



Timor-Leste: Blue Whales Timor-Leste

Tour Code Timo1

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WORLDWIDE

TRAVEL | EXPERIENCE | CONSERVE

At Wildlife Worldwide we have been creating **outstanding wildlife holidays** for over 30 years. Established in 1992, our first tours were in Africa, due to founder Chris Breen's love of Zambia's Luangwa Valley where he managed bush camps and guided safaris. Our collection has grown over the years and now covers all corners of the globe from Africa, Asia and the Americas, to Europe and the Polar regions. From safaris and whale-watching to bear watching and wildlife cruising, we have something for all wildlife enthusiasts. Here are a few great reasons to choose Wildlife Worldwide...

A knowledgeable and passionate team of wildlife experts

We have travelled the world, managed safari lodges, worked as tour leaders and safari guides, and have years of experience in the travel industry. We continually research, explore and photograph wildlife and wilderness areas around the world to keep our knowledge up to date and consistently arrange outstanding trips.

Our personal service

Our **personal service**, built on the foundations of quality, knowledge, expertise, reliability and professionalism. A dedicated Wildlife Travel Consultant is available to discuss your holiday at any point.

Flexible tailor-made holidays

We offer **flexibility**, so whether you wish to upgrade your flights, change your accommodation, add in some extra days, or plan something special to coincide with an anniversary or birthday, please tell us, so we can perfect your holiday.

Dedicated group departures

We have our own series of dedicated group departures and in addition we sell a hand-picked collection of departures offered by our overseas partners.

Expert local naturalist guides

Our **naturalist guides** and **tour leaders** are truly outstanding. We only work with the finest guides who offer an exceptional level of expertise, knowledge and passion, and always go the extra mile.

Committed to conservation and responsible tourism

Since its inception, Wildlife Worldwide has placed a special emphasis on **sustainable travel** – focussing on the environment, the wildlife, and the communities that live in close proximity.

We are independent

We are a privately-owned independent company – something that is increasingly rare these days! The advice we give you is completely impartial.

Peace of mind

In addition to offering you 100% financial protection through our **Air Tour Organisers License** (ATOL 10544) and our membership of the **Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited** (5199) we have a 24-hour emergency line should anything happen whilst you are away.

We look forward to welcoming you on your next Wildlife Worldwide holiday.

INTRODUCTION

The waters surrounding Timor-Leste are home to an extraordinary array of cetaceans, making this an exceptional adventure for whale and dolphin encounters. Many species can be seen year-round, however the migration season from October to December is especially remarkable. Join cetacean expert Mark Carwardine and wildlife guide Rachel Ashton as they guide you through these rich tropical seas.

Among the many whales that frequent the waters of Timor-Leste is the pygmy blue whale, a unique subspecies of the blue whale found exclusively in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. While still immense—reaching lengths of up to 24 meters—the pygmy blue differs in several ways from the larger "true" blue whale. These differences include broader, shorter baleen plates; a shorter tail, which gives the body a proportionately longer appearance in front of the dorsal fin; a larger head in relation to its body size; and a heavier body weight compared to other blue whales of similar length. These adaptations make the pygmy blue whale a fascinating subject of study and a highlight for many marine enthusiasts.

The waters here are also home to humpback whale, known for their dramatic breaches and complex songs that play a key role in social communication and mating. Short-finned pilot whale can also be seen, these highly social creatures are often seen travelling in strong, tight-knit pods. Other species include pygmy killer whale and melon-headed whale, both intriguing for their elusive nature and tendency to form large, active groups. Adding to this rich biodiversity, sperm whale, the largest of the toothed whales, can occasionally be spotted as they dive to great depths in search of squid. False killer whales, though rarer, are remarkable for their social bonds and playful interactions.

Dolphins are equally plentiful here, with spinner dolphin often dazzling onlookers with their high-energy aerial spins. Bottlenose dolphin, highly social and curious, are frequently seen approaching boats, while Risso's dolphin, identified by their scarred bodies, reveal fascinating tales of interactions with other marine creatures. Rough-toothed dolphin add to the diversity, sometimes forming large pods that can be observed both nearshore and farther out at sea. These species together showcase the extraordinary marine life that thrives in this region.

OUTLINE ITINERARY

Day 1 Dili (9 nights).



HIGHLIGHTS

- 🐾 Search for pygmy blue whale in one of the world's most reliable regions to encounter this rarely seen subspecies of the largest animal on Earth
- 🐾 Opportunity to swim with pygmy blue whales, when conditions allow, offering an unforgettable encounter with these immense yet graceful giants
- 🐾 Explore a cetacean hotspot where more than 20 species of whales and dolphins have been recorded in the nutrient-rich waters surrounding Timor-Leste
- 🐾 Travel with renowned cetacean expert Mark Carwardine and wildlife guide Rachel Ashton
- 🐾 Witness remarkable marine behaviour, from spinner dolphin performing aerial spins to humpback whale breaching and sperm whales diving

TOUR LEADERS

Mark Carwardine

Mark is a respected and widely travelled zoologist and environmentalist ('Mark Carwardine has seen more of the world than anyone else I know' - Lyn Hughes, Founding Editor of Wanderlust Magazine). He presented the weekly BBC Radio 4 programme Nature for many years, and his TV series include Last Chance to See, co-presenting with actor and comedian Stephen Fry, in which the unlikely duo criss-cross the globe in search of some of a motley collection of endangered species.



A bestselling author of nearly 60 books about wildlife and conservation, his work includes the original Last Chance to See, co-written with Douglas Adams (author of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy). Since 2000, he has written a provocative monthly conservation column for BBC Wildlife magazine. Considered one of The World's 40 Most Influential Nature Photographers, he chaired the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition for many years.

Rachel Ashton

Rachel Ashton has worked closely with conservationist, zoologist, wildlife photographer, author and broadcaster Mark Carwardine since 2004, when she became his Project Manager. She has organised and handled bookings on Mark's trips over the years, as well as assisting him on many of his wildlife adventures, such as whalewatching in Baja California (more than 50 trips), ship charters to Baffin Island, Antarctica and South Georgia, and snorkelling with manatees in Florida and sperm whales in Dominica.



A keen diver, she is, like Mark, passionate about marine wildlife. She started out in advertising and marketing in Australia, before a happy career switch to BBC Wildlife magazine in Bristol, where she ultimately became Features Editor. She also wrote the captions for the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition for 15 years.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1

Arrive in Dili

Welcome to Timor-Leste, one of the world's youngest and least-explored countries. Since gaining independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has remained an off-the-beaten-path destination, where rugged landscapes, rich marine life, and a unique cultural blend of Portuguese and Timorese traditions await. While tourism infrastructure is still developing here, this only adds to its charm—travel here feels authentic and untouched.

We transfer to our hotel and have some free time to explore or relax. Later, we gather together for a pre-tour briefing.



Dili

Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste, is situated on the northern coast of the island of Timor, bordered by the blue waters of the Ombai Strait. Its location offers a mix of rugged mountainous terrain and picturesque coastal scenery. The vegetation around Dili reflects the island's diverse microclimate, with the dry open savannah of the north coast giving way to dense forest cover as you move into the cooler, moisture-rich mountains.

Between Dili's beaches and headlands, pockets of mangroves line the shore, creating essential breeding habitats for fish and supporting a wide array of wildlife, from Timor deer to a variety of colourful birdlife, including the black cuckoo-dove and yellow-crested cockatoos. The waters surrounding Dili are a paradise for marine life, featuring vibrant coral reefs teeming with fish, sea turtles, and seasonal sightings of majestic blue whales and dolphins.



Begin your stay at J L World (9 nights)

JL World Hotel in Dili is a contemporary beachfront property set on the shores of Areia Branca, just moments from the iconic Cristo Rei statue. Combining a modern design with subtle local influences, the hotel enjoys a peaceful setting overlooking the Timor Sea. Its location places you within easy reach of Dili's key sights, while still feeling pleasantly removed from the bustle of the city.

Rooms and suites are stylish and well-appointed, ranging from comfortable executive rooms to spacious pool and garden suites, all comfortable and modern in design. Facilities include a lagoon-style outdoor pool, sea-view terraces, multiple dining venues, and a sunset deck, the perfect spot to relax after a day of exploration.



Days 2 to 9

Whale watching

The next 8 days are dedicated to whale watching. Each morning, we set out on an unforgettable journey into the waters off Dili, dedicating our days to observing and, if conditions allow, swimming with whales. Our focus is on encountering the magnificent pygmy blue whale, but the region is also home to a variety of cetacean species, offering the chance to witness an array of marine life in its natural habitat.

We begin our day with breakfast and an early pick-up from our hotel, heading to the departure point where we board our two boats for a six-hour excursion at sea. Equipped with a dedicated whale seeker, we scan the waters for signs of these elusive giants. Sightings are never guaranteed, but Timor-Leste's deep coastal waters provide one of the best opportunities in the world to encounter these incredible animals.

Flexibility is key to our experience. Each day unfolds according to the conditions, the whale movements, and their behaviour. When we locate a whale, we observe respectfully, ensuring our presence does not disturb them. If we are fortunate enough to encounter a relaxed individual, and conditions permit, we will have the opportunity to enter the water. Using a mask, fins, and snorkel, we take a passive approach, allowing the whales to decide how close they wish to come.

Throughout the trip, we remain mindful that these are wild animals, and each interaction is dictated by their natural behaviour. Whether we observe from the boat or have the privilege of swimming alongside them, every moment in their presence is remarkable.

Species such as melon-headed whale, short-finned pilot whale, Fraser's dolphin, spinner dolphin, and Risso's dolphin can be observed here year-round. Our target species, the pygmy blue whale and also sperm whale, are migratory and appear seasonally between October and December.

Our time on the water is not just about whale encounters—it is also a chance to immerse ourselves in the beauty of the incredible marine environment. We may spot pods of dolphins, flying fish, or even the occasional seabird gliding above the waves. Between sightings, we'll have snacks, along with tea, coffee, and water to keep us refreshed.

By early afternoon, we return to Dili, where we have the rest of the day at leisure to relax, reflect on our encounters, or explore more of what Timor-Leste has to offer. As the week progresses, we build a deeper connection to this extraordinary environment and gain a greater appreciation for the privilege of witnessing these incredible creatures in their world.

Stay at J L World

Breakfast is included.

Day 10

Continue your onward travel arrangements

This morning, our adventure comes to an end. Enjoy breakfast and proceed with your onward travel

arrangements.

INCLUSIONS	EXCLUSIONS
• International and regional flights as shown • Accommodation as shown • Meals as indicated in the itinerary • Transfers • Guided activities	• Drinks (unless otherwise stated) • Tips • Insurance • Items of a personal nature

BOOKING INFORMATION

The itinerary is perfect - I want to book.

Great! If you wish to go ahead, booking is easy. To secure your holiday, we simply require you to:

1. Read our booking terms and conditions before making your booking. They are available to read on our [website](#). If you would like us to post or email you a copy, just ask.

2. Pay a deposit, which your consultant will usually take over the phone. If you prefer, you may also pay by bank transfer into the account details provided below.

🐾 Account No: 13777049

🐾 Sort Code: 20-97-19

🐾 Account Name: The Natural Travel Collection Ltd (we recommend abbreviating to "TNTC Ltd")

🐾 Bank Name: Barclays

🐾 ***Please include your surname and booking number (0) as a payment reference.***

🐾 *If you wish to pay from an overseas bank account, please ask your consultant for details.*

The deposit we require is **£200 per person** or **20% of the total** of the total value of the trip – whichever is the greater. There may be instances when we have to ask for a higher deposit – but we will advise you if this is the case.

Flight instalment if your holiday includes instant purchase flights, we will also require the full payment for these at the time you book your holiday. For example, this would be required if your holiday includes flights with a low cost carrier, or if you are booking a last-minute holiday.

3. Complete your departure lounge. Once we receive your deposit we will set about getting all the arrangements confirmed for your holiday. We will confirm receipt of your payment and you will receive an email requiring you to submit full details of everyone travelling on your booking in your 'Departure Lounge', our secure online passenger portal.

4. We'll re-confirm your holiday once you have completed your 'Departure Lounge'. We'll send you a confirmation pack that clarifies the details of your booking and the reservations we have made for you, along with your ATOL certificate, the invoice for your holiday, and practical travel advice for your chosen destination.

If any changes to the proposed itinerary are necessary at any stage, your consultant will inform you and suggest a suitable alternative.

What about the final balance?

We require you to make full payment **8 weeks before departure (16 weeks** in the case of wildlife cruises
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and 12 weeks for trips to the Falkland Islands). If you book within **8 weeks** of departure (or 16 in the case of a wildlife cruise, or 12 in the case of a trip to the Falklands), you must make full payment when you book.

Is my money 100% secure?

In a nutshell, yes.

We are a fully bonded tour operator and hold an **Air Travel Organiser's Licence** (ATOL) issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which regulates the travel industry. This provides you with complete financial protection and a guarantee on all money we receive from you.

Every holiday we sell that includes a flight element is protected under our ATOL (licence number 10544). In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad or will arrange to refund any money you have paid to us for an advance booking.

And our membership of the **Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited** (ABTOT) provides full financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for packages that exclude flights.

There is more information about your financial protection here: www.wildlifeworldwide.com/financial-security

How about travel insurance?

We strongly recommend that you take out travel insurance at the time of booking your trip as cover will commence for pre-departure cancellation from the date you purchase the insurance. This will therefore provide cover should you have to cancel your trip for an insured reason such as illness or serious accident preventing you from travelling.

The [Campbell Irvine Direct](#) insurance includes cover in the event of you having to cancel or curtail your holiday.

Important Details

Please refer to the policy wording for full details of the cover available.

Full details of cover provided are shown on the policy document, a copy of which is available to download online. Read it carefully to ensure you are happy with the cover provided. The policy contains a 21 day cooling off period and details of how to make a claim and who to contact in the event of a medical emergency. The policy also includes certain terms and conditions, exclusions and excesses. Please note cover is excluded for any defined pre-existing medical condition from which you or any person upon whom travel depends are suffering. For any queries please contact the insurers medical helpline on 01702 242 7237 or visit their [website](#) as additional cover may be purchased directly from the insurer's medical screening helpline for certain conditions.

The Natural Travel Collection Ltd is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd. which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Contact [Campbell Irvine Direct](#) for your travel insurance quote.

Tel: 01702 427 236

Email: info@campbellirvine.com

Following travel advice

Please ensure that you fulfil all entry requirements for your final destination and any transit destinations that you may be travelling through. The Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office website offers destination advice on their [Foreign Travel Advice](#) webpage including local customs and laws.