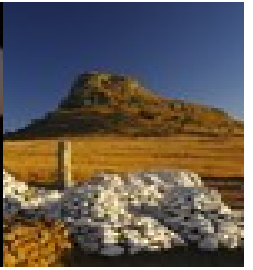


# THE ZULU KINGDOM UPDATE



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This September issue focuses on **THE GREATEST SHOAL ON EARTH**  
-The annual Sardine Run in KwaZulu-Natal!



Between May and July each year huge shoals of sardines move up the coastal waters of southern KwaZulu-Natal in a natural phenomenon, known as THE SARDINE RUN - the marine equivalent of the annual Wildebeest migration in the Mara.

The annual migration of sardines starts at the Agulhas Banks in the Cape, off the southern most tip of Africa when colder water conditions move up the normally warm (+20°C) East Coast and allow the sardines to extend their range.

On this journey, the combination of inshore currents, the narrow continental shelf as well as predator herding, often forces the sardines to "beach" between Port St. Johns and Durban. These shoals can contain over a thousand tons of fish, stretch for over 5 kilometres and have many predators in hot pursuit! The KwaZulu-Natal South Coast stages 90% of this spectacle.

This moving fish restaurant and ensuing feeding frenzy is an amazing sight to behold and certainly one of the wildest spectacles to occur anywhere on the planet. The predators can include over 20 000 common and 2500 bottlenose dolphins as well as copper dusky, blacktip and spinner sharks, various species of game fish such as shad and garrick, and even the occasional South African fur seal. There are also multitudes of sea birds circling overhead and sightings of various whales are common.

Locals suffer from "sardine fever" at this time when the predators drive shoals onto the shore. They join the frenzy and wade into the sea every conceivable container in hand to try and grab the slippery fish regardless of the consequences!

Visitors can enjoy the spectacle of shimmering shoals of sardines within and beyond the surf zone, accompanied by flocks of plunging gannets, schools of dolphins and packs of sharks. Teams of fishermen can be watched as they encircle pockets of sardines with seine nets and then haul the catch back to the beach through the surf. Lively bargaining then takes place on the beach as the fish are sold by the basket.



As exciting as the action is on the beaches may be, the frenzy of the sardine run is best experienced by boat as beaching of the shoals is unpredictable and shore based viewing is often limited to seeing the action through binoculars. Assisted by up to date reports of sightings from micro lights, helicopters and the Natal Sharks Board monitoring the movements of the shoals, boat operators are able to put their boats right in the middle of the action offshore. The braver souls on board can venture into the shoals with scuba diving equipment, but often those on the surface and snorkellers have the best sightings.

A number of annual events are based around the Sardine Run such as **The Sardine Festival**, which runs until the middle of July each year. Some of the highlights include the Spear Fishing Open Competition, the Mercury Mallards Ski Boat festival and the popular Ugu Jazz Festival ensuring the whole family has a fun-filled, truly African beach experience.

**"The Sardine Festival offers something for the whole family - marathons, mountain biking, a garden fair, sardine tasting, a colourful jazz festival and a host of other magnificent beach entertainment. If you have not experienced the fever of the Sardine migration, you have not experienced one of life's truly unforgettable experiences."**

- Michael Bertram - Ugu South Coast Tourism

In addition to some of the country's premier swimming beaches, there are several vantage points along the 120km long Hibiscus coastline for visitors to view the sardines as they migrate northwards. Those wanting to take an even closer look can take advantage of numerous marine charters and dive operators along the South Coast - or even charter a plane from Margate Airport. The more adventurous can even dive with the sardines - including the reefs, wrecks and sharks - at Aliwal Shoal, Protea Banks and Rocky Bay.

Aliwal Dive Charters offer a 2-hour dive safari to see the sardines. For more info contact [dive@aliwalshoal.co.za](mailto:dive@aliwalshoal.co.za) or visit [www.aliwalshoal.co.za](http://www.aliwalshoal.co.za)

To get live updates on where the sardines are along the coastline, visitors can call the **Sardine Hotline** on +27 (0) 822849495

The Natal Sharks Board monitors the progress of the sardines so it can remove and replace the shark nets that protect bathers at swimming beaches and allow the sardine run to pass by unhindered.

For more information visit the official website on <http://www.sardinerun.co.za>, <http://www.tourismsouth-coast.co.za/> or visit [www.zulu.org.za](http://www.zulu.org.za) for more general information on the whole province.

A high res image of the sardine run can be downloaded from [http://gallery.ethosmarketing.co.uk/gallery/Roger-de-la-Harpe-images/Sardine\\_run?full=1](http://gallery.ethosmarketing.co.uk/gallery/Roger-de-la-Harpe-images/Sardine_run?full=1)

**For more information, please visit [www.zulu.org.za](http://www.zulu.org.za) or contact Ethos Marketing, the UK office for Tourism KwaZulu-Natal on 01403 243 619 or [info@ethosmarketing.co.uk](mailto:info@ethosmarketing.co.uk).**

**Many thanks to Roger de la Harpe and any other photographers for the use of their images.**

**Don't forget that numerous high res images of the Zulu Kingdom can be downloaded from our gallery on <http://gallery.ethosmarketing.co.uk/photo/tkzn>**

**Whilst every care has been taken, I apologize for any incorrect information that might have been taken from outdated websites.**

**If any KZN suppliers have news snippets that they would like to see included in this newsletter please email 300 words plus your website address and contact details to [Claire@ethosmarketing.co.uk](mailto:Claire@ethosmarketing.co.uk)**