



BEACON OF HOPE

Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park. © Shutterstock

Kathryn Curzon goes diving in Mexico and discovers the twin benefits of ocean conservation and ecotourism.

Diving into the warm, blue waters of the Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park is like stepping back into a time when our ocean ecosystems were exactly as they ought to be – teeming with life, untouched, and wild.

Places where nature rules and the impacts of humanity are blissfully absent. This inspiring marine park is located on the east coast of Mexico's Baja California peninsula in the sun-kissed waters of the Sea of Cortez.

The diverse reef colours and abundance of marine life at Cabo Pulmo create an experience that attracts scuba divers from around the world.

However, it wasn't always like that. Cabo Pulmo has transformed from a struggling fishing community to a beacon of marine conservation and a world-class dive destination.

In the 1990s, Cabo Pulmo faced a crisis as overfishing depleted its marine resources. Local communities recognised the

urgent need for change and made a bold decision to transition from a traditional fishing industry to ecotourism.

The shift aimed to protect the marine life they once depended on and to secure a sustainable future. This pivotal change marked the birth of the Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park.

Established in 1995, the marine park was a collaborative effort, driven by a small community's devotion to conservation. Locals, in partnership with environmental

organisations, created a sanctuary where marine life could thrive.

The results are staggering – a remarkable 400% increase in fish biomass, showcasing the success of this grassroots initiative.

Jacques Cousteau famously referred to the Sea of Cortez as the "Aquarium of the World" and used this term to highlight the incredible biodiversity and richness of marine life found in this region.



Kathryn Curzon



Diverse sea coral formations are a feature of the marine park. © Kathryn Curzon

There are now more than 6000 marine species at the Cabo Pulmo National Marine Park, including sea lions, whales, rays, and sharks.

Tucked away at the end of a long and bumpy unsealed road, Cabo Pulmo isn't the easiest destination to get to. Towering cacti and rolling hills dominate the landscape, eventually leading to a panorama of idyllic beaches and bright turquoise waters.

At the end of the road, a scattering of thatched beach shacks and an unassuming dive centre announce your arrival. There is not a tarmac road in sight. This is a destination far from the buzz of towns and mainstream tourism.

After a surf launch and short boat ride out to the dive sites, you are immersed in warm waters with colourful reef fish and passing sea turtles.

seemingly never-ending train, is the dive highlight that Cabo Pulmo is famous for, and it lives up to expectations.

Diving at Cabo Pulmo isn't just a visual feast though. It's also a crucial economic lifeline for the local community.

The income generated from scuba diving significantly surpasses what was once derived from the fishing industry. This shift not only revitalised the community but also underscored the financial viability of sustainable tourism over resource exploitation.

The positive impacts of Cabo Pulmo's conservation efforts extend beyond fish populations and economics. The park serves as a model for how marine ecosystems can rebound when protected. Coral reefs flourish, creating a haven for various species.

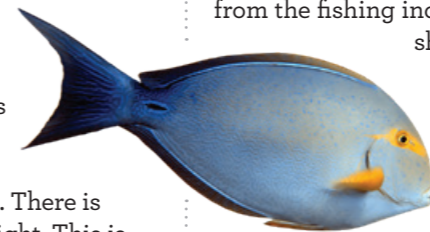
The park has also become a research hub, contributing valuable data to global marine conservation efforts. It serves as a model for successful community-driven marine conservation and inspires other communities worldwide to consider how they can protect their marine environments.

Whether you are a diver or not, it is worth visiting Cabo Pulmo simply to be inspired by what conservation-minded communities can achieve.

It is a testament to the lasting positive impacts we can have when we unite for conservation.

From the brink of ecological collapse to a thriving marine sanctuary, this success story offers a glimmer of hope for other struggling ecosystems worldwide.

As we face the global climate and biodiversity crises, you need look no further than this small, unassuming community to find hope for a future where nature and humanity can thrive



Sea fan. © Kathryn Curzon

The diverse coral formations and sea fans add another layer of beauty, making every dive a unique experience. The currents can be strong, but often you can dive with them, drifting over the landscapes below.

Diving alongside huge schools of jacks, which pass by in a



Diver with huge school of jack fish at Cabo Pulmo. © Kathryn Curzon



GETTING THERE

If you plan to visit Cabo Pulmo, which I highly recommend, the best time to experience diving there is from August to December. During those months, the waters are warm and full of life. From December to March, the waters are cooler, but you can spot humpback whales and whale sharks. See [**Creatures \(seecreaturesbaja.com\)**](http://Creatures(seecreaturesbaja.com)) offer a variety of diving experiences at Cabo Pulmo and further afield.