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## Swimming with Whale Sharks Isla Mujeres, Mexico

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- **Trip Highlights:** Swim alongside the largest fish on the planet, snorkel in crystal clear Caribbean waters, relax on Playa Norte, and discover the charms of Isla Mujeres
  - **When:** Scheduled group departure August 5 - 9, 2010
  - **Duration:** 4 Nights
  - **Accommodations:** Luxury boutique hotel
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**Whale Shark Biosphere Reserve** ~ Reserva de la Biosfera Tiburón Ballena, designated in 2009, is located off the north coast of Quintana Roo, Mexico, with a surface area of 145,988 acres. The marine surface of this Biosphere Reserve guarantees the protection of the region which contains waters rich with organic material. This concentration of nutrients allow for the exceptional presence of species such as mussels, crustaceans, birds and marine mammals, as well as large groups of whale sharks, making it the perfect environment for spotting these gentle sea giants in their natural environment.

**Isla Mujeres** ~ The "Island of Women", is located less than 10 miles off the coast of Cancun, Mexico. Just a short **20-minute ferry ride from Cancun**, it is a long way from the bustle of mega-resort vacations. With almost perfect year-round weather, Isla Mujeres is a haven for beach and water sports enthusiasts.



Reefs to Rockies



### Day 1 – Arrival to Isla Mujeres

Shuttle transfer from Cancun International Airport to Gran Puerto Ferry Terminal for our 20 minute ferry ride to Isla Mujeres. You will be met at the ferry dock on Isla by a local representative and transferred to your hotel. Tonight, we'll all gather for a sunset cocktail reception on the beach. Overnight at Na Balam.

**Whale Sharks** ~ The gigantic, polka-dotted whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), called "domino" by locals, is the largest living fish on the planet. One of only three filter-feeding sharks, the whale shark feeds on minute organisms including krill, fish eggs, crab larvae, and jellyfish. They are able to open their mouth wide to optimize feeding. They can also feed via suction while vertical in the water. Even though the whale shark has a sizable mouth, it shows no evidence of large, sharp teeth characteristic of most shark species.

### Day 2 – Whale Shark Tour

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll be met at the nearby ferry dock for our first whale shark adventure. Twenty-five miles off the coast, in deep blue waters abundant with plankton, whale sharks have come together in large numbers for their annual aggregation. We have the opportunity to swim with these gentle giants as they glide close to the surface, mouth wide open like a vacuum, filtering food from the water. After our whale shark adventure, we'll return to Isla where we'll have the rest of the afternoon to explore. You can relax on world-famous Playa Norte (North Beach), or shop in artisan-owned stores. This evening, we'll meet for dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Na Balam. (B,BL,D)



### Day 3 – Whale Shark Tour

Today, we'll spend another day swimming with sharks -- no two days are alike. The afternoon is on your own. You can rent a golf cart or bicycle to check out the south end of the island. Dinner at a local restaurant and overnight at Na Balam. (B, BL, D)

### Day 4 – Snorkeling and Picnic

This morning, we'll go out for a private snorkeling trip around the island before the crowds arrive followed by a picnic lunch. The reef surrounding Isla is home to a dazzling array of schooling fish and corals. Dinner at a local restaurant and overnight at Na Balam. (B,L,D)

### Day 5 – Return Home

Transfer back to the airport for your flight home or continue your stay in Mexico with an optional extension on the Yucatan Peninsula.

**Optional Extensions:** Due to its close proximity to Cancun and the Riviera Maya, Isla Mujeres is a wonderful starting point for discovering the Yucatan Peninsula's diverse cultural, archaeological, and biological diversity. If you'd like to extend your stay in Mexico, we're happy to help make suggestions and travel arrangements.

**Pricing \$975/ person based on double occupancy.** Package includes round-trip shuttle and ferry transfers between Cancun International Airport and Isla Mujeres, meet and greet at Isla Mujeres ferry dock, two days of whale shark tours, snorkeling tour near Isla Mujeres, local guides, accommodations, meals, and cocktail reception as listed in the itinerary.