



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Snorkel with Humpback Whales

On the Silver Bank, Dominican Republic

March 28 to April 4, 2020



Humpback Whale

SAFARI OVERVIEW

In the warm waters of the Dominican Republic, the world's largest concentration of humpback whales converges to calve and mate on the Silver Bank. This time of year, is peak breeding season which will provide you with once-in-a-lifetime experiences of in-water encounters and whale watching. Witness males vying for the coveted "escort" role and hear them sing their famous songs. Slip into the water to see curious calves as they follow their mothers and drink their rich milk. Absorb Ted's extensive knowledge of photographic techniques and of the behaviors, anatomy, and temperaments of the North Atlantic humpback whales. When the weather cooperates, and it normally does this time of year, you'll get close-up photos of surface activity like breaching, flipper-slapping, and competitive interactions. You'll also come eye-to-eye with whales during "soft-in-water" encounters. Nothing compares to sharing the water with a whale!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Swim alongside humpback whales, including docile mother-and-calf pairs whose curiosity brings them eye-to-eye with you for an unforgettable experience.
- Take advantage of opportunities to photograph the intricacies of whale behavior and learn how to interpret these behaviors from our expert leader.
- Discover the Silver Bank, an important whale breeding and calving site within the Sanctuary for the Marine Mammals of the Dominican Republic, during five total days of in-water whale interaction (half a day longer than other tours).

LEADER: Ted Cheeseman.

DAYS: 8 days total, including estimated travel time. 7 nights aboard the *Turks and Caicos Explorer II*.

GROUP SIZE: 19.

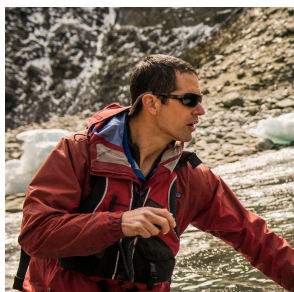
SHIP: The *Turks and Caicos Explorer II*, a 20-passenger ship.

COST: \$5,320 to \$5,820 per person, double occupancy, depending on cabin type, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 4.

CONDITIONS: This is a **non-smoking tour** for people who are interested in close-up encounters with humpback whales and witness their behavior above and below the ocean surface. See the *Conditions* section on page 7.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Mar 28	Arrive in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. Board ship in the late afternoon.	<i>Turks and Caicos Explorer II</i>	D
Mar 29	Full day of whale watching while cruising to the mooring site on the Silver Bank. Afternoon of in-water whale interaction.		B, L, D
Mar 30–Apr 2	Four full days of soft-in-water encounters and learning about whale behavior, anatomy, conservation, and individual personalities.		
Apr 3	Morning in-water whale encounters. Whale watching en route to Puerto Plata.		
Apr 4	Disembark after breakfast. Fly home.		B

LEADER



Ted Cheeseman ~ Ecologist and Photographer

Ted grew up traveling extensively and began studying and photographing wildlife as a child. After completing a Master's degree in Tropical Conservation Biology at Duke University, Ted returned to California to lead and organize expeditions full time with Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris. Ted currently leads expeditions to Antarctica, the Arctic, and the Caribbean and recently founded the citizen science project Happywhale.com.

SHIP



The 124-ft *Turks and Caicos Explorer II* is home during the tour and, with two tenders, provides the best platform for whale watching on the Silver Bank. We'll anchor in a sheltered spot on the reef and venture out by tender to share our days with the humpbacks. Our crew of certified Dive Masters is committed to keeping the ship a trouble-free adventure during your stay. Enjoy your meals in the air-conditioned salon with ocean views. A daily happy hour on the sundeck offers snacks, green-flash sunsets, and starlit

nights. Experience the Silver Bank in individually controlled air-conditioned double cabins with private bathrooms with your own gear locker and wet suit rack. See *Deck Plan* on page 9.

Our two tenders are the keys to our intimate whale encounters. The 25-ft long, extra-wide, ocean-going fiberglass tenders are equipped with twin, environmentally friendly four stroke engines. These permit us to quietly approach whales for soft-in-water encounters with virtually no exhaust fumes and the ability to double our traveling range to reach the best areas on the bank.

Each tender carries nine guests with plenty of bench space for your comfort, splash guards to protect your camera gear, an abundance of storage space for your gear, bimini tops to protect you from the sun, heavy duty boarding ladders, first aid kits, VHF radios, GPS navigation, and plenty of sandwiches, snacks, fruit, and beverages to hydrate and energize you throughout the day. Experience the best platforms for topside photography available on the Silver Bank.



DETAILED ITINERARY



Mar 28 ~ Fly to Puerto Plata; embark on the Turks and Caicos Explorer II
Arrive in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic by mid-afternoon and transfer to the *Turks and Caicos Explorer II*.

Mar 29 ~ Arrive on the Silver Bank
Scan the waters for whales en route to the mooring site on the Silver Bank. After your mid-morning arrival, you'll be briefed about soft-in-water encounters, a profound experience for all, and prepare for a full afternoon on the two tenders.

Mar 30–Apr 2 ~ *Enter the whales' world*

The numerous female humpback whales that choose the Silver Bank as their nursery for their newborn calves are usually nestled in the northeast corner of the Silver Bank, a shallow area protected by coral heads. Although coral heads encompass the entire Silver Bank, the northeast corner has extensive coral that breaks the surface during low tides, giving protection to newborn calves (and you!).

You may have some “whale waiting” time while looking for cooperative humpback whales, but that time is quickly forgotten when you are amidst surface activity and soft-in-water encounters. Most of the time you will find whale activity nearby. In fact, you will more often ask, “Which whale should we watch?” rather than, “Where are the whales?” The biggest obstacle to success is spending too much time with uncooperative whales, so be prepared to leave one group in search for more cooperative ones; be patient as you may approach many whales before finding an interested group that allows us to join them in their element and on their terms.

Apr 3 ~ *Morning whale watching, then return to Puerto Plata*

You will spend the morning on the tenders then return to the ship for lunch. Sail back to Puerto Plata through the banks, watching for more whale activity from the ship deck while bidding farewell to the world of these docile creatures. You will arrive at the dock in Puerto Plata in the late evening for your last night on board.



Apr 4 ~ *Disembark the Turks and Caicos Explorer II*

Disembark in the morning and transfer to the airport.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Description (See <i>Deck Plan</i> on page 9)	Cost per Person
Lower Deck	Double occupancy, twin upper and lower beds, porthole window, cabins 8, 9, 10.	\$5,320
Main Deck	Double occupancy, two lower twin-sized beds, desk, chair, large windows, cabins 3, 4.	\$5,520
Main Deck	Double occupancy, queen-sized bed or two lower twin-sized beds, desk, chair, large window, cabins 5, 6, 7.	\$5,520
Upper (Boat) Deck	Double occupancy, one queen-sized bed, TV, desk, chair, large window, cabins 1, 2.	\$5,820

Costs are per person depending on cabin type, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

We reserve the right to charge for cost increases that occur between when we set tour prices and the date of travel, for example, changes due to the cost of lodging and transportation. If you are a single traveler and you desire, we will find a roommate for you. If we cannot find you a roommate, we will not charge you a

single supplement. If space is available, some cabins can be booked for a single occupant by adding **90%** over the listed cabin cost. Single rooms are subject to availability.

Please note that we cannot guarantee a specific cabin number. If changes occur, we will do everything in our power to assign a cabin of equal or greater value as the cabin type specified in your reservation. Deck plan, cabin arrangements, and cabin amenities are subject to change by ship operator.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Second Payment	April 15, 2019	\$2,000
Final Payment	October 15, 2019	Remaining balance

Payments will be due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space. For reservations made after a due date, all past payments will be due with registration. By sending your initial deposit, you agree to accept our payment schedule and cancellation policy as a contract. If payments are still outstanding two weeks after the due date, your space may be forfeited.

Cancellations

Refunds are given depending on the time left before departure according to the following table. The cancellation fee of \$300 per person can be applied toward another tour if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. Consider purchasing trip cancellation insurance that could reimburse your trip costs in the event of your cancellation.

Dates	Forfeited Amount per Person
On or before August 14, 2019	\$300
August 15 to September 14, 2019	10% of tour cost
September 15 to October 14, 2019	40% of tour cost
On or after October 15, 2019	100% of tour cost

Included

- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, landing fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Transfers to the ship on March 28 and directly to the airport on April 4.
- Seven nights on board the *Turks and Caicos Explorer II*.
- Meals from dinner on March 28 through breakfast on April 4.
- Snacks, coffee, tea, juices, soda, beer, wine, and spirits aboard the ship.
- Cruising and port fees.
- Onboard lectures in the evenings.
- Trip Materials - information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Airfare is approximately \$500 to \$800 from the USA to Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, depending on origin.

- Tourist card fee for US passport holders of about \$10.
- Wetsuit and snorkeling equipment (mask, snorkel, and snorkel fins). We will send you more details about rentals in the Trip Materials.
- We can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra hotel nights for an extra cost.
- Gratuities: tipping is, of course, discretionary, however we suggest budgeting \$50 to \$100 per participant per day for March 29 to April 3 aboard the ship (about \$300 to \$600 total *per participant*), to be distributed among all the ship crew. Our leader, Ted Cheeseman, and local operator, Tom Conlin, do not receive a gratuity.
- Tips for porters and cab drivers for all transfers.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance, and trip cancellation insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as equipment rental, laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, and items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation/Release Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation/Release Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris
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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

The Silver Bank is typically 75 to 80°F (24 to 27°C) during the day and cool enough in the morning/evenings to wear a sweatshirt or light fleece. The water temperature is usually 76 to 78°F (24 to 26°C). On a typical day, winds blow from the north to southeast about 15 knots (17mph), ranging from 0 knots to 25 knots; the coral formations throughout the Silver Bank provide protection from the wind and sea conditions, and February–March is the least windy time of the whale season and rain is infrequent. The crossing to and from the Silver Bank is usually calm, but we can encounter rough sea conditions. At the mooring area, you may hardly notice the ship moving, depending the sea conditions. Because we are about 80mi offshore from the Dominican Republic on an ocean frontier, sea conditions are subjected to Mother Nature's many moods.

Fitness Level and Snorkeling Experience

Minimal fitness is required to join this whale safari, but your fitness and snorkeling ability enrich the experience. Getting in the water is not required; we've shared this safari with travelers who had wonderful experiences whale watching from the tenders. At minimum you need to comfortably and safely move around the ship and embark / disembark from the whale watching tenders. To get the most out of this safari you should be comfortable in the water, snorkeling, and getting in and out of the water via a boat ladder. Please contact us if you don't have experience snorkeling but would like to join this safari. Strong swimming

ability and the ability to free dive (i.e., diving underwater without scuba tanks) are not required, but will also enrich your experience, especially if you can dive to hear whales sing.

Flights

Airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: We suggest arriving in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic (POP) a day early on March 27, but no later than mid-afternoon on March 28. Depart from Puerto Plata (POP) anytime on April 4.

Seasickness

Don't let a fear of seasickness scare you away! Our vessel is moored in calm water for the duration of the week, and rarely does someone get seasick while in the tenders we watch whales from daily. The voyages to and from the Silver Bank are usually the only time motion-sensitive travelers take medication, and our voyage out is during the evening, so most sleep through it. Although you will eventually acquire your "sea legs", bring seasickness medication. As with all medications, do your own research and consult with your doctor before taking any drugs (even if they are over-the-counter) and especially if you are taking other drugs. Read our suggestions for coping with seasickness at www.cheesemans.com/seasickness and contact us if you have any concerns.

Conditions

- **Non-smoking policy:** We have a strict non-smoking policy. Smoking is not permitted at any time or any place during our tours.
- **Maximum time in nature:** We try to spend as much time in nature as possible, sometimes resulting in long days but giving you a more in-depth experience.
- **Itinerary route:** The itinerary route, stops and plans are subject to change by unforeseen circumstances beyond our control, such as weather or road conditions.
- **Additional forms:** For some of our tours, you may be asked to fill out additional forms (e.g., medical questionnaire).
- **Medical conditions and travel risks:** Travel to remote places is exciting, but it is important to understand and accept the risks, both medical and logistical. Minor medical problems can usually be treated, but because we are often far from medical facilities, there can be no expectation for immediate medical treatment or evacuation, even in cases of trauma. Anyone with health problems needing close medical supervision should not consider going on this tour. Bring enough medication for the duration of the trip for any chronic medical needs since pharmacies are usually not available. When you send your deposit and signed Reservation/Release Form, you certify to us that you do not knowingly have any physical or other conditions that would create a risk for yourself or for other trip participants.
- **Use of drones/UAVs on tours:** Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), AKA drones, are not suitable for use on most Cheesemans' Ecology expeditions due to logistical constraints and in many cases, local and national laws or regulations. In some cases, such as on our polar voyages, we operate under environmental regulations that ban the use of recreational drones. Do not bring a drone on safari without contacting us first.

Conservation

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of these valuable wildlife habitats. We urge you to support conservation organizations that protect and restore natural habitats and write letters to tourism and government agencies to promote work in preserving wildlife.

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice.

While on board, Ted will be documenting the individual Humpback Whales we see to contribute to our understanding of whale populations, movements, and conservation issues. You can take part in this as well and learn the stories of the whales we see! To do so, photograph flukes of diving whales – the underside of the fluke is used to identify individual humpbacks – and submit them to Happywhale (www.happywhale.com/) when you return home.

FAQS

What is the Silver Bank?

The Silver Bank is located about 80mi north of the Dominican Republic and 100mi southeast of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and it's one of the most important breeding and calving grounds for humpback whales in the North Atlantic Ocean. At least 5,000 humpbacks use the Silver Bank from January through early April each year. The Silver Bank Sanctuary, established in 1986, is approximately 200 sq mi (about the area of San Francisco city and county), and now part of the larger Sanctuary for the Marine Mammals of the Dominican Republic.

Water visibility on the Silver Bank varies daily, but averages from 40 to 60ft around the mooring area with occasional particles suspended in the water. The wind, swells, and slight current cause run-off from the coral which determines the amount of visibility. As a whole, the Silver Bank has patchy visibility. The average water depth is approximately 80–90ft. Wind can impede whale watching, so weather will dictate the quality of activity with the whales.

What is a soft-in-water encounter?

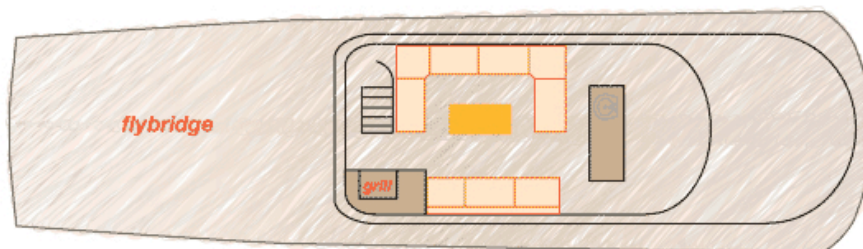
A soft-in-water encounter is passive, non-aggressive floating at the surface, in mask, fins, and snorkel, allowing the humpback whales to develop an interest in you. The key is to find a cooperative, tolerant, or curious whale to meet in the water calmly and peacefully on its terms, to experience a rare and treasured encounter between you and that individual. With hundreds of voyages under their belt, our guides can interpret the behaviors of the humpbacks and tell us how to react to them above and below the water. Following instructions is key to successful interactions.

What is a typical day like on safari?

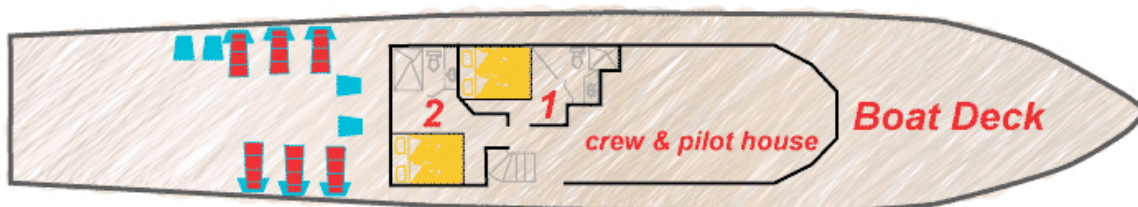
Each morning you depart on two well-stocked tenders for full days of whale observations both above and below water. Activity on the Silver Bank runs in cycles, so you'll have slack periods that vary from day to day. Typically, you return to the ship for lunch but if you experience extraordinary activity, expect to eat lunch on

the tenders. If you return to the ship for lunch, you will go back out for the afternoon action, returning to the ship in time for dinner.

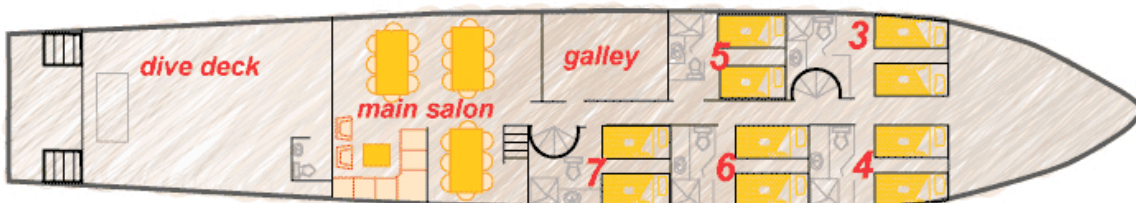
DECK PLAN FOR THE *TURKS AND CAICOS EXPLORER II*



Flybridge with covered seating area, wetbar, and grill



Boat Deck with open sun deck and two VIP staterooms



Main Deck with dive deck, lounge, dining room, and cabins 3 - 7



Lower Deck accessed via a circular staircase, and cabins 8 - 10

See cabin descriptions under the *Costs* section on page 4.
Deck plan, cabin arrangements, and cabin amenities are subject to change by ship operator.