



SNORKELLING WITH FRIENDLY SPERM WHALES IN THE CARIBBEAN



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A wonderfully relaxing land-based tour – for a group of only eight people – to snorkel with friendly sperm whales in the crystal clear waters of Dominica. We'll stay in a sensational hotel on the beach and have our own specially chartered boat – during peak season – to spend five full days snorkelling with sperm whales and another two days watching a variety of other tropical whales and dolphins.

About our trip

Beautiful Dominica is one of the few countries in the world where sperm whales live year-round (though sightings are most common between November and March – which happen to be the best months weather-wise and for calm seas). There are estimated to be about 300 in this corner of the Caribbean, where they feed, mate and socialise. We hope to have some wonderful encounters – the protected lee of the island is an important calving ground, so we hope to see nursery groups of females with their young calves, as well as visiting males. The sheltered waters are deep very close to shore – so we rarely have to go far out to sea.

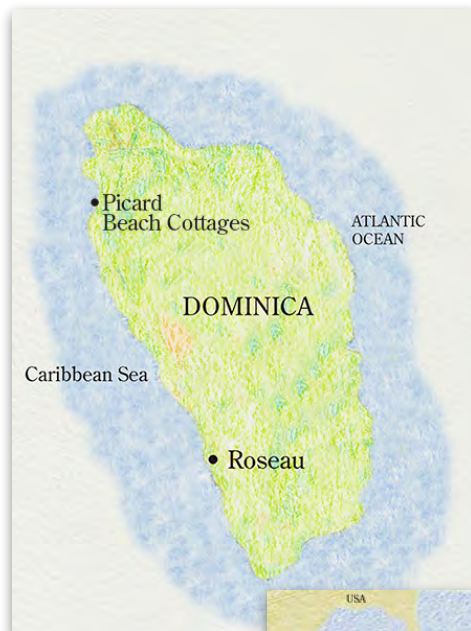
We have special permits (very few permits are issued and we are lucky to get them). They are only issued to a few select researchers, documentary film crews and reputable expedition leaders. Three people are allowed in the water with the sperm whales at any one time, for about 45 minutes, so we will take it in turns during the day. Sperm whales are among the most relaxed marine mammals in the sea. If we are lucky, the females and calves will swim over to check us out – they often hover right in front of snorkellers to have a closer look. As long as you feel



comfortable in the water, you do not need to be a strong swimmer or a qualified diver – it's all very relaxed and calm and gentle. The slower we are, the more likely the whales are to come closer.

We have five full days with the sperm whales and a further two full days looking for other species. We hope to see short-finned pilot whales, pygmy sperm whales and a host of tropical dolphins, including spinner, pantropical spotted, Fraser's, bottlenose and Risso's. Bryde's whales, humpback whales, Cuvier's beaked whales, false killer whales, melon-headed whales and dwarf sperm whales are also sometimes encountered. It's one of those places where almost anything can turn up.

If we wish, and there is an opportunity, we can also get in the water with any of these species.





About Dominica

Our whale watching will take place against the lush, mountainous rainforest backdrop of Dominica – dubbed the 'Nature Island of the Caribbean' for its untouched natural environment. This wonderful, quiet island lies in the Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles, in the Eastern Caribbean, and is a world away from the hustle and bustle of other Caribbean islands. Just 29 miles long and no more than 16 miles wide, it is famous as one of the least-populated countries on Earth and one of the happiest places to live. As part of the Commonwealth, English is the official language (although a French patois is commonly spoken and the original Carib language is evident in many place names).

When we are there, the climate is particularly

pleasant. Between the rainy hurricane season (June to October) and the dry season (February to May), it is usually comfortably warm and dry.

Dates

1. Saturday 20 November – Sunday 28 November 2021 (arrive home 29th) [led by [Rachel Ashton](#)]
2. Sunday 28 November – Monday 6 December 2021 (arrive home 7th) [led by [Rachel Ashton](#)]
3. Saturday 8 – Sunday 16 January 2022 (arrive home 17th) [led by [Mark Carwardine](#)]
4. Sunday 16 – Monday 24 January 2022 (arrive home 25th) [led by [Mark Carwardine](#)]

Itinerary

Day 1: fly from the UK to Dominica (there are direct flights to a few Caribbean islands with a short hop to Dominica; we'll give suggested flights closer to the date) – transfer to our lovely beachside cottages for the week, evening orientation and welcome meal.

Days 2-8: five full days of snorkelling and two full days of whale watching. We have a specially chartered boat at our disposal all day every day, so can go where and when we please. We'll take packed lunches with us on the whale watching days, giving plenty of flexibility. And the boat will pick us up from the jetty right in front of the hotel.

Day 9: transfer to the airport for the overnight flight home.

Day 10: arrive in the UK.



PLEASE NOTE: everyone will need to demonstrate swimming ability in front of the local guide – while you don't need to be a long-distance swimmer or anything, you do need to show a certain degree of confidence swimming in deep sea water.



Where we'll be staying

We'll be staying at Picard Beach Cottages, which make a perfect base for the week. Located on Dominica's longest beach (with reefs just offshore which are good for snorkelling), in Prince Rupert Bay, they are locally owned and set on six acres of old, wildlife-rich coconut plantation. Each spacious cottage has a bedroom with air conditioning and private facilities. It's definitely quiet – apart from bird song and the rhythm of the waves lapping at the shore a few steps away. There is also a wonderful dining area, for breakfast and dinner, on a wooden patio overlooking the sea.



Mark's link with Dominica

Mark has been 'friends' with Dominica for many years. He first visited in 1994 to discuss the possibility of establishing whale watching on the island. There was a lot of interest, so he returned a year later to run a week-long workshop for anyone interested. It kickstarted whale watching there and, although it is still small (nothing is too big in Dominica!) it's been a highly successful part of the island's ecotourism ever since.

Group size

Places are very limited – with a group size of only 8 (plus Rachel or Mark).

Price

£5,995 per person sharing twin or double hotel room (excluding flights).

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Eight nights' hotel accommodation in comfortable hotel with private facilities in Dominica; all breakfasts, lunches and dinners in Dominica; snorkelling and whale watching as described and all necessary permits; transfers between airport and hotel in Dominica; guide services of Rachel Ashton or Mark Carwardine and local guides in Dominica; information pack; government taxes; service charge.



WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Flights; airport departure taxes; travel insurance; carbon offsetting; alcoholic drinks; gratuities; personal items.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE (per person)

Non-refundable deposit of £500 per person upon booking (although this is refundable in full in the unlikely event of having to cancel the trip due to coronavirus); first-stage payment of £2,747.50 six months prior to departure; final balance of £2,747.50 90 days prior to departure.

HOW TO BOOK

Please call or email Rachel Ashton

T: 0117-904-8934

E: rachel@markcarwardine.com

