Swimming with Sharks, a New Offer to Attract Tourism to Cuba

Looking to hook visitors that could rebuild tourism in Cuba, local authorities have a new proposal: swimming with sharks without “any cage to protect them.”

CNN correspondent in the island, Patrick Oppman, went through the experience and filmed a report reviewing the tourist activity. Ironically, he indicated that before doing that, he had to confront “the expanding bureaucracy of Cuba to organize a dive with those sharks.”

Oppman’s destination was the Shark Friends Dive Center, managed by the coastal city of Playa Santa Lucia –Santa Lucia beach- located in Camagüey. The report highlights that this is the only site in Cuba, and one of the few places in the world where divers can swim with bull sharks.

According to scientists consulted by the CNN reporter, bull sharks have “350 teeth, a muscular appearance and an occasional propensity for attacking boats.” He was assured that it is rare for a bull shark to attack humans. In addition, the Cuban diving instructor swore that he “had never had a client bitten by a shark, not even a small bite or a nick.”
The profits could reach into the millions

Dan Whittle, Senior Director of the Environmental Defense Fund, a group that in 2015 worked with the Cuban government to implement greater protective measures for marine life in the island, stated to CNN that shark tourism could make millions of dollars for the Cuban government.

The Bahamas, for example, is another Caribbean destination for swimming with sharks. This type of tourism generated more than US$100 million to the local economy of the Bahamas.

Although the report assures the reader that the amount of money that Cuba earns as a result of this activity is less than what the Bahamas earns, tourist guides hope that this new attraction becomes very popular. They state that the virgin reefs in the island and the efforts to safeguard the approximately 100 species of shark native to Cuba can attract tourists.