

Socorro Islands, Mexico

Socorro | San Benedicto | Roca Partida

Mexico Master - 8 and 10 night itineraries

- **Pre-embarkation check-in:** 11:00-17:00 at Hotel El Ganzo
- **Embarkation:** San José del Cabo Marina at **18:00***
- **Disembarkation:** San José del Cabo Marina at **08:30***

*Earlier embarkation and disembarkation are not possible.

Mexico Master operates on a same-day turnaround, so the crew will be busy restocking and preparing the vessel until the designated embarkation time. Guests arriving early who wish to use the Hotel El Ganzo's facilities before embarkation can purchase a day pass from the hotel reception desk.

Additionally, this itinerary involves a significant amount of overnight cruising between San Jose del Cabo and the Revillagigedo Archipelago, which can be affected by sea and weather conditions. We can not guarantee the vessel will be back in port for disembarkation earlier than the normal time.

Flights & Transfers

Flights and transfers are not included in the liveboard price.

- **Nearest Airport: Los Cabos International Airport (SJD)**

Los Cabos Airport is approximately 30 minutes drive from San José del Cabo Marina.

IMPORTANT: *Guests are strongly advised to arrive the day before embarkation to allow for flight delays or missing luggage. Flight disruptions are common, and scheduled arrival times are not guaranteed; therefore, travel insurance is mandatory.*

Master Liveboards can not be held responsible for flight-related issues, but we will assist you wherever possible. However, *the liveboard departure time cannot be altered* to accommodate guests' late arrival.

Guests are advised to allow at least 3 hours between disembarkation and their return flight departure time.

Important Diving Information

The Revillagigedo Archipelago, widely known as the Socorro Islands, is one of the most celebrated big-animal dive destinations in the world. Diving here is conducted in the open Pacific, often with significant swell, surge, and strong currents. The sites are not suitable for inexperienced divers, and guests should be comfortable in open-ocean conditions before joining this trip.

- **Mandatory minimum certification:** PADI Advanced Open Water, or equivalent, AND Nitrox certification*.
- **Mandatory minimum logged dives:** 50 logged dives

***The use of nitrox is mandatory;** All divers are required to have nitrox certification and only dive with nitrox on this itinerary.

Guests who do not have the mandatory certifications or minimum logged dives will be excluded from diving throughout the cruise. Our crew have the right to refuse guests' participation in some or all dives if they are not satisfied that the diver has the necessary skills or experience to safely dive in certain conditions.

All divers must dive with a guide at all times. Guests will be divided into groups of 6-8 divers per guide and must surface with their group or dive buddy.

Water Temperatures:

Overall water temperatures range from 21–28°C (70–82°F), depending on the time of year. Noticeable thermoclines are common, and on deeper dives, you can expect drops of 2-5°C (35-41°F) below the surface temperature. Seasonal variation is significant and influences the marine life activity you are likely to encounter.

- **November–December:** Typically 26–28°C (79–82°F)
- **January:** Around 24–26°C (75–79°F).
- **February–March:** The coldest months, typically 21–23°C (70–73°F).
- **April:** Roughly 23–25°C (73–77°F).
- **May–June:** 25–27°C (77–81°F).

Wetsuit recommendations: While some divers may be comfortable in a 3mm wetsuit during the warmer months, a **5mm is strongly recommended as a minimum** given the thermoclines and the cumulative effect of up to four dives a day. During the colder months, a drysuit, or a 7mm or 5mm wetsuit with a hooded vest and additional thermal layers, is recommended.

PLEASE NOTE: To comply with national park regulations, ***dive gloves are not allowed***. Dive knives and handheld torches are also not permitted.

Participation in this liveaboard itinerary is subject to acceptance of our Terms & Conditions as outlined here: www.masterliveboards.com/terms-conditions.

Itinerary Details

Revillagigedo National Park Fees: 3,760 MXN per person, per diving day.

The Socorro Islands lie approximately 400 kilometres (250 miles) southwest of San José del Cabo. On average, the crossing takes between 24 and 26 hours each way, which determines the number of diving days available and means there is genuine open-ocean cruising on both legs of the trip. You should come prepared for this and bring seasickness remedies if you are prone to motion sickness.

The distance between the three islands we visit ranges from 65 km to 120 km, so there are further periods of several hours cruising throughout the itinerary. While we always aim to complete the full schedule of dives, weather, sea conditions, wildlife activity, and restrictions imposed by the park authorities can affect the final programme.

Your Cruise Director will plan up to four dives per day where possible.

NOTE: A mandatory naval inspection takes place on the first day at Socorro Island, which limits the number of possible dives on that day to three. Additionally, there are restrictions enforced by the park authorities that may affect the number of dives possible on other days.

The following describes the usual day-to-day itinerary route, and schedule. Due to open-ocean conditions, the dive scheduling is subject to daily assessment by your Cruise Director.

8-night itinerary

Number of scheduled dives: Up to 18

- **Day 1:** Embarkation at 18:00, followed by introductions, safety drill and dinner. Depart from port at 19:30
- **Day 2:** Crossing to the Revillagigedo Archipelago
- **Day 3:** Diving at San Benedicto (3-4 dives)
- **Day 4:** Diving at Socorro (3 dives)
- **Day 5:** Diving at Roca Partida (3-4 dives)
- **Day 6:** Diving at Socorro (3-4 dives)
- **Day 7:** Diving at San Benedicto (3-4 dives)
- **Day 8:** Return crossing to San José del Cabo
- **Day 9:** Breakfast at 07:00 followed by disembarkation no later than 08:30

10-night itinerary

Number of scheduled dives: Up to 26

- **Day 1:** Embarkation at 18:00, followed by introductions, safety drill and dinner. Depart from port at 19:30
- **Day 2:** Crossing to the Revillagigedo Archipelago
- **Day 3:** Diving at San Benedicto (3-4 dives)
- **Day 4:** Diving at Socorro (3 dives)

- **Day 5:** Diving at Roca Partida (3-4 dives)
- **Day 6:** Diving at Roca Partida (3-4 dives)
- **Day 7:** Diving at Socorro (3-4 dives)
- **Day 8:** Diving at Socorro (3-4 dives)
- **Day 9:** Diving at San Benedicto (3-4 dives)
- **Day 10:** Return crossing to San José del Cabo
- **Day 11:** Breakfast at 07:00 followed by disembarkation no later than 08:30

Daily dive schedule

Each full diving day is typically scheduled as follows, where conditions permit. In accordance with Revillagigedo Biosphere Reserve National Park regulations, ***there are no night dives*** on this itinerary. Maximum dive time is 60 minutes from entry to exit.

- Early wake-up and continental breakfast
- Briefing and dive 1
- Hot breakfast
- Briefing and dive 2
- Lunch and rest period
- Briefing and dive 3
- Snacks
- Briefing and dive 4 (where possible)
- Special presentations & bar time
- Dinner

Safety and dive briefings are conducted in English, but can also be given in Spanish if required. If you or any of your group do not speak or fully understand English or Spanish, please let us know before you arrive.

Dive Sites

The Revillagigedo Archipelago is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a Mexican National Park, and one of the largest Marine Protected Areas in the eastern Pacific. All diving takes place within these protected waters, and ***the use of dive gloves, dive knives and handheld torches is not permitted.***

The Revillagigedo Archipelago consists of three remote volcanic islands that rise from the floor of the eastern Pacific: San Benedicto, Socorro, and Roca Partida. Each island has a distinct character above and below the surface, but all share the same defining quality: the large, curious marine life that has made this one of the most sought-after dive destinations in the Pacific. Currents around the islands can be powerful, but they are what drive the productivity of this ecosystem.

We will always do our best to fulfil the standard programme, but access to specific sites is subject to sea conditions, naval permissions, and park authority restrictions, and can change at short notice. ***The inclusion of any specifically named site is not guaranteed,*** and there may be dives at sites that are not listed below.

San Benedicto Island

The second-smallest island in the archipelago and typically the first stop on the itinerary, San Benedicto has a reputation built entirely on one animal: the Giant Pacific manta ray. These are resident year-round, and the encounters here are not the kind where you briefly glimpse an animal before it disappears. Multiple mantas circling a single group of divers for the full duration of a dive is a common occurrence at San Benedicto. They come in to be cleaned by Clarion angelfish and have a well-established habit of actively seeking out divers. The mantas' wingspans regularly exceed 4 metres (13 ft), and some individuals are substantially larger.

The Boiler

Typical depth: 5–18m (16–59ft)

The most celebrated site at San Benedicto, The Boiler is a shallow seamount that rises to within a few metres of the surface. The name comes from the way upwelling water makes the surface above it appear to boil, and it is the focal point of the island's manta activity. Interactions here tend to be among the most intimate in the archipelago: the seamount is small enough that the mantas orbit closely and repeatedly. The site is also exposed enough that whale sharks, yellowfin tuna, and bottlenose dolphins turn up without warning, and the seamount itself holds dense schools of fish on the structure.

The Canyon

Typical depth: 15–30m (49–98ft)

The Canyon sits on the south side of San Benedicto and has a very different character from The Boiler. The site is formed by a deep, horseshoe-shaped ridge of volcanic rock enclosing a sandy bottom, with the walls dropping to around 40m (131ft) in places. Two cleaning stations attract consistent manta aggregations and a reliable mix of shark species: silvertip sharks, Galápagos sharks, silky sharks, and scalloped hammerheads are all regular visitors, with the hammerheads sometimes gathering in large schools. Mantas appear here too, but the sharks are the main event at Canyon. Current can run through the site, but the topography provides natural shelter points allowing divers to hold position and observe the action.

Socorro Island

The largest island in the archipelago and home to a permanent Mexican Navy station, Socorro offers a broader range of dive sites than San Benedicto. Giant Pacific manta rays are present year-round, but the island is also one of the most reliable places in the Pacific for underwater encounters with humpback whales — a genuine possibility from January through to early April. Bottlenose dolphins are frequently encountered at depth, often displaying the inquisitive, interactive behaviour for which Socorro diving has long been celebrated.

Roca O'Neal

Typical depth: 10–30m (33–98ft)

Widely referred to as Hammerhead Central, Roca O'Neal is a fully exposed rocky outcrop several hundred metres off the shores of Socorro Island. From the surface, it appears as a cluster of jagged black volcanic peaks; underneath, a shallow plateau breaks into boulders and ridges before dropping steeply into deep blue water. The hammerhead presence here can be extraordinary with large schools rather than individuals working their way through the current. Galápagos sharks, grey reef sharks, and silky sharks are also regularly seen here. The plateau itself, sitting at around 10 to 12m (33 to 39ft), is worth slower exploration for lobsters and smaller reef life, and there is a photogenic cavern below it that is one of the more distinctive topographical features in the archipelago. Due to swells, the site is not always accessible, but when conditions allow, the combination of shark activity, topography, and reef life makes it one of the more complete dives at Socorro.

Cabo Pearce

Typical depth: 10–30m (33–98ft)

Cabo Pearce sits on the eastern side of Socorro and is formed by a long finger of volcanic rock that extends out into the prevailing current. That exposure is what drives the site: the current brings in schooling scalloped hammerheads in impressive numbers, along with silky sharks, Giant Pacific mantas, and bottlenose dolphins. During the winter months, humpback whale song is a near-constant presence in the water, and visual encounters are far from unusual. The best approach is to drop to the rocks, find shelter from the current, and let the animals come to you. It can be a significant current site, and conditions should be assessed on the day.

Punta Tosca

Typical depth: 12–40m (39–131ft)

Punta Tosca sits on the west coast of Socorro and, unusually for the archipelago, has noticeably more coral growth than most sites, giving it a bit more colour and texture on the reef. The site is best known for its bottlenose dolphins, which regularly engage with divers at close range and can stay with a group for the duration of a dive. Oceanic mantas visit the cleaning stations here, and a broader range of shark species passes through than the site perhaps gets credit for, with silky, Galápagos, tiger, and hammerhead sharks all recorded. The site drops to around 40m (131ft) on the outer edges, so depth awareness matters, particularly when the animals draw attention upward.

The Aquarium

Typical depth: 5–18m (16–59ft)

Tucked on the eastern side of Socorro Island in calmer, more sheltered water, The Aquarium offers a very different kind of diving from the exposed seamounts and drift sites elsewhere on the itinerary. The name is apt: the site is dense with fish life, with large schools of Clarión angelfish among the more photogenic residents. It is the macro dive of the Socorro programme, and photographers in particular tend to appreciate the slower pace and the time it allows for close observation. Visibility can be less than at the open-ocean sites, but conditions are generally gentler, and when humpback whales are in the area, the sheltered position of the site can make for some remarkable acoustic encounters.

Roca Partida

Access to Roca Partida is entirely weather-dependent. The site offers no shelter and cannot be dived in significant swell or surge. Your Cruise Director will assess conditions on the day.

Typical depth: 5–40m (16–131ft)

Roca Partida is unlike anything else in the archipelago. A narrow sliver of volcanic rock barely wide enough to walk across, it is the exposed summit of a submerged volcano rising vertically from the ocean floor, with walls that drop to depth on all sides. There is no reef in the conventional sense: just sheer rock covered in encrusting life and the open Pacific in every direction. The entire pinnacle can be circumnavigated underwater in a single dive, and the experience is closer to blue-water diving than anything else on this itinerary.

What makes Roca Partida exceptional is the concentration of large animals that use it as a reference point in an otherwise featureless ocean. Scalloped hammerheads gather in schools, particularly in the early morning. Oceanic whitetip sharks, Galápagos sharks, silky sharks, and Giant Pacific manta rays are all regular visitors. Wahoo and large yellowfin tuna patrol the surrounding blue water, and whale sharks are a genuine possibility throughout the season. Bottlenose dolphins and humpback whales have both been encountered here. It is consistently the site guests talk about most when they get home.

NOTE: Currents at Roca Partida can be strong and unpredictable, making it one of the most demanding sites on the programme.

Seasonal Highlights

Giant Pacific manta rays and multiple shark species are present throughout the November to June Socorro season. The highlights below are associated with specific periods, although all wildlife sightings are subject to natural variation and cannot be guaranteed.

- **November-December:** Whale sharks are possible at all three islands; Scalloped hammerhead and oceanic manta activity is strong, and visibility is typically at its best.
- **January-March:** Peak humpback whale season. Underwater encounters are possible, particularly at Socorro and around Roca Partida, and hearing them in the water is likely throughout this period
- **February-April:** Prime season for manta ray and dolphin interactions, with the animals at their most active and inquisitive.
- **May-June:** Whale sharks become possible again, baitball activity increases, and conditions around Roca Partida can produce some of the most productive open-water diving of the season.

Should you have any questions about the dive sites or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team, who will be happy to assist: dive@masterliveboards.com.