

Beat: Lifestyle

SHIPWRECK COAST HAS MORE THAN DUTCH TREASURE

Celebrities want Black Pearls

Perth , Western Australia, 28.07.2015, 10:52 Time

USPA NEWS - From the dawn of time 'Black Pearls' have been collected and treasured by millions , now a small family owned business in remote Western Australia has captured the market with their latest harvest from the Abrolhos Islands. Known as the 'Shipwreck Coast' and graveyard to hundreds of Dutch sailors.

Recently I had the amazing opportunity to spend a few days with Black Pearl Farmer and land developer Barry Humfrey on the tiny remote island of "Big Rat" situated in the Abrolhos Islands, or Houtman Abrolhos as they are more correctly called. Consisting of three separate groups of islands one hundred nautical miles west of Geraldton , off the Western Australian coast. The group extends one hundred running north-south, with the Wallabi group to the north, then Easter, and finally the Pelsart group to the south. Predominantly coral based, and the protected waters harbour some of the most magnificent coral gardens in the world, rivalling the larger Great Barrier Reef , named after Frederik de Houtman, a Dutch sea captain who discovered the group in the early seventeenth century. In the late nineteenth century the southern islands were worked for guano. The northern islands are the centre of a lucrative cray fishing industry in season. The islands are a wildlife sanctuary and camping is prohibited without authorisation. It is here on one of the more inhabited islands we find Big Rat Island , famed home of Chimere Pearls crew and "Black Pearl" cultivators where I spent several days photographing an amazing island , its inhabitants and learning about "Black Pearls".

Kerrie-Anne Greyson , Manager of Chimere pearls said " The warm waters of the Leeuwin Current combined with the world's southernmost coral reef system and pristine waters allows us to nurture the fabulous Chimere black pearls from our hatchery . We cultivate *Pinctada Margaritifera* (Black Lipped Pearls) and *Pinctada Fucata* (Akoya Pearls), Abrolhos Pearls (WA) Pty Ltd owns and operates the only licenced Hatchery at the Abrolhos Islands. I asked Barry Humfrey of Chimere Pearls if there is a growing demand for Black Pearls? "A quick google search and we find Actors Pierce Brosnan, Angelina Jolie, Christina Ricci ,Charlize Theron, Paul Hogan, Kylie Minogue, Cameron Diaz & Elton John have all been photographed with black pearls."Said Barry.

The majority of Chimere pearls are well rounded, but they also come in a large variety of shapes which preserve their unique character and individuality. The colours reflected are shades of green and blue, aubergine, gold and silver grey unlike the pure blacks of the Tahitian pearl. With eye-catching lustre and quality nacre skins, Abrolhos pearls provide a never-ending number of unique variations to discretely and elegantly accommodate any look, style or design and in Geraldton there global demand from "A" List Celebrities is slowly growing. Very secretive of their clients General Manager of Chimere Pearls has stated that more and more of her clients are women buying for men. When you walk into their magnificent showroom in the tiny port of Geraldton your struck down by images of Australian celebrities such as singer and entertainer Katie Underwood and someone looking very much like Ryan Gosling. So the next time you see an amazing "Black Pearl" ask if it's an Abrolhos pearl from Australian, you never know how surprised people will be when you ask them.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-4624/shipwreck-coast-has-more-than-dutch-treasure.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Robbie Merritt

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