

29/12/2022 - 6/01/2023
Mexico

Better than I could have ever dreamed!

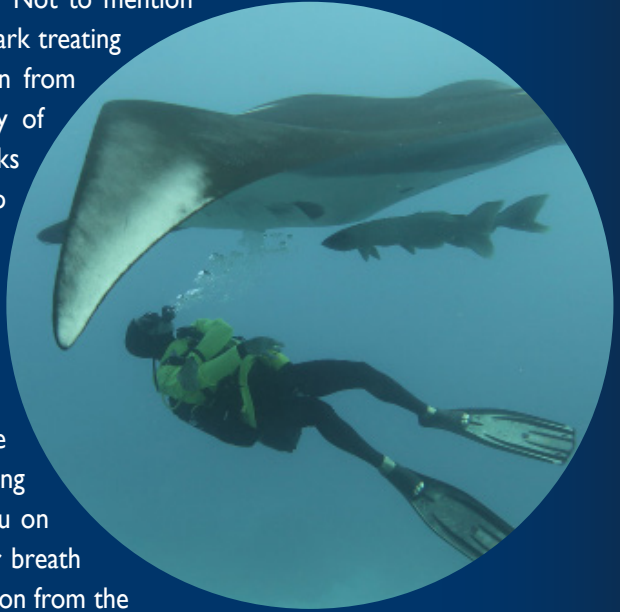
by Jess Haines (AKA Madi Dhahtha - meaning manta sister)

Over the years of working in manta ray conservation for the Manta Trust in the Maldives, I had heard of the Revillagigedo Archipelago. Not that I could ever pronounce the name properly, although I recently learnt that the cool kids now call it “Revilla” sounds like “Rev-ee-ya”, so that makes my life much easier.

The truth is, despite having heard of this place and dreaming of going there, it was so much more than I could have ever imagined. Being the largest Marine Protected Area (MPA) in all of North America has proven to me that MPAs do work wonders if they are managed properly. In the space of just 5 days, I saw more marine wildlife than I have in my entire life of diving (and I’ve been diving since I was 8 years old).



We swam amongst the biggest gentle giants, with 40 oceanic manta rays greeting us across every dive site we visited, one manta even following us between dive sites on different days! Not to mention the gentlest giant of them all, a whale shark treating us to a sight of glory as it swam down from the surface straight into a mass frenzy of cleaning, white tip, and silver tip sharks at the breathtaking Roca Partida. To top off an epic last day of diving at Cabo Pierce, a site described perfectly as “The gift that keeps on giving” we not only encountered 20 oceanic manta rays on this day but also the biggest school of scalloped hammerhead sharks, I have dreamt my whole life of seeing. Having 100+ hammerheads swimming above you on a dive is something that truly takes your breath away. Very quickly distracting your attention from the beautiful manta ray cleaning station, where the charismatic clarion fish were busy at work keeping our mantas clean at their local natural spa.



With so many things ticked off my bucket list, diving at Revillagigedo Archipelago was what the phrase “Trip of a Lifetime” was designed for. Although we could have gained access to satellite internet had we wanted to. Our divers onboard all agreed there is something quite spectacular about being cut off the grid from the everyday world, really immersing ourselves amongst nature in its purest beauty, and getting to know the people around you. Something I’ve always valued about Liveboard diving is meeting like-minded lovers of the ocean and bonding over what memories you have seen, that no story you tell or photo you share back home, will ever do justice to these unique experiences. That raw sense of belonging and awakening each time you submerge yourself below the surface and wait to see what marine life will come and greet you.



Words that will stay with me for a lifetime:

“My heart is full of Revilla love and my mind is blown at how magical this place is. I feel like I dreamt it all and I keep pinching myself to wake up! I hope one day to return and live it all over again”.