



## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

# DIVING

*Divers are some of the strongest and most effective advocates for coral reef conservation. Please follow these simple guidelines to become a "coral friendly" diver.*



### AS A RESPONSIBLE TOURIST

- For your vacation, choose an environmentally friendly resort or hotel; one that practices energy conservation, recycles, and treats sewage and solid waste in responsible ways.
- Choose coral friendly dive operations that practice reef conservation by:
  - Giving environmental briefings.
  - Holding buoyancy control workshops.
  - Using available moorings.
  - Using available wastewater pump-out facilities.
  - Actively supporting local coral parks.
  - Participating in local conservation projects.
- Pay user fees or make a donation when visiting coral parks and other marine conservation areas.
- Avoid purchasing souvenirs made from coral, turtles or other marine life—this is often illegal, and it's never environmentally wise.
- Learn all you can about coral reefs—they are fascinating and fragile environments.



### IN THE WATER

- Never touch corals; even a slight contact can harm them and some corals can sting or cut you.
- Carefully select points of entry and exit to avoid areas of reef.
- Make sure all your equipment is well-secured.
- Make sure you are neutrally buoyant at all times.
- Maintain a comfortable distance from the reef.
- Practice good finning and body control to avoid accidental contact with the reef or stirring up the sediment.
- Stay off the bottom and never stand or rest on corals.
- Avoid using gloves and kneepads in coral environments.
- Take nothing living or dead out of the water, except recent garbage.



Good divers know that the best way to enjoy a reef is to slow down, relax and watch as reef creatures go about their daily lives undisturbed.

Be sure to find out about local laws and regulations as they may differ from these general guidelines.





## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES DIVING

### MINIMIZE CONTACT WITH MARINE LIFE

- Never chase, harass or try to ride marine life.
- Do not touch, handle or feed marine life except under expert guidance and following established guidelines.



### PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

Divers need advanced diving skills to take pictures and video underwater. Photographic and video equipment is cumbersome and affects a diver's buoyancy and mobility in the water. It is all too easy to touch and damage marine life when concentrating on "the perfect shot."



### ON DIVE BOATS

- Choose dive operations whose boats make use of available moorings—anchors and chains destroy fragile corals.
- Make sure garbage is well stowed, especially light plastic items.
- Be sure to take away everything you brought on board, such as packaging, used batteries and bottles.



### SHORESIDE

- Support coral parks and other conservation projects:
  - Visit established coral parks and pay applicable user fees that support marine conservation.
  - Encourage and support the use of dive moorings.
  - Participate in local initiatives to monitor the marine environment.
  - Participate in cleanups.
  - Make a donation or volunteer your skills to support a coral park. For example, you can participate in a reef survey, conduct outreach, or help educate others about coral reef conservation.
  - Donate used equipment such as cameras, dive gear or reef identification books.
- Speak up. Make sure your dive buddies understand these simple but important conservation practices.



The Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) is a member-supported, non-profit international organization dedicated to keeping coral reefs alive around the world. Visit our website <http://www.coral.org>



Visit the Project AWARE Foundation website at [www.projectaware.org](http://www.projectaware.org) to find out more about protecting the aquatic environment and its resources.



## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

# SNORKELING



*Coral reefs are among the world's most spectacular ecosystems and snorkeling is an excellent way to explore them. As coral reefs face an increasingly uncertain future, snorkelers and other coral reef visitors can play an important role in helping protect these fragile habitats. Follow these simple guidelines to become a "coral friendly" snorkeler.*



### BEFORE SETTING OUT TO EXPLORE THE REEFS

- For your vacation, choose an environmentally friendly resort or hotel; one that practices energy conservation, recycles, and treats sewage and solid waste in responsible ways.
- Pay user fees or make a donation when visiting coral parks and other marine conservation areas.
- Get the best possible snorkeling instruction you can.
- Practice snorkeling skills away from the reef.
- Make sure your equipment fits properly before you snorkel near corals—it can be very difficult to adjust in the water.
- If you feel uncertain, or are an inexperienced snorkeler, consider wearing a snorkel vest for added buoyancy.
- Learn all you can about coral reefs—they are fascinating and fragile environments.



### IN THE WATER

- Never touch corals; even slight contact can harm them. Some corals can sting or cut you.
- Select points of entry and exit to avoid walking on corals.
- Maintain a comfortable distance from the reef, so as to avoid contact.
- Know where your fins are at all times and don't kick up sand.
- Stay horizontal in the water while you're near or above the reef.
- Learn to swim without using your arms.
- Move slowly and deliberately in the water—relax as you swim and take your time.
- Remember, look but don't touch.



Good snorkelers know that the best way to enjoy a reef is to slow down, relax and watch as reef creatures go about their daily lives undisturbed.

Be sure to find out about local laws and regulations as they may differ from these general guidelines.





## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

# SNORKELING

### MINIMIZE CONTACT WITH MARINE LIFE

- Take nothing living or dead out of the water except recent garbage which does not have living organisms on it.
- Never chase or try to ride marine life.
- Never touch, handle or feed marine life except under expert guidance and following locally-established guidelines.
- Avoid using gloves in coral environments.



### ON BOATS

- Choose snorkel operations whose boats make use of available moorings —anchors and chains destroy fragile corals.
- Make sure garbage is well stowed, especially light plastic items.
- Be sure to take away everything you brought on board, such as packaging, used batteries and bottles.



### SHORESIDE

- Support coral parks and other conservation projects:
  - Visit established coral parks and pay applicable user fees that support marine conservation.
  - Encourage and support the use of boat moorings.
  - Participate in local initiatives to monitor the marine environment.
  - Participate in cleanups.
  - Make a donation or volunteer your skills to support a coral park. For example, you can participate in a reef survey, conduct outreach, or help educate others about reef conservation.
  - Donate used equipment such as cameras, dive gear or reef identification books.
- Avoid purchasing souvenirs made from coral, turtles or other marine life—this is often illegal, and it's never environmentally wise.
- Speak up. Make sure your snorkeling buddies understand these simple but important conservation practices.



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## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES TURTLE WATCHING



*Sea turtles have lived in the world's oceans for over 150 million years. Sadly, these ancient reptiles are now globally threatened with extinction. Many populations are declining as a result of persistent hunting, increasing coastal development, incidental capture in fisheries, the degradation and destruction of nesting beaches, and marine pollution. You can help to protect them by following these simple guidelines.*



### TURTLE FACTS

- All species of sea turtle are endangered and need protection.
- Turtles can drown if they are prevented from reaching the surface of the sea to breathe.
- Litter is dangerous, especially plastic bags, which can be mistaken for jellyfish—a favorite turtle food.
- Turtles remain in the same region for years and, as adults, return to the same nesting area year after year. If a nesting colony is destroyed, the turtles may never return.



### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Support local sea turtle conservation initiatives—consider volunteering!
- Participate in local sighting networks and complete all sighting forms.
- Do not buy or sell turtle products—turtles are strictly protected under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and most national laws.



### ON THE WATER

- Watch for turtles while boating—boat strikes can kill.
- When in the water, keep your distance and avoid startling turtles. Do not disturb resting, sleeping or feeding turtles.
- Approach turtles slowly and calmly and move away if they show signs of distress.
- Never try to spear, harass, catch, or ride turtles.
- Do not touch or feed turtles.
- Take all litter home with you; trash can kill, especially when it is mistaken for food.



Participating in turtle watching programs actually helps to protect turtles by raising awareness about them.

Be sure to find out about local laws and regulations, as they may differ from these general guidelines.





## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES TURTLE WATCHING



### ON THE BEACH

During breeding seasons, some special considerations apply to turtle nesting beaches.

- Avoid damaging incubating nests—do not drive on a turtle nesting beach or use it for camp fires or barbecues.
- Do not leave large items (such as chairs, umbrellas or vehicles) on nesting beaches at night. These can obstruct a turtle's path and prevent egg-laying.
- Keep pets, especially dogs, away as they can endanger eggs and hatchlings.
- Minimize beach lighting; artificial lights disorient turtles.
- Shield or switch off lighting that is visible from the beach.



### WATCHING NESTING TURTLES

Turtles are very vulnerable on land and if startled, a turtle may return to the sea before her eggs can be successfully laid. Please follow these simple rules.

- Stay quiet and move slowly.
- Do not approach or photograph any turtles that have not yet laid their eggs.
- Make minimal use of flashlights and never shine lights directly into a turtle's face.
- Approach from behind and keep low to the ground.
- Move away if the turtle shows signs of distress.
- Never disturb turtle eggs or hatchlings.
- Limit viewing to 30 minutes at a time.



### PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography of nesting turtles is illegal in some places. Use a camera flash very sparingly if at all and take photos only from behind to avoid blinding the turtle.

### HATCHLING TURTLES

- Shield hatchlings from beachfront lighting. Ask that lights be turned off long enough for the hatchlings to reach the sea.
- Do not interfere with their crawl to the sea.
- Never photograph hatchlings—they are very sensitive to light.



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Visit the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECASST) website at <http://www.widecast.org> for more information on marine turtles and turtle conservation



## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

# UNDERWATER CLEANUP

*Underwater cleanups are a great way to help protect the marine environment. There are some special considerations when cleaning up under water, especially in fragile coral reef environments. Please follow these simple guidelines to avoid damage to fragile coral reefs.*



### PLANNING THE DIVE

- Always dive with a buddy and be sure to check equipment and divers' signals beforehand.
- Make sure underwater conditions and weather are suitable for diving to ensure safety for divers and for underwater organisms.



### GEARING UP

In addition to normal dive gear, divers will need:

- Mesh sacks.
- Gloves for protection from rubbish and sharp objects.
- Shears or scissors for cutting fishing line and tin cans.

### DIVE PROTOCOL

- Work slowly and carefully.
- Dive in a head-down position to avoid making contact with the bottom.
- Adjust buoyancy throughout the dive as the garbage gets heavier.
- Make sure equipment is secured and the mesh sack is held so that nothing can trail or snag on corals.
- One diver should collect garbage with gloves on while another holds the mesh sack.
- Place glass, needles and hooks inside other garbage for safety.
- Never try to remove anything that cannot be easily lifted such as tires or car batteries.



### CLEANUP TARGETS

- Plastics, especially plastic bags.
- Cloth items or rice sacks.
- Fishing line, netting, and broken lobster pots or fish traps.
- Batteries, bottles without marine growth, and tin cans.
- Cigarette butts and bottle caps.

Cleanup dives are a practical way to help protect and conserve the underwater environment for this and future generations to enjoy.



Become familiar with local diving techniques and regulations as they may differ from these general guidelines.





## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES UNDERWATER CLEANUP

### WHAT TO REMOVE—AND WHAT TO LEAVE

Do your best not to remove articles that have already been incorporated into the reef and are helping to support life.



### CHECK IT BEFORE YOU BAG IT

- Make sure nothing is living in or on each item before removal.
- Do not remove bottles that are covered in growth.
- Cut open tin cans to make sure there is nothing inside.
- Hold cups or cans close to sandy parts of the sea bed and shake out sand or silt.



### WHAT TO LEAVE

- Anything which is “stuck” or encrusted with growth.
- Anything, no matter how ugly, which has become overgrown with marine life.
- Anything that may be dangerous.
- Heavy items—never use your buoyancy control device to lift heavy objects.
- Metal drums and containers which might contain hazardous materials.



### PLASTIC FISHING LINE

- Never try to pull fishing line free. Cut and remove it in sections to avoid damaging organisms growing around it.
- Use shears or scissors rather than a knife.
- Wind the line around an object or hand to control it.



### RECORDING THE RESULTS

Document everything that is collected so that its origin can be identified and pollution problems tackled at the source. For more information and data recording sheets contact The Ocean Conservancy.

### AFTER THE DIVE

Arrange for garbage to be collected or taken to an official site—do not leave it on the beach.



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Visit The Ocean Conservancy website at <http://www.oceanconservancy.org> and support annual International Coastal Cleanups by joining an event near you





## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES WHALE & DOLPHIN WATCHING



*Watching whales or dolphins is often an awe-inspiring and unforgettable experience. Whale and dolphin watching trips should be calm, controlled, and guided by a deep concern for the animals' well-being and safety.*

### GENERAL DO'S AND DONT'S

- Always allow the animal(s) to control the nature and duration of the encounter.
- Never pursue or harass whales or dolphins.
- If they appear agitated or disturbed, leave the area.
- Keep a good look out at all times to avoid collisions or inadvertent harassment.
- Be especially careful around mothers and calves—keep at a distance and never separate them.
- Keep all noise to a minimum.
- Experts advise not to touch or feed whales or dolphins.
- Trash can kill, so remove all litter.
- Do not buy whale products—they are strictly protected under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).



### SIGNS OF AGITATION IN WHALES AND DOLPHINS

- Rapid changes in direction or speed.
- Erratic behavior.
- Escape tactics such as prolonged diving.
- Tail slapping or tail swishing.



### SWIMMING WITH WHALES AND DOLPHINS

Whale and dolphin behavior is not thoroughly understood. Experts advise that it is best to observe and appreciate the animals without entering the water to protect yourself and the animals.



Participating in whale watching programs helps to protect whales by raising awareness about them and providing income to local people.

Be sure to find out about local laws and regulations as they may differ from these general guidelines.





## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES WHALE & DOLPHIN WATCHING

### VIEWING GUIDELINES

Never chase or herd whales or dolphins. Operate your boat in a predictable manner. For example:

- Keep to a no-wake speed and never try to overtake whales or dolphins.
- Avoid sudden changes in speed, direction or noise level.
- Do not encircle, chase or separate animals and always leave an escape route.
- Never approach whales or dolphins head-on, and stay out of their path so they are not forced to change course.
- Do not engage in “leapfrogging” or jumping ahead of a whale’s path to force an encounter.



### IN THE “VIEWING ZONE”

Stay at least 100 meters (110 yards) away.

- Stay at or below a no-wake speed.
- Coordinate approaches into the viewing zone with other vessels to avoid “trapping” whales or dolphins.
- Limit viewing time to around 30 minutes per vessel.
- Limit the number of vessels in the viewing zone to one or two at a time.
- Stay on a course parallel to that of the whales or dolphins.



### WHEN WHALES OR DOLPHINS APPROACH

If whales or dolphins approach, maintain your course and continue dead slow or stop, leaving the engines to run in neutral.

### DOLPHINS AND BOW RIDING

- Do not drive through groups of dolphins to encourage them to ride the bow wave—not all dolphins will want to bow-ride and many will find it stressful.
- If dolphins approach to ride the bow wave, maintain course and speed or slowly stop and let them pass.



**CAUTION—LET WHALES OR DOLPHINS KNOW WHERE YOU ARE.** Always keep the boat engine running even when drifting. This is for your safety as well as the animals’. Whales have been known to collide with boats under sail.



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Visit the International Fund for Animal Welfare website at <http://www.ifaw.org> for more information and support its work with whale and dolphin conservation.