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## Georgia Aquarium Whale Shark Expedition

### August 2011

Join Georgia Aquarium on its annual whale shark eco-tour to the beautiful waters of the Gulf of Mexico! This summer, the Aquarium will take an intimate group of individuals on a relaxing trip to Mexico for an exclusive opportunity to see Georgia Aquarium researchers at work and enjoy special animal encounters. The expedition will be guided by the Aquarium's Lead Researcher, Dr. Al Dove and VP of Development and Membership, Kristie Cobb Hacke.

Since 2002, a team of Georgia Aquarium researchers has been working off the coast of Mexico to study whale sharks as part of Project Domino, a collaboration Georgia Aquarium staff and scientists, Mote Marine Laboratory scientists and Mexican researchers. This work and funding of Georgia Aquarium's research in Mexico is just one of many ways the Aquarium is working to protect and expand the scientific understanding of aquatic animals in their native habitats. Now seven years since the project began, the Aquarium invites you to join us on our annual shark expedition.



## Friday, August 12th

Our experience will begin in Atlanta, where you will meet at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and depart for Cancun on AirTran Airways.



Our accommodations will be at the stunning Ritz-Carlton Cancun, with a breathtaking ocean view from each room. Immerse yourself in the exotic Mexican Caribbean while staying at The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun, an exclusive resort in the heart of the Cancun Hotel Zone – and among the most luxurious hotels in the world. With convenient access to intriguing ancient Mayan sites, enticing white sand beaches and a variety of lively and leisurely pastimes, this Cancun hotel provides an exceptional setting for an unforgettable vacation.

The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun, is home to an outstanding collection of exceptional services and amenities including:

- Two award winning Restaurants, **Fantino** and **The Club Grill**
- An exclusive **Culinary Center** designed by Viking Rage®
- A **Cliff Drysdale Tennis Center**, considered one of the top players of all time
- An award winning **Spa**
- A **Turtle Camp**, for the protection of marine turtles
- Impeccable personalized service paired with the warmth of the Mexican hospitality

That evening we will be welcomed with cocktails, and you are free to enjoy the evening on your own.

**Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Breakfast & Afternoon Boat Tour**



Mid-morning the next morning, we will depart by boat for the highlight of the trip to tour the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, where scientists have found the world's largest aggregation of whale sharks. The tour starts with an early morning coffee reception where we will review the regulations associated with our activities in protected waters. Along the ride to the whale shark feeding area we will lookout for manta rays and

other Caribbean animals in their natural environment. This five to six hour tour includes a boat guide, soft drinks, snorkeling gear and snacks. You can use the afternoon to relax or explore the natural beauties of this idyllic Caribbean island with white sand beaches.

In the evening we will join Georgia Aquarium's research team for dinner where they will discuss research, the animals' habitats and the goal of their work. The team will include a variety of specialized researchers including nutritionists, shark specialists, and local partners.



### **Sunday, August 14<sup>th</sup>**



On our third day, you will have the opportunity to explore the Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza and Cenote. This pre-Columbian architectural site is a wonderful site and important part of the area's history. Following the tour you will visit the Cenote and have a buffet lunch with the group.

Optional tour includes a "Dolphin Royal Swim" encounter where we will learn about dolphins' great intelligence and friendliness while in the natural paradise of Isla Mujeres. We will share many activities with our new dolphin friends, who will greet you with a handshake and a kiss in the pristine and calm ocean waters surrounding Isla Mujeres. Activities may also include a manatee and sea lion encounter, the head veterinarian will offer his expertise and the day's activities will result in fun for all. (Please note, this activity may include additional charges).

### **Monday, August 15<sup>th</sup>**

On our fourth day in Mexico, you will enjoy the breathtaking views at The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun, over a group breakfast. Early that morning we will again join the research team and have another opportunity to swim with the whale sharks and other natural beauties for our final whale shark activity.

### **Tuesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>**

On our final day in Cancun we will be spent swimming with whale sharks as we enjoy this majestic species before departing for Atlanta the next day.



### **Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>**

On our sixth morning in Mexico we will visit the Cancun International Airport for departure to Atlanta.

## Georgia Aquarium Whale Shark Experience Itinerary – August 2011

**Day    Itinerary**

**8/12    Depart Atlanta – Arrive in Cancun**

Departure from Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, with check-in assistance.

**8/13    Swim with Whale Sharks and Mid-Morning Boat Tour**

Boat tour of the Gulf of Mexico and whale shark aggregation.

**8/14    One Day Tour to Chichen Itza & Cenote**

Optional afternoon visit to Dolphin Discovery.

**8/15    Swim with Whale Sharks and Morning Boat Tour**

Early morning tour boat departure into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to observe the great whale shark. Tour will last 5-6 hours and includes: boat, guide, soft drinks, snorkeling gear and snacks. Dinner and afternoon on your own.

**8/16    Swim with Whale Sharks and Morning Afternoon Boat Tour**

Early evening boat departure into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to observe the great whale shark. Tour will last 5-6 hours and includes: boat, guide, soft drinks, snorkeling gear and snacks.

**8/17    Departure to Atlanta**

## Prices and Lodging

The price per person includes airfare on AirTran Airways and all items listed below in the "Price Includes" section

**Single Occupancy \$3,386 per person**

**Double Occupancy \$2,244 per person**

**Triple Occupancy \$2,055 per person**

## Lodging

The Ritz-Carlton Cancun

\*\*Lodging subject to modification within the same hotel class\*\*

## Price Includes:

- Roundtrip group airfare from Atlanta to Cancun on AirTran Airways;
- Lodging for 5 nights at the Ritz-Carlton Cancun, daily breakfast included;
- All ground transportation in Mexico for scheduled excursions;
- Bottled water available in the vehicle during travel;
- Three 5-hour boat tours with whale shark snorkeling hosted by English-speaking guide and Aquarium staffer and light lunch with drinks will be served on the boat;
- Day tour and buffet lunch at Chichen Itza;
- One dinner with the whale shark researchers; and
- Local and federal taxes.

## Price does not include:

- Any personal expenses;
- Any drink or beverage except for those detailed above and included in the dinner in Cancun;
- Any excursion or visit not mentioned above; and
- Anything not mentioned on the price includes paragraph.

## Program Deposits and Payments

- A deposit of \$500 per person is required within 7 business days of your reservation.
- The full payment for the trip is due by August 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.
- The deposit is non-refundable. The payment for the trip is non-refundable unless a replacement is located.

To reserve your spot or if you have questions please contact Kristie Cobb Hacke at (404) 581-4130 or [kcobb@georgiaaquarium.org](mailto:kcobb@georgiaaquarium.org).

For complete details about the Georgia Aquarium Whale Shark Conservation efforts visit <http://www.georgiaaquarium.org/conservation/whalesharkprogram.aspx>.

\* Proceeds benefit Georgia Aquarium's whale shark conservation initiatives. A portion of the price is tax-deductible. The Aquarium will provide a tax letter for your records. Please consult your tax advisor for details. Prices are valid for the specified dates and for a **minimum of 8 guests**.