

SCIENTIFIC CAMPAIGN · SECAC & GARA ITSASOA



First cetacean expedition of the Canary Islands

Science, whales and dolphins: a voyage across the most emblematic marine areas of the Canary Islands

1-12 Nov 2026

17–28 January 2027 · 5–16 April 2027 · 7–18 June 2027 · 4–15 October 2027

SECAC · Society for the Study of Cetaceans in the Canary Archipelago | Gara Project Prime S.L.

OVERVIEW



The Canary Islands, a living laboratory in the middle of the Atlantic

The Canary Islands offers **unique conditions** for the study of cetaceans: **deep waters close to the coast, Atlantic and African influence, seamounts, inter-island corridors and an extraordinary marine diversity.**



A total of **31 cetacean species** have been recorded in these waters, including resident, migratory and deep-diving species.



31 cetacean species

One of the greatest diversities in the Atlantic



Deep waters close to the coast

The ocean becomes accessible for research



Volcanoes and sea

Islands born from the ocean floor: slopes and banks that concentrate life



Marine protected areas

Key areas for conservation and scientific knowledge

THE SCIENTIFIC BODY

SECAC, three decades listening to the ocean

The Society for the Study of Cetaceans in the Canary Archipelago is a scientific NGO founded in 1993.

Since then, it has promoted the research, conservation and public understanding of cetaceans in the Canary Islands, developing scientific, educational and public-awareness projects.



Research · Monitoring the structure and dynamics of cetacean communities



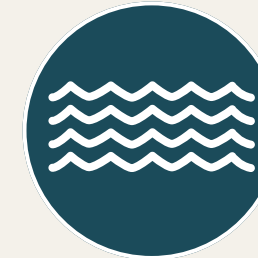
30 years of research

Continuous work in Canary waters.



Applied conservation

Science in the service of marine protection.



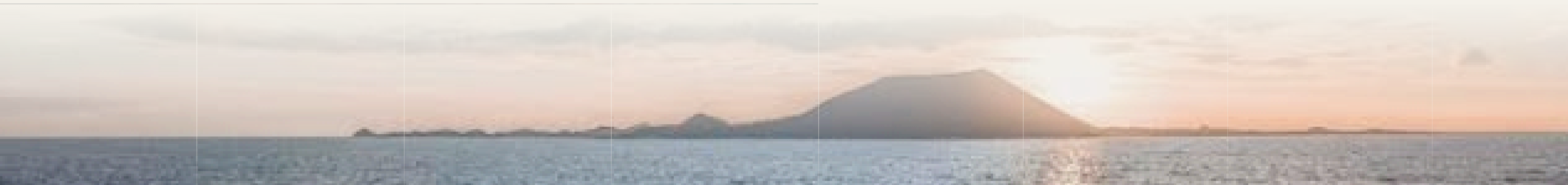
Outreach and education

Accessible knowledge for institutions, the public and participants.



Scientific reference

Curator of the **Macaronesian Cetacean Reference Biological Collection.**



THE SCIENTIFIC BODY

A leading scientific body

SECAC is curator of the **Macaronesian Cetacean Reference Biological Collection**, runs the Canary Islands Cetacean Research Centre in Arrecife and collaborates with researchers and centres nationally and internationally.

It also holds administrative authorisation from MITECO to carry out studies with cetaceans.



**Macaronesian
Cetacean Reference
Biological Collection**



**Canary Islands
Cetacean Research
Centre**



**Collaboration with
researchers and
centres nationally
and internationally**



**MITECO
authorisation
Studies under
Royal Decree
1727/2007**



THE SCIENTIFIC BODY

The science that gives the voyage its meaning

This expedition is not an observation tour. It is a scientific campaign designed to contribute real data on the cetaceans of the Canary Islands.

SECAC provides the scientific direction, the field methodology and the experience gathered over decades of research.





SCIENTIFIC DIRECTION | WHO GUIDES YOU

Vidal Martín

Founder, president and scientific director of SECAC. 40 years studying the cetaceans of the Canary Islands. When Vidal says there is a sperm whale down there, it is because he has spent half a lifetime listening to them. He puts the science within everyone's reach: talks on what you have sighted, concepts explained at an unhurried pace, and an atmosphere where learning is part of the voyage.

- First president of the Spanish Cetacean Society (SEC).
- Director of the Canary Islands Cetacean Museum (2007–2011).
- Has led field campaigns, stranding monitoring and studies on distribution and conservation.
- Author of scientific publications on the cetaceans of the Canary Islands.

What the scientific programme includes

Visual and acoustic surveys

Predetermined transects with a towed hydrophone to determine the distribution and frequency of cetaceans, seabirds and turtles.

Monitoring of key species

Acoustic monitoring of group movements in each study area. Special attention to sperm whales, beaked whales, pilot whales and dolphins.

Photo-identification

Individual identification of target species to obtain demographic and behavioural data.

A day of research on board

Transects

Sailing along predetermined transects from the coast to the open sea, at around 8 knots and up to 12 miles from each island and through the inter-island channels.

Observation

Two observers scan a 180° sector with the naked eye and 7×50 binoculars. Sightings, effort and environmental conditions (Beaufort/Douglas) are recorded.

Acoustic detection

A towed array hydrophone off the stern detects the presence of sperm whales; when it picks up sound, they are located with PAMGuard software to help make visual contact.

Recording

On sighting a cetacean, the boat approaches to identify the species and record time, GPS position, distance, detection cue, behaviour and group size. Photo-ID (individual identification).

End of the day

After dinner, a shared review of the day's progress and a science talk on the species sighted.

Six islands. Four marine protected areas.

From Lanzarote to the Chinijo archipelago, and the waters of Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Tenerife and La Gomera — mooring at iconic locations when there is no night-time navigation.



Chinijo

Europe's largest marine reserve



Lanzarote–Fuerteventura

Several resident beaked whale species



La Isleta

Risso's dolphins off Las Palmas



Teno–Rasca

Resident short-finned pilot whales all year round



La Gomera

Southwestern waters, high cetacean diversity



Los Gigantes

Cliffs rising 600 m above the sea

SPECIES OF INTEREST

The target species of the survey



Sperm whale

Physeter macrocephalus



Bryde's whale

Balaenoptera edeni



Short-finned pilot whale

Globicephala macrorhynchus



Risso's dolphin

Grampus griseus



Common bottlenose dolphin

Tursiops truncatus



Rough-toothed dolphin

Steno bredanensis

And all beaked whale species. MITECO authorisation for the handling of cetaceans.



EXPEDITION PROGRAMME

Twelve days across the Canary archipelago

Day 1

Welcome aboard in Arrecife (Lanzarote) from 5 pm

Introduction to the team, the expedition and the scientific protocols.

Days 2–3

Chapter I · The volcanic origin

Lanzarote · Chinijo Archipelago · La Graciosa

On the second day we begin sailing through one of the oldest and most protected marine landscapes in the Canary Islands: cliffs, volcanic islands, seabeds of high ecological value and Europe's largest marine reserve. First cetacean observations.

Day 4

Chapter II · The deep corridor

Eastern Lanzarote · Fuerteventura

We enter an exceptional area for deep-diving cetaceans: beaked whales, pygmy sperm whales, seamounts and waters of high biological productivity.



EXPEDITION PROGRAMME

Day 5

Chapter III · The city and the ocean

Gran Canaria · La Isleta

Dawn off Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and sailing through the La Isleta marine area, where maritime traffic, marine life and resident Risso's dolphins coexist.

Day 6

Chapter IV · Humboldt's gaze

Northern Tenerife · Anaga · Teide · Los Gigantes

Sailing around Tenerife: from the green landscapes of the north that inspired Humboldt to the volcanic cliffs of Los Gigantes.

Days 7–8

Chapter V · The realm of the pilot whales

Teno–Rasca · Los Gigantes

Two days in one of the most important areas in the world for observing short-finned pilot whales and bottlenose dolphins.



EXPEDITION PROGRAMME

Day 9

Chapter VI · Wild La Gomera

Santiago · Valle Gran Rey

Sailing towards a rugged, green and deeply oceanic island, with waters of great interest for cetacean observation.

Days 10–12

Chapter VII · The return

Passage back to Lanzarote

Final observations, close of the expedition and return to port.

**The itinerary may be adapted depending on weather, oceanographic or scientific conditions.*

THE FLOATING LABORATORY

Gara Itsasoa: a catamaran designed for science

A 22 m aluminium catamaran, built in 2025 and designed for one thing: to take science to where the ocean still keeps its secrets.

Below deck, a laboratory; above it, twelve days on the trail of whales and dolphins. ***And you, part of the voyage.***

Everything an expedition needs: home, laboratory and command bridge in a single hull.



THE FLOATING LABORATORY

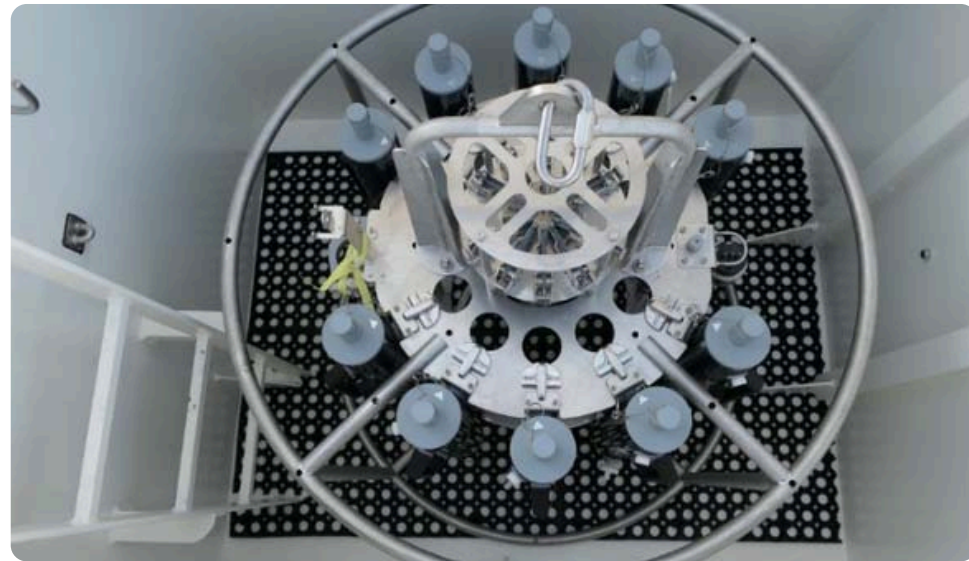
A warm refuge in the middle of the Atlantic

- **Saloon.** A shared space with a screen for group projections and viewings: the meeting point at the end of the day.
- **Open galley.** Premium, locally sourced, with quality at its heart.
- **Rest.** Up to 8 guests in 4 double cabins, each with a private bathroom.
- **Community and privacy,** each with their own space.

Fine wood, warm light and real rest after each day at sea.



The Gara Itsasoa is not a catamaran with a laboratory. It is a *laboratory that sails*.



CTD rosette

You measure the temperature, salinity and oxygen of real seawater, with the instruments of a scientific campaign.



Towed hydrophone

You listen to sperm whales underwater. You don't just watch them from afar: you hear them before you see them.



Underwater robot

You look down where no diver can reach. The robot descends and streams back, live, what is happening in the deep.

Every data point you collect on board feeds real research into the cetacean populations of the Canary Islands.

WHO TAKES YOU THERE

A crew that knows the sea and looks after you on board

Eduardo Pérez, skipper

Licensed Offshore Skipper with extensive experience on both commercial fishing vessels and recreational boats. A thorough understanding of the profession, having progressed from deckhand to captain.

Lenka Klikarova, crew

Ten years under sail. She guides you through the sail manoeuvres if you want to take part.

Yaiza Sistiaga

Many years' experience as a marine biologist and offshore skipper, with professional diver training. He operates the research equipment for sampling.

Cook

Delicious cooking with fresh, locally sourced produce.





WHO CAN TAKE PART

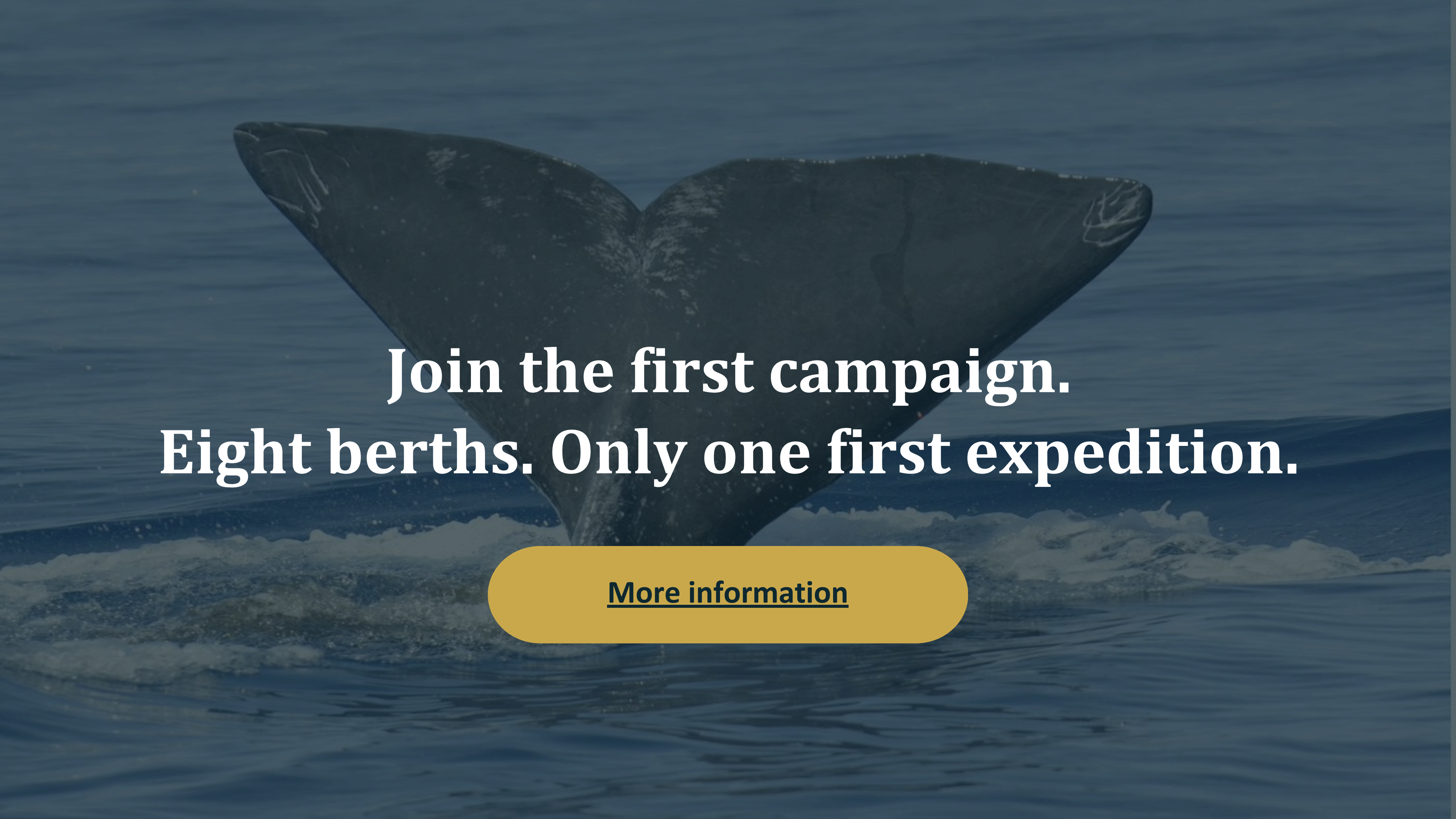
No previous experience. As hands-on as you want to be

No experience is needed: all it takes is the right attitude, a spirit of teamwork and a desire to learn. On board, you take part in the life of the boat as much as you feel like — or simply let go and enjoy the ocean. You choose, every day. You can:

- Take part in the sail manoeuvres
- Stand night navigation watches under the stars
- Lend a hand in the galley
- Or simply let go and enjoy the ocean

CONDITIONS

November is the season of the autumn calms. For safety and for sightings, we sail in good weather: above 25 knots we seek the shelter of a protected bay.

A large whale tail fluke is visible, emerging from the water. The background is a deep blue ocean with some white foam from the whale's movement.

**Join the first campaign.
Eight berths. Only one first expedition.**

[More information](#)



Your place on board awaits

A 12-day experience where your presence contributes to the knowledge and conservation of the cetaceans of the Canary Islands.

Join the expedition

Registration: Gara Project Prime S.L.

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