



Basking Shark Itinerary 2012

Basking Sharks are one of the most interesting sharks in our oceans. The world's second biggest shark, their mysterious migratory lives are only just being uncovered as tagging programs by various conservation organisations are beginning to reveal the huge distances they travel. It is not until you come across one in the water that their true majesty comes to life. Their black beady eyes remind us a lot of the great white, and only add to the mysterious feel of this ocean giant.

This itinerary is for our basking shark trip to Scotland's Inner Hebrides. It is a trip exclusively centred around in-water viewing of Basking Sharks and takes place on a snorkel/free diving basis. These sharks move a lot during the day and it would not be practical nor productive on scuba; we enter and exit the water many times during the day as the sharks move.

The trip is for seven days, with five of those spent in the water. One day each end of the week is allowed for arriving and departing comfortably to and from Tobermory.

Why here and not Cornwall? We have chosen the Hebrides, in particular the two Islands of Coll and Tiree as they are said to be the places within the UK having the most regular Basking Shark appearances. Cornwall has a lot of Basking sharks in certain years, but some years they show only in low numbers and sporadically. Our trip area is not known for large groups of sharks but it is known for decent regularity of sightings. Although numbers seemed to be up in 2010 where we had regular days of 40 or so sharks in the area.

Our Captain is a dedicated wildlife fanatic and he and his family have been operating in the area for over twenty five years. This WISE accredited operator is well respected for their responsibility towards wildlife viewing and we continue this responsibility thoroughly in our Basking Shark itinerary. Due to the expansiveness of the sharks' range, our days can be long, and many hours are spent out on the water. Our captain is probably one of the most dedicated we have ever met and so our chances of encountering the sharks are very good indeed.

Our itinerary for this trip is as follows:

Day One: Arrive Tobermory. Mull is not the easiest place to get to, with a ferry crossing necessary from Oban on the Scottish coast. Depending on your travel method, we aim for everyone to be in Tobermory by lunchtime so that we can get everything loaded on the boat and have a relaxed afternoon before we head off to our shark sites the following day. We will be taking recent sighting info into account when we plan our week ahead, and will spend the afternoon of arrival day making sure everyone is keyed up on our week ahead. We have developed an option whereby we can camp on some of the islands if we find the sharks are a long way off, to save on navigation time and we will be equipped to be able to do this if necessary.

Day Two through to Day Six. We will spend as many hours as possible out on the water looking for Basking Sharks. Sometimes we won't get a sighting until the afternoon, so the days can become long. The boat is comfortable and spacious for the group size, with a dry cabin and tea and coffee making facilities. There is much wildlife to see, with minke whale and dolphin sightings and an abundance of birdlife including skua, petrel, fulmar and gannet to hold us in awe whilst we look for the sharks. If there are no shark sightings then we have the chance to explore coves in crystal clear waters for seals, and abundant macro life on scuba. Likewise if there is an abundance of sharks in the area, we can also dedicate one day to macro work in these coves if the group would like. We lunch on the boat and arrive back at base during the evening. At the end of Day Six we will head back to Tobermory and spend one night in this beautiful town hopefully celebrating a great week full of basking Sharks.

Day Seven. Leave Tobermory. Again, as Mull is such a distant part of the country, it makes sense to leave early in the morning on the first sailing to Oban from Mull to allow the rest of the day to get to our destination.

Equipment: We do not supply any diving or snorkelling equipment for this itinerary. You should bring all of your own equipment for diving, free diving or snorkelling. There are no dive centres in Tobermory or on Tiree and so equipment hire is not an option. We can get scuba tanks filled but as scuba is not part of the itinerary we plan only to use one tank if and when we make a macro/seal dive.

Clothing should be with Scottish weather in mind. The water temperature is around 11 – 14 degrees Celsius so it is quite possible to become chilled whilst in the water and a warm change of clothes upon exit is most recommended. Coffee is used for drinking and not for pouring down the back of your wetsuit. A waterproof jacket and woolly hat will make your boat side aspect of the trip more enjoyable. Although our trips may sometimes be blessed with warm sunshine and glassy seas, we do not anticipate having this much luck all of the time.

What is included/Not included?

Included – Guide: Knowledgeable and Dedicated Captain, Boat, Accommodation (price is for sharing a twin room, please enquire about single room supplement), tea and coffee on board. Mobile camping equipment (except sleeping bag).

Not Included – Travel to and from Tobermory*. Main Meals. Our accommodation will be self catering and we do not provide meals for this itinerary. Dive Equipment. Outdoor Clothing. Sleeping Bag.

*There are various ways to get to Tobermory. There are regular ferries from Oban to Mull. Timetables, booking and pricing can be found at <http://www.calmac.co.uk> and there are plenty of hotels in Oban if you decide to overnight there before the ferry to Mull. There are regular flights to Glasgow airport and car hire facilities. Car hire share option from Glasgow to Mull is possible and recommended. Journey time from Glasgow to Oban can take as long as four hours. We can arrange all bookings for car hire (shared) and flights at extra cost. Please enquire.

Booking for this trip is only accepted on completion of a booking form which includes requirement for reading our terms and conditions. http://www.acuatours.com/booking_form.html

Price per Person - £ 795.00 per person. Payable as 50% at time of booking with the balance payable 30 days prior to departure. Dates available: Arriving any Saturday between June and August 2012.

