



UNESCO Underwater Checklist

28 diver-focused UNESCO marine destinations: 18 World Heritage properties and 10 Biosphere Reserves. Tick places you have visited or use the list to plan future trips. Updated 3 August 2026.

UNESCO World Heritage marine destinations

Done	Destination	Country	Access	Level	Planning window	Underwater highlights
☐	Galápagos Islands	Ecuador	Liveaboard for Darwin and Wolf	Advanced	Year-round; whale sharks usually June to November	Hammerheads, whale sharks, marine iguanas, penguins, mola mola
☐	Komodo National Park	Indonesia	Liveaboard or day boat from Labuan Bajo	Open Water to advanced	Year-round; many liveaboards favour April to November	Mantas, reef sharks, current-swept pinnacles, coral, macro
☐	Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park	Philippines	Liveaboard only from Puerto Princesa	Advanced recommended	Normally mid-March to mid-June	Pristine walls, reef sharks, tiger sharks, turtles
☐	Sanganeb and Dugonab Bay	Sudan	Expedition liveaboard when available	Advanced	Often best in spring and autumn	Coral walls, hammerheads, mantas, dugong habitat
☐	Archipiélago de Revillagigedo (Socorro)	Mexico	Liveaboard only	Advanced	Typical season November to May	Giant oceanic mantas, dolphins, sharks, humpbacks
☐	Cocos Island National Park	Costa Rica	Liveaboard only from Puntarenas	Advanced	Year-round; conditions vary by season	Schooling hammerheads, rays, tuna, dolphins
☐	Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System	Belize	Resort, day boat or liveaboard	Open Water to advanced	Year-round; drier November to May	Walls, atolls, reef sharks, turtles, Blue Hole
☐	Great Barrier Reef	Australia	Day boat, overnight boat or liveaboard	Beginner to advanced	Year-round; many favour May to October	Coral reefs, minke whales, turtles, reef sharks
☐	Rock Islands Southern Lagoon	Palau	Day boat or liveaboard from Koror	Intermediate to advanced	Year-round; drier December to April	Blue Corner, channels, sharks, mantas, caves
☐	Ningaloo Coast	Australia	Mostly shore and day-boat diving	Open Water to advanced	Whale sharks usually March to July	Whale sharks, mantas, turtles, humpbacks
☐	Lagoons of New Caledonia	New Caledonia, France	Shore and day-boat diving	Open Water to advanced	Year-round; seasonal wind and temperature	Barrier reefs, passes, sharks, turtles, dugongs
☐	Lord Howe Island Group	Australia	Island-based day boats	Open Water to advanced	Main season through warmer months	Southern coral reef, endemic fish, Ball's Pyramid
☐	Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas	Brazil	Island-based at Fernando de Noronha	Intermediate to advanced	Late dry-season months often bring visibility	Dolphins, sharks, turtles, volcanic formations
☐	Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary	Colombia	Specialist liveaboard only	Expert	Year-round; visibility and current vary	Hammerhead schools, silky sharks, whale sharks
☐	Coiba National Park	Panama	Day boat or expedition boat	Intermediate to advanced	Dry season roughly December to April	Sharks, rays, turtles, schooling fish
☐	Gulf of California protected areas	Mexico	Day boat or liveaboard	Open Water to advanced	Popular liveaboard window September to November	Sea lions, whale sharks, mobulas, dolphins

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☐	iSimangaliso - Maputo National Park	South Africa and Mozambique	Day-boat diving	Intermediate	Year-round; seasonal wildlife changes	Coral reefs, turtles, whale sharks, whales
☐	Socotra Archipelago	Yemen	Specialist expedition when conditions permit	Advanced	Monsoon winds strongly control access	Endemic marine life, coral, remote seascapes

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves for divers

Done	Destination	Country	Access	Level	Planning window	Underwater highlights
☐	Baa Atoll	Maldives	Resort or liveaboard	Open Water to advanced	Mantas usually strongest May to November	Reef mantas, whale sharks, coral, turtles
☐	Addu Atoll	Maldives	Resort or liveaboard	Intermediate to advanced	Year-round; monsoon-dependent	Mantas, eagle rays, channels, British Loyalty wreck
☐	Fuvahmulah	Maldives	Island-based diving	Advanced	Year-round; pelagic seasons vary	Tiger sharks, threshers, oceanic mantas
☐	Raja Ampat	Indonesia	Liveaboard or eco-resort	Open Water to advanced	Many liveaboards October to April	Exceptional coral diversity, mantas, macro
☐	Wakatobi	Indonesia	Resort, local boat or liveaboard	Open Water to advanced	Year-round; crossings vary	Coral gardens, walls, turtles, reef fish
☐	Seaflower	Colombia	Island-based diving	Open Water to advanced	Year-round; Caribbean weather patterns	Barrier reefs, walls, sharks, turtles
☐	Banco Chinchorro	Mexico	Expedition day boat or multi-day trip	Intermediate to advanced	Often calmer in dry-season months	Remote atoll reef, wrecks, coral, sharks
☐	Isla Cozumel	Mexico	Day-boat diving	Open Water to advanced	Year-round; winter fronts can interrupt	Drift diving, walls, swim-throughs, toadfish
☐	La Palma	Spain	Shore and day-boat diving	Open Water to advanced	Year-round; warmer late summer and autumn	Volcanic reefs, arches, black sand, rays
☐	El Hierro	Spain	Shore and day-boat diving	Intermediate	Year-round; late summer and autumn popular	Volcanic pinnacles, clear water, rays, groupers

Scope: This is a diver-focused checklist, not a list of every marine or coastal UNESCO designation. Access, seasons, permits, travel advice and local rules can change. Verify them before booking. Hanifaru Bay manta encounters are managed mainly as snorkelling, not scuba diving.