

Humpback Whale Expedition

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



All Humpback Whale charters except the first charter (Grand Turk/Puerto Plata) and last charter (Puerto Plata) of the season depart from Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic

Reservations Center Contact Information

Office Hours are Central Daylight Time

Monday-Friday 8-5 CDT
Saturday/Sunday Closed

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COMMUNICATIONS

The Reservations Center and the Turks & Caicos Aggressor II are in constant communication. In the event of an emergency, family and friends may contact you at the above numbers. If you need to reach the yacht, please call or e-mail the boat. There is an onboard satellite phone and e-mail. There is a charge for this service. Prepaid e-mail cards are available for purchase onboard.

Thank you for joining us on your expedition to the Silver Bank. We look forward to sharing with you a once-in-a-lifetime encounter with the humpback whales.

As you prepare for your expedition aboard the Turks & Caicos Aggressor II, we extend a most hearty welcome. The enclosed information will assist you. In the event you receive this document more than 60 days prior to traveling, please download the most recent “**Know Before You Go**” from www.aggressor.com. It is important to notify our office of last minute changes concerning your airline arrival and departure times or any changes in your address or telephone numbers.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II offers whale charters departing from **Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic**. Please check with your travel agent or the Reservations Center to confirm the departure port of your charter. If you arrive on the day of your charter, Saturday, you will be met at the airport by an Aggressor representative and transferred to the boat. If you are already on the island, please make your way to the Turks & Caicos Aggressor II anytime after 4:00 p.m. The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II contracts the transportation service and is unable to pick up at surrounding hotels on the day of arrival, only from the airport. In Puerto Plata, the Aggressor docks at the “Ocean World Marina, www.oceanworldmarina.com. In Grand Turk, the yacht docks at the Government Dock. Dinner is served on board Saturday evening. The yacht departs the dock for Silver Bank at 9:30 p.m. so all passengers must be onboard prior to that time.

PASSPORTS & DOCUMENTATION

Visitors must have a current passport, adequate funds to support themselves, and a return airline ticket to travel to Dominican Republic. It is the travelers’ responsibility to ensure they have the proper documentation to travel to the destination and return to their country. Please check with the appropriate consulate to ensure you have the proper documentation. Always check your passport and visa requirements. US citizens may go to the US Department of State website at www.travel.state.gov for more information. ***The Reservation Center cannot assume responsibility for passengers not having correct documentation.***



To ensure the timely arrival of your luggage into Puerto Plata, we recommend re-checking it at the ticket counter before your international departure. Don’t forget to use

your Aggressor luggage tags. They will help the crew identify your luggage.

ABOUT YOUR EXPEDITION

Many of the places where Humpback Whales congregate are too cold or turbid for rewarding encounters. The Silver Bank area is the only place in the world where humans can have soft-water encounters with humpbacks. The Silver Banks' warm clear waters are an ideal location for viewing and photographing the whales.

The Silver Bank, a possession of the Dominican Republic, is located between the island of Grand Turk in Turks and Caicos and the Dominican Republic. The area is considered treacherous by mariners because of its numerous coral pinnacles which rise from depths of 60 and 100 feet to within a few feet of the surface. The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II is one of the few vessels permitted access to the Silver Bank during the Humpbacks mating and breeding season.

The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II moors in an area near the backbone reef of the Silver Bank where an old Greek freighter called the Polyxeni lies aground being rapidly reclaimed by the sea. This extensive reef provides some protection and a comfortable anchorage for the vessel. Inflatable's (with bimini tops) are launched several times daily and are solely used to bring you closer to the whales. Inflatable runs last one and a half to three hours depending on the proximity of whale activity and time of day.

Humpback whales find the area ideal for mating and giving birth. The banks offer safety and protection to females and their calves until the young are strong enough to make the trip back to the North Eastern U.S. coast.

During the trip you will enjoy two distinct types of encounters. One type will occur on the surface as you enjoy the spectacle put-on by rowdy males as they aggressively compete for the attention of the females by breaching, slamming into one another, lob tailing, spy hopping and fin and tail slapping. Needless to say, these activities can only be safely observed from a reasonable distance in the inflatables.

The other type of encounter will involve entering the water wearing mask, fins and snorkel to observe less aggressive and often curious groups and individuals. Whales considered to be approachable in the water include mother, calf and escort male trios, solitary females and sleeping whales. Sometimes the whales are curious and cooperative and sometimes they disappear in a flash.

We have been instructed by the Whale Commission that no diving is allowed in the Whale Sanctuary. Marine mammals view bubbles (scuba) as a sign of aggression and the Whale Commission wants to avoid any chance that divers and whales meet.

It is extremely likely that your experience with the whales will exceed your wildest expectations, but we ask that you come with the following points in mind:

- The more time you spend in the inflatables, the greater chance you will have to reach the experience you are seeking.
- You must stay prepared to enter the water and follow all instructions the inflatable operator gives you.

APPROACHING THE WHALES

We take great care not to be excessively intrusive or disruptive toward the whales. The way the whales are approached makes a big difference in how close you can get. Swimming quickly, aggressively, and loudly will scare away even the most curious whale. Slow gentle movements work best. Remember you will be there during their breeding cycles. Humpback whales are giant, non-aggressive creatures. They are aware of our presence, however, if you get too close; remember that an accidental bump could injure you.

TAXES AND FEES

An arrival and departure tax to the Dominican Republic is collected when entering and leaving the country. Fees range between **\$10-\$20** per person US. There is an additional **\$150 fee per person** to cover the costs of the Whale Sanctuary fee and dockage. This fee will be paid upon boarding the vessel. All fees must be paid in CASH.. *Fees & Taxes are not included in the charter rate.

DIVE THE WORLD CLUB

If you are a member of the Dive the World Club, you will receive onboard discounts.

WAIVER AND APPLICATION

The Reservations Center and the Turks & Caicos Aggressor II require each guest to complete a Cruise Application and Liability Waiver form at least (90) ninety days prior to departure date which can be completed online by going to www.aggressor.com. Many Aggressors have to submit passenger information for permits. Passengers who fail to email, fax or mail it will be denied boarding.

INSURANCE

We highly recommend the purchase of a travel insurance policy from DiveAssure, Divers Alert Network or a policy of your choice. For coverage information, or to purchase a policy, go to: www.aggressor.com

HEALTH

The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II has a first aid kit on board, including oxygen. You may want to bring motion sickness medicine and any other medication you feel you may need. We recommend a complete physical before your trip.

There is NO smoking allowed inside the boat or on the dive deck. Smoking is only permitted on the sun deck.



THE YACHT

The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II is a 120-foot vessel, designed and powered for comfort, safety and stability. She is diesel-powered, cruises at 10 knots and has 110-volt power on board. She sleeps up to 18 guests in privacy and comfort. Guests may choose from nine staterooms. There are six “deluxe” staterooms featuring double and single berths, flat-screen DVD player and ensuite bath. The “master suite” for couples, has one large double bed with ensuite bath and flat screen DVD player. Two “twin” cabins have two single berths, flat-screen DVD player and they each share a head with an entrance through the cabins.

The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II has a beautiful salon, spacious sun deck with shading, chaise lounges and deck chairs, wet bar, hot tub, grill, and complete photo center with digital cameras. In the salon, there is a computer station with a scanner and e-mail capabilities.

THE CHASE BOATS

The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II has two 17 ft. long by 7 ft. wide, aluminum V-hull boats with 18 “ pontoons that hold 11 people in each one. They are fitted with a dive ladder for easy exiting, a full length bimini top for sun protection, 2 50 hp 4 stroke Yamaha engines for extra safety and a VHF radio.

MEALS

The menu on board is varied and plentiful, with a variety of American feasts, barbecues and local cuisine. Wake up to fresh fruits, hot entrees, cereals and juices. Lunches are buffet-style, featuring hot soups, homemade breads, salads and sandwiches and/or entrees. Dinners are diverse, including seafood, beef or chicken. Each evening, enjoy fresh homemade desserts. Please notify our office of special dietary requests as well as speak to the ships Chef after boarding.

BEVERAGES

Soft drinks, tea, local beer, and wine are complimentary. We suggest you bring your special brand of liquor from the U.S. or pick-up some at the last duty-free port before entry into Puerto Plata. Due to local regulations, the bar will be closed while the boat is in port. Drinking and diving do not mix. Once you drink alcohol, you become a snorkeler until the next day.

CLOTHES

While aboard, dress is very casual. Days are warm, bright and sunny. However, evenings can be cool. We recommend packing a sweatshirt or windbreaker. For easy luggage storage, we suggest packing in a soft duffel bag.

ENTERTAINMENT

There is a variety of nightly entertainment; nightly educational slide shows, movies, games and more. The crew especially loves new releases of DVD movies, CD’s, recent magazines, and books. Feel free to bring along your favorites.

SHIP’S BOUTIQUE & CREDIT CARDS

There is a mini-boutique on board with assorted t-shirts, shorts, film, batteries, and miscellaneous items. Because of limited availability, we recommend you bring extra batteries, film and/or CD’s for photos. The Turks & Caicos Aggressor II accepts Visa, MasterCard and traveler’s checks. Sorry, no personal checks or American Express. Many credit card companies are charging a conversion fee. If this happens to you, please contact your credit card company.

VIDEO/DVD

Our video professional can capture your diving adventure to share with family and friend.

DVD of the Week/DVD \$65 per DVD

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER’S AND VIDEOGRAPHER’S FEES

Any person/group or company is required to submit an application to the Commission prior to travel for a professional project. The Commission will determine the cost of the permit that will be issued. These fees, which are levied by the Turks & Caicos and Dominican Republic Government, are subject to change without notice. They are not included in the charter rate.

SILVER BANK SNORKELING CONDITIONS

You will be snorkeling in water that averages 78°F. Most guests make as many as 2 “whale runs” each day, so some sort of protection is needed. A 3mm wetsuit or shorty is recommended. Full-foot fins are a plus for free diving. Most snorkeling is done from the inflatables. Some whale observations do occur from the mothership.

The Whale Commission does not allow scuba units or rebreathers in the Whale Sanctuary. Guests will board inflatables and when the whales are located, guests will slip into the water and snorkel with the whales face-to-face.

WHAT TO BRING:

- ✓ Mask, fins, snorkel, light wet suit (2mm) or shorty, mesh snorkel bag. Full foot fins are a plus. Each piece of gear should be marked with waterproof paint or tape
- ✓ Sweatshirt, sturdy windbreaker or all weather jackets, wide brim hat.
- ✓ Dry bag, attaché’ case size, O-ring sealed, dry box for land cameras and dry gear (Pelican or Underwater Kinetics cases work best).
- ✓ Thermos for early morning runs, binoculars, water bottle
- ✓ Land still camera with zoom lens and underwater still camera.
- ✓ A video camera with housing. (Rain-X for your lens).
- ✓ Seasick medicine, sunscreen, lip balm.

TOPSIDE PHOTOGRAPHY:

- 28-85mm and 200-400mm zoom lenses, a 4 gig and higher card are best.
- 300mm lens works for distance shots from the mother ship.

- Anything longer than 400mm will be hard to use due to movement of the boat and targets.

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY:

With a housed camera a 12-24mm lens or the new 10-17mm Tokina are good choices with lots of card space. It is hard to get closer than 10 feet to a whale; therefore, strobes will be of marginal use. Visibility ranges from 40 to 100 feet. Bring lots of disc, especially if you have a motor drive on your topside camera.



CAPTAINS LOG

Each week the Captain posts a log of the previous charter. Please feel free to visit www.aggessor.com and go to the Captains log to find out water temperature, visibility, sightings etc.



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5/26/09

SAMPLE ITINERARY

SATURDAY: If you arrive on the day of your charter, you will be met at the airport by an Aggressor representative and transferred to the boat. If you are already on the island, please make your way to the yacht anytime after 4:00 p.m. for boarding.

SUNDAY: Arrival in Silver Bank is around 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m. Sunday weather permitting. Brunch/late breakfast while crew prepares vessel mooring and assembly of inflatables. The first inflatable run begins at 2:00 p.m. (2 inflatables running). Afternoon inflatable run, return to vessel approximately 5:00 p.m.

MONDAY - WEDNESDAY: First inflatable run will commence immediately after breakfast. Whale runs are throughout the day. "Sundowner" cocktail parties on the sun deck every afternoon following whale runs. Slide show and video will be after dinner

THURSDAY: Two inflatable runs will be offered prior to departure from Silver Bank.

FRIDAY: The yacht returns to the Ocean World Marina in Puerto Plata late Friday afternoon. Friday night, dinner is not served onboard; however, the crew will recommend a restaurant at the marina.

SATURDAY: Check out is between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m.

TIPS ONBOARD

Gratuities should be voluntary and based upon the quality of service the crew has provided. When settling your account on the final day of the trip, the Captain will have an envelope for gratuities, to be divided equally among the crew.

CHECKOUT

Check out is Saturday morning between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. If you are extending your stay in Puerto Plata and your resort is located on the route back to the airport, transportation will be provided. Feel free to call the Aggressor Fleet agent who is in charge of the Turks & Caicos destination to confirm this for you.

