

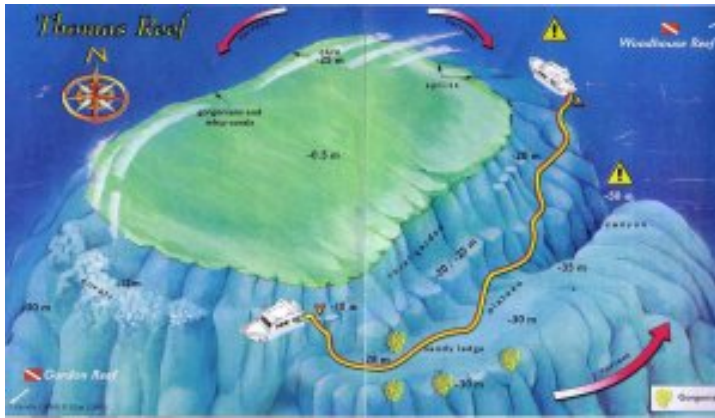
Strait of Tiran



Starting from the North on the Eastern side of the Sinai Peninsula are **the Strait of Tiran**, one of the most famous diving areas in the Red Sea. Situated in the middle of the straits are four coral reefs: Gordon, Thomas, Woodhouse and Jackson.

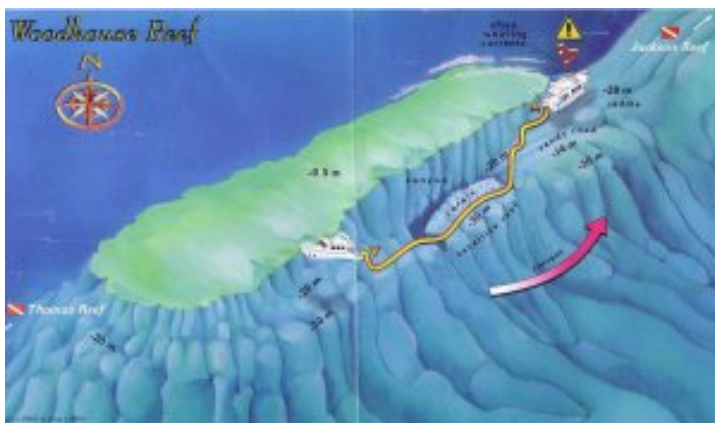


The Gordon Reef is marked by the wreck of a large commercial freighter. The reef composition is quite varied, with patchy sections, sand beds and full-fledged coral gardens. In the centre of the reef slope, a 'shark amphitheatre' or bowl dips to 24 m; a variety of shark species can be seen sleeping on the sandy bottom. The site boasts a very good range of corals, with lots of branching varieties. All of the corals are well preserved, in densely grown patches that often show a remarkable mix of different species. Fish life is not the most profuse in the Straits of Tiran, but there are some notable surprises including a huge moray eel with a body as thick as a small divers waist. Triggerfish abound while surgeons and jacks swim in moderately large schools, and angels, parrotfish and small wrasse are all present in good numbers. Large Napoleon wrasse can often be seen along the reef.



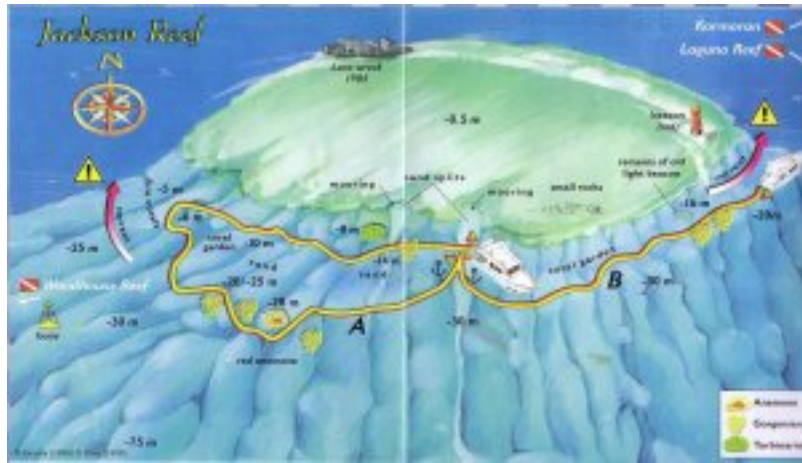
The Thomas Reef includes some plateau sections and a very deep canyon running along the reef's southern section. It is the smallest of the four Tiran reefs. The reef's upper section is a riot of color, encompassing some of the finest soft coral growth in the Sinai region. Huge, densely packed fields of *Dendronephthya* of every imaginable hue are spread across the reef, along with antler corals, fine *Stylophora*, some *Acropora* and many other stony coral forms.

Fish life is also rich, with the greatest concentration in the shallows. Lyre tail cod and other groupers grow to great size, and many varieties of rabbitfish and wrasse congregate along the reef face, accompanied by box and pufferfish. The only reason to go deeper than 20 m at Thomas Reef is to explore the canyon!



The Woodhouse Reef is a long, narrow reef running at an angle from northeast to southwest. Woodhouse is generally dived as a drift along the reef's eastern side. Coral cover is excellent throughout the reef, with dense growth all over; there are a few sandy patches at depths of around 20 m.

Many species are present but because of the sheltered position of the reef, away from the main current, a certain amount of sedimentation has affected the corals here. Pelagic fish including big tuna and schools of trevally or jacks. Woodhouse has Fusiliers, snapper, surgeons and unicorns also school here, along with thousands of other reef fish.



On the northern edge of the Jackson Reef, the wreck of a grounded freighter stands as a warning to the shipping in the busy straits; most of its hull has been salvaged for scrap, leaving only a skeletal hulk. The steep-sided walls of Jackson Reef are among the finest in the Sinai region; the current-swept reef is densely grown with a real profusion of hard and soft corals, with special accents provided by luxuriant gorgonian fans, sea whips and black corals, and vivid growths of soft coral. Fish life, not surprisingly, is excellent.

The strong current brings plenty of nutrients for reef and schooling fish; current and profile combine to tempt pelagic fish in from the open water, and large schools of barracuda and jacks are common here, as are larger predators including several species of shark. The smaller reef species on which these pelagic visitors feed are profuse.

The "**Thistlegorm**" is probably the most famous wreck in the Red Sea. The British ship was on the way to Egypt to bring military equipment of all kinds for the British troops in North Africa. But then on the 6 of October 1941 a German bomber attacked the Thistlegorm. Now the wreck is lying upright on the sea-bottom at 30 m depth. Especially interesting is the cargo: Tanks, trucks, motorcycles, weapons, railway carriage and one railway engine.

The Reef at Abu Nuhas is famous for wrecks. There are 4 wrecks here, which are today an attraction point for divers all around the world. For example the Greek cargo ship "**Giannis D.**", which ran aground the reef on 19 March 1983 and sank a short time afterwards. It is now lying in a maximum depth of 27 m and is overgrown with hard- and soft corals. The ship cracked down in the middle. The better part of the two halves is the stern section. Here it is easy to dive inside the wreck, because there are a lot of entry and exit points. Because the wreck is leaning on a 45° angle you will find yourself swimming up a stairwell which your mind tells you are heading down. This effect is very disorientating. The steamship **Carnatic** struck the reef in September 1869. She sank the following day as the weather worsened. She lies in about 24 m depths. She has broken up amidships, leaving her bow and stern intact. The decking has fallen away to be replaced by a thick growth of tube sponges, alcyonarians and occasional table corals, making her very photogenic. She is also laid open to light from above and is easily penetrated.