

Guidelines for Environmentally Friendly Diving and Snorkelling

"As divers and snorkellers, you are the ocean's partner in conservation"



Do not step on the coral

Watch your feet and fins at all times. Most damaging contacts to the reef come from your fins. Corals are very fragile and take a long time to grow. Stepping on or kicking the corals can break it, damage its surface, or cut your feet.



Do not stir the sediment

If you are not careful, your fins can stir up the sediment and debris, upsetting small habitats and covering corals. This not only reduces the ability of the coral to photosynthesize, it can also lead to devastating coral diseases. Stirring sediment can also lead to small animals being washed away or increase their chance of predation.



Do not chase or touch any marine life

This can cause great stress to any animal. This can also transmit diseases or remove protective coatings of fish, mammals, invertebrates, and other species. Look, but never touch or try not to get too close.



Do not feed the fish

Feeding fish and any other species can cause them to rely on that food source. This also makes fish more aggressive towards divers because they expect to be fed. It can even lead to corals getting smothered in algae, as the fish no longer eat their natural food source, like algae.



Do not throw trash into the sea

There are many problems with marine pollution, ranging from animals eating plastic bags and cigarette butts, to chemicals in the waste contaminating the water and entering the food chain. Marine pollution can be dangerous for humans too; after all, whatever we put in the ocean comes back to us when we eat seafood.

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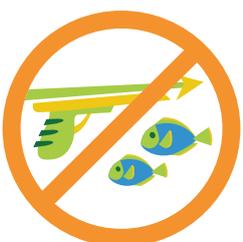
Do not buy corals or marine life as souvenirs

This encourages people to remove tons of marine life, dead or alive, from marine ecosystems to sell as souvenirs. Many of these species play vital roles in maintaining healthy reef ecosystems. If the buying stops, the killing and collecting can too.



Do not support shark feeding

Feeding sharks can change their behaviour, social interactions, feeding patterns, the habitats they visit and how long they spend there. It can also change the numbers and types of sharks present at specific sites. The change in diet can cause health problems, increase the risk of disease and impact the balance of the ecosystem by affecting prey population numbers. Feeding can also encourage sharks to associate humans and boats with food; making them more aggressive towards humans and increasing the risk of being bitten.



Do not spearfish

This method of fishing removes the largest and slowest reproducing species, which can change the balance of the ecosystem and upset the food chain dramatically. It is also likely to injure a species if it is not speared correctly, leading to a slow death. Spearfishing can also be dangerous to divers, snorkelers, and swimmers.



Do not anchor on coral reefs

Anchors are heavy and often have a long chain attached. When dropped onto a fragile coral reef, they cause great destruction. If the boat changes direction with wind or currents, the anchor and chain will drag and cause more damage to our valuable reefs.



Do not take marine life – dead or alive

Removing species that would normally break down and be recycled into the sea leaves other animals without nutrients and elements that they need for growth. Even empty shells on the beach play an important role. Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but bubbles.

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Do not wear gloves

Wearing gloves gives you a false sense of protection and encourages you to hold on to things, like coral, underwater. In addition to potentially damaging marine life and spreading disease, wearing gloves can be dangerous for you too. Gloves will not provide any security against marine life that can be life threatening.



Wear a life jacket at the surface

This is recommended for all levels of snorkelers and swimmers. From beginners to experienced swimmers, wearing a life jacket helps you avoid standing on or kicking shallow corals that will take many years to recover.



Use mooring buoys

By using mooring buoys, destructive impacts of anchors can be avoided. This practice also sets a good example for others and raises awareness of the highly damaging practice of anchoring.



Report environmental violations

Report destructive practices and violations of environmental laws. Tell your dive guide, dive operator, or community leaders and government officials. Informing key authorities of your observations can lead to appropriate action. By letting them know your concerns, you are being part of the solution.



Participate in conservation projects

By participating in conservation projects you can have a positive effect on the environment and help educate others. A little help from everybody goes a long way.