



*Coral reefs are one of the world's most spectacular marine habitats and snorkeling is an excellent way of exploring them. As coral reefs face an increasingly uncertain future, snorkelers and other coral reef visitors can play an important role in helping to protect these fragile habitats. Follow these simple guidelines to help protect the coral reefs you visit.*

## BEFORE SETTING OUT TO EXPLORE THE REEFS

- Get the best possible instruction you can
- Be sure to practice snorkeling skills in a swimming pool or sandy area until you are completely comfortable in the water
- Make sure your equipment fits properly before you snorkel near corals – it can be very difficult to adjust in the water
- If you are feeling unsure, wear a snorkel vest – many operations insist on them
- Learn all you can about coral reefs – they are fascinating and fragile environments



## SNORKEL IN THE COMFORT ZONE

To get the most out of snorkeling, stay within your “comfort zone”. You will see much more and be able to enjoy the beauty of the reefs more by hanging back. Depending on snorkeling skills, experience, fitness and age, each snorkeler will have their own personal safe distance from the reef from which to comfortably enjoy it without causing harm.



## SNORKELING OUT ON THE REEF

Be sure to avoid all contact with corals and other marine life. Not only could you be hurt but corals are very fragile animals – as much as a gentle touch can harm them. Even sand kicked up by fins can smother and kill them.

- Be careful where you get into and out of the water to avoid walking on corals
- Be sure to snorkel in your “comfort zone” – don't get too close to the reef
- Lie flat in the water, and avoid coming upright so you don't stand on corals
- Try to swim without using your arms to avoid accidentally touching the reef
- Make sure you know where your fins are so you don't kick anything
- Move slowly and deliberately in the water – relax and take your time
- Remember look but don't touch!



Snorkeling pros know the real way to enjoy the beauty of the reef is to slow down, relax and watch as reef creatures go about their daily lives undisturbed.

## GOING ON A SNORKELING HOLIDAY?

- Opt for conservation conscious accommodation and facilities, such as those saying they recycle and treat sewage and solid waste in an environmentally friendly way
- Look out for and support Coral Parks and other marine conservation areas



Being a coral friendly snorkeler not only helps to protect coral reefs directly, it also helps to raise awareness for coral reefs

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



## AS A RESPONSIBLE SNORKELER

- Do not touch anything in the water
- Never chase, harass or try to ride marine life
- Take nothing, living or dead, out of the water except recent garbage
- Do not touch, handle or feed marine life except under expert guidance and following established guidelines
- Do not use gloves in coral environments – it will make you much more careful about what you touch



## ON BOATS

- Choose 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 Reserves which are actively supporting coral reef conservation
  - Encourage and support the use of boat moorings
  - Participate in local initiatives to monitor the marine environment e.g. sighting forms
  - Participate in cleanups
  - Volunteer your skills to help Coral Parks e.g. with reef surveys, outreach and awareness
  - Consider donating used equipment such as cameras, dive gear or reef ID books
- Take your garbage home with you, especially items such as batteries which are toxic and difficult to dispose of safely in countries without special waste handling systems
- 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 snorkeling buddies understand about these simple conservation practices – we need to work together to protect and preserve coral reefs for all time

