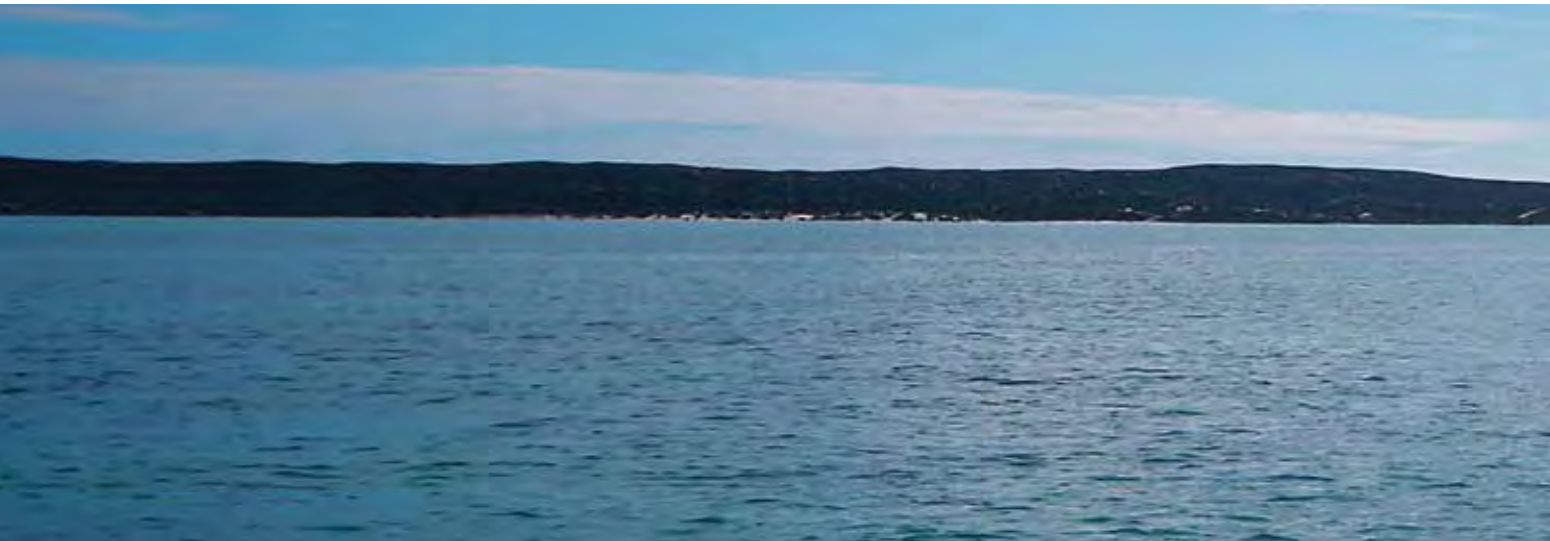
Sail into the sunset and wake in a stunning aquatic playground!

Night One

Your "welcome aboard" the magnificent **TRUE NORTH** is in the port city of Fremantle. Embarkation proceedings begin at 1700 – then join the sunset cocktail party as we commence our overnight cruise to the Abrolhos Islands. A sumptuous dinner, a glass of fine wine and, the comforts of your cabin, will ensure that you are adequately prepared for the coming days activities!

Day One

The Abrolhos are a chain of 122 islands and associated coral reefs lying some eighty kilometres due west of Geraldton. They are the southernmost true coral reef in the Indian Ocean and one of the highest latitude



reef systems in the world. They are also one of the world's most important seabird rookeries and the centre of Western Australia's largest single species fishery, the Western Rock Lobster Fishery. The islands have a small seasonal population of fishermen and they are well known as the site of numerous shipwrecks, the most famous being the Dutch ships *Batavia*, which was wrecked in 1629, and *Zeewijk*, wrecked in 1727.

Upon arrival the **TRUE NORTH** will anchor off Pelsart Island.

Here you will find that fishing, snorkelling and sightseeing opportunities abound.

Start the day with an early morning flight in the ship's helicopter featuring a birds-eye view of stunning reef formations and intriguing island communities.

The snorkelling tenders will be away early as well - shallow inshore lagoons provide comfortable snorkelling midst colourful coral and a myriad of fish species. Curious sea lions frequently join in the fun.

Or perhaps it's time to wet a line! As well as being the 'home' of Western Australia's delectable rock lobster – the Abrolhos is also renowned for its fishing. Fine eating species such as Westralian jewfish, groper, snapper and coral trout are commonly caught and, with your assistance, will likely adorn the ship's menu.

Another alternative might be a scenic cruise in one of our comfortable expedition boats. Step ashore and find bird-watching paradise. On the beach the honeymooning oyster catchers are hard to miss – they never leave each other's side. In the dunes button quails and crakes nest under the dry vegetation and unique to the Abrolhos are the lesser noddys – beyond the shores of Australia, their only other nesting location is in the Seychelles. Thousands of migratory birds use the islands as a pit stop on their arduous journey across the globe. Greenshanks, godwits, sandpipers, knots and stints decorate sparking white beaches, roseate, crested and sooty terns fish the blue water and ospreys build giant nests wherever they can.

Day Two

Wake this morn in Easter Group, so named when they were discovered by the crew of HMS Beagle during Easter 1840.

The snorkelling and fishing boats will be away again and the divers will be keen to dive the well regarded "Anemone Patch".

Don't miss an opportunity to walk amongst the intriguing shacks on Rat Island.

The rock lobster fishermen of the Abrolhos Islands occupy their shacks during the fishing season only – from March to June. At other times of the year the empty shacks provide the visitor with a fascinating opportunity to stretch their sea legs.

In the afternoon try your hand at squid fishing or join a scenic cruise to nearby Wooded Island.

There will also be more opportunities for fishing, snorkelling and, diving.

Day Three

The Houtman Abrolhos – so named to warn mariners to "keep a sharp look-out", but the fate of the Dutch East-Indian merchantman *Batavia* was sealed long before her hapless crew could take heed. In the dark of night the Batavia struck an unforgiving Abrolhos reef and so began a terrifying sequence of events overshadowed by desertion, betrayal, murder and revenge!

In 1628 the newly built *Batavia* sailed from Holland bound for the Dutch East Indies. It sailed under the command of Francisco Pelsaert, with Ariaen Jacobsz serving as skipper. Also on board was junior merchantman Jeronimus Cornelisz, a bankrupt

pharmacist from Haarlem who was fleeing the Netherlands in fear of arrest because of his heretical beliefs.

During the voyage, Jacobsz and Cornelisz conceived a plan to take the ship and after leaving Cape Town, Jacobsz deliberately steered the ship off course.

On 4 June 1629 the ship struck a reef near Beacon Island. Of the 322 aboard, most of the passengers and crew managed to get ashore, although 40 people drowned. An initial survey of the islands found no fresh water and only limited food (sea lions and birds). Pelsaert realised the dire situation and decided to search for water on the mainland.

A group comprising Captain Jacobsz and Pelsaert left the wreck site in a 9m longboat in search of drinking water. After a fruitless search, they abandoned the other survivors and headed north in a danger-fraught voyage to the city of Batavia (now known as Jakarta). This journey, which ranks as one of the greatest feats of open-boat navigation, took 33 days and, extraordinarily, all aboard survived.

After their arrival in Batavia, Jacobsz was arrested for negligence, although his position in the potential mutiny was not guessed by Pelsaert.

In order to rescue the others and, to salvage the *Batavia*'s valuable cargo, Batavia's Governor General immediately gave Pelsaert command of the *Sardam*. He arrived at the islands two months after leaving Batavia, only to discover that a bloody mutiny had taken place amongst the survivors.

Jeronimus Cornelisz, who had been left in charge of the survivors, was well aware that if the water party ever reached the port of Batavia, Pelsaert would report the impending mutiny. Therefore, he made plans to hijack any rescue ship. Cornelisz's first deliberate act was to have all weapons and food supplies commandeered and placed under his control. He then moved a group of soldiers, led by Wiebbe Hayes, to nearby West Wallabi Island, under the false pretence of searching for water. They were told to light signal fires when they found water and they would then be rescued. Convinced that they would be unsuccessful, he then left them to die.

Cornelisz then had complete control and the remaining survivors faced two months of unrelenting butchery and savagery. Between them, his followers murdered at least 110 men, women, and children.

Although Cornelisz had left the soldiers to die, they had in fact found good sources of water and food on their islands. Initially, they did not know of the barbarity taking place on the other islands and sent the pre-arranged smoke signals. However, they soon learned of the massacres from survivors who managed to flee Cornelisz' island. The soldiers put together makeshift weapons made from materials washed up from the wreck and, they built a small fort out of limestone and coral blocks.

Cornelisz seized on the news of water on the other island - his own supply was dwindling and the continued survival of the soldiers threatened his own success. He went with his men to try and defeat the soldiers marooned on West Wallabi Island. However, the trained soldiers were by now much better fed than the mutineers and easily defeated them in several battles before Pelsaert returned.

Pelsaert seized the mutineers – the worst offenders were executed. Some were abandoned on the mainland and the rest were taken to Batavia.

A board of inquiry later decided that Pelsaert had exercised a lack of authority and was therefore partly responsible for what had happened. His financial assets were seized and he died a broken man within a year.

On the other hand, the common soldier Wiebbe

Hayes was hailed a hero. The Dutch East India Company promoted him to sergeant, and later to lieutenant, which increased his salary fivefold.

Of the original 341 people on board Batavia, only 68 made it to the port of Batavia.

In circumstance that could not be more contrasting – discover for yourself the fate of the Batavia. Snorkel and dive in the crystal clear waters of the wreck site. Go ashore at Beacon Island and see a remarkably preserved canon lying in shallow water.

At the end of the day it will be hard not to reflect on such tragic circumstance!

Day Four

Enjoy an early morning stroll and a refreshing swim in beautiful Turtle Bay.

Join the expedition boats for a day of fishing, snorkelling and diving.

Nearby Fish Point has been known to produce coral trout in shallow water and we know some spots out-wide that are pretty reliable when it comes to fine eating species such as jewfish.

Fish Point and the Turtle Bay shallows are also well-suited to an easy snorkel. Dive sites in the area include "Planet Channel" and other spots feature excellent overhangs and caves.

Step ashore at West Wallaby Island for a glimpse of the reclusive tamar wallaby and join our guides for a scenic walk amongst the ruins of Wiebbe Hayes' rudimentary 'fort'.

Then return to the **TRUE NORTH** for sunset drinks and a farewell dinner to remember.

Day Five

Disembark in Geraldton for your return flight to Perth.