MEXICO

Home

Mexico is a big country in the south of North America. It has been visited by tourists for a long time. They come to see the Mesoamerican cultural sites, they spend time on the beach and they come to dive.   
Mexico is touched by the sea on two sides. On the east, you have the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. On the west, there is the Sea of Cortez/Baja California and the Pacific Ocean. They are different. On the East, you have the warm waters and the colourful reef fish. It is nice for doing your first courses around the Riviera Maya. The West will give you the big and scary pelagics while diving in colder waters. This is more for the experienced divers unless if you go to Puerto Vallarta.

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ISLA GUADALUPE

Isla Guadalupe is a volcanic island 240km/150mi west of the Baja California Peninsula. This island is the best in the world to spot Great Whites. You can only reach it by liveaboard. The boat trip over is up to 20h. You can leave from Ensenada, Mexico or San Diego, California, USA.

All the dives done, are cage dives. No need to bring fins… Although some liveaboards let you out of the cage. If you dare of course! There are also no dive sites. Cages are lowered in the water and the sharks show up. It’s even not needed to chum them. They are just there. It’s a terrific place for taking pictures. The visibility reaches up to 45m/150ft.  
The shark season is from July till November. The seas are calmest at that time. Water temperatures are between 18C/65F and 23C/75F.

Apart from the Great whites, you may also encounter fur seals, dolphins and tunas around the island. On the way over, there is a good chance to spot different types of whales, mantas, dolphins and lots of seabirds.

SEA OF CORTEZ

The Sea of Cortez or the Baja California is a marginal sea between the Baja California Peninsula and the Mexican Mainland. The sea is 1126km/700mi long and covers 160.000 km2/62.000sq mi. It is home to an unique and rich marine ecosystem. There are the different types of whales, like the Humpbacks, Pilot Whales, Grey Whales, Blue Whales, Fin Whales and Bottlenose Dolphins. You can see Hammerheads, Whale Sharks or the endemic Mexican Horn Shark. Sea Lions are very common and numerous at Los Islotes, La Paz. And as last, there are the Manta Rays and Mobulas. The whales and whale sharks are only to snorkel with. You aren’t allowed to dive with them but you never know they just show up on the dive.

You can dive the Sea of Cortez the whole year through but different times of the year will give different animal sightings. The best time for visibility and calm seas is between July and December, although there can be the run-off from a hurricane. September and October bring in the Whale Sharks. From December to June, there is more wind and visibility is less because of plankton blooms. The advantage is that this does give more sightings of Mobulas and Whales.  
The water temperatures range between 18C/65F in winter and 30C/86F in summer.

The Cortez Sea is dived from on a liveaboard, or you go day diving from 3 destinations: Loretto, La Paz or Los Cabos down South. From Cabo San Lucas, you can also take a liveaboard to another great diving destination, the Socorro Islands.

Sadly enough, the encounters with big groups of Hammerheads and other fish are becoming less and less normal. Even though significant areas in the Sea of Cortez are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, there is lots of overfishing. The Mexican government tries to help and tries to create new parks. The local government and the fisheries don’t care. Money comes first…

CENOTES

If you want to dive the cenotes, you’ll have to go to the Playa Del Carmen and Tulum area on the Yucatan Peninsula, East Mexico. The Cenotes are natural pits, formed when the limestone bedrock collapsed. Now these sinkholes form beautiful sinkholes with crystal clear waters and sometimes kilometres/miles of underwater cave systems.

The cenotes have some of the best visibility in the world, sometimes more than 100m/330ft. People can even get vertigo from it. The rainwater that comes in, is so much filtered before it reaches the pit, that there are no more particles disolved in it. Only when divers kick up the silt from the bottom, the great vis is disturbed. So, dive carefully and don’t ruin it!  
Sometimes, when the cenotes are closer to the coast and when they are connected to the sea through a cave system, you may encounter a mirroring halocline where the saline water reaches the fresh water.  
Water temperature in the cenotes is around 24C/75F.

There are thousands of cenotes but not all of them are completely explored. Regular divers, so not the cave divers, can enter around 15 of them. One of the most popular is Dos Ojos. These are two cenotes connected by a cave. The diving isn’t that deep(10m/33ft) so there will be a good number of snorkelers too. Still, it is beautiful when all the sunlight comes down the holes in the ceiling. One of Dos Ojos is called the Bat Cave. Guess which animals fly around in there?  
If you are a bit more experienced and you don’t want snorkelers around, go to The Pit. This one is deeper. The cenote goes to 40m and has a hydrogen sulphide layer at 30m. Diving through it seems like diving through the clouds. Also Angelita has this mystical layer. Going in it makes you feel like diving in a nightly forest.

Diving the cenotes is a bucket list thing to do. Find the one(s) that suits you the best, go dive it with pleasure and see the WOW-effect. Get in contact with Kasper from Halocline Divers. He’ll try to do his best to fulfil all your diving needs.

COZUMEL

Cozumel is an island in the Caribbean Sea, East of the Yucatan Peninsula. It is the biggest Mexican island, right in front of Playa Del Carmen. To reach it, you take the ferry from PDC or you fly from Cancun or Mexico City. In the summer months, there are international flights landing on the Cozumel airstrip.

Half of the Cozumel tourists are divers and/or snorkelers. The rest are sunseekers or cruise ship passengers. Most of the tourists come in the summer months and on spring break. If you can, visit Cozumel some other time. Also, the island is in the hurricane path. In September and October, you have the most chance your diving will be limited or cancelled due to tropical storms.  
Water temperatures are good all year round, between 26C/78F and 30C/86F. Visibility is always around 30m/100ft.

Cozumel lies on the second biggest barrier reef of the world, the Meso-American barrier reef. Most of the dive sites will be in the Cozumel Reefs National Marine Park and you’ll find plenty of fish and beautiful coral. For sure, check for the endemic toadfish and different turtles!  
The island has great diving for all types of divers. There are protected bays with no current for the novices, funky drift dives for thrill seekers, steep walls full of colourful coral and sponges, nurse sharks and eagle rays and finally the must-do Devils Throat cave dive.

There are lots of dive centers on Cozumel so it’s difficult to find one out of the blue. I recommend Deep Blue Cozumel. First, they dive in smaller groups, what is always nice. And second, they will fulfil all your diving needs. You ask, they deliver!