

Meet the Manta Ray

The manta is the largest ray, but it has no bones. Its body is made of *cartilage*, like the divider between the two sides of your nose.

Mantas are found in the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Ocean. Even without bones, mantas are huge. They can be more than 6 meters wide and can weigh more than 1300 Kg.

The head of the manta is shaped like a disc. Its eyes are on the sides of its head. It breathes through small holes, also on the sides of its head.

The manta has a small back fin.

Mantas feed near the surface of the ocean. When small ocean creatures pass by, special fins on the side of the manta's head help to fan them into the manta's mouth. The fins are near the front of the head and usually point forward. They look a little like horns, so some people call the manta ray a "devil ray."

Most scientists think that mantas breathe water into the mouth and then into the space under their gills. Mantas have special "strainers" in their throats. The strainers hold back food, but they let water pass through to

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the gills. Together, the strainers look like a lot of small bumps, each with many spines.

Manta mothers hatch their eggs inside their bodies. Then the baby manta is born, wiggling and swimming.

People like to watch mantas. There are even some ocean resorts where you can swim with one! If you're lucky, you may get to see the manta do back flips. First, the manta arches its back. Then it does a series of back dives that lasts for several minutes, without stopping.