

Snorkel with Humpback Whales

On the Silver Bank, Dominican Republic

March 13 to 21, 2026



Humpback Whales
© Steve Thompson

SAFARI OVERVIEW

In the warm waters off the coast of the Dominican Republic, the world's largest concentration of humpback whales gathers on the Silver Bank to mate and calve. During this peak breeding season, you'll have the rare opportunity to observe extraordinary whale behavior both in and out of the water. Watch from the tenders as powerful males vie for the coveted "escort" role in thrilling heat runs and slip into the water to witness playful calves trailing their mothers, learning to nurse, socialize, and explore, all while listening for the sounds of distant whale songs. With favorable weather—common this time of year—you'll capture stunning close-up photos of breaching, flipper-slapping, and other dramatic surface displays. Revel in the soft in-water encounters where you might even find yourself eye-to-eye with these gentle giants. There's nothing quite like sharing the water with these magnificent creatures!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience five total days of whale interaction, a half-day longer than other trips.
- Delight in unforgettable close encounters with humpback whales, including mother-and-calf pairs.
- Photograph various whale behaviors above and below the surface and learn how to interpret them from our expert leader and crew.
- Listen for the melodic sounds of distant whale songs.

LEADER: Scott Davis.

DAYS: 9, 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. See the *Ship* section on page 2.

COST: \$6,650 to \$7,150 per person, double occupancy, depending on cabin type and occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 4.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Mar 13	Arrive in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic.	Cofresi Hills Residence, Cofresi	–
Mar 14	Board the ship in the evening and navigate to the Silver Bank overnight.	On board the <i>Turks and Caicos Explorer II</i>	B, D
Mar 15	Afternoon of in-water, up-close whale interaction.		B, L, D
Mar 16–19	Enter the whales' world during four full days of soft in-water encounters. Learn about whale behavior, anatomy, conservation, and individual personalities.		
Mar 20	Morning of in-water whale encounters. Whale watching en route back to Puerto Plata.		
Mar 21	Disembark after breakfast and fly home.		B

LEADER



Scott Davis

Scott is a professional photographer (www.scottdavisimages.com/) specializing in wildlife, nature, and travel. Originally trained as a wildlife and marine biologist, his research and photo assignments took him to the far corners of the globe. National Geographic, BBC, Animal Planet, and renowned magazines have used his photography. His patience for teaching and love of capturing the essence of his subjects make him one of our most popular tour leaders.

SHIP

The Turks and Caicos Explorer II

Our 124-ft ship will be your home during the trip, and with two tenders, it provides the best platform for whale watching on the Silver Bank. You'll anchor on the reef and venture out by tender to share your days with the humpbacks. Our crew of certified Dive Masters is committed to keeping your experience on the ship a trouble-free adventure during your stay. Enjoy your meals in the air-conditioned salon with ocean views. Share happy hours on the sundeck, green-flash sunsets, and starlit nights. Experience the Silver Bank in individually



controlled air-conditioned double cabins with private bathrooms and your own gear storage and wet suit rack on the back deck. See *Deck Plan* on page 8.

Our two tenders are the keys to your intimate whale encounters and the best platforms for topside photography available on the Silver Bank. The 25-ft long fiberglass tenders are equipped with twin, fuel-efficient four-stroke engines. These permit us to quietly approach whales for soft in-

water encounters with virtually no exhaust fumes and to double our traveling range to reach the best areas on the Silver Bank.

Each tender carries nine guests with plenty of bench space for your comfort, bow storage to protect your camera gear, individual foot storage for your wet gear, Bimini tops to protect you from the sun, heavy duty boarding ladders, first aid kits, VHF radios, GPS navigation, and plenty of snacks and beverages to hydrate and energize you throughout the day.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Mar 13 ~ Arrive in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic

Arrive in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic for an overnight stay near the Ocean World Marina.

Mar 14 ~ Board the ship

Arrive at the marina in the early evening to board the *Turks and Caicos Explorer II*. After dinner, you'll navigate to the mooring site while you spend the night in your comfortable cabin.



Ocean World Marina
© Steve Thompson

Mar 15 ~ Arrive on the Silver Bank

Wake up on the Silver Bank! After breakfast, 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 16–19 ~ 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 relatively 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 amid 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 of 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.



Humpback Whales
© Luke Tingley

Mar 20 ~ Morning whale encounters, then navigate back to Puerto Plata

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

Mar 21 ~ Disembark and fly home

Disembark in the morning, after breakfast, and transfer to the airport for your flights home.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Costs and Cabin Options

Type	Description (see <i>Deck Plan on page 8</i>)	Cost per Person
Lower Deck	Double occupancy, twin-sized upper and lower beds, porthole window. Cabins 8, 9, and 10.	\$6,650
Main Deck	Double occupancy, two lower twin-sized beds, desk, chair, large windows. Cabins 3 and 4.	\$6,850
Main Deck	Double occupancy, one queen-sized bed or two twin-sized beds, desk, chair, large window. Cabins 5, 6, and 7.	\$6,850
Upper Deck	Double occupancy, one queen-sized bed, TV, desk, chair, large window. Cabins 1 and 2.	\$7,150

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

If you are a single traveler, we will try to find a roommate for you, but if we cannot pair you with a roommate, we will not charge you a single supplement. If space is available, some cabins can be booked as a single by adding **90%** over the listed cabin cost.

We cannot guarantee a specific cabin number, but if changes occur, we will assign a cabin of equal or greater value.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$1,000
Final	October 5, 2025	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm the reservation of your space.

Refunds are given depending on the time left before departure according to the following table. Through August 3, 2025, the cancellation fee of \$300 per person can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the canceled trip’s departure date. Cancellations are non-transferable.

Dates	Forfeited Amount per Person
On or before August 4, 2025	\$300 (see terms above)
August 5 to September 4, 2025	10% of trip cost
September 5 to October 4, 2025	40% of trip cost
On or after October 5, 2025	100% of trip cost

Included

- Carbon offsets for the duration of this trip.
- All leaders, transport, port and fuel fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Accommodation (double occupancy) for the night of March 13.
- Seven nights on board the *Turks and Caicos Explorer II*.
- Meals from breakfast on March 14 through breakfast on March 21, except meals listed in *Not Included* section.
- Transfers on March 21 between the Ocean World Marina and the Puerto Plata Airport or your hotel.
- Snacks, coffee, tea, juices, soda, beer, wine, and spirits aboard the ship.
- Trip Planning Materials – information about entry requirements, flights, packing, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- Carbon offsets for your flights to/from this trip.
- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$500 to \$800 between the US and Puerto Plata, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- COVID tests.
- Lunch on March 14
- Divergent airport transfers and extra hotel nights.

- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$75 to \$100 per participant per day for six days with your ship crew (about \$450 to \$600 total per participant).
- Wetsuit and snorkeling equipment (mask, snorkel, and snorkeling fins) with limited rental availability.
- [Emergency evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance](#).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Traveler Form.

SIGN UP

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

[Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris](#)

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Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

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 for 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 to 25 knots. The coral formations throughout the Silver Bank provide protection from the wind and sea conditions, and February–March is typically the least windy time of the whale season with infrequent rain.

Fitness Level

The greatest fitness demand of this trip will be swimming, but at a minimum, you must be able to move around the ship and embark/disembark from the tenders comfortably and safely. For safety and to get the most enjoyment out of this experience, you should be comfortable in the water, snorkeling, and getting in and out of the water via the tender ladder. Every in-water interaction is different, and in some encounters, you will float quietly while the whales come to you. More often, however, you must swim to position yourselves and, at times, swim in parallel with a slow-moving relaxed whale. For these reasons, improving your swimming fitness before the voyage will benefit your experience.

Getting in the water is not required; we've shared this trip with travelers who had wonderful experiences whale watching from the tenders. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging or if you don't have experience snorkeling but would like to join this trip.

Motion Sickness

Don't let a fear of motion sickness keep you away! Even those who have experienced seasickness reported that the incredible wildlife and overall experience were well worth the temporary discomfort. If you are susceptible to seasickness or are concerned that you might be, please come prepared! The key to avoiding seasickness is to act before you experience nausea. Do your own research and consult your doctor before taking any

medications. A good night of sleep, eating well, limiting alcohol, and using your favorite seasickness remedy is sufficient for most travelers. Find more information on our [Coping with Seasickness](#) webpage (this information is applicable to any form of motion sickness) and contact us if you have any questions.

Flights

Detailed logistical information is included in the Trip Planning Materials we will send you.

Flights you book

- Arrive in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic (POP) by 11:59pm on March 13.
- Depart from Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic (POP) after 8:00am on March 21.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current [Terms and Conditions](#).

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Cheesemans' Trips are Carbon Neutral.**
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. You can purchase offsets with most airlines (Delta includes them automatically), use our handy [carbon calculator](#) and donate to Sustainable Travel International, or contribute to your favorite offsetting organization.

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 square miles (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. The average water depth is approximately 80 to 90ft. Wind can impede whale watching, so weather will dictate your quality of activity with the whales.

What is a soft in-water encounter?

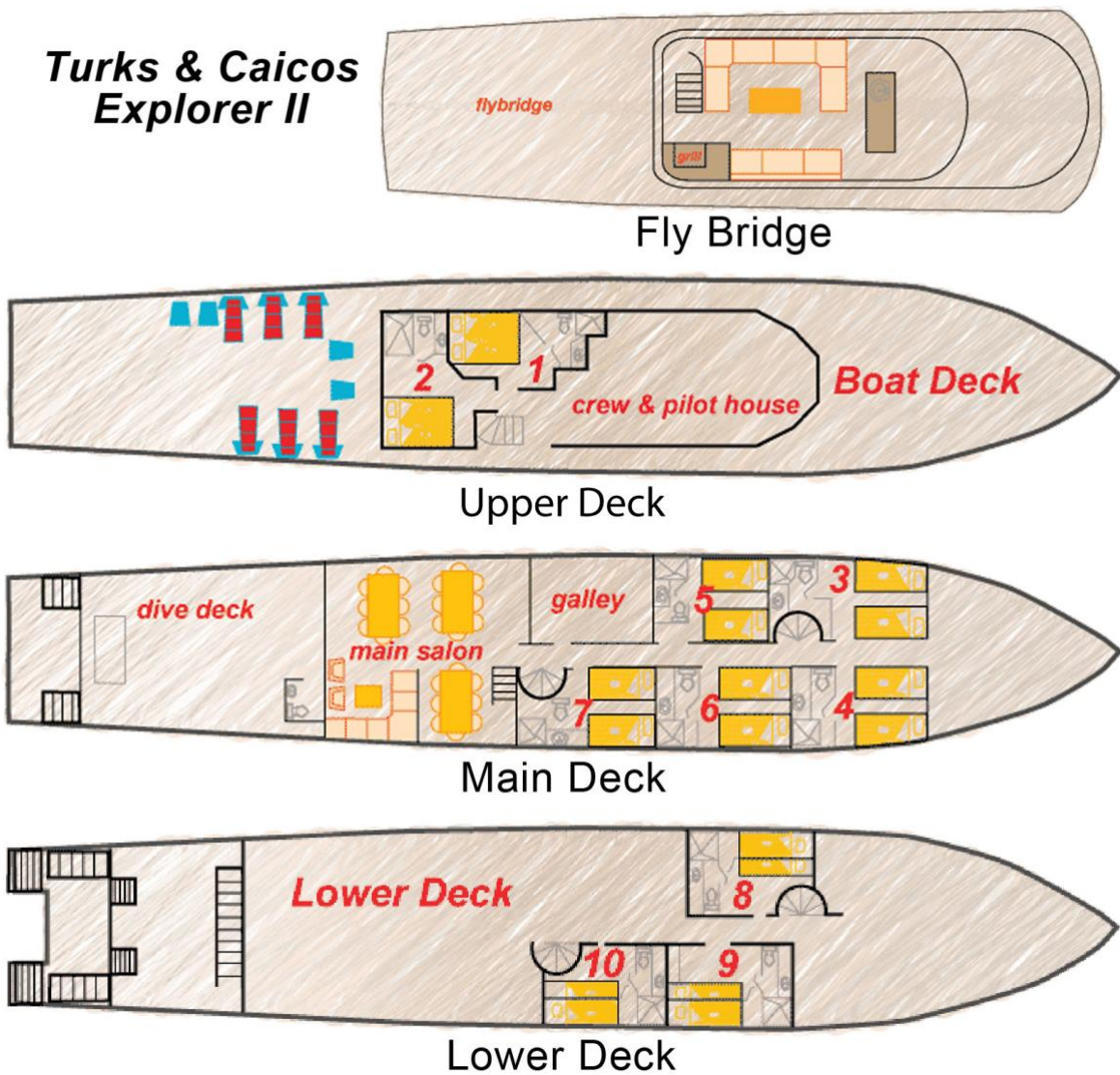
A soft in-water encounter is passive, non-aggressive floating at the surface, in mask, fins, and snorkel, allowing the humpback whales to develop an interest in you. The key is to find a cooperative, tolerant, or curious whale to meet in the water calmly and peacefully on its terms, to experience a rare 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 you how to react to them above and below the water. Following instructions is key to successful interactions.

What is a typical day like on the trip?

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.

TURKS AND CAICOS EXPLORER II DECK PLAN



Deck plan and cabin sizes are not to scale.
See cabin descriptions under the *Costs* section on page 4.