

Gardens of the Queen Dive Sites

Cabezo de la Cubera

The depth ranges from 18 to 63 ft. "Cabezo" is a Cuban marine term for an isolated coral formation on a sandy bottom. This place has a "cabezo" with a circular shape, around 600 ft in diameter which is extremely impressive with big schools of dog snapper and cuberas in the water column above the coral; mutton, yellowtail snapper schools between the coral patches, Caribbean reef sharks, different species of groupers, sting rays, turtles. After going around the coral formation divers get to a shallow wall with clouds of purple blue tangs and massive schools of tarpon crossing by.

Black Coral I

Depth ranges between 72 and 96 ft. Coral bands that grow higher near the edge of the platform (drop-off) are more than 30 ft high over the sand patches in the bottom between them, abundant colonies of black coral, a resident population of more than 20 Caribbean reef sharks, huge black groupers come close to the divers all the time, schools of jacks rubbing their bodies against the sharks to clean parasites away, parrot fish schools, clouds of school masters and yellowtail snappers, also rainbow runners and oceanic triggerfish.

Black Coral II

Depth ranges between 60 and 90 ft., impressive coral mountains near the edge of the platform, resident population of more than 25 reef sharks (*Carcharinus Perezi*) patrolling the coral mountains. Big colonies of black corals, large sponges, depth gorgonians, midnight parrotfish schools, king mackerel, black groupers, moray eels, hawksbill, and a friendly nurse shark comes very close to the divers. In the blue passing schools of oceanic triggerfish and lonely eagle rays.

Five Seas

Depth ranges between 21 and 66 ft. under the wall there are overhangs with impressive resident schools of tarpon, black corals, and colorful sponges, divers go under and tarpons get as close as two inches from the mask to turn away with a shining silver flash. Resident population of more than 15 Caribbean reef sharks, snappers, black groupers, Goliath grouper (*Epinephelus Itajara*) comes very close. There is a wreck 15 meters long, it was a boat of Júcaro harbor that was used as a pilot boat and its name was Five Seas, was sunk intentionally, the remaining parts of the boat are full of corals, sponges, schools of jacks and black corals, also green moray eels.

Octopus Cave

Depth ranges between 15 and 54 ft. there is a wall full of sponges and gorgonians, tarpon schools, Caribbean reef sharks and Goliath grouper over 200 pounds, impressive schools of grunts, porgies and mullet around big pillar corals in the edge of the wall, also big clouds of school masters.

Pillar corals are over 6 feet high and are cleaning stations for large and small reef fish There is a cave at 18 feet with a horizontal development of its gallery of over 230 ft., but it is restricted, and you can only explore the entrance, the cave is inhabited by "brotulas", a blind fish, they can only be seen at night. There are also iridescent sponges with decorated crabs.

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Cabezo de la Raya

Depth between 15 and 63 ft. Circular coral formation more than 900 ft. in diameter, forming bands of coral in the sand, many sting rays in the sandy areas, nurse sharks, Caribbean reef sharks, goliath grouper, black and Nassau groupers, hawksbills, king mackerel, at the end the dive finishes at 15 ft. in a shallow wall full of reef fish, grunts, schoolmasters, parrots, barracudas, angelfish, blue tangs, mullet, nudibranchs etc.

Los Mogotes

Amazing visibility, "Mogotes" is the name Cuban fishermen give to coral formations in a white sandy bottom, as they see these from the boat as darker areas in the sand.

Depth ranges between 21 and 63 ft. there is a wall, with some overhangs full of black coral, small caves with tarpon schools especially in May, June, July, constantly patrolled by Caribbean reef sharks, big black groupers, jacks, crabs, and many reef fish in the shallow zone.

Pipin

Drop-off wall dive, between 45 and 105 ft. deep, with many coral canyons, resident school of Silky sharks (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) swimming near the boat all the time and Caribbean reef sharks in the deep. Black corals, huge spotted eagle rays, tarpon, jacks, snappers, turtles. Big colonies of black corals.

El Farallon

Coral formation between 45 and 160 ft. crossed by some ruptures where the corals are 30ft. high over the sand and 6 ft. wide, some of this impressive tunnels barely open in the top allowing the rays of light to enter forming an spectacular view, divers go across two tunnels and then go to the drop-off full of black corals and hanging sponges, black groupers, goliath grouper, snapper, Caribbean reef sharks and silky sharks.

Russian Mountain

Drop-off, perpendicular wall, the dive goes between 66 and 105 ft. With large coral canyons, big schools of jacks, Black corals, huge sponges, Silky and Caribbean reef sharks, occasionally a giant lonely great hammerhead (*Sphirna mokarran*) emerges from the depth to take a quick view of the divers. Turtles, snappers, and groupers.

Vicente

Large cylindrical coral formations at the edge of the wall as pinnacles that rise 72 ft. from a deep sandy bottom, the dive goes between 114 and 60 ft. from top to top of these intricately decorated coral mountains, with all species of sponges, corals, gorgonians, very colorful drop-off, also large groupers, Caribbean and Silky sharks, and occasionally a huge great hammerhead comes up curious. Spotted eagle rays flying parallel to the wall.

Avalon

Frontal edge of the reef wall, between 72 and 110 ft. full of big black coral colonies, and depth gorgonians, groupers, silky and Caribbean reef sharks, massive iridescent sponges,

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is a very colorful wall, eagle rays are seen here very often, also goliath groupers, hammerhead occasionally. Some impressive canyons in the deeper areas of the wall.

Sample itineraries and maps are for illustrative purposes only. The exact route and sites visited are subject to change based on local regulations, guest experience, weather and logistics, and is at the Captain's discretion.

