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with  
**GIANTS**

WHERE, WHEN AND HOW TO ENCOUNTER THE CARIBBEAN'S  
MOST EXCITING BIG ANIMALS → By Terry Ward

DAVID GARCIA



# HUMPBACK WHALES



Anyone who's encountered one will tell you that gazing into the eye of a humpback whale is a life changer. Every winter, thousands of them make like snowbirds, traveling up to 4,000 miles from the cold North Atlantic waters to reach the balmy breeding and calving grounds off the Dominican Republic. Live-aboards depart from Puerto Plata for trips to Silver Bank, about 70 miles off the north coast of the DR, where you'll don a mask, snorkel and fins (scuba and rebreathers are not allowed) for "soft-in-water" encounters. Since only about 500 guests are permitted each year, overcrowding is rarely an issue. Guides are careful to approach only resting or courting whales that are most likely to be open to interaction.

➔ **MAKE IT HAPPEN** *Turks & Caicos Aggressor* ([aggressor.com](http://aggressor.com)) runs weeklong live-aboard charters to the Silver Bank January through March from Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, that start at \$2,895 per person.

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There's a common misconception among divers that the **Caribbean** is all about sunny reefs and their jewel-colored (and -size) denizens — that for the large, dynamic predators and pelagics you have to head to the Pacific. Not so, we say. From **Tobago** and the **Bahamas** to the Mayan Riviera, the Caribbean's cast of **big animals** stars mantas, sperm whales, whale sharks and more.



DANIELA DIRSCHER/AGEFOTOSTOCK