

THE ULTIMATE



From top: Swimming alongside a whale shark, the world's largest fish, is an experience of a lifetime; participants can assist marine biologists in monitoring the coral reefs in the Maldives.

Swimming with giants

For many divers, swimming alongside the world's largest fish ranks as one of the most unforgettable underwater experiences. Although the word "shark" often inspires fear, the massive whale shark is in fact a shy, solitary creature that feeds chiefly on plankton, earning itself a reputation as one of the ocean's gentlest giant. Biosphere Expeditions, an award-winning not-for-profit conservation organisation, has a one-week programme that lets experienced divers with an interest in sea conservation assist marine biologists in studying the coral reefs and whale shark population in the Maldives. It is a particularly important project for the country, given that it is made up entirely of coral islands, with reef-based tourism playing a vital role in driving the economy.

Participants are trained as "Reef Check Eco-Divers", whose tasks include taking gill ID photographs of whale sharks and monitoring the marine life around the reefs.

Details: £1,620 per person, inclusive of meals and accommodation on board a fully appointed four-deck dive boat with air-conditioned cabins and en suite amenities. This year, expeditions will take place on 3-9 September and 10-16 September.
www.biosphere-expeditions.org