

MANTA RAYS: THE GENTLE GIANTS OF THE OCEAN

Manta rays are **harmless**. Unlike their stingray cousins, they do not possess a stinging barb.

Instead, manta rays rely on their enormous size and speed to escape potential threats. Oceanic manta rays (*Manta birostris*), like those seen around Tumbes, are the largest rays in the world - they can reach roughly 7.0m wide, from wing tip to wing tip!



Despite being the largest ray, and one of the largest fish in our seas, manta rays feed on some of the ocean's smallest inhabitants - microscopic zooplankton! With their mouths open wide, they swim into clouds of their planktonic prey, and use specially-modified gills to filter this food from the water column. But zooplankton can be tricky to find, especially in large quantities, so mantas spend much of their lives traveling the oceans in search of their next meal.



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SNORKEL WITH MANTA RAYS

LIVE THE ADVENTURE!

And help protect this vulnerable species!



WHY PROTECT MANTA RAYS?

Manta rays live very conservative lives. They take a long time to reach sexual maturity, reproduce once every 2-5 years, and give birth to only one offspring at a time. This makes them very vulnerable to exploitation.

Whilst they have few natural predators, mantas are increasingly threatened by the **actions of man**. They are frequently caught by fishermen, both accidentally and intentionally.

In Peru, the threat of fishing is particularly troublesome, as initial research by Planeta Océano suggests that Tumbes may be an important area of reproduction for one of the world's largest populations of oceanic manta rays.

This makes the need to protect this area and the mantas visiting it even more urgent!

WHY SWIM WITH MANTAS IN ACAPULCO?

Taking part in this snorkel excursion provides:

- Minimal impacts to the environment.
- Conservation education to the local communities.
- A way for local communities to actively participate in the conservation of these rays in their area.
- Economic benefits and incentives to the community to continue to protect these rays.

This activity also helps:

- Create jobs in the community.
 - Develop local services and infrastructure.

- Conserve the area's natural resources.

- Improve and increase the research being

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THE TOWN OF ACAPULCO, TUMBES

Acapulco is a small community in Tumbes, where the main economic activity is fishing.

Fishermen in Acapulco are committed to the conservation of manta rays. They provide guide-swims to tourists visiting their community, and educate them about the manta's habitat and life cycle. In addition, they directly support ongoing research efforts to better understand the biology and ecology of giant, oceanic manta rays.

During these excursions, fishermen invite tourists into their world, and share with them their life experiences.