

DISCOVER THE WORLD OF PANTERRA



Journey into the Mysterious World of the Whale Shark

8 Day Dive/Snorkel/Research/Natural History Expedition

La Paz, BCS, Mexico

June 9 - 16, 2012

Dive Expeditions
2012 Brochure
August 20, 2011



Join world renowned scientist Dr. Deni Ramirez into the whale shark waters of the southern Sea of Cortez.

Expedition is open to divers and non-divers.

WHALE SHARK SCIENTIST

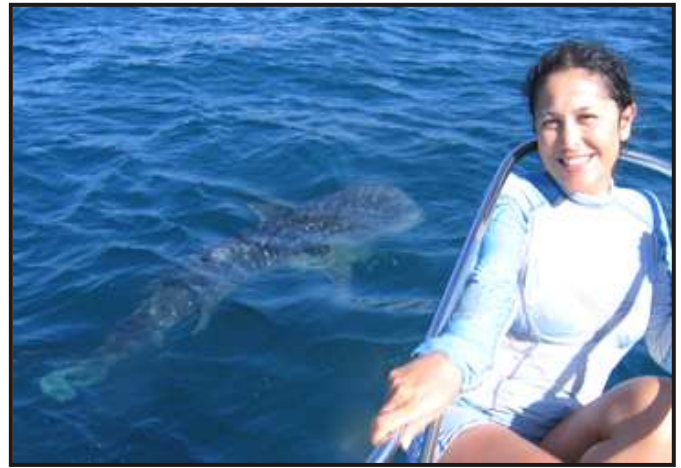
Dr. Deni Ramirez Macias is the project leader of Whale Shark Mexico. She has studied whale sharks in the Gulf of California since 2001.

In 2005, as an assistant researcher, she started a study at Holbox Island in collaboration with "Proyecto Domino del Atlantico Mexicano".

In her master's degree work, Deni obtained DNA samples, photographic identifications, and observed whale shark behavior to collect sex ratios and measurements of whale sharks from the Gulf of California. This allowed her to define the population structure in this area. Using photographs and photo-ID she has already identified over 350 individual whale sharks. This data will help in future efforts to determine the size of the whale shark population in the Gulf of California.

In 2007, Deni started her doctoral studies and research traveling to the Philippines and to Revillagigedo Island of México to gather genetic samples in these areas. At the same time, she is collaborating with researchers in Mozambique, Australia, Taiwan and Djibouti to prepare a genetic analysis of whale sharks on a global scale. This information has important implications for global conservation of whale sharks.

In June 2011, Deni received her PhD for her outstanding research of these amazing gentle giants.



Deni with a baby whale shark.
Photo courtesy of Deni Ramirez - copyright protected

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE SEA OF CORTEZ

The Baja Peninsula was formed approximately five million years ago when part of the earth's crust separated along the San Andreas Fault and drifted away from mainland Mexico. After colliding with southern California, an ocean basin was formed. This basin is known today as the Gulf of California, or the Sea of Cortez. The youngest and most prolific sea on earth.

During its movement fragments of land, broken off in the split, created islands and left behind underwater canyons and troughs reaching depths of 10,000 feet. It is the depth of these structures that cause the upwelling of nutrient-rich waters creating the basis for a highly productive marine food chain.

This amazing Galapagos type setting plays host to some of the rarest and most beautiful marine life encounters possible and offers an amazing environment for diving, snorkeling, kayaking, and hiking. It's an ideal backyard for underwater adventures.

Rich in natural history, unspoiled in beauty, and unrivaled in marine life, the Sea of Cortez is a world of a different time, place and rhythm.

TRIP INFORMATION

Itinerary:

Day 1 (Sat. June 9): Arrival and Boarding the Ship

- The group will be met at the La Paz/Cabo airport and transferred to the ship, the MV Adventure. The ship will be available for boarding after 5:00 pm.
- Once onboard and settled in, pre-dinner cocktails will be served, with dinner set for 7:30 pm as the ship departs the bay of La Paz for the islands. The evening is yours to organize your gear and familiarize yourself with the ship.



Aerial view of El Mogote and the Bay of La Paz.
Sanctuary for juvenile whale sharks.



Deni at work.
Photo courtesy of Deni Ramirez - copyright protected

Trip Information - Itinerary continued:

Day 2 - 6: Our 5 day dive adventure begins

- Today we begin our adventure at sea. The next five days you can expect 3 dives a day and for 3 of the 5 days we will spend with Deni as we assist her in her whale shark research.

Please Note: Due to the movement of the whale sharks we will have an open itinerary planned around their location in the Gulf Islands. In addition we will engage in the "Planned Activities" outlined below.

Day 6 - 8: Enjoying La Paz

- We will arrive back at the marina in La Paz and transfer to the Marina Hotel for a 2 night stay. Once checked-in, the following couple of days are yours to stroll and shop along La Paz's famous sea walk, "The Malecon". In the evenings plan on meeting up with the group for dinner at one of the local restaurants.

Day 8 (Sat. June 16): Trips End

- Check out is at 1:00 pm and this now concludes our expedition.

Planned Activities:

***Whale Shark Research** - We will be assisting Deni with her research on the whale sharks which will include photo ID, gathering data on size, sex, scars, taking DNA samples and placing satellite tags on at least one whale shark. There are two opportunities to encounter the whale sharks. The first, and most likely, are the pregnant females which can be found at depths of 60 ft. Divers will be required to have an advanced certification for participation. The second opportunity, is snorkeling with the aggregating juveniles which can be found on the surface. With the use of a spotter plane we will know where to find the whale sharks.

*Participants are asked to understand that with all wildlife one can never predict it's presence. However, this is the peak time for the presence of the pregnant females in the area and small numbers of aggregating juveniles can also be found.

Diving - The sea offers an amazing diversity of undersea life to include moray eels, manta rays (mobulas), stingrays, turtles and more. Not only will we have the opportunity to dive with such a diversity of marine life, to include whale sharks, but a colony of playful sea lions are a stone's throw from our main dive sites. The Sea of Cortez is known as the world's largest aquarium offering world class diving. For more info on the ships dive inventory, set up and dive sites please visit the "Dive Expeditions" section of our website at www.panterra.com.

Additional Activities - While diving is our main focus, if you would like to take a break from diving and explore the islands we will be offering optional kayaking, hiking and snorkelling. Non-diving wildlife encounters include whales, dolphins, manta rays, sea lions and a spectacular array of seabirds.

Evening Activities - As the sun sets and the night falls upon us one of the most beautiful things you can do is stargaze. If you have never seriously done it before, it is a must. Stasia Ferbey, our resident astronomer, will introduce you to the night sky. You may also choose to simply relax with a cocktail in hand, and reflect on the days' adventures.



The Sea of Cortez offers world class diving in the largest natural aquarium on earth.



Whale Shark feeding.
Photo courtesy of Deni Ramirez - copyright protected

Trip Information continued:

Climate:

During the month of June the average temperature in the Sea of Cortez ranges from 79° - 90° F. The water temperature ranges from 68° - 80° F at the surface, with a thermocline between 40 - 60 feet ranging between 65° - 75° F. With water temperatures warming up fast visibility is improving daily, early-mid June visibility is around 30 - 45 feet. In the Baja the days are warm and beautiful, the evenings cool down and may require light pants and jacket.

Menu:

Our meals consists of a variety of healthy, nutritious foods including fresh fruits, vegetables and meats. The cuisine reflects the Mexican culture and most dietary needs can be accommodated with advanced notice.

Customs and Immigration:

Requires pre-immigration clearance prior to leaving the docks in La Paz. A valid passport is required and this information must be submitted to the Panterra office 30 days prior to departure. A delay in getting this information to Panterra may result in up to 3 days departure from the docks.

Expedition Staff:

The divemasters are local, and well known in their profession. Dr. Ramirez will be accompanied by her own divemaster who is trained to work with her and clients participating in the research. The naturalist staff, Lela Sankeralli and Stasia Ferbey, bring to the expedition a science based educational component with 30 years of combined experience in teaching marine sciences, natural history and astronomy in the Baja. Our goal is to blend adventure travel with environmental awareness/conservation, providing participants with an unforgettable cultural and educational experience.

Ship's Crew:

The Captain(s), engineer and crew are onboard to insure the safety and well being of the group. They bring many years of mariner experience in the Sea of Cortez and offer the warmth and kindness that reflects the beauty and hospitality of the people of Baja, Mexico.

Ship's Information:

The "MV Adventure is a 110' aluminum hull ship. As a certified passenger vessel, all crew, vessel paperwork, safety and navigation equipment meet the legal requirements under the "Nacional de Seguridad Maritima". The multiple level decks are ideal for wildlife viewing and accommodations are private staterooms with single berths, dble/quad occupancy. Each stateroom comes complete with air conditioning, cupboards and draws to unpack in, sink/vanity and comfortable spacious bunks. Shared restrooms and showers are separate to the staterooms. Deluxe accommodations are available at an additional cost of \$200.00 per person. These limited staterooms come complete with their own ensuite bathroom/shower and can be converted to a dbl bed.

Expedition Includes:

All amenities onboard the ship (i.e. meals, accommodations, trip equipment inclusive of air, weights and tanks, and ships library), tourism fees, pre-immigration clearance, 2 nights accommodations at the Marina Hotel in La Paz and airport transfers on trip day of arrival/departure from La Paz or Cabo airports.



The Sea of Cortez ia an aquarium chalked full of amazing marine life. There is lots to see and explore.



Bulls-eye Stingray watches as we swim by.



The MV Adventure anchored at the sea lion colony of Los Isolotes.

Trip Information continued:

Expedition DOES NOT Include:

Airfare, Travel Insurances, Dive Insurance (mandatory), crew gratuities, spending money and personal dive gear and items of a personal nature.

Expedition Cost:

- **\$1995.00 US/CDN** per person
- Expedition is open to 16 participants and based on dbl occupancy.

We highly recommend that participants purchase trip cancellation insurance, in the event of an unexpected cancellation. We also recommend that you have adequate medical insurance to cover any unforeseen situations that may arise.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Reservations and Payments:

Payments can be made online by PayPal, cheque or money order and mailed to:

Panterra, 9601 Sixth Street, Sidney, BC, V8L 2W1

Deposit - In order to reserve a space on the expedition a \$595.00 deposit is required.

Balance - of \$1400.00 is due by April 15, 2012.

Cancellation and Refund Policy:

If you must cancel your trip the refund policy is as follows:

Prior to 30 days, if a replacement reservation is found a full refund less \$150.00 administrative fee. If a replacement reservation is not found the full amount paid is retained.

30 days or less, the trip fee is non-refundable. **Panterra** is not responsible for any additional costs that may arise from a trip alteration or delay, caused by circumstances beyond our control.

Medical Forms and Liability Release:

Each participant is required to complete the "Participant Information Form" which covers medical information and release of liability. This form must be submitted with the initial deposit. It can be obtained from the Panterra website www.panterra.com. Go to "Our Expeditions", click on "Dive Expeditions" scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "Divers Participant Information Form". For non-divers go to "Our Expeditions", click on "Adult/Family Expeditions" scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "Participant Information Form".

Participant Responsibilities:

Scuba diving is a potentially dangerous activity and involves the risk of serious injury and/or death and/or property damage. Diving with compressed air involves certain risks and injuries that can occur which require treatment in a recompression chamber or other facility, which may require a great distance of travel. We ask that you understand that open water diving trips may be conducted at a site that is remote, either by time or distance or both, from a recompression chamber or medical facilities. We ask that you recognize that you are responsible for your own safety and welfare during each and every segment of travel and activities while participating in the Panterra Expedition whether it be on land or underwater. If you have any physical limitations or concerns, please contact us. Expedition is open to divers and non-divers. When diving with the pregnant females an advanced certification is required. Dive insurance is also mandatory. Proof of both will be required prior to boarding the MV Adventure. Panterra is not responsible for anything beyond it's control.

If you would like to learn more about our expeditions, viewing the places we visit, the marine life we encounter and the kinds of activities we engage in, you are invited to browse through the "Trip Journal" section of the website.

For more information or to book your spot on the expedition please contact:

Panterra - Lela Sankeralli - 1-800-665-6639

Email: info@panterra.com Website: www.panterra.com