

WHALE SHARKS

As the largest fish in the sea, reaching lengths of 40 feet (12 meters) or more, whale sharks have an enormous menu from which to choose. Fortunately for most sea dwellers and us, their favorite meal is plankton. They scoop these tiny plants and animals up, along with any small fish that happen to be around, with their colossal gaping mouths while swimming close to the water's surface.

The world's biggest fish are hungry migrators on a mission, according to a tracking study that mapped whale sharks' long journeys around the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean to a favorite feeding hot spot off the Yucatan Peninsula.

One whale shark's incredible 5,000-mile (7,200-kilometer) swim could even help solve the long-standing mystery of where whale sharks give birth, an event no scientist has ever seen. Preferring warm waters, whale sharks populate all tropical seas. They are known to migrate every spring to the continental shelf of the central west coast of Australia and Mexico.

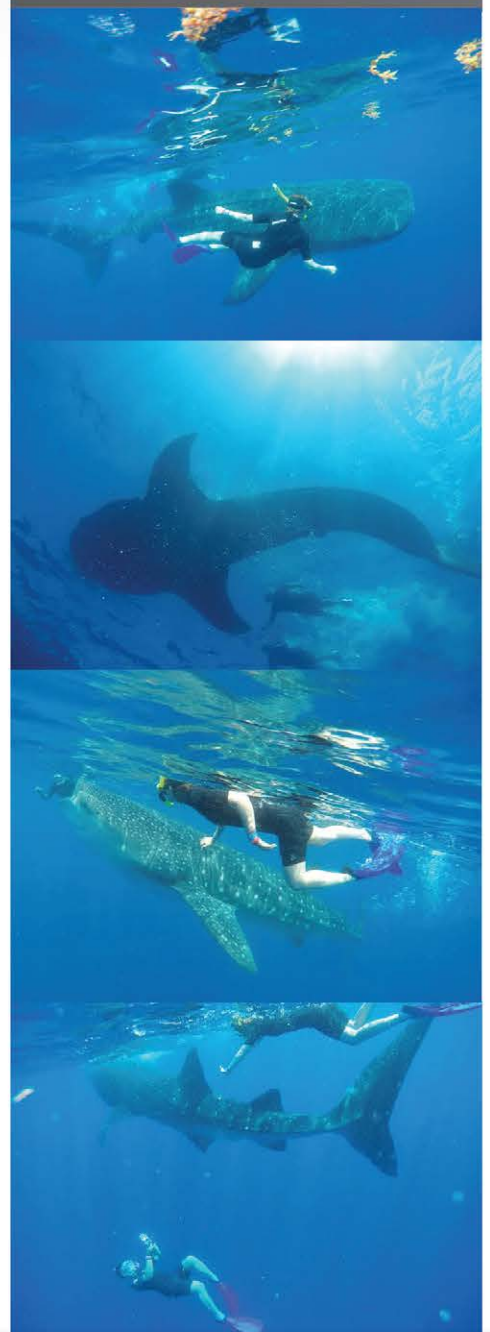
General guidelines: Swimming with Whale Sharks Tour

- DO NOT TOUCH ANY ANIMAL
- The ability to swim is required
- Leave items of value (tablets, cameras, etc.) in your hotel
- Feel free to bring your own equipment, but we provide snorkel equipment
- Bring towel, hat, sun glasses, money for tips and souvenirs, sandals or flip-flops
- Rash Guards or Organic sunscreen only
- Please do not put any sunscreen or repellent on before we go into the water

Source: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/whale-shark/>
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/08/130821-whale-shark-satellite-tracking-migration-gulf-mexico-science/>
<http://www.myprivate.tours/single-post/2016/05/10/Swimming-with-Whale-Sharks>

Quick facts about Whale Sharks

Scientific Name: Rhincodon typus
Slow moving plankton feeder
Largest known fish species
Length: up to 12.5 meters / 41 feet
Weight: up to 21.3 metric tons / 47,000 lb

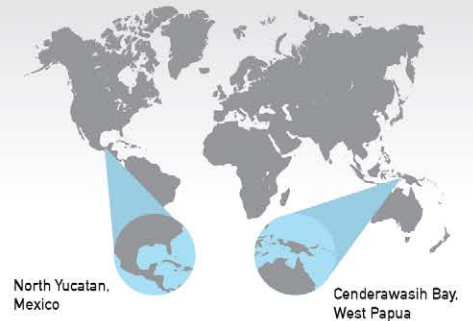



THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SHARK


Whale sharks are found in tropical and temperate waters around the world, in shallow coastal water and the open ocean.

While Whale sharks are mostly solitary animals, they are known to feed in large groups.



This behavior has been documented in Cenderawasih Bay in West Papua and in the north of the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico, the most marine biodiverse waters on Earth.


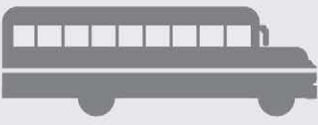
The deepest recorded whale shark dive is 3146 feet (979.5 m.)



That's more than 3 times the height of Eiffel Tower.

The whale sharks can grow up to 39 feet (12m.) long.

Whale sharks can be as large as a school bus, making them the world's biggest fish.

FAQ'S:

CAN A WHALE SHARK ACCIDENTALLY SWALLOW YOU?

No, although its mouth can be over 3 feet wide its throat isn't big enough to pass large objects.

DO WHALE SHARKS BITE?

No, Whale sharks have over 3.0000 teeth, but they look like velcro and are too small to cause any damage.

PROTECTING WHALE SHARKS

PROBLEM:

Whale sharks are valuable to humanity and the economy, yet are being exploited worldwide.

- Many killed for fins to use in soup
- Fins are high-value commodities
- Highly valued in Asian markets

SOLUTION:

Enhance current protective measure and create new policies that curb exploitation.



ENHANCE ECO - TOURISM

Swimming with whale sharks in their natural habitat, without touching them, creates awareness about the threat of extinction of these animals.

BAN SHARK FINNING

Finning involves cutting off a shark's fins and throwing the rest of the body back into the water only to experience a slow death. Creating legislation that bans finnings is critical to helping preserve all sharks. The US and EU recently closed loopholes in laws that prohibit this wasteful practice.

CREATE SHARK SANCTUARIES

The establishment of shark sanctuaries in places such as the Marshall Islands the Bahamas and Mexico protects sharks by prohibiting all commercial shark fishing, allowing populations to recover and improving the health of the whole ecosystem.