



*Divers are uniquely privileged: they can experience the wonder and diversity of life on coral reefs first hand. As coral reefs face an uncertain future, divers and other coral reef visitors are becoming some of the strongest and most effective advocates for coral reef conservation. As divers we have a duty of care towards the reefs we visit. Follow these simple guidelines and be a "Coral Friendly" diver.*

## BEGIN AT HOME

Supporting coral reef conservation starts at home by choosing your resort with care and "voting green" with your vacation dollars:

- Opt for conservation conscious places to stay, such as those saying they recycle and dispose of sewage and solid waste in an environmentally friendly way
- Look for and support Coral Parks and other marine conservation areas
- Choose Coral Friendly dive operations which practice reef conservation e.g.:
  - Give diver orientations and briefings with conservation tips
  - Hold buoyancy control workshops
  - Actively support their local Coral Park
  - Use moorings wherever possible
  - Use wastewater pump out facilities where available
- Keep your diving skills fine-tuned and always try to improve them through additional training
- Practice dive skills, especially buoyancy control, either in a swimming pool or well away from the reef, for example over a sandy bottom
- Learn all you can about coral reefs – they are fascinating and fragile environments



## IN THE WATER

Avoid all contact with corals and other marine life. Corals are very delicate animals; even a gentle touch can cause them harm and some corals can sting and cut you.

- Carefully select where you get into and out of the water to avoid areas of reef
- Make sure all equipment is secured so that it cannot drag or snag on anything
- Maintain good buoyancy control – be sure you are neutrally buoyant at all times
- Practice good finning and body control to avoid accidental contact with the reef or stirring up the sediment, which can choke and kill corals
- Stay off the bottom and never stand or rest on corals
- Avoid using gloves and kneepads in coral environments – bare skin makes divers much more careful about what they touch
- Take nothing living or dead out of the water, except recent garbage



## Keep interactions with marine life to a minimum

- Do not chase, harass or try to ride marine life
- Do not touch, handle or feed marine life except under expert guidance and following established guidelines

Great divers know 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



## DIVE IN THE “COMFORT ZONE”

To get the most out of diving, stay within your “comfort zone” and don’t get too close to the reef. Depending on dive skills, experience, fitness and age, each diver will have their own personal safe distance from the reef from which to comfortably enjoy it without causing harm.



## ADVANCED DIVING SKILLS: 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 shot”.

It is essential that divers acquire advanced training when taking up photography or videography.



## ON DIVE BOATS

- Choose dive operations whose boats make use of moorings when available – anchors destroy fragile corals when set directly on the reef
- Make sure garbage is well stowed, especially light plastic items such as cups and bags that can easily be blown overboard
- Be sure to take away everything that was brought on board and dispose of garbage safely and responsibly

## SHORE SIDE

- Support Coral Parks and other conservation projects
  - Pay user fees in recognized Coral Parks and conservation areas which are actively supporting coral reef conservation
  - Encourage and support the use of dive moorings
  - Fill in sighting forms
  - Participate in cleanups
  - Volunteer your skills
  - Consider donating used equipment such as cameras, dive gear or reef ID books
- Take your garbage home with you, especially items such as batteries
- Refuse to buy souvenirs made from coral, turtles or other marine life – often this is illegal as many endangered species are protected under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and by national laws
- Speak up: make sure your dive buddies understand about these simple conservation practices – we need to work together to protect and preserve coral reefs for all time

