

TRAVELAGE WEST

Where to Swim With Whale Sharks in Mexico

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Whale sharks, the biggest fish in the ocean, are gentle creatures that feed on plankton.
Credit: 2023 PADI/Shawn Heinrichs

Of all the wonderful experiences I've had in Mexico, one of the most memorable is swimming with whale sharks in the Mexican Caribbean. There's something about getting so close to these gigantic creatures — the largest fish in the ocean — that is truly moving. And Mexico is one of the best places to have a face-to-face encounter.

It all comes down to timing your visit and choosing the right destination. There are essentially three regions in Mexico where it's easy to view whale sharks: off the coast of the Baja California peninsula (including [the Sea of Cortez](#) and Bay of La Paz); off the coast of Quintana Roo (in the Mexican Caribbean); and in the waters around Socorro Island, a volcanic island that is a Mexican possession about 370 miles off the west coast.

Depending on which destination is on your wish list, it may be time to start planning that next trip now, since peak whale shark season varies by region. No matter which location a traveler chooses, they'll be treated to spectacular sights as they witness whale sharks feeding on plankton as part of their seasonal migration.

When it comes to setting up a guided excursion, it's best to go with operators certified by [SEMARNAT](#) — Mexico's secretary of the environment — and [SECTUR](#), the secretary of tourism, since those suppliers are more likely to follow regulations that ensure the safety of both human participants and marine life.

Here are details about how to see and swim with whale sharks in all three regions.

<https://www.travelagewest.com/Travel/Mexico/aguascalientes-travel-guide>

Baja California Peninsula

June to December are the best times to spot whale sharks off the eastern coast of the state of Baja California. Bahia de los Angeles is one of the best bases for exploration, according to [Baja California Tourism](#). The fishing town of about 1,000 residents is located between the Sierra San Borja mountains and the Sea of Cortez.

The tourism office recommends several operators, including [Mexico Liveaboards](#), which offers a Sea of Cortez/Midriff Islands trip from July through September, with multiple departure dates available in 2024. The eight-day itinerary includes activities such as snorkeling with whale sharks and diving among sea lion colonies and along extensive reefs. The trip also includes stops for hiking at several of the 55 uninhabited islets that make up the Midriff Islands.

[Ricardo's Diving Tours](#), meanwhile, offers whale shark swimming excursions from June to November that depart from Bahia de los Angeles. The company also arranges house rentals in the town.

Farther south, in the state of Baja California Sur, October to April is considered the best time for viewing whale sharks near the city of La Paz. [VIP Tours](#) offers a two- to three-hour Whale Shark Encounter that departs from the La Paz marina and includes wetsuits and snorkel gear, as well as information about local marine life. Videos and photos are also included. Travelers looking to see more may want to opt for the eight-hour Combo Tour, which combines the whale shark experience with snorkeling near a sea lion colony and lunch on the beach.

Several luxury hotels in Los Cabos also arrange whale shark tours, including Solaz, a Luxury Collection Resort, [Los Cabos](#) and [Four Seasons Resort Los Cabos at Costa Palmas](#), where a concierge can arrange outings to Cabo Pulmo by car and boat. [Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal](#), meanwhile, offers whale-watching excursions and swimming encounters in La Paz.



Several operators offer whale shark excursions in Baja California.
Credit: 2023 Baja California Tourism