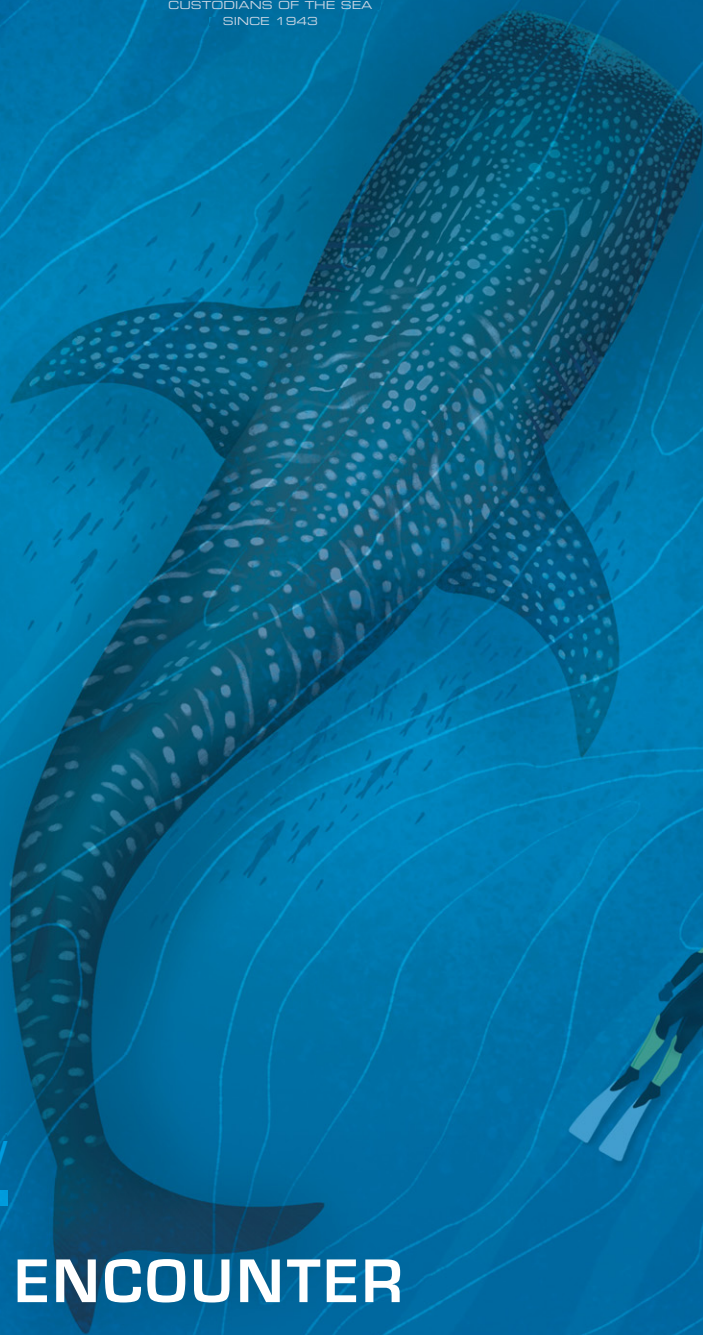


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CUSTODIANS OF THE SEA  
SINCE 1943



TO KNOW

**IF YOU ENCOUNTER  
WHALE SHARKS**



## TO KNOW

### IF YOU ENCOUNTER WHALE SHARKS

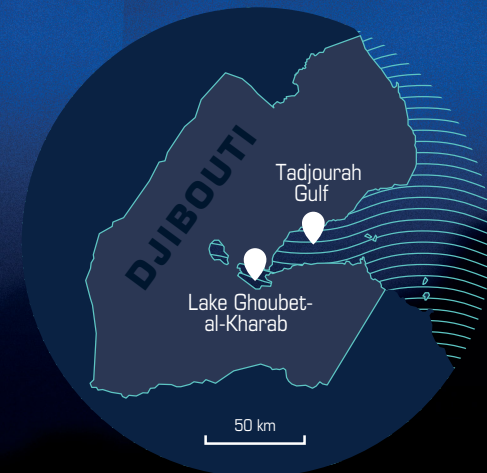
The whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) is a type of carpet shark and the largest known fish species alive today, with a lifespan of about 70 years. Whale sharks are found in tropical and temperate oceans, and they feed on plankton. Seasonal feeding aggregations occur at several sites in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, particularly in Djibouti. Indeed, Djibouti is a world famous place for the observation of whale sharks, especially in the Gulf of Tadjourah and in Ghoubet-al-Kharab, where every year you can witness a spectacular grouping of these majestic fish that come to feed and reproduce.

Whale sharks are threatened by habitat loss, pollution, and fishing. To promote their protection, it is important to protect their environment and to limit disturbances that may cause stress or affect their natural behavior (underwater discovery without a qualified guide, noise disturbances and injuries due to passing ships, etc.).

Whether you are swimming with these huge graceful fish or just going around safely, following these guidelines will help you make sure that your behavior is safe for you, the environment and the animals you are hoping to see.

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
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#### WHALE SHARK GATHERING PERIOD





## TO KNOW

### IF YOU ARE NAVIGATING BY SHIP

Every year, a spectacular gathering of whale sharks takes place in the Gulf of Tadjourah and in Ghoubet-al-Kharab. **Indeed, these animals come to feed in large numbers in this area from mid-October to February, because it is during this period that the waters contain the most plankton.** Whale sharks also go there to breed and take advantage of the high concentration of food to raise their young. That is why it is imperative to adopt safety measures to protect whale sharks during this crucial period of their life cycle. The following recommendations apply to all vessels to reduce the risk of accidental collision.

#### 1 • Be alert and watch the surface.

The large size of the whale shark and the fact that it feeds close to the surface increases the risk of a collision with a ship; this can cause serious injury to both the animal and the passengers.

It is therefore essential to carefully observe the surface of the water to try to locate them and, if necessary, to avoid them.



#### 2 • Do not exceed 12 knots.

It is important to adopt a reduced speed to be able to spot whale sharks and avoid them.

**3 • If you spot a whale shark: reduce your speed to 8 knots and go around it** by leaving a 250m safety distance between it and the ship.

## TO KNOW

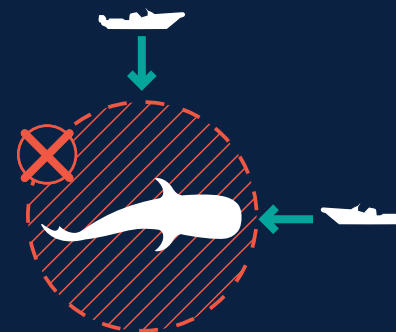
### IF YOU WATCH WHALE SHARKS BY SHIP

**1 • A contact zone of 250 m around the whale shark must be respected.** Only one ship at a time can occupy the contact zone. Other vessels will have to circumvent this 250 m zone around the whale shark.

#### 2 • Do not exceed 8 knots

(14.6 km / h) when entering the contact zone and do not exceed 2 knots (3.6 km / h) in the 50 m zone around the whale shark.

**3 • Keep a minimum distance of 30 m** between the boat and the whale shark.



**4 • The shark should be approached from the front or the sides** whenever possible.

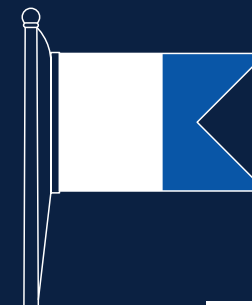


**5 • The duration of observation should not exceed 30 minutes** if other boats are waiting to observe the whale shark.



#### 6 • Hoist a flag

Indicating that you have people on the water watching for whale sharks if this is the case.



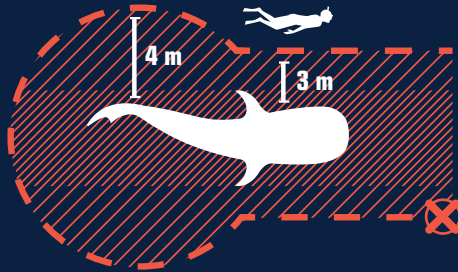
## TO KNOW

### IF YOU WATCH WHALE SHARKS WHILE SNORKELING

**Be sure to be accompanied by a professional guide** for your whale shark trip. Snorkeling is more than enough to observe these animals that will essentially be on the surface when you encounter them.



**1 • Listen carefully to the briefing that precedes the excursion.** Trained guides will be familiar with site conditions and the behavior of whale sharks.



**3 • To approach a whale shark, you must arrive from the side.** Never swim in the path of a whale shark. Do not approach them within 3 m of the head or 4 m of the tail.



**2 • Enter and get out of the water quietly.** Splashing and noisy entrances can scare away whale sharks. Swim slowly with smooth movements. Be aware of other surrounding species that may be fragile and/or dangerous.

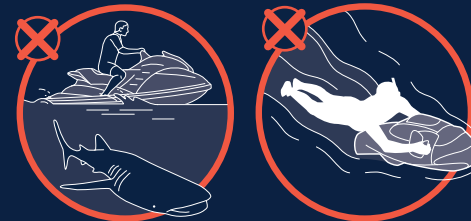


**4 • Never touch a whale shark** or try to climb on its back. Never hunt or harass whale sharks or try to keep them in a shoal.

**5 • If you are close to a group of feeding whale sharks, stay still** and let the animal move around you. Whale sharks can be curious animals and could approach you. If this happens, do not move and watch!



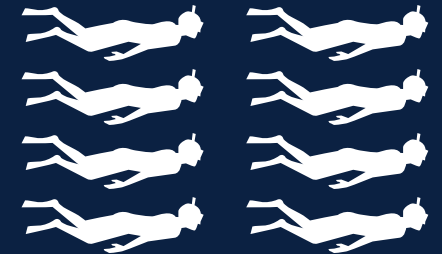
**6 • Do not feed whale sharks or throw objects into the water** to try to get their attention. Whale sharks feed exclusively on plankton and are not interested in our food.



**7 • Do not wear or use motorized or mechanical devices** that produce noises and may disturb whale sharks (eg, submarine scooters, jet skis, electronic shark removal devices).



**8 • If you use your camera,** be aware that whale sharks can be disturbed if the lens is turned directly towards them. Turn off your flash.



**9 • Never go on excursions with more than 8 people** around a whale shark.

TO DO

## AFTER YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH WHALE SHARKS

**1 • Ambassador:** Be a Whale Shark Ambassador and talk about these graceful and intelligent fish with your friends and family and remember the importance of protecting them for the entire marine ecosystem.

**2 • Tourism:** Do not buy souvenirs from the sea, such as shark teeth, shells, corals or other souvenirs made from marine organisms.

**3 • Bad Behaviour:** If you see people with bad behavior around whale sharks, report it to your tour guide, competent authorities or the Cousteau Team.

**4 • Reports:** Participate in the conservation of whale sharks by sharing your observations and sharing photos of your encounter. You can also report any disrespectful or illegal activity that you may witness, including the location, date, and details of the problem. Positive and negative observations are welcome and will help research and conservation.

Below please find links where you can upload photos and information about your encounter:

- Whale Shark (only whale sharks) : <https://www.whaleshark.org/>
- Cousteau Divers (all species) : <http://www.cousteaudivers.org/>

Feel free to send us your suggestions for improving our guidelines at: [guidelines@cousteau.org](mailto:guidelines@cousteau.org)



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**COUSTEAU DIVERS**