

Banco Chinchorro



Some Of The Healthiest Coral In The Caribbean Is At Banco Chinchorro

Banco Chinchorro is further away from the major hotel areas but therein also lies its benefit. There are far less divers here than sites closer to Cancun and Playa del Carmen. Divers who make the trek will be richly rewarded with an intimate and unspoiled experience of the largest coral atoll and some of the best diving in the Northern hemisphere.

Banco Chinchorro is a biosphere reserve and has the highest level of protection. It used to be very difficult to even be able to get someone to take you to dive there. Things have changed due to an increase in tourism to Costa Maya and now it is fairly easy to book diving. But dives here are still quite rare because permits are limited and it's not the easiest site to get to. The boat trip to the island is 2.5 hours and high winds can defeat the journey.

For the adventurous, there is a lot to love about Banco

Chinchorro. The site has many shipwrecks and the coral is truly outstanding. The shipwrecks here are real shipwrecks, not boats that were intentionally sunken. There are at least 9 shipwrecks, including 2 Spanish Galleons. The coral is some of the healthiest and unspoiled you will ever see. Many biologists come here specifically to study the incredible coral and it has been cited as a textbook example of how a healthy reef should look.

The wrecks are not all accessible to the general public at this time. Some are too dangerous to dive and some are prohibited by the government. You will be allowed to see the 40 cannons wreck site, and the Copper. We know at least one dive shop, [Amigos Del Mar](#), that is certified with the national institute of anthropology and history that says it has access to the Chinchorro underwater museum and its dozens of shipwrecks. If you are interested in the wrecks definitely talk to the dive shops to see what they can do for you.

The marine life and corals are absolutely first class. There are fish everywhere you look. You will see schools of snappers and blue tangs, barracudas and eels. Sharks, rays and sea turtles abound, and dolphins also frequent the site. The American Alligator is a big highlight. There are brain corals and barrel sponges the size of cars, and plentiful black coral. The collection of soft corals here is especially majestic

The land portion of the reef is only 1%, so the whole site is almost entirely a coral wonderland. There are no visitors allowed on the island. In between dives you will hang out in the water and snorkel with a vest. Expect to be in the water the entire time.

You can dive Banco Chinchorro all year round but be especially mindful of hurricanes and nortes when booking your trip because high winds will cause boats to cancel their voyages out to the island. Your best bet is to book several days in

Costa Maya to leave yourself the best chance of getting good conditions. The water is warm all year round and cools only slightly in the winter months.

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