

WILDAID



WHALE SHARK TRIP

2021

INFORMATION AND ITINERARY



WELCOME TO ISLA MUJERES

Welcome to the charming island of Isla Mujeres, Mexico. We are thrilled to have you on this once-in-a-lifetime trip to swim with the majestic whale sharks. We hope you enjoy a wonderful week of hospitality, fine dining and unrivaled ocean encounters.

ABOUT ISLA MUJERES

A sliver of land fringed by white sand beaches amid the turquoise sea, Isla Mujeres is five miles long and no more than a quarter-mile wide. The island was formed by ocean currents depositing sediment, which provides its abundance of sand and flat topography. The island's population is just 15,000.

Isla Mujeres was one of the Mexican Caribbean's earliest destinations with hotels and other tourist developments, but attention quickly shifted to Isla Cozumel and Cancun mainland. As those areas exploded — rushing to build high-rise hotels and ports for cruise ships — Isla Mujeres has maintained a relaxed, low-key atmosphere of a quiet fishing community, attracting backpackers and bohemian visitors alike.

HOW THE ISLAND GOT ITS NAME

Francisco Fernández de Córdoba discovered Isla Mujeres in 1517. Legend has it that the only inhabitants of the island were the priestess of Ixchel and her court of women. Scattered around were numerous gold, silver and clay statues of Ixchel, and so the island got its name: Isla Mujeres, the Island of Women.

"During Lent of 1517 Francisco Hernandez de Córdoba sailed from Cuba with three ships to procure slaves for the mines... (others say he sailed to discover new lands). He landed on the Isla de las Mujeres, to which he gave this name because the idols he found there, of the goddesses of the country, "Ixchel" and her daughters and daughter-in-law's "Ixchebeliax", "Ixhunie", "Ixhunieta", only vested from the girdled down, and having the breast uncovered after the manner of the Indians. The building was of stone, such as to astonished them, and they found certain objects of gold which they took."

— Excerpt from "Yucatan, Before and After the Conquest" written in 1566 by Friar Diego de Landa.

ORIENTATION

The town of Isla Mujeres is located at the island’s northwestern tip. Just eight blocks long and five blocks deep, it’s quite walkable and home to most of the island’s restaurants, shops and services. The east shore of Isla Mujeres faces the Caribbean and consists of rough boulders and limestone.

AREAS OF INTEREST

- Avenida Matamoros is notable for its bohemian shops and atmosphere.
- Avenida Hidalgo intersects the town and the local Zocalo (central plaza). This area is pedestrian-friendly and has many shops and restaurants.
- Avenida Rueda Medina is the busy street that runs along the south side of the island near the ferry piers.

BEACHES

PLAYA NORTE (NORTH BEACH)

Playa Norte is the ideal beach for sipping margaritas, sunning and relaxing. Fine white sands descend gradually into a gorgeous turquoise sea—in fact, you can wade nearly 100 yards and still be only waist deep.

PLAYA SOL

For deeper water and a wider beach, visit Playa Sol, a short walk from Playa Norte. This beach is ideal for sunning and playing in the sand but is not ideal for swimming due to strong currents.

PLAYA LANCHERERO

Playa Lancheros is at the south of the island. While less manicured than North Beach, it offers stunning views of the Caribbean.



SHOPPING - SUBJECT TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

Selected picks for unique shopping on the island:

AZTLAN

Specializes in Mexican masks and art. Located at Hidalgo street near Abasolo.

GALERIA DE ARTE MEXICANO

Selling fine pottery and silver. Parque Central, Ave. Guerrero 3.

LA SIRENA

Textiles, skeleton art and masks can all be found in this tiny shop, filled with folk art curated from all over Mexico. Located at Av. Morelos at Av. Hidalgo.

INTERNET

WiFi is available in your room and all public areas of the hotel (see hotel information on next page).

MEDICAL

HEALTH

To help avoid upset stomachs, wash your hands regularly and use hand sanitizer, especially after handling money. Avoid tap water. Use bottled water to brush your teeth. Be sure to use sunscreen and stay hydrated.

HOSPITAL

The hospitals in Cancun offer advanced medical facilities. Galenia Hospital, 998–891–5200; HOSPITEN, 998–881–3700; AmeriMed Hospital, 998–881–3400; Hospital Americano. 998–884–6133; and AMAT Hospital, 998-887-4422. Please let us know if you have an emergency situation so we can immediately assist.

DOCTOR

Dr. Antonio Salas is an English speaking general medicine doctor on Isla Mujeres with a private practice at #18 Av. Hidalgo. Tel: 998-877-0021 / 24-hour emergency care: 998–877–0477. Feel free to write to Dr. Salas with any of your medical questions regarding your trip to Isla Mujeres/ E-mail: drsalas@prodigy.net.mx

DENTIST

Dr. Rodrigo Tello Peón is an English-speaking dentist in Cancun. Located at #18 B Ave. Robalo, just a 10-minute taxi ride from Puerto Juarez. Tel: 998-884-1743

POST OFFICE

The post office is open Monday–Saturday, 10:00am–4:00pm. It is located at Av. Guerrero and Av. Lopez Mateos. You may also drop stamped mail at the hotel lobby for mailing.

BANKING

There is an HSBC bank and a CIBanco located in front of the ferry dock. An ATM and currency exchange is available there as well. (Currency exchange: Mon–Fri 9:00am–5:00pm and Sat 9:00am–3:00pm/ Bank: Mon–Sat 8:00am–7:00pm)

The best exchange rate on the island can be found at the hotel. Visit the front desk and they will exchange your currency for you.

PHARMACY

Super Market Express, carries a limited selection of items. If you have forgotten anything, check with WildAid staff. We have a small supply of items.

TRANSPORTATION

TRAFFIC AND DRIVING

Golf carts are a standard method of getting around Isla Mujeres. WildAid will provide golf carts for your use. Just watch out for pedestrians in the town, as many people are on foot. Keep an eye out for the many speed bumps throughout the island.

TAXI INFORMATION

Island taxis are plentiful and will take you anywhere you want to go. Villa Rolandi will call a taxi for you.

CURRENCY & TIPPING

CURRENCY

The peso is Mexico’s national currency, but vendors and restaurants in Cancun and Isla Mujeres will also accept both U.S. dollars. The exchange rate fluctuates daily but is around 19.9 pesos to the dollar. If the amounts are in the hundreds of dollars, it pays to get the exchange rate converted precisely. Please note that U.S. coins are of no value to the locals and can even be considered offensive, so please do not leave them for locals.

TIPPING

Tipping is customary in Mexico. Your gratuity is included for meals and boat guides.

DRESS CODE

The island is relaxed and informal. Casual island clothing is suitable for dinner and events.

ABOUT VILLA ROLANDI

INCIDENTALS

All meals, beverages/cocktails, and room costs are included with exemplary service. Should you have any other incidentals, please make payment directly to the hotel upon check out.

ROOM AMENITIES

Amenities at this hotel are included with 24-hour room service. The minibar is stocked with soda, beer, sparkling wine, and bottled water.

HOTEL AMENITIES

FITNESS ROOM

A fitness room is available at the hotel, with machines and weights.

SPA TREATMENTS

Use of the spa is not included in your package. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, appointments can only be booked after arrival.

DINING

BREAKFAST

Breakfast is provided daily at Casa Rolandi from 7:00-10:30am. We will leave the hotel between 7:30 am - 7:45 am so plan breakfast accordingly.

LUNCH

Lunch is provided daily on the boats. For those staying back on the island, Casa Rolandi serves lunch beginning at 12pm.

DINNER

Each evening, WildAid will host dinner. Check your itinerary for the time and location. Room service is available 24 hours a day.



HOTEL BAR

THE BAR IN CASA ROLANDI

Open from 7:30am–10:30pm

CHECK OUT

All of your airport transfers have been previously arranged. On the day of your departure, you will meet a WildAid staff member in the hotel lobby to depart. Please return your room keys and take care of any incidentals; all other costs are covered. Be prepared to leave 3.5 hours before your flight's departure time. Expect 1.5 hours for transit to Cancun Airport and 2 hours for international check-in.

SCHEDULE OF WHALE SHARK TRIP EVENTS

WHALE SHARK SWIMS

Each morning our group will meet in the hotel lobby. We'll then walk over to the Villa Rolandi docks, where our boat will be waiting. We will depart shortly thereafter to meet the whale shark tour boats.

Once everyone is situated on the boats, we'll head out and marvel at the morning view of Isla Mujeres and breathtaking North Beach. Whale shark territory covers a seven-mile-wide circle, and you'll be within range in about an hour. You'll spend the morning scouting out groups of whale sharks and enjoying private encounters. Just two people enter the water at a time. We will swim with the sharks until about 2pm-3pm daily.

TIPS FOR YOUR SWIM

Breakfast will be light. A heavy meal will be tough for swimming and boating, but a light meal will help fuel you for your swim.

Additional snacks, drinks and lunch will be provided on the boat. Your boat guide will provide flippers, wetsuits or flotation devices. They will also take fantastic underwater photographs of your swim.

THINGS TO BRING ON YOUR SWIM

- Towel (provided)
- Hat (provided)
- Sunscreen (provided)
- Water bottle (provided)
- Snorkel gear (during COVID it will be important to bring your own snorkel gear)
- Camera (optional, as our guides will take professional photos)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are plenty of things to do if you prefer not to dive with the whale sharks one day. Please note the following activities are not included in your WildAid package.

CENOTES DIVES

A cenote (pronounced say-NO-tay) is a natural sinkhole created where a cave ceiling has collapsed. Meander around stalactites through tunnels or just enjoy a refreshing swim in the freshwater. (Please note: you must be a scuba-certified to participate in dives and you will miss a swim with the sharks if you attend this excursion.)

CHICHEN ITZA

Located hours south of Cancun, Chichen Itza is one of the finest examples of ancient Mayan civilization and an unforgettable UNESCO World Heritage Site. (Please note that this is a full-day trip, so you will miss one whale shark excursion.)

GARAFON NATURAL REEF PARK

The best snorkeling on Isla Mujeres can be found at Garrafon Natural Reef Park. Located at the base of a large bluff, the park is perfect for snorkeling and includes part of the magnificent Great Maya Reef. Parrotfish, manta rays and other reef fish are among the marine life that call this reef home. Garrafon also offers an exciting over-the-water zip line as well relaxing lounge areas, kayak rentals, hammocks and a freshwater infinity pool overlooking the ocean.

TEMPLO DE IXCHEL AND SCULPTURE GARDEN

Located at the island's Punta Sur (south point), the Ixchel Temple is an ideal place to watch crashing waves amid the turquoise waters. Walking trails meander along the edge of a bluff and through a sculpture garden. The Mayan ruin of the goddess Ixchel is also found here.

TURTLE FARM

Turtle Farm is a sea turtle conservation facility. During nesting season from May to July, turtles lay their eggs at night along the rugged east shore. Volunteers at the turtle farm help spot nesting turtles, and their eggs are moved to a protected area away from predators (and humans) until they hatch. Upon hatching, the baby turtles are released into the Caribbean. You can visit the park where the turtles are housed and raised as well as a small aquarium.

RELAX!

The laid-back atmosphere and beautiful beaches of Isla Mujeres are the perfect place to catch rays, and enjoy a relaxed island lifestyle. We recommend cruising the island in a golf cart to enjoy the architecture, atmosphere and rustic charm of the island.



ITINERARY

JULY 22: WELCOME

7:00 PM

WildAid presentation on the south side of The Villa Rolandi pool deck.
Refreshments and appetizers served

8:15 PM

Casa Rolandi at
The Villa Rolandi for dinner

JULY 23: MEET THE WHALE SHARKS

7:00-7:30AM

After eating breakfast,
please meet in the hotel lobby
We will announce the departure time for whale shark swims during the previous night's dinner as it depends on sightings that day.

7:00 PM

WildAid nightly presentation on the south side of The Villa Rolandi pool deck.
Refreshments and appetizers served.

8:15 PM

Casa Rolandi at
The Villa Rolandi for dinner.

JULY 24: SWIM WITH THE WHALE SHARKS

7:00-7:30AM

After eating breakfast,
please meet in the hotel lobby
We will announce the departure time for whale shark swims during the previous night's dinner as it depends on sightings that day.

7:00 PM

WildAid nightly presentation on the south side of The Villa Rolandi pool deck.
Refreshments and appetizers served.

8:15 PM

Casa Rolandi at
The Villa Rolandi for dinner.

JULY 25: SWIM WITH THE WHALE SHARKS

7:00-7:30AM

After eating breakfast,
please meet in the hotel lobby
We will announce the departure time for whale shark swims during the previous night's dinner as it depends on sightings that day.

7:00 PM

WildAid nightly presentation on the south side of The Villa Rolandi pool deck.
Refreshments and appetizers served.

8:15 PM

Casa Rolandi at
The Villa Rolandi for dinner.

JULY 26: FAREWELL

WildAid will organize all guest travel to the airport so you can have a relaxing day on Isla Mujeres! Departure process to include COVID-19 testing.



PHOTOS & SOCIAL MEDIA



TWITTER

Tell your friends what you're up to and share stories with the group! Tweet using the hashtag #WhaleSharks21, WildAid's handle @WildAid and Corie's handle @WAE Expeditions. Here are some suggested tweets:

- Whale sharks need our help. Join me and @WildAid in saying no to shark fin soup! #WhaleSharks21 #WildAid
- I met a whale shark thanks to @WildAid and @WAE Expeditions! #WhaleSharks21 #WildAid
- Did you know a whale shark can help generate \$2M in tourism revenue to a coastal community? @WildAid #WhaleSharks21 #WildAid



INSTAGRAM

Whether you opt for filter or no-filter on your Instagram posts, tag @wildaid and @wildaidexpeditions



FACEBOOK

Upload your photos and share your experiences with your friends on Facebook. Be sure to tag @WildAid in your photos and in your updates.

CONTACT INFORMATION

ON-SITE WILDAID CONTACTS

Wildaid team members will be available in the lobby each morning before the swims. Should you need anything during the day, please call/text a WildAid team member. Every evening, WildAid team members will be available at each individual dining establishment.

CORIE KNIGHTS

Cell: 213-446-8885
E-mail: corie@wildaid.org

DEBRA BAKER

Cell: 310-968-4666
E-mail: debra@wildaid.org

PETER KNIGHTS

Cell: 415-254-3174
E-mail: knights@wildaid.org

HOTEL

VILLA ROLANDI

(52) 998-999-2000

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

POLICE

Tel: 998-877-0082

DOCTOR

Tel: 998-877-0021

EMERGENCY

Tel: 998-845-2370

ABOUT WILDAID

WILDAID



WILDAID IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION WITH A MISSION TO END THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE IN OUR LIFETIMES. WHILE MOST WILDLIFE CONSERVATION GROUPS FOCUS ON PROTECTING ANIMALS FROM POACHING, WILDAID WORKS TO REDUCE GLOBAL CONSUMPTION OF WILDLIFE PRODUCTS SUCH AS ELEPHANT IVORY, RHINO HORN AND SHARK FIN SOUP. WITH AN UNRIVALED PORTFOLIO OF CELEBRITY AMBASSADORS AND A GLOBAL NETWORK OF MEDIA PARTNERS, WILDAID LEVERAGES NEARLY \$230 MILLION IN ANNUAL PRO BONO MEDIA SUPPORT WITH A SIMPLE MESSAGE:

WHEN THE BUYING STOPS, THE KILLING CAN TOO.



Up to
500 MILLION PEOPLE
reached every year in China



\$230 MILLION OF DONATED
media space and air-time
in 2018



144,000 SQ KMS OF MARINE
life protected in Galapagos
Marine Reserve



150+ PUBLIC SERVICE
ANNOUNCEMENTS
produced in dozens of
languages, versions,
and formats



90+ COUNTRIES REPRESENTED
in our donor base



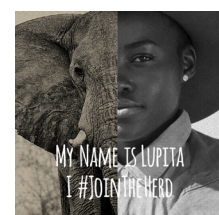
Up to
450 MILLION SOCIAL MEDIA
users reached in 2018



30+ PRO BONO
media partners



40+ MEDIA PLATFORMS
including television,
billboards, transit, internet,
mobile, and print



80+ INTERNATIONAL AMBASSADORS
a who's who of leading Chinese and interna-
tional celebrities including China's biggest
star Yao Ming, action hero Jackie Chan,
Hollywood Stars Danai Gurira, Bryce Dallas
Howard, and Lupita Nyong'o along with
many of the world's leading sports stars

BACKGROUND

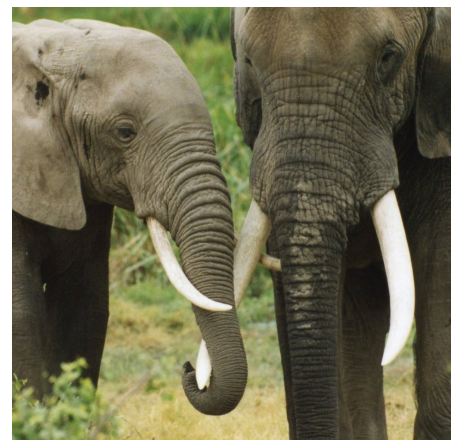
The illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade is estimated to be worth over \$10 billion per year and has decimated certain wildlife populations around the world.

Killed for trophies and ornaments, food, medicine and clothing, these animals are pushed to the brink of extinction as a result of consumer demand. Similar to the drug trade, law enforcement efforts alone have failed to curb growing consumer demand. Every year, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent protecting animals in the wild, yet little is spent on addressing the underlying demand for wildlife parts and products. This is what makes WildAid unique in the conservation world.

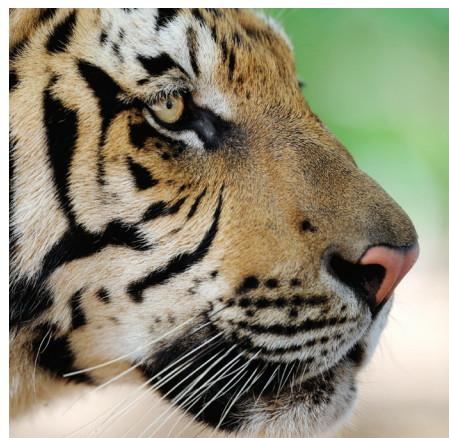
KILLED FOR
TROPHIES AND
ORNAMENTS,
FOOD, MEDICINE,
AND CLOTHING,
THESE ANIMALS
ARE PUSHED
TO THE BRINK
OF EXTINCTION
AS A RESULT
OF CONSUMER
DEMAND.



Every year, fins from up to
73 MILLION SHARKS
are used for SHARK FIN SOUP



Every year, up to
35,000 ELEPHANTS
are killed for THEIR IVORY



Every year, about
150 TIGERS
are killed for their BODY PARTS



More than
1,000 RHINOS
are killed in South Africa
every year for THEIR HORNS

WHERE WE WORK



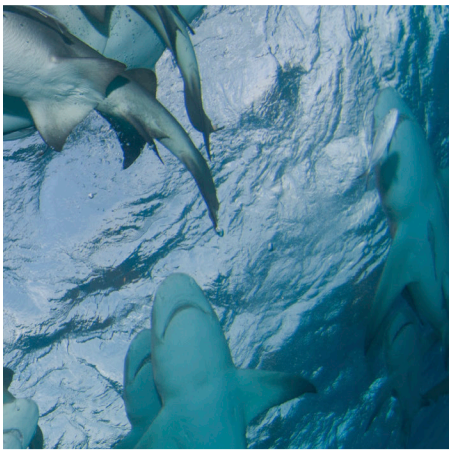
WILDAID SAVES
WILDLIFE AROUND
THE WORLD THROUGH
CONSUMER DEMAND
REDUCTION, MARINE
ENFORCEMENT AND
BUILDING PUBLIC AND
POLITICAL WILL TO
ENSURE THREATENED
SPECIES ARE FULLY
PROTECTED.

SHARK FACTS

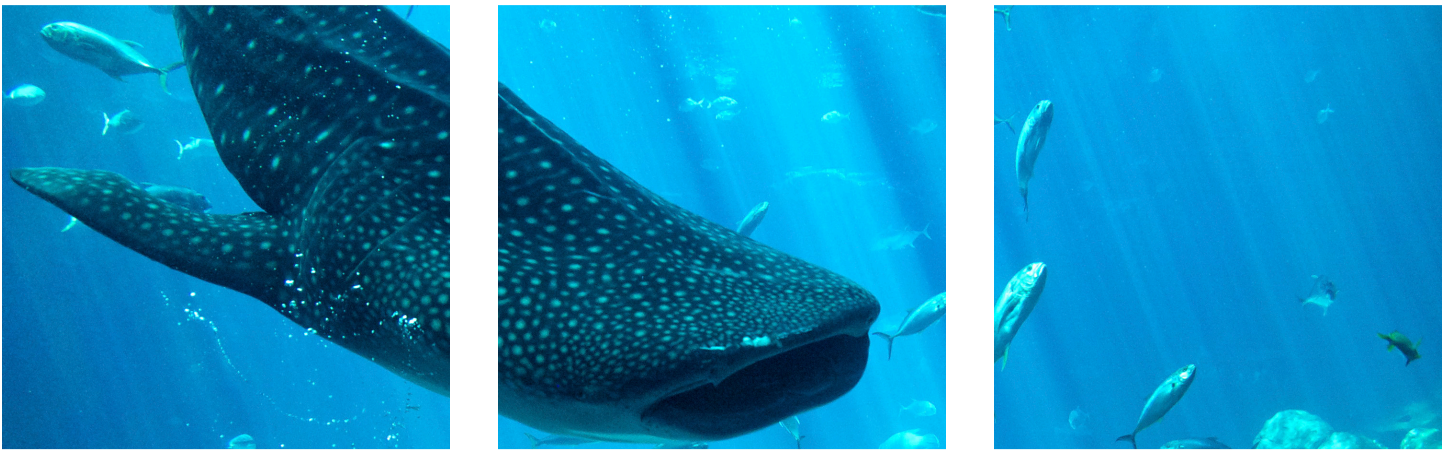


- There are around 500 known species of sharks.
- Sharks have inhabited our oceans for over 400 million years and have survived four mass extinction events including the Cretaceous–Tertiary extinction event that brought an end to the dinosaurs.
- Sharks sit at the top of the food chain in most of the ecosystems in which they occur.
- Sharks help maintain a balance in marine ecosystems, controlling the abundance and influencing the behavior and feeding habits of prey species.
- Sharks are a draw for tourism and in turn can be a major revenue earner. For some countries, sharks are worth thousands of dollars more alive swimming in the oceans than dead on a plate.
- Removing a species from an ecosystem has profound ecological consequences for the rest of the ecosystem. Declines in other commercially valuable species have been documented when sharks have been fished out, disrupting ecosystem balance and impacting economic benefits and food security for human populations.
- Litter, discarded fishing gear, chemical pollution and habitat loss all have a damaging impact on shark populations. However, the greatest threat to sharks is commercial fishing.
- The commercial exploitation of sharks has risen dramatically in recent years, driven for the most part by the explosion in demand for shark fin.
- Fins are the most valuable part of a shark, worth as much as US\$700/kg, and considerably more than the meat. As a result, many fishermen choose to cut the fins from sharks whilst still at sea and throw the rest of the shark overboard rather than carrying the whole carcass back to port. Up to 95% of the shark can be wasted.
- Shark fishing is big business, and the shark product trade now engages an estimated 145 countries. Hong Kong and mainland China continue to be the top importers of shark fin globally.
- As a result of the shark fin trade, shark populations have plummeted. An estimated 25% of all known shark and ray species are threatened with extinction. More than a third of pelagic shark and ray species are threatened with extinction. Only a handful of sharks are legally protected.

THE GREATEST THREAT TO SHARKS IS COMMERCIAL FISHING.



WHALE SHARK FACTS



- Found in tropical and warm temperate seas, the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) is the largest fish on the planet, growing up to 20 meters long and weighing up to 34 tons.
- Satellite tracking has shown that whale sharks take long-distance migrations that can last over the course of many years, spanning thousands of miles.
- As one of only three species of shark that filter feed, they typically feed on microscopic plankton, crustaceans and small fish.
- Whale sharks reproduce slowly and are found in low abundance, thus making them highly vulnerable to overfishing.
- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species lists the whale shark as Endangered. Whale sharks are listed on Appendix II of the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) and Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and included as a highly migratory species in Annex I of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Whale shark tourism is estimated to be worth over \$47 million USD worldwide each year.

WHALE SHARK TOURISM IS WORTH OVER US\$47 MILLION WORLDWIDE EACH YEAR.

Above : Whale Shark © zappowbang

SHARK FIN SOUP FACTS



- Shark fin is known as ‘yu chi’ in China (“fish wing” in English).
- Shark fin soup has been considered a delicacy in Chinese cuisine since the Sung dynasty (AD 960–1279), and shark fin soup was established as a traditional component of formal banquets by the Ming dynasty (AD 1368–1644).
- Chairman Mao shunned consumption of shark fin as an expensive delicacy, during the Cultural Revolution.
- A substantially renewed interest in shark fin in China began in the 1980s and has grown ever since, as increasing numbers of primarily urban wealthy enter the market. Current projections suggest that around 250 million new Chinese “middle class” consumers will enter the market over the next ten years. The combination of old customs and traditions with new money, conspicuous consumption and powerful new aspirations has, resulted in an explosion in the consumption of shark fin soup in China.
- Shark fin is favored for special occasions such as weddings, as a mark of respect at business and other important meetings and increasingly as a more commonplace exhibition of wealth and status.
- WildAid surveys show that despite being the single largest market for shark fins, many Chinese consumers do not know that the dish they have ordered contains shark parts.
- Shark fin itself is virtually tasteless. The flavor is entirely in the broth. Many consumers also see it as a health tonic, yet shark fin is mainly protein and contains no vitamins.
- Research has connected possible detrimental health effects with consumption of shark fin or meat—evidence suggests high levels of methylmercury, arsenic, cadmium and even beta-Methyl-amino-L-alanine (BMAA, a toxin linked to development of Alzheimer’s and AMS) can be found in sharks.
- Prices and sales of shark fin have fallen in China by 50–70%, thanks in part to demand reduction campaigns from WildAid and partner organizations.

THREATS TO OUR OCEANS

Our oceans and the three billion people worldwide that depend on them are in trouble. Ninety percent of fisheries are fished at or beyond sustainable levels. Since 1970, there’s been a 50% decline in marine life populations, leaving many in danger of extinction. Moreover, climate change threatens coral reefs, which harbor one-fourth of all marine species.

We know what we need to do to solve these problems: protect key habitats, stop killing endangered species, and only take as much as the ocean can give. Effective marine protected areas (MPAs) can make these changes a reality. They can quadruple fish populations, provide a refuge for endangered species habitat and their nursery grounds, increase the resiliency of coral reefs against external impacts, and provide coastal communities with vital protein supplies and income.

The good news is that 7.3% of the world’s oceans are now established as MPAs, and an additional 4% have been pledged, pending official designation. The bad news is that nearly 60% of the world’s MPAs do not have the resources or management in place to properly protect marine habitats and species—making these areas indistinguishable from unprotected waters.

WILDAID’S MARINE PROTECTION MODEL

WildAid makes the promise of MPAs real, allowing them to fulfill their conservation potential. We work with local partners to provide the resources and capacity building needed to ensure successful long-term management and enforcement of the MPA. We assess the MPA using our comprehensive enforcement model, create a multi-year plan, train rangers, and provide the appropriate tools and our expertise and mentorship. This helps to ensure that MPAs reach their true potential allowing marine wildlife to recover and flourish.

COMPREHENSIVE MPA ENFORCEMENT

Our comprehensive enforcement model addresses five different areas to ensure the successful conservation of a marine area: Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, Systematic Training, Policy and Sanctions, Education and Outreach, and Sustainable Finance. Each piece of the chain works together to form a functional system. For example, if illegal fishers frequently target a protected area, little will stop those same fishers from continuing this practice if there are no consequences for their actions. Therefore, park rangers need to have proper surveillance to detect illegal activity, rapid patrol vessels to intercept the fishers and a functional legal system that will punish infractions. Likewise, if a country declares an MPA, they need to have the ability to enforce regulations, gain community support and stop illegal activity.

WildAid’s model is unique and effective, and has been proven in the Galapagos Marine Reserve, Coastal Ecuador, Indonesia and Palau. Our recent significant achievements include: law enforcement patrol hours increased by 28% in four of coastal Ecuador’s Marine Protected Areas over two years, successful prosecutions of environmental infractions in the Galápagos Marine Reserve increased 84% over two years, and total marine species biomass in the Misool Marine Reserve increased 250% over six years.

DESPITE BEING THE
SINGLE LARGEST
MARKET FOR SHARK
FIN, MANY CHINESE
CONSUMERS DO NOT
KNOW THAT THE
DISH THEY HAVE
ORDERED CONTAINS
SHARK PARTS.

WILDAID'S MARINE PROTECTION INITIATIVES

GALAPAGOS MARINE RESERVE | ECUADOR

The Galápagos Islands are home to nearly 3,000 marine species, many of which are found nowhere else on earth. The area’s nutrient-rich waters support the concentration and reproduction of migratory marine species including humpback whales, sea turtles, giant manta rays and hammerhead sharks.

INITIATIVES

STOPPING ILLEGAL FISHING IN THE GALAPAGOS MARINE RESERVE

Together with the Galápagos National Park Service and Ecuadorian Navy, WildAid integrates electronic surveillance technology to monitor the reserve, trains park rangers annually, and works with the government to enact stronger regulations to combat illegal fishing in Ecuador. Recent successes include: the implementation of an AIS monitoring system, high-profile arrests and sentencing of crews illegally transporting sharks, and the development of a legal database for Galápagos park lawyers to handle a backlog of over 200 environmental cases.

PREVENTING THE INTRODUCTION OF INVASIVE SPECIES

The greatest unaddressed threat to biodiversity on the Galápagos Islands is the introduction of invasive species. Once introduced, irreversible damage may occur to native or endemic species of plants, animals or insects. WildAid currently supports the Galápagos Biosecurity Agency via training initiatives for their staff that help to prevent the introduction of invasive species and enact effective quarantine measures once they have been identified. Recent successes include the launch of a canine unit, the construction of a new biosecurity lab for the agency, setting up rapid diagnosis units to identify high-risk invasive species and quickly contain them, and launching a four-month celebrity-led awareness campaign to prevent the introduction of invasive species through educational videos that reached five million people across Ecuador.

COASTAL ECUADOR

Coastal Ecuador is home to the largest remaining population of endangered giant manta rays, five species of sea turtles, 20 kinds of whales and dolphins, hammerhead and whale sharks. Its waters are important for both marine biodiversity and coastal economies.

STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF COASTAL MPAS IN ECUADOR

WildAid designed a national MPA enforcement strategy for coastal Ecuador. This plan is currently being implemented at five priority MPAs with activities including collaboration with artisanal fishers to promote sustainable fishing practices and community-led enforcement, assistance with sea turtle conservation initiatives to protect more than 15,000 endangered sea turtle hatchlings, systematic ranger trainings, expanded communications networks and investments in surveillance and interception equipment.

60% OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR MARINE ECOSYSTEMS HAVE BEEN DEGRADED.



NORTHERN REEF PROJECT | PALAU

The tiny Pacific island nation of Palau made history when they moved to protect 80% of their national waters. Palau's communities rely almost exclusively on fish for their diet and economy. Its numerous coral reefs, volcanic atolls, nesting beaches and mangroves offer spawning and aggregation sites for various migratory reef fish, sharks, rays, sea turtles, dugongs, crocodiles and giant clams.

STOPPING ILLEGAL FISHING IN PALAU’S PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK

Together with The Nature Conservancy, we designed a practical and feasible enforcement system for the Northern Reefs to be implemented over four years. The Northern Reefs are some of Palau's most productive fishing grounds and encompass 3,930 square kilometers. Our strategy, launched in 2015, combines electronic surveillance equipment with strategic patrols to provide a constant presence and rapid response capacity. In 2018, we began a project with TNC and the Palau Protected Areas Network, which encompasses 20% of their coastal waters, to assess and strengthen management of the network and mentor senior staff.

GABON

PROTECTING GABON'S NEW MPA NETWORK

WildAid launched a new project in Gabon’s coastal MPA network, home to the world’s largest nesting population of leatherback sea turtles and critically endangered humpback dolphin, shark and ray populations. In 2018, we provided a comprehensive assessment of four MPAs, developed a multi-year enforcement plan, and have begun implementing its strategy.

INDONESIA

SUPPORTING LOCAL CONSERVATION IN THE CORAL TRIANGLE

WildAid designed an enforcement plan for Southeast Misool, located in Indonesia's biodiverse Coral Triangle, and supports Misool Foundation, our local enforcement partner in its operations. Patrols of no-take zones have continually improved to ensure compliance of local regulations. Outreach to local communities has been critical in raising awareness and changing practices to better manage marine resources. The efforts of Misool Foundation, together with other conservation initiatives in the region have already succeeded in doubling the biomass around the Misool Eco Resort over a five-year period and increasing patrols by 500%.

WILDAID



PRINTED ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER.