

## Ten places to celebrate Shark Week

**Larry Bleiberg**  
Special to USA TODAY

They may be cold-blooded killers, but sharks are getting a lot of love. This week Discovery Channel broadcasts its 30th annual Shark Week, featuring eight days of shark-centric programming, ending Aug. 4.

The appeal is easy to see, says Neil Hammerschlag, a marine ecologist at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science. "Sharks are the fighter jets of the ocean. People appreciate that beauty."

Hammerschlag, a Shark Week contributor, and Discovery Channel share favorite sites to see and dive alongside the ferocious fish with 10 Great Places columnist Larry Bleiberg and USA TODAY.

### **Narragansett, Rhode Island**

Summer visitors have a good chance of spotting shortfin mako and blue sharks on day trips off the coast.

"These are open-ocean sharks. You can be at the surface and the boat crew can be out there talking with you. You can have ten to 15 blue sharks swimming," Hammerschlag says. "If you're lucky, you might have mako come check you out." For more information, visit [southcountyrri.com](http://southcountyrri.com).

### **Newport Aquarium, Newport, Kentucky**

This inland aquarium just over the bridge from Cincinnati has gone shark crazy this summer with reduced children's admission and a new baby epaulette shark on display.

Several times a year, guests can spend the night next to a tank where the sleek killers circle. And every day, they can cross its Shark Bridge, a 75-foot rope span suspended inches above the water.

For more information, visit [newportaquarium.com](http://newportaquarium.com).

### **Florida Keys**

At the interactive Florida Keys Marine Life Experience in Marathon, Florida, visitors can get in the water and feed sharks in a 200,000-gallon interconnected saltwater aquarium. Even non-divers can participate using a tethered diving hose allowing them to breathe underwater. Elsewhere, Keys outfitters visit areas where they may spot blacktip, Caribbean reef and lemon sharks.

"You have a good chance to see a drive-by or a pass-by of these species," Hammerschlag says.

For more information, visit [floridakeysaquariumencounters.com](http://floridakeysaquariumencounters.com) and [fla-keys.com](http://fla-keys.com).

### **Prince William Sound, Alaska**

Travelers have an opportunity to snorkel or dive with the rare salmon shark on trips operating out of Valdez, Alaska. Hammerschlag says it's a special experience.

"The salmon sharks can be seen leaping out of the water seeking salmon. They are a very cool shark — very understudied."

For more information, visit [valdezalaska.org](http://valdezalaska.org).

### **Shark Reef Aquarium, Las Vegas**

While card sharks are no strangers to Las Vegas casinos, you can also see the actual animals at the Mandalay Bay Hotel, which is home to 100 sharks of 15 different species.

Sightseers explore two acrylic tunnels through the middle of the resort's 1.3-million-gallon Shark Reef, home to sand tiger, sandbar and white-tip reef sharks. Certified divers can even arrange to take a dip with the killers.

For more information, visit [visitsharkreef.com](http://visitsharkreef.com).

### **Nassau, Bahamas**

Hammerschlag took his first shark dive in the Bahamas when he was 16, and although he didn't know it at the time, it set him on his career path. "It's probably the shark diving capital of the world," he says.

He notes that visitors can easily see Caribbean reef sharks during warm shallow-water dives: "At any point in time, you may have 25 to 45 sharks circling around you. They put on a pretty wonderful display."

For more information, visit [bahamas.com](http://bahamas.com).

### **Georgia Aquarium, Atlanta**

Although neither whale nor shark, the whale shark is still worth checking out. At almost 40 feet long, and with a tail fin as tall as a man, these gentle giants don't have menacing teeth or personalities.

Divers can swim with the animals at the Georgia Aquarium, and in the wild off Isla Mujeres, near Cancun, Mexico. "They're completely harmless. It's spectacular to be in the water with them," Hammerschlag

says.

For more information, visit [georgiaaquarium.org](http://georgiaaquarium.org) and [cancun.travel/en](http://cancun.travel/en).

### **San Diego**

Families can have a close encounter with predators at Sea World San Diego, where its 280,000-gallon Shark Encounter is home to sand tiger, bonnethead, blacktip and whitetip reef sharks.

In the nearby Pacific, day-trippers regularly encounter shortfin mako and blue sharks on scuba and snorkeling outings. "The deep water's not that far offshore. This is popular shark diving," Hammerschlag says.

For more information, visit [Seaworld.com](http://Seaworld.com) and [sandiego.org](http://sandiego.org).

### **Morehead City, North Carolina**

Not only can divers visit deep water shipwrecks on the Atlantic Coast, but they also often see the sand tiger sharks that are drawn there. "They're kind of menacing-looking because they have front teeth that stick out," Hammerschlag says.

But the danger is minimal: "They're gentle unless you do something stupid like grabbing their tails." This scuba dive, which may reach more than 100 feet is not for beginners,

though."

For more information, visit [Morehead.com](http://Morehead.com).

### **Jupiter, Florida**

Hammerschlag calls the Gulf Stream "an underwater highway for sharks." And because the current comes close to shore near Jupiter, both snorkelers and scuba divers can catch sight of lemon, bull, sandbar, great hammerhead and tiger sharks.

"I've done it several times," he says. "It's just a couple miles offshore."

For more information, visit [thepalmbeaches.com](http://thepalmbeaches.com).