

WHITE SHARK PROJECTS

Shark Cage Diving: 20 Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. When is the best time to go shark cage diving?

There is no 'best' time to go shark cage diving as it takes place all year round. In our summer season (October to March) we get large congregations of Bronze Whaler Sharks, and in our winter season (April to September) we tend to see more Great White Sharks. We used to see Great White Sharks all year round but due to declining population numbers we sadly do not see them as much as we used to. They do come into the area intermittently during the summer time, but in the winter, we tend to see them more frequently.

In terms of the weather, it is variable all year round as we are close to the tip of Africa, so we are often subjected to changing weather conditions. In summer, it is generally hotter but we still do have windy days! In winter, it is generally cooler and we often have strong storms stopping us from being able to go to sea. We therefore do suggest putting aside a few days for shark cage diving so that you can always re-schedule to another day if the weather causes the cancellation of your trip.

2. Do I have to get into the cage?

No, you do not have to get in the cage. You are more than welcome to watch and observe from the boat. We have a top deck on our boat, which is the perfect viewing area. Much of the shark activity is at the surface so you get a great view on the boat as well!

3. Is there a different price for people who don't go into the cage?

No. The price is the same whether you go in to the cage or not as you are paying for a space on the boat. Our boat can only take up to 20 passengers and each 'seat' costs the same!

4. Do you provide all the gear?

Yes. We provide all the gear that you need including wetsuits, masks, weight belts, and booties to wear in the water. You will receive all of this once you arrive at the anchor spot. We also have towels on board the boat for everyone, as well as snacks and water.

5. How long is the trip at sea?

The trip out at sea is normally two to three hours, depending on shark activity. Shark activity does go up and down every day, and on every trip. We are working with wild animals so they are unpredictable and uncontrollable, however two to three hours is the average amount of time.

6. How long does it take for the sharks to appear?

Some days sharks will show up within five or ten minutes, some days it might take 30 minutes, whilst other days it might take up to an hour or more! Every day is different. We are often lucky and do not have to wait long, but we have days with longer waits too! It all depends on how the sharks are feeling and how interested they are in us!

7. How long do the sharks stay around the boat?

Each species is different. Bronze Whaler Sharks are a schooling shark so when you are observing this species, you tend to see more than one individual at a time, and they tend to stick about the boat for the majority of the trip. This is because once one individual is interested, others become interested and then they may stay around the boat for even a few hours.

In terms of Great White Sharks, it is very variable. Each Great White Shark has its own individual personality. Some are very interested in the boats and may stay around for up to an hour, whilst others are not interested at all and can swim by and pay no attention whatsoever. It depends on what time of shark they are, and also how much energy they have. On average Great White Sharks stay around the boat for 5-20 minutes, but it can be more or less depending on other environment variables. Great Whites are solitary animals and work on hierarchy, basically if a bigger shark enters the area they will swim away.

8. How many people go in the cage? Can I get in with my family and friends?

We can take six divers in our cage at one time. We do try our best to get you in the cage with your family and friends but if you are in a group larger than six, you will need to split up.

9. How long will I spend in the cage?

When you get out to sea, your guide will split you into three or four groups of six people, depending how many people are on the boat on that day. Group number one will get changed and go into the cage first. They will see the sharks a certain number of times (depending on the activity that day), and then the crew will swap group number one for number two, and so on. Once everyone who is on the boat has been in the cage, if there is time, and if the sharks are still interested, those who want to get into the cage for a second time, will have the chance to get back in.

It also depends on the species that you are observing on that day. With Bronze Whaler Sharks we can leave people in the cage for longer as this species tends to stick around the boat longer. With Great White Sharks we often change people out the cage very quickly to ensure everyone gets to see it underwater. Once everyone has seen it, we will then offer the opportunity to get back in again and have another chance whilst the shark is still around. We do this quickly as we are not sure how long the Great White might be interested in us.

10. How cold is the water?

Our water is not warm in the area but it does go up and down. It can range from as low as 9°C (48°F) up to 20°C (68°F). We cannot predict what the water temperature is going to be each day until we get out to sea as it can change overnight. Generally, the water is warmer in winter time than in summer time, as that is the way our currents work!

11. Can children go cage-diving?

Cage-diving is for children over the age of 12. However, the skipper will allow children under 12 in the cage at his discretion, depending on the weather and other factors on the particular day. We strongly recommend arranging babysitting services on shore for children under the age of six. This is something that we can assist with as we have 18 wonderful members of staff onsite.

12. How deep does the cage go?

The cage remains always attached to the side of the boat. The cage is about 75% submerged in the water. It will not go any deeper than that. Your head is always above the water, and you are never fully submerged.

13. Does the cage have a lid?

Yes. The cage does have a solid lid that will be closed once all six divers are in the cage. You can get out at any time as our dive master will be watching and listening to you 100% of the time.

14. Do I need to be able to SCUBA dive?

No. You do not need any SCUBA qualifications. Shark cage-diving requires a very simple breath hold method. You can pull yourself under the water with the bars located inside the cage.

15. Do I get a refund if we do not see sharks?

No. We are sadly not able to issue refunds if no sharks are sighted. Whilst we do have a 95% success rate of seeing sharks, we are still working with wild animals and cannot predict their behavior from day to day. They may move over night, and we are not able, to predict their movements. We will, however, issue you with a voucher that is valid indefinitely, and will enable you to return for another trip with us at no charge. This could be the following day or whenever you are next available to join us.

16. Can you guarantee shark sightings?

Sadly no. As mentioned, we are working with nature and things can change from one day to the next. We never know what is going to happen each day and what sharks we are going to see, and that is what makes it so exciting!

17. Will I get sea sick?

Unfortunately, sea sickness is a reality of being at sea. Not everyone suffers with sea sickness, but some people do so it is best to be prepared.

18. How can I help prevent sea sickness?

There is no general rule to avoid sea sickness but there are some steps you can take to help prevent it. For example, we suggest avoiding drinking and getting a good night's sleep the night before. You can also take a sea sickness tablet the night before, as well as in the morning an hour before launch. These are available at any pharmacy without a prescription. During the excursion we also recommend that you stay outside the cabin and the toilet, as being inside makes sea sickness much worse. We also suggest eating something light before boarding the boat, as having any empty stomach can make you sick in the same way as being too full can make you sick.

19. Is it safe?

Shark cage diving is perfectly safe. The main risks involved in this activity occur when climbing in and out of the cage or due to sea sickness. There are no recorded incidents with sharks in the cage-diving industry in South Africa. All incidents you may have seen online are from the shark cage diving industry off Guadalupe Island, and are often the result of unnatural provocation. In South Africa, we follow strict regulations as outlined by our Department of Environmental Affairs.

20. Can I smoke on the boat?

No. This is considered hazardous due to the amount of fuel that is carried on the boat. It is also for the comfort of all passengers on board.