RESPONSIBLE MARINE WILDLIFE VIEWING GUIDELINES

A guide to industry best practice for viewing marine wildlife in the Pacific

EUROPEAN UNION

SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Pacific BioScapes

PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT

PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION

The Pacific BioScapes Programme is a European Union (EU) funded action, managed and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). It includes 30 focused activities taking place across a diversity of ecosystems in 11 Pacific island countries that are addressing critical issues concerning coastal and marine biodiversity, and ecosystem-based responses to climate change adaptation.

These Guidelines have been prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in partnership with the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) as part of the Pacific BioScapes Programme to support implementation of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022–2026 and the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework 2030. Feedback on the usefulness and applicability of the guidelines will help shape future updates. Queries regarding this document should be directed to SPREP.

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SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa
T: +685 21929 E: sprep@sprep.org W: www.sprep.org

Our vision: A resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

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MESSAGE FROM SPREP DIRECTOR GENERAL

Bula Vinaka and Talofa Lava!

Our ocean environment offers unforgettable experiences to visitors who come to see the waters of our beautiful Pacific home. The viewing of marine species is often a highlight for locals and international visitors alike. These species are part of our cultural heritage and through tourism they also generate economic contributions and employment opportunities for our people. That is why the Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines are so important to our region. We need to ensure that we do not harm what we came to see.

The inception of these guidelines has been a few years in the making after many discussions between the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) .This has been an effective partnership which we hope will continue as we work together to promote and embed these guidelines within our Pacific tourism industry. Marine wildlife species in the Pacific are all the iconic, yet vulnerable species, that tourists are so often very keen to see on their visit to Pacific Islands: whales and dolphins, turtles, sharks and rays, seabirds and dugong. Many are seen as intelligent and playful; however they are nevertheless vulnerable to poorly managed interactions which can have long term consequences for their survival.

Many species of whale including the humpback whale are only now slowly recovering from whaling exploitation last century. All species of turtles are threatened, and ongoing fisheries exploitation of sharks and rays is driving many species populations towards extinction. Dugongs are also considered vulnerable to extinction in the region and 42 species of seabirds are known to breed in the region with several also threatened. Threats to marine wildlife are often similar across species groups mostly because of human activities. They include impacts from climate change, marine pollution, over-harvesting and fisheries impacts as well as from uncontrolled tourism. Culturally, these species are central to many Pacific Island communities and play important roles in cultural traditions and are major features of art and cultural heritage.

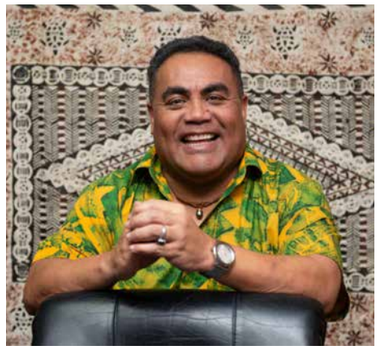
The guideline provides practical, science-based information for tourism operators and tourism regulators who want to offer the best possible experience to their customers, while ensuring the species and their habitats are protected. By adopting these guidelines, government agencies and marine tourism operators can ensure safe and respectful marine wildlife tourism, prioritising both the protection of Pacific marine biodiversity and the safety of their guests.

It is a privilege to acknowledge the generous assistance and contribution of the European Union through the Pacific BioScapes Programme. The Programme is a European Union funded action, managed and implemented by SPREP. It includes 30 focused projects taking place across a diversity of ecosystems in 11 Pacific island countries that are addressing critical issues concerning coastal and marine biodiversity, and ecosystem-based responses to climate change adaptation. It is under the Pacific BioScapes Programme, and with the support of our partners and friends at SPTO, that the development of the Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines has been made possible.

Sa vinaka saka!

Sefanaia Nawadra
SPREP Director General

MESSAGE FROM SPTO CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Warm Pacific Greetings!

Tourism remains a pivotal driver of economic development in the Pacific Islands despite the impacts brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a notable surge in tourism income and arrivals in some nations since the reopening of international borders. Governments are channelling resources to enable a quicker recovery for the sector while businesses are actively pursuing innovative strategies to get back to pre-pandemic levels with several countries now surpassing those targets.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the implications of these developments on our land and marine ecosystems. I echo our collective stance as large oceanic states, that we need to make the right policy, partnership and development choices if we are to envision benefits from our ocean resources as articulated in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. At sector level, cooperation on ocean and environment ambitions through responsible marine tourism is therefore pertinent in achieving our shared goals.

The Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) plays a crucial role in supporting our countries and industry members to cultivate a form of tourism that not only fosters economic empowerment but also safeguards and promotes our natural assets for the benefit of our communities. The 2030 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework serves as a guide for advancing sustainable tourism priorities that have been identified by our member countries, the private sector, civil society, donors and development partners. Within this framework, there is a focus on developing tourism that contributes to Healthy Islands and Oceans.

The Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines offer countries and industry stakeholders the necessary resources and guidance to ensure safe and respectful practices of marine tourism activities that prioritise the protection of marine biodiversity and the safety of guests. Adhering to these guidelines is essential for achieving a balance between providing exceptional visitor experiences and safeguarding marine ecosystems for future generations. The guideline is solution-oriented, providing essential tips, guidance, recommendations, and actions crucial for the safety and success of marine tourism. It also considers the current capacity and available resources within countries and the industry to ensure practicality, fit-for-purpose, and feasibility.

On behalf of SPTO, I commend the dedication and commitment of all stakeholders involved in the development of these guidelines. I would also like to express our gratitude for the funding support from the European Union through the SPREP Pacific Bioscapes Program, for supporting the mission of SPTO and its member countries in completing this work. I urge all tourism operators, industry partners, and visitors to embrace and uphold the principles outlined in the guideline. Furthermore, I call upon development partners, governments, and donors to support the implementation of these guidelines and contribute to the development of a Pacific Tourism sector that not only fosters economic growth but also protects and promotes our ocean and environment.

Malo 'aupito!

Christopher Cocker
SPTO Chief Executive Officer

ABOUT THESE GUIDELINES

Introduction

The Pacific islands region covers 32 million km² within the largest continuous marine habitat on the planet, the Pacific Ocean. The region is home to a diverse range of large marine species, including cetaceans (whales and dolphins), sirenians (dugong), testudines (marine turtles), elasmobranchs (sharks and rays), and seabirds.

Coastal and marine tourism represents at least 50% of total global tourism.[1] It is the largest economic sector for most small island developing states and coastal states, creating jobs and income for communities and foreign exchange earnings.

Viewing and swimming with whales and dolphins, dugongs, turtles, sharks, rays and seabirds are popular activities for visitors to the Pacific islands. All these species are under pressure for their survival in the face of multiple compounding threats including fisheries pressures, pollution, climate change, competition with invasive species and habitat degradation.

Disturbance from tourism activities can have serious long-term impacts – to the detriment of the animals themselves, to marine tourism businesses, and to future generations of people who will enjoy seeing marine life in their natural habitat.

This guideline provides practical, science-based information for tourism operators and tourism regulators who want to offer the best possible experience to their customers, while conserving species and habitats and making a positive contribution to local communities.

It provides guidance, and tools that can be tailored to local circumstances, enabling operators to improve the educational quality, safety, and sustainability of their businesses. It also gives practical information, based on the best available scientific data, to management authorities and others engaging with the industry.

It is specifically focussed on viewing whales and dolphins, dugongs, turtles, sharks, rays and seabirds. It also provides information on conducting safe and sustainable in water or 'swim with' experiences. Specifically tailored to the Pacific region, the Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines provide detailed information on how to conduct responsible viewing and 'swim with' experiences with whales, dolphins, dugongs, sharks, rays, turtles and seabirds.

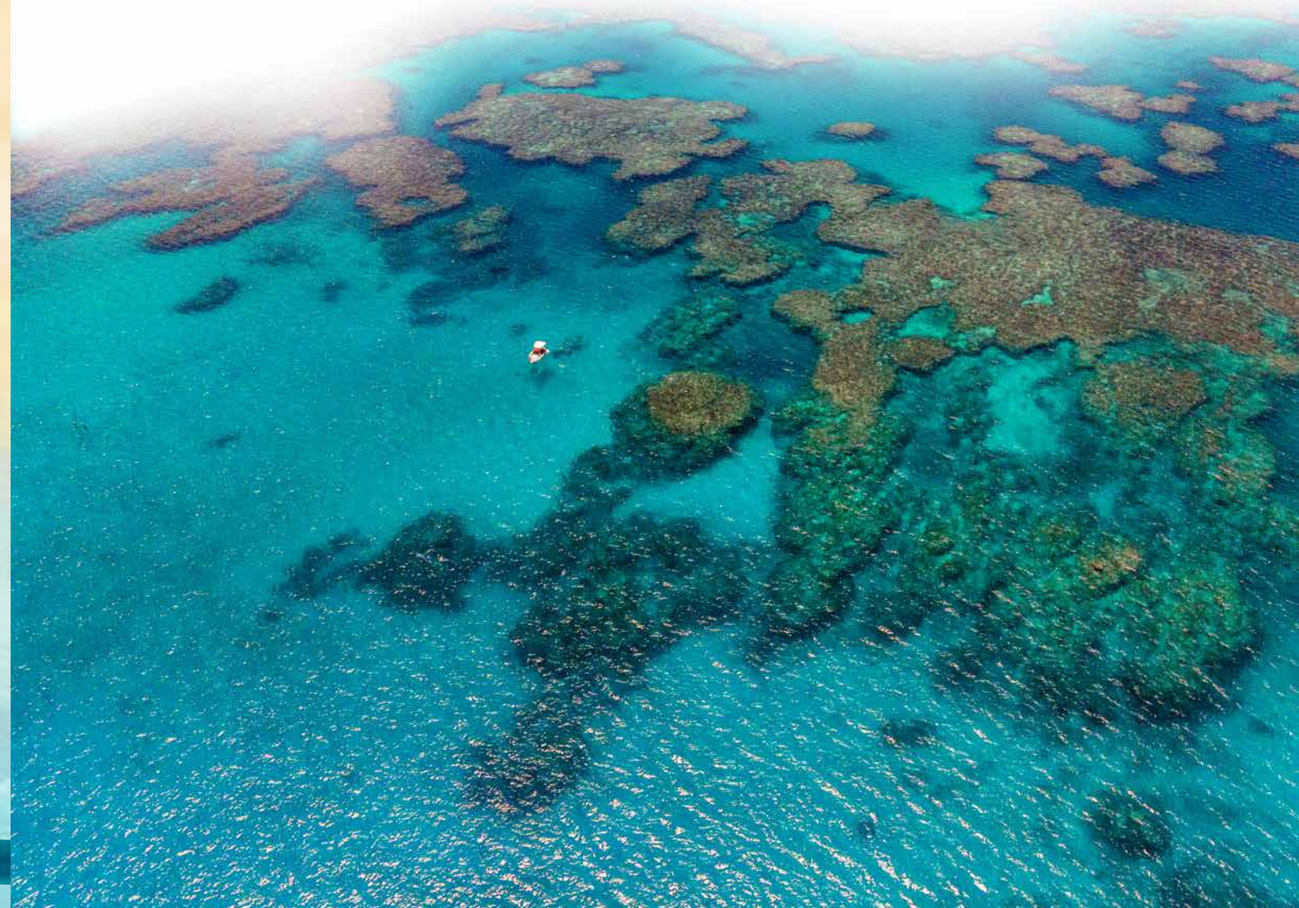
By adopting these guidelines, government agencies and marine tourism operators can ensure safe and respectful marine wildlife tourism, prioritising both the protection of the Pacific's marine biodiversity and the safety of their guests. While this guide provides some information related to sustainable and safe practices, these can differ by country. Operators should check with their local authorities to find out exactly what's required.

[1] Northrop et al. 2022. 'Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience'. Report. World Resources Institute, Washington D.C.

Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Requires Collaboration

Reducing the pressures of marine tourism on marine species wildlife requires collaboration among industry, scientific and government stakeholders.

- **Governments across the Pacific can play a pivotal role in ensuring marine tourism activities are sustainable, with responsibilities that span regulation and enforcement, education, research, conservation, and partnership facilitation**
- **Tourism operators can play a critical role in marine wildlife protection by adopting sustainable practices, respecting local guidelines and regulations, supporting conservation efforts, and educating tourists**
- **The scientific community can provide in-depth understanding of marine ecosystems, biodiversity, and environmental impacts. Research helps identify sensitive areas and species requiring protection and informs best practices for marine tourism activities**
- **Tourists can also support sustainable marine tourism by choosing sustainable operators and activities, supporting conservation efforts through research and finance, and practising responsible marine tourism behaviour**



Application of the Guidelines

The Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines are designed to support existing measures that Pacific nations may already have in place to manage marine tourism activities such as legislation, regulations, policy and voluntary guidelines.

Nations can adopt and adapt these guidelines to suit their national or local context. They can be used to inform a review of existing regulations and/or the development of new policies on marine tourism. They can also be used to support Environmental Impact Assessments of marine tourism activities to ensure protection and management of marine biodiversity and sustainable tourism practices.

At a national level adaptation of the guidelines will need to consider:

- **The current legislative context for the management of marine wildlife tourism activities**
- **The welfare and conservation status of marine wildlife populations that are, or have the potential to be impacted by marine tourism activities**
- **Scientific research that may inform the management of marine tourism activities to protect marine species**
- **Existing measures to protect marine wildlife from the impact of tourism activities and consider if there is a need to strengthen these measures through licensing or limiting the number of operators and the types of activities undertaken**

The guidelines may be tailored or amended by providing additional information about:

- **The legislative context and licensing/permit requirements**
- **Maps of areas of special interest where activities are conducted and specific management requirements and cultural considerations**
- **Suggested routes or no-go zones for boat-based wildlife-watching tours where relevant**
- **A calendar of aggregation and occurrence if seasonality is observed / known**
- **Opportunities to support conservation and research activities**
- **Sanctions for boat operators and visitors in case of non-compliance with legislation**

A Precautionary Approach

Insufficient data on marine wildlife populations in the Pacific region can hamper our understanding of the ecological dynamics and conservation needs of marine species. Data gaps include knowledge of the occurrence of species in the area, the frequency of occurrence, seasonal patterns in their usage of the area, behaviour of the species present in the area, including what they are using the area for (e.g., breeding, feeding, moving through to other areas).

A range of factors need to be considered regarding activities that could potentially result in injury or disturbance to marine wildlife:

- **The type of activity**
- **Duration and frequency of the activity**
- **Extent of the activity**
- **Timing and location of the activity**
- **Other known activities in the area at the time**

Adoption by the tourism sector of these guidelines combined with proactive implementation of mitigation measures through monitoring and regulation, licensing, industry education and engagement by various management authorities at the national level can minimise the potential for unintended harm to wildlife populations and their habitats. This approach acknowledges the uncertainty surrounding the impacts of human activities on marine wildlife and emphasises the importance of proactive conservation measures to safeguard marine ecosystems for future generations.

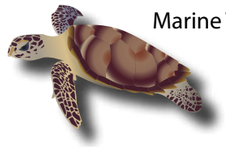
Structure of the Guidelines

The guidelines consist of the following:

1. General Guidelines which are applicable to all marine tourism operations and all marine wildlife species

2. Species Specific Guidelines for:

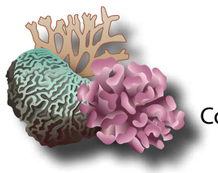

Whales and Dolphins


Marine Turtles


Dugongs


Seabirds


Sharks and Rays


Coral Reefs/Habitats

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Responsible Marine Tourism Operators

Responsible marine tourism operators aim to exceed the standards set by national regulations, policies and guidelines to ensure safe and respectful marine wildlife viewing for their customers. This includes obtaining the necessary approvals and permits and adhering to maritime safety protocols. They should also:

- **Provide the best possible experience to their passengers, whilst placing customers' comfort and safety and the welfare of marine wildlife above all else**
- **Offer an enriching educational experience**
- **Emphasise their commitment to sustainable and responsible practices**
- **Respect local laws, guidelines or codes of conduct**
- **Respectfully include elements of local culture and heritage in tours**
- **Seek out training and capacity building opportunities and update regularly**
- **Maintain a commitment to continuous improvement**
- **Be champions of the environment and species upon which their business relies and are protectors of their habitat**
- **Foster positive relationships within the community in which they operate**
- **Contribute to science and marine conservation efforts**

Pacific marine tourism operators can demonstrate their ongoing commitment to protecting and conserving marine species and their habitats by following the Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines.

Practical Tips for Marine Tourism Operators

Here are some practical ways to ensure that marine tourism activities are conducted responsibly:

- **Know the law— Before spending time on or near the ocean with your guests, know the regulations for viewing marine species that apply in your country. Be aware that regulations and guidelines vary in each country and by species**
- **Follow the guidelines: Make sure you, your staff and your customers follow these guidelines, whether engaging in activities from the shore, on watercraft, or participating in in-water tours, including equipment rentals**
- **Learn about the species: Learn about the marine species of interest to your customers, their behaviours responses to disturbances. Your customers will thank you for sharing this information and for helping to protect marine wildlife**
- **Educate your customers: Integrate educational elements into you tours to enrich the experience and manage expectations and behaviours of your customers when interacting with marine life. Incorporate agreed-upon cultural interpretations into your tours**
- **Respect restricted and protected areas and caution zones as defined by local, national, or international regulations or the local community. A caution zone is a designated area around the animals where specific guidelines and restrictions are enforced to minimise disturbance, ensure the safety of both the animals and the viewers, and promote responsible marine tourism**
- **Provide accurate cultural and scientific information to guests about marine species and demonstrate sustainable tourism practices**
- **Record your sightings and provide your observations to local marine research and monitoring programs**
- **Promote a 'no touch' and 'don't feed' policy for all marine wildlife viewing activities**
- **Lend a hand with regular beach and/or ocean cleanups to reduce the risk to marine animals. Carry a rubbish bag and pick up litter found along the shore and in the water and encourage your guests to do the same**
- **Avoid single use plastics and dispose of all waste responsibly**
- **Prevent toxic chemicals such as oil, cleaning products, sunscreen from entering the ocean**
- **Do not collect, sell or display marine life**
- **Report animals that appear injured or sick. If you think an animal is in trouble—if it's entangled, stranded, sick, or injured—please report it to your Environment or Fisheries Authority**
- **Collaborate with others: Work with other tourism stakeholders, local communities, and others to promote safety, research and conservation efforts, animal welfare, and environmental management practices**

Note that feeding and touching and in some cases swimming with marine wildlife is not considered best practice due to potential long-term impacts

Viewing Marine Wildlife

- **Understand behaviours: Recognise the specific behaviours of marine species and their habitats to identify signs of disturbance**
- **Maintain slow speeds: Operate at slow speeds, ideally under 10 knots, when near marine wildlife**
- **Consistent speed: Keep a steady, low-speed direction in caution zones**
- **Respect natural behaviours: Operate vessels without disrupting the natural behaviours of marine life**
- **Avoid approaching or following animals that show signs of disturbance or disinterest**
- **Give them space: Never chase, encircle, block, or attempt to trap marine animals**
- **Avoid physical interaction: Physical interaction with marine animals, including touching and feeding should be avoided**
- **Avoid causing separation: Prevent actions that could separate animals from their group or scatter them**
- **Neutral gear: If an animal approaches, switch to neutral gear and allow it to pass**
- **Engine and sails: Keep boat engines on and idle or sails dropped when observing wildlife, following species-specific guidelines**
- **Avoid drifting: Position boats to avoid drifting into the path of marine wildlife or over aggregation areas**
- **Stop at signs of disturbance: Cease interaction at the first sign of disturbance**
- **Safe departure: When departing, ensure all animals are at a safe distance before moving at a no-wake speed**
- **No artificial lighting: Refrain from using artificial lighting or flash photography near marine wildlife**
- **Assistance for Distressed Wildlife: If encountering distressed wildlife, notify authorities and report the incident**
- **Propeller Guards: Installing propeller guards can lower the chances of injuring marine animals, in combination with reducing speed, which is widely acknowledged as the most effective preventive measure**
- **Marine wildlife does not need to be fed as they have very different diets. All marine animals can find all the food they need in the ocean and do not need extra food from humans. Feeding wildlife often with inappropriate foods, can negatively affect their health, change their feeding patterns or stop them foraging for themselves**

Sustainable Boating Practices

- **Avoid or Limit Use of Two-Stroke Engines: Two-stroke engines are less efficient and release more pollutants into the water. Whenever possible, opt for four-stroke or electric engines, which are cleaner and more fuel-efficient**
- **Use Synthetic or Biodegradable Oils: If you must use a two-stroke engine, use synthetic or biodegradable oils to reduce the environmental impact**
- **Maintain Engine Regularly: Regular maintenance is crucial to ensure the engine runs efficiently and minimises pollutant discharge from oil and fuel**
- **Limit Operation in Sensitive Areas: Avoid operating two-stroke engines in ecologically sensitive areas, such as near coral reefs, to reduce the risk of pollution and physical damage. Use eco-friendly, non-toxic antifouling paints and biodegradable cleaning products to minimise harmful chemical release**
- **Anchor only in designated mooring areas, using buoy moorings to prevent anchor damage to coral structures**
- **Practice mindful refuelling to avoid spills that could harm coral reefs**

Always prioritise the safety and well-being of your guests

Safety Equipment

Choose safety equipment based on:

- **Activity type**
- **Vessel operation**
- **Expected passenger count**
- **Ensuring passenger safety and comfort**
- **Make sure your safety gear complies with national safety standards and is fit for the intended use and conditions**

Severe Weather and Emergency Planning

Make sure you check the weather and have a severe weather contingency plan for activation in the case of inclement weather. Make sure you have an emergency management plan in place that covers:

- **Emergency response actions**
- **Roles and responsibilities**
- **Nearest medical care facilities**
- **Emergency access and escape routes, assembly points**
- **Key emergency contact details (ambulance, local police) and communication protocols**
- **Communication equipment and its limitations**
- **Reporting protocols for fatalities, serious injuries, or dangerous incidents**

Customer Safety

Operators should aim to understand and accommodate the abilities and needs of their customers. This involves:

- **Age Considerations: Pay special attention to the needs of older participants or very young children**
- **Accessibility Considerations: Ensuring the activity is accessible, which may include providing suitable boarding equipment, seating arrangements, and where restroom facilities are available. Information about accessibility should be clearly communicated to potential participants**
- **Medical Condition Disclosure: Encouraging participants to share any medical conditions or other concerns that might affect their safety or experience during the activity**
- **Pre-Activity Assessments: Conducting assessments to confirm that all participants can safely engage in the activity**
- **Inclusive Communication: Implementing alternative communication methods for those with hearing or visual impairments and for participants who speak different languages**

Information for Participants

Operators should offer precise, relevant information about the activity being offered at point of booking, highlighting:

- **Activity goals, type, nature, duration, and setting**
- **Participants' responsibilities and accountability for their actions, including adherence to leaders' instructions and addressing personal safety and health concerns**
- **Required personal equipment and physical fitness levels and recommended experience**
- **Risks and benefits of participation**
- **Insurance and liability details**
- **Provider and leader backgrounds, roles, and contact information**

Safety Briefings

Clearly communicate the risks to all passengers before departure. Crew must detail the vessel's safety features, hazards, and emergency procedures to participants, including lifejacket usage/location when required before the activity commences/departs. **Share precise instructions for in-water activities just before they start, highlighting:**

- **The sequence of the activity**
- **Entry/exit points**
- **Area boundaries**
- **Activity-specific safety and emergency protocols**
- **Communication methods, including signals and buddy system**
- **Wildlife viewing guidelines, and conservation strategies**
- **Keep your swimmers safe -- Ensure inexperienced swimmers wear life jackets and ensure you have a competent swimmer as part of your crew.**

Crewing Essentials for Marine Tourism

For marine wildlife tourism to be successful and safe, detailed attention to crewing configurations, skills, and training is essential. Crew should be trained in the roles they perform and understand the relevant maritime safety minimum standards. Where crew are also acting as guides, they should have good knowledge of marine wildlife and customer service skills.

Determining Crew Needs

Operators must consider several factors to ensure adequate crewing, including:

- **Risk to safety, environment, and people**
- **Crew work hours and rest to avoid fatigue**
- **Vessel size, operational area, and voyage complexity**
- **Legal compliance and crew-to-passenger ratios for effective monitoring and safety**

Crew Roles

When crew members also serve as tour guides, this dual role must be documented and communicated to ensure clear safety instructions to passengers.

Crew Skills and Competencies

Successful marine tourism depends on skilled crew members who:

- **Possess navigation skills tailored to marine wildlife tourism and can manage safety risks**
- **Understand the importance of undertaking marine wildlife tourism activities responsibly**
- **Have specific swimming and rescue skills where in-water activities occur**
- **Maintain skills and knowledge**
- **Follow specific safety ratios and legal regulations**
- **Lookouts are dedicated observers distinct from the captain. Their primary role is to monitor participants, wildlife and the environment for safety, without engaging in the in- water activities**

Responsibilities of lookout crew:

- **Are well briefed on monitoring hazards, participant risks, and guidelines to minimise disturbance to marine wildlife.**
- **Focus solely on observation tasks, including potential rescues or first aid, from a suitable, visible location.**
- **Operate from an elevated, distraction-free spot with a clear view of the entire activity area.**
- **Prioritise monitoring high-risk participants and environmental conditions impacting visibility**

Practical Tips for the Cruise and Yachting Sector

The cruise and the yachting sector can also contribute to the protection of marine wildlife in the Pacific Islands region through sustainable tourism practices. Here are some practical ways for this sector to contribute to responsible marine tourism.

Adherence to Laws
Comply with international, national, and local environmental regulations and guidelines.

Waste Management
Implement comprehensive waste management systems to ensure that no garbage, plastics, or hazardous materials are released into the ocean. This includes proper treatment of sewage and greywater and restricting use of single use plastics on board vessels. Display waste management systems and requirements on the vessel for passengers to see.

Water Conservation
Use water-saving devices and systems onboard, such as low-flow faucets and showers, and avoid discharging untreated wastewater into the ocean.

Eco-Friendly Products
Use biodegradable and eco-friendly cleaning products, toiletries, and supplies to reduce chemical runoff into the ocean. Recommend use of environmentally friendly sunscreens to passengers and consider supplying these.

Energy Efficiency
Implement energy-efficient technologies such as LED lighting, solar panels, and optimised fuel consumption to reduce the ship's carbon footprint.

Lighting Control
Use minimum lighting necessary on vessel at night so as not to affect nocturnally migrating birds, this is especially important when passaging past important seabird breeding islands. Advise passengers to use curtains/blinds and avoid bright white LED deck lights outside.

Anchoring Practices
Use designated mooring buoys instead of anchoring directly on the seabed to protect sensitive marine habitats like coral reefs and seagrass beds.

Slow Speed Zones
Reduce speed in areas known to be inhabited by marine mammals like whales and dolphins to reduce the risk of ship strikes and noise pollution.

Onboard Education
Provide educational programs and materials to inform passengers about safe and respectful wildlife viewing, maintaining a safe distance from animals, avoiding any actions that could disturb them and the harmful effects of touching and feeding wildlife.

Excursion Guidelines
Ensure that shore excursions and activities are licensed and adhering to responsible marine tourism guidelines.

Local Partnerships
Collaborate with local conservation organisations and communities to support marine protection efforts and sustainable tourism initiatives.

Research and Monitoring
Participate in or support marine research and monitoring programs to contribute to the understanding and conservation of marine ecosystems.

Environmental Education
Educate crew and guests on marine conservation and sustainable practices to encourage responsible behaviour during activities like snorkelling, diving, and fishing.

Responsible Shore Excursions:
Partner with local tour operators that adhere to sustainable practices and offer guests environmentally responsible shore excursions that have minimal impact on local ecosystems and communities.

BEST PRACTICE MARINE WILDLIFE VIEWING GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC SPECIES

WHALES AND DOLPHINS

Whales and dolphins (cetaceans) evolved from land mammals about 50 million years ago. While fully adapted to sea life, they still show traces of their terrestrial origins. Cetaceans give birth to live young, nurse them with milk, and invest heavily in their upbringing. They live long, mature late, reproduce slowly, and form complex social relationships. In many cultures, cetaceans hold significant importance.

The Pacific Islands region is home to over 30 species of cetaceans, including large migratory species such as humpback whales, and small estuarine-associated dolphins. Many of these species are endangered or vulnerable. Their survival is threatened by fisheries interactions, hunting, pollution, boat collisions, noise, habitat degradation, climate change, food chain disruptions, and irresponsible tourism.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region (under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species) aims to protect and conserve these species and their habitats, including migratory corridors. Many Pacific Island countries and territories are signatories to this MOU.

Why We Need To Be Careful

Whale and dolphin watching is a popular tourist activity in the Pacific Islands and it is important to ensure that these activities do not cause harm such as physical injuries to the animals from watercraft, or cause habitat displacement and behavioural changes. Such disturbances can lead to population declines and damage entire ecosystems.

Swimming with whales or dolphins, although tempting, poses significant risks to both humans and animals. For humans, the risks include potential injury or even death. For cetaceans, especially mother-calf pairs, in-water activities can cause avoidance behaviours and disruptions to mother calf nurturing activities that are critical to survival of the calf.

Global best practice does not support swimming with whales

These close, intrusive encounters create more disturbance than boat-based tours and if allowed should be very carefully monitored and controlled. Best practice globally does not support swimming with whales, particularly mother/calf pairs. Swimming with dolphin pods containing young calves is also not global best practice. Where possible develop opportunities for viewing whales and dolphins with calves without swimming.

Understanding the Impact of Marine Tourism on Whales and Dolphins

Whales and dolphins can be disturbed by people, vessels, or aircraft. Research shows that these activities often cause whales and dolphins to exhibit avoidance behaviours such as increased swim speeds, erratic movements, and altered dive patterns. **Whale and dolphin watching, while popular, can lead to long-term disturbances such as:**

- **Displacement from critical habitats (e.g., resting, feeding, breeding, and calving areas)**
- **Elevated stress levels**
- **Reduced breeding success due to reduced nurturing of calves by mothers**
- **Increased mortality**
- **Injury**

Reactions to disturbances can vary widely among whales and dolphins, depending on species, age, sex, and whether they are accompanied by a calf. Calves are highly vulnerable to predators, making protective measures even more crucial.

Signs of Disturbance in Dolphins and Whales

Dolphin and whales may display the following behaviours when affected by human presence:

- **Changes in swimming speed and direction, both horizontally and vertically**
- **Changes in breathing rate and diving patterns e.g. increased time spent underwater compared with at the surface**
- **Stopping or changing activity patterns**
- **Changes in group size or cohesion**
- **Changes in acoustic behaviour**
- **Trumpet blows or loud exhalations**
- **Head slapping, tail slapping and breaching**
- **Jaw clapping or open jaw display**
- **Mothers shielding their young with their bodies**
- **Agonistic behaviour towards the perceived threat (human in the water). This could include a tale swipe which could cause injury or even death**

Even where these behaviours are not observed, there may still be long term impacts as a result of human disturbance which may affect for example calf survival. By following these best practices, we can continue to enjoy watching and learning about them in a way that supports their conservation and our safety. Let's continue to work together to protect these ocean treasures and ensure a sustainable future for whale and dolphin watching in the Pacific.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING AND SWIMMING WITH CETACEANS

By following these guidelines, tourism operators are prioritising both the well-being of whales and dolphins and the safety of their guests.

Viewing Whales

Swimming with Whales

Get Permission First: Only offer 'swim with' experiences if you have a license or permit to do so. Make sure you have a permit or license to offer 'swim with' whale activities

Check Behaviour: Check whale behaviour before entering the water. If you see mating groups, mother and calf pairs, solitary calves or nursery whales, aggressive individuals, leave them alone

Safe Swimmer Drop-Off: Keep your engine in neutral when stopping. Avoid drifting into the whale's path. Raise the alpha/dive flag. Use a surface rope to aid swimmers in and out of the water – no towing. Keep your boat at least 100 meters away from the cetacean but always keep an eye on your swimmers

Time It Right: Limit in-water time to 20 minutes

Smart Swimmers: Inform swimmers on no-touch, no-dive, and no-chase protocols. Supervise swimmers and make sure they are ready to follow your instructions

Watch For Stress: Stop the swim if whales show stress, weather worsens, swimmers don't follow instructions, or another boat arrives

Photo Guidelines: No flash photography or selfie sticks. Follow distance rules when taking photos. Safety first!

Underwater Scooters and Propulsion Devices: Underwater scooters or propulsion devices should not be used

Maximum Numbers:

One boat at a time

Four swimmers plus guide

30m - Swimmers away from whales *(or as specified by national regulations)*

50m - Minimum departure distance

100m - Boat no approach zone. Low speed, no wake

300m - Stay away if another boat has swimmers in the water

Aircraft and Drones: Where permitted, drones must be flown at least 50 meters above whales. Aircraft should be 300 metres or above, within 300 metres radius of a whale

Viewing Dolphins

Know the Law: Know the regulations that apply to viewing dolphins in the location you are conducting the activity

Slow Down: Maintain a speed of less than 10 knots in areas known to have dolphins (or as required by national regulations or codes)

Give Right of Way: Ensure dolphins have the right of way, and your boat does not restrict their movements

Prevent Injuries: Avoid gear changes and sudden changes in speed or direction

Avoid Mothers and Calves: Look out for mother and calf pairs and avoid approaching them

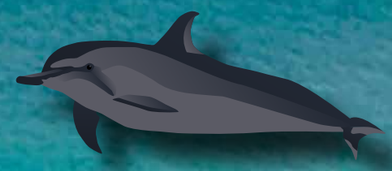
Sound: Switch off echo sounders to minimise noise disturbance if maritime safety requirements allow.

Stay Neutral if Approached: If a dolphin comes closer than 100 meters, put the boat in neutral. Always stay in neutral until the dolphin is at least 50 meters away

Exception: *Do not encourage dolphins to bow ride, but if dolphins approach and bow riding can't be avoided, maintain a constant speed without sudden direction changes*

50m - No approach zone

100m - Neutral gear zone



300m - Caution zone. Low speed, no wake

300m - No approach zone to lone calf, or resting dolphin

Idle Your Engine: Keep the boat engine on and in idle when watching dolphins to indicate your location and remain manoeuvrable

Stay on the Same Side: Boats within 300 meters of a dolphin must stay on the same side to reduce movement restriction. Ensure dolphins are not trapped between boats and physical barriers like islands or reefs

Watch the Time: Limit viewing time to 30 minutes per boat. If more than three boats are present, reduce viewing time to 10 minutes per boat

Avoid Repeated Visits: Do not return to the same dolphins during the same trip. Aim to visit different whales on each trip within a day

Maximum Number of Boats: No more than three boats should be within 300 meters of a dolphin at any one time

Approach From the Side: Approach dolphins from the side and slightly behind, moving parallel to them. Never approach directly from behind or in front and avoid the J- approach/manoeuvre

Swimming with Dolphins

Get Permission First: Only offer 'swim with' experiences if you have a license or permit to do so. Make sure you have a permit or license to offer 'swim with' dolphin activities

Check Behaviour: Check dolphin behaviour before entering the water. If you see mating groups, mother and calf pairs, solitary calves or nursery dolphins, aggressive individuals, leave them alone

Safe Swimmer Drop-Off: Keep your engine in neutral when stopping. Avoid drifting into the whale's path. Raise the alpha/dive flag. Use a surface rope to aid swimmers in and out of the water – no towing. Keep your boat at least 100 meters away from the cetacean but always keep an eye on your swimmers

Time It Right: Limit in-water time to 20 minutes

Smart Swimmers: Inform swimmers on no-touch, no-dive, and no-chase protocols and no flash photography or selfie sticks. Supervise swimmers and make sure they are ready to follow your instructions

Watch For Stress: Stop the swim if dolphins show stress, weather worsens, swimmers don't follow instructions, or another boat arrives

Photo Guidelines: Follow distance rules when taking photos. Safety first!

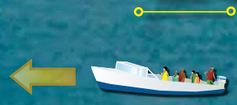
Underwater Scooters and Propulsion Devices: Underwater scooters or propulsion devices should not be used

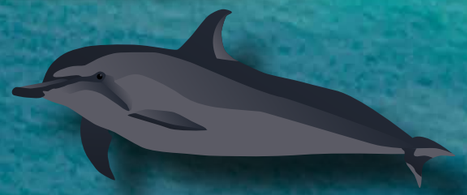
Maximum Numbers:

One boat at a time

Eight swimmers plus guide

30m - Swimmers away from dolphins *(or as specified by national regulations)*





50m - Minimum departure distance

100m - Boat no approach zone. Low speed, no wake

300m - Stay away if another boat has swimmers in the water

Aircraft and Drones: Where permitted, drones must be flown at least 50 meters above dolphins. Aircraft should be 300 metres or above, within 300 metres radius of a dolphin

DUGONGS

The dugong is the only herbivorous marine mammal in the Pacific. They are found in the waters off Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. They stay close to the coast and live in places where seagrass grows, eating up to 40kg a day. Dugongs help maintain seagrass habitats that are also important for other species such as marine turtles and play an important role in the culture of many coastal communities.

Dugongs are slow growing and can live for a long time. They can grow up to three metres in length and weigh up to 500 kilograms. A dugong will have its first calf between 6-18 years old. Dugongs are pregnant for 14 months and give birth to live young. They usually only have one calf at a time which is breast-fed for 18 months before it can eat seagrass. A dugong will have a calf every 3-7 years under ideal conditions. They are slow to mature. With a low breeding rate the dugong is vulnerable to population declines and recovery is slow.

The Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats (under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species) aims to ensure the long-term survival of dugongs and their seagrass habitats. Pacific nations that have dugong in their waters are signatories to the Dugong Memorandum of Understanding.

Why We Need to be Careful

Dugongs are at risk at becoming extinct in the wild in the medium-term future. Dugongs migrate and disperse over vast distances, making their survival dependent on conservation and management.
Key threats to dugongs include:

- **Poaching:** Dugongs are poached, primarily for their meat and oil for cultural purposes
- **Habitat Degradation:** Coastal development, sedimentation, pollution, and habitat destruction from activities like dredging and reclamation disrupt or destroy seagrass beds, the primary food source for dugongs
- **Bycatch:** Dugongs can become entangled in fishing gear such as nets and traps, leading to injury or death
- **Boat Strikes:** Dugongs are often struck by boats and watercraft, especially in areas with high fast-moving marine traffic, resulting in injuries or fatalities
- **Climate Change:** Impacts like sea level rise, ocean acidification, and changes in water temperature may affect the availability and quality of seagrass habitats

Understanding the Impact Of Marine Tourism on Dugongs

Dugongs are easily disturbed or frightened by people and are very shy. Unpleasant encounters can make them avoid certain areas or people, reducing future sightings and negatively impacting their well-being.
Dugong watching, while popular, can lead to impacts to dugong or their habitat from:

- **Boat Traffic:** Increased boat traffic from tourism increases the risk of collisions with dugongs, particularly in areas they frequent
- **Noise Pollution:** Boat engines and other tourist activities create underwater noise, disrupting dugong communication, feeding, and breeding behaviours
- **Anchor Damage:** Anchoring by tourist vessels can damage seagrass beds, critical habitats for dugongs
- **Tourist Interaction:** Unregulated in water viewing, such as attempting to feed or closely approach dugongs, may disturb their natural behaviours and cause stress. Swimming with dugongs can also present risks to humans.
- **Disturbing Dugongs:** Disturbances while they are feeding can prevent them from eating enough, leading to sickness and fewer calves being born. This further increases their vulnerability to extinction

Signs of Disturbance in Dugongs

Dugongs may display the following behaviours when affected by human presence:

- **Avoidance Tactics:** Movement away from the disturbance source, changes in direction or swim pattern, swimming at maximum speed, or swimming away from disturbance
- **Sudden Change of Activity:** Abrupt dives, dives with fluke slaps, or swimming actively to deeper areas
- **Change in Behavioural State:** Interruption of resting, feeding, and nursing

By understanding these threats and disturbances, we can take action to protect dugongs, ensuring their ongoing survival and the health of their habitats. If possible, choose not to swim with mothers and calves which are most vulnerable to disturbance. By following best practices and prioritising the well-being

of these incredible animals, we can enjoy watching and learning about them in a way that supports their conservation and our safety. Let's work together to protect these ocean treasures and ensure a sustainable future for dugong watching in the Pacific by adopting the following guidelines.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING AND SWIMMING WITH DUGONGS

By following these guidelines, tourism operators are prioritising both the well-being of dugongs and the safety of their guests.

Viewing Dugongs

Know the Law: Know the regulations that apply to viewing dugongs in the location you are conducting the activity

Take Care: There are Dugongs down there! Dugongs are reliant on seagrass to survive. Be careful when travelling over seagrass meadows to make sure you don't damage them with your propeller

Be Careful: Anchor to avoid damaging seagrass meadows. Steer clear of narrow channels at low tide

Slow Down and Look Out: Reduce speed to no wake speed in areas with a high probability of encountering dugongs. Always keep a lookout to avoid collisions

Approach From the Side: Approach dugong from the side and slightly behind, moving parallel to them. Never approach directly from behind or in front

Respect Mothers and Calves: Never get between a mother and her calf. If any dugong shows distress, move at least 50 metres away

15m - Engine off zone

20m - No approach zone to mother and calf pairs

50m - Neutral gear zone

100m - Low speed, no wake zone

Stay in Neutral if Approached: Wait until they move away before putting the engine in gear

Let Them Breathe: Never drive over the top of a dugong, even if it appears to be deep underwater. Avoid impeding their ability to surface and breathe

Watch the Time: Limit interaction time for each vessel to a maximum of 30 minutes

Maximum Number of Boats: No more than three boats should be within 50 metres of a dugong. If there are already three boats within 50 metres, stay back at least 200 metres away and wait your turn

Non-Motorised Vessels: Stay at least 10 metres from dugongs. No more than three non-motorizedwatercraft should be within 20 metres of a dugong. If there are already three there already, stay back at least 50 metres

Swimming with Dugongs

Get Permission First: Only offer 'swim with' dugong experiences if you have a license or permit to do so

No Overcrowding: If there are already five people 10 meters away from a dugong, stay back another 5 metres. Make sure no person or watercraft gets between a mother and her calf at any point

Watch for Stress: Stop the swim if dugongs show stress, weather worsens, swimmers don't follow instructions, or another boat arrives

No Surface Ropes: Avoid using ropes; dugongs might chew or manipulate them

Smart Swimmers: Raise the alpha/dive flag. Explain no-touch, no-dive, no feed and no chase protocols to all swimmers

Ensure Swimmers Follow these Guidelines: Let dugongs come to you. Don't swim towards them. Don't corner or restrict dugongs. Never get between a dugong and the surface. Swim calmly, slowly and minimise excess noise and splashing. Follow distance rules when taking photos

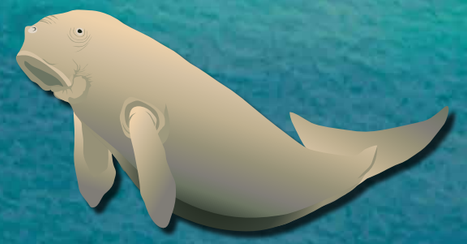
Warning! Never get between a dugong and the surface of the water. They need to come to the surface to breathe and anything that gets in the way of them surfacing can cause distress

Time It Right: Limit in-water time to 20 minutes

Maximum Numbers:

Four swimmers plus guide

Be Careful! When swimming with a dugong that has approached you, try to stay at least 5 metres away from the tail. Dugong tails are very powerful, and you could get hurt if it hits you



10m - Swimmers away from dugongs

15m - No approach zone to mother and calf pairs *(it is better not to swim with mothers and calves)*

15m - No approach zone if 5 people are already 10m away from dugongs

Aircraft and Drones: Where permitted, drones must be flown at least 50 meters above dugongs. Aircraft should be 300 metres or above, within 300 metres radius of a dugong

SHARKS AND RAYS

Sharks and rays are fish that have skeletons made from soft cartilage rather than bone. They are one of the oldest and most ecologically diverse vertebrate groups that inhabit the ocean. They play a key role in the balance and productivity of marine ecosystems, often occupying top positions in food chains. An estimated 189 species of sharks and rays have been recorded within the Pacific region.

Sharks and rays are important for food, human livelihoods, tourism and their ecological roles. They also play an important part in the cultures, beliefs and traditions of the Pacific people. Some sharks and rays, such as thresher sharks, produce just two to four pups once a year, compared, for example, to a swordfish that produces millions of eggs in its lifetime. Because of these life history characteristics, most sharks and rays have very low rates of population increase and are not as able to withstand sustained harvest or recover from over-exploitation (direct or indirect) and other threats and pressures.

Sharks and rays occupy a diverse range of trophic niches from planktivorous sharks such as whale and basking sharks to top predators that feed on marine mammals. They are present in a variety of habitats, the demersal zone on continental and insular shelves, coral reefs and atolls, the benthic upper slope (200–1000 m), and in coastal pelagic waters (0–200 m).

Many Pacific countries support international conventions and measures to protect sharks and rays through regional cooperation. Several countries have established shark reserves including Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa and the Cook Islands.

Why We Need to Be Careful

Understanding of the Pacific's sharks and rays is still very limited, and the focus of research has generally been on species taken in fisheries. The biological characteristics of sharks and rays make them especially vulnerable to the impacts of human activities. Because they grow slowly, are late to mature, and produce few young, they are especially vulnerable to overfishing and slow to recover from depletion.

As an example, Manta Rays typically have just a single pup every 4–5 years, and therefore they are particularly vulnerable to population decline. Approximately half of all shark and ray species recorded in the Pacific have been assessed by IUCN, as threatened (Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered) or Near Threatened. **Key threats to sharks and rays include:**

- **Overfishing and Bycatch:** Fishing remains the primary threat to sharks and rays. The high demand for their meat, fins, mobulid gill plates, and shark liver oil drives overfishing, which has led to significant population declines
- **Environmental Pollution:** Sharks and rays are highly susceptible to environmental pollution, including persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, crude oil, plastic waste, and discarded fishing gear
- **Climate Change:** Climate change exacerbates existing stressors on sharks and rays. Temperature changes directly affect the physiological and metabolic functions of sharks, impacting digestion, growth, and reproduction
- **Habitat Degradation and Loss:** Critical habitats can be destroyed by coastal development including from sedimentation, and dredging. Additionally, human impacts to coral reefs reduce the quality of habitats available, potentially leading to population declines and fragmentation

Understanding the Impact of Marine Tourism on Sharks and Rays

Shark and ray watching, while popular, can lead to impacts from:

- **Boat Traffic:** Sharks and rays can suffer injuries or death from collisions with boats
- **Feeding:** Using food or another attractant to lure sharks and rays has the potential to significantly alter their behaviour. It may also cause dependency and associated negative health outcomes. The long-term impacts of feeding are unknown therefore a precautionary approach is recommended to avoid unexpected ecological, safety, and economic consequences. Feeding can also affect feeding behaviour, population numbers and habitat use, which could lead to changes in a whole ecosystem

Signs of Disturbance in Sharks and Rays:

The impact of tourism on sharks and rays is largely dictated by the ecology and behaviour of each species. The regular appearance by people in important shark and ray habitats, such as feeding areas, cleaning stations, or reproduction sites, creates the risk of disturbing the animals or disrupting important natural behaviours. Where there is a near-constant human presence, there is a threat of chronic stress and disruption.

Generally, sharks and rays may display the following behaviours when affected by human presence:

- **Avoidance Tactics:** Changes in direction of movement or increased swim speed
- **Change in Activity:** Attraction to humans and/or vessels, aggressive competition, altered diet patterns and patterns of habitat use
- **Change in Behavioural State:** Interruption of current behaviour (e.g. feeding), threatening displays and agonistic behaviour which may be a precursor to attack

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING AND SWIMMING WITH SHARKS & RAYS

By following best practices for marine tourism for different species of sharks and rays, we can enjoy watching and learning about them in a way that supports their conservation and our safety. Let's work together to protect these ocean treasures and ensure a sustainable future for sharks and rays in the Pacific by adopting the following guidelines.

Viewing Sharks and Rays

- **Know the Law:** Know the regulations that apply to viewing sharks and rays in the location you are conducting the activity
- **Slow Down and Look Out:** Reduce speed to no wake speed in areas with a high probability of encountering rays and sharks. Post a lookout for animals or swimmers
- **Anchoring:** Avoid anchoring on or near known feeding and cleaning stations for manta rays
- **Wait Your Turn:** If there is already a boat within the caution zone, stay back at least 500 metres and wait your turn
- **Watch the Time:** Limit your interaction in the boat to 30 minutes
- **Day Time Only:** Do not view sharks and rays at night

No Feeding! Sharks and rays have plenty of food. Avoid feeding to attract marine wildlifefor tourism – it is not best practice

See specific distance guidelines for species in table on page 33

- **Observe Caution Zone:** Observe caution zones and maintain a constant, predictable direction
- **Give Right of Way:** Ensure sharks and rays have the right of way, and your boat does not restrict their movements
- **Approach from the Side:** Approach from the side at no wake speed
- **Minimum Distance:** Observe minimum distances shown for different types of sharks in the accompanying table for individuals or group of sharks and rays

Swimming with Sharks and Rays

Get Permission First: Only offer 'swim with' shark and ray experiences if you have a license or permit to do so

Safe Swimmer Drop-Off: Raise the alpha/dive flag. Day time only. Enter and exit water a safe distance from aggregation sites. If there is a current, drop off upstream, pickup downstream. Move away once swimmers dropped off

Boat Use: In the caution zone use no-wake speed. Engines in neutral when stopping. Avoid drifting into the path of an individual or group of animals. No vessel traffic directly above aggregations sites

Keep a Safe Distance: Observe the distances as shown in the table for each species. Avoid swimming near or over cleaning stations. Guide guests out of the water if sharks and rays become too inquisitive

Time It Right: Limit in-water time to 40 minutes

Inform and Instruct: Before entering the water brief swimmers/divers on no-touch, no-dive, and no-chase protocols and no flash photography, selfie sticks

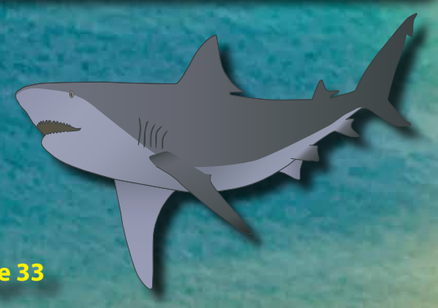
Swimming and Diving: Do not position yourself directly above or below the animals to keep the water column unobstructed. Do not block their path; and stay where you are. Avoid splashing and noise. Supervise swimmers and divers and make sure they are ready to follow your instructions

Give Them Space: Do not stop directly above sites where sharks and rays are expected to be seen (aggregation sites)

Maximum Numbers: Check group sizes recommended in the table on page 33 for each species before entering the water

Monitor and Respond! Stop the swim if sharks and rays show stress, weather worsens, or swimmers and divers don't follow instructions

See specific distance guidelines for species in table on page 33



Aircraft and Drones: Where permitted, drones must be flown at least 50 meters above dugongs. Aircraft should be 300 metres or above, within 300 metres radius of a dugong

WHALE SHARKS

VESSELS	
Distance	Must not approach closer than 30m to a whale shark Do not approach in the path of the shark's direction of travel when dropping swimmers into the water
Speed	Less than 8 knots, switch off propellers when 30m away from the shark
Caution Zone	An exclusive cau:on zone of 250m radius applies around any whale shark Only one vessel at a time may operate within the zone The first vessel within that zone is considered to be 'in contact' A second vessel to arrive must keep 250m away from the shark Any other vessels must be 400m from the shark No scooters or jet ski
SWIMMING	
Distance	Minimum 3 metres from head of shark and 4m from tail
Group Size	Maximum 10 people in the water at any one time, including guides and videographer/photographer

BASKING SHARKS

VESSELS	
Distance	Do not approach within 100 metres Maintain a distance of at least 500 metres where there are pairs or large numbers of sharks following each other closely. This may be courting behaviour, and they should not be disturbed Caution when sharks have been seen breaching
Speed	6 knots when approaching - no boat propellers within 100 meters. Avoid sudden changes in speed. No jet skis
SWIMMING	
Distance	4 metres from the shark and be wary of the tail
Group Size	Maximum 10 people within 100 metres of a shark

REEF AND PELAGIC SHARKS

VESSELS	
Distance	N/A as sharks are unlikely to be visible from the vessel
Speed	N/A as sharks are unlikely to be visible from the vessel
SWIMMING	
Distance	Minimum distance of 3 metres and remain as close to the bottom as possible
Group Size	Maximum 10 people, including guide and videographer/photographer
Do Not Touch	Do not touch any reef or pelagic shark as it is harmful to them

STING RAYS

VESSELS	
Distance	30 metres from the ray aggregation site 1 vessel only per ray aggregation
Speed	Maximum of 6 knots when approaching area
SWIMMING	
Distance	Minimum distance of 2 metres, but watch for tail
Group Size	Maximum 10 people, including the guide and videographer/photographer

MOBULID RAYS (MANTA AND DEVIL RAYS)

VESSELS	
Distance	Minimum 10 metres at all times
Speed	Minimum 8 knots within 100 metres and 5 knots within 30 metres
SWIMMING	
Distance	Minimum 3 metres; drop off minimum 10 metres away from aggregation
Group Size	Maximum 10 people, including guide and videographer/photographer

SEABIRDS

Seabirds make their living at sea but must come to land to breed. Colonies can be very dense, with groups of up to thousands of breeding pairs. They travel hundreds of kilometres in search of fish, cephalopods, molluscs, crustaceans, plankton, and other marine organisms. Through guano deposition, they transport marine nutrients back to land. This transportation represents a significant contribution to the nutrient cycles and to the improved functioning of coastal ecosystems.

The Pacific Ocean is an important breeding area for forty-two seabird species. Among these, seventeen species are endemic to the region with eleven species assessed by IUCN as threatened with extinction (Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered) and one is Near Threatened. The critically endangered species are Fiji petrel, Beck's petrel and Rapa shearwater.

Seabird movements can cover thousands of kilometres across the whole Pacific Ocean. Their breeding habitats range from high inland forested mountain slopes to coastal fringes and atoll islands. The locations of the breeding grounds of some species are unknown.

Seabirds' movements at sea have long been used in Pacific cultures both to track fish schools and for navigational support and as physical manifestations of deities or ancestors, prominent in traditional knowledge including chants and prayers.

Migratory seabird species in the Pacific region are protected under several international treaties and agreements including Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP).

Photo: © Edin Whitehead www.edinz.com

Why We Need to Be Careful

Seabirds' reliance on both marine and terrestrial ecosystems also makes them highly vulnerable. That combined with their life history characteristics has contributed to their worldwide decline. **Human threats to seabirds include:**

- **Introduced Predators:** Can threaten adult seabirds, chicks and eggs. This has been a major cause of extirpation of many seabirds from islands. Introduced insects or grazing animals may alter the vegetation cover, lower the suitability for nesting such as through trampling
- **Bycatch:** Seabirds are often accidentally caught in fishing gear such as longlines, gillnets, and trawls, leading to injuries and mortality. This has been a major contributor to decline of some albatross and petrel species
- **Marine Pollution:** Including plastic debris, oil spills, and chemical pollutants can harm seabirds through ingestion, entanglement, and contamination of their habitats
- **Climate Change:**Temperature rise, coastal erosion, sea level rise and extreme climatic lower the availability of breeding areas, and directly affect the survival of both adults and chicks
- **Overfishing:** Depletion of fish stocks through overfishing can reduce prey availability leading to declines in populations
- **Light Attraction:** Many seabirds are susceptible to light attraction in urban areas (and on brightly lit ships), and nocturnal species can collide with human infrastructure such as powerlines, communication tower guy lines and ship infrastructure causing death or injury
- **Habitat Destruction:** Alteration or destruction of islands and coastal areas due to human activities and infrastructure can threaten seabird breeding colonies
- **Introduced Plants:** Certain plant species can completely alter the breeding habitat in seabird colonies, making it impossible for birds to build nests or burrows

Understanding the Impact of Marine Tourism on Seabirds

Seabirds can be impacted by tourism particularly if important breeding sites on atolls, islands, low isles and coral cays are accessed. **Marine and land-based tourism activities can impact seabirds in the following ways:**

- **High Boat Speed:** Disturbing groups of seabirds sitting on the water or passing through seabird rafts
- **Disturbance:** At breeding and foraging sites from trampling of nests/burrows and noise. Handling of seabirds/chicks can seriously affect the survival of offspring because of nest abandonment by adults
- **Artificial Light:** From coastal developments, cruise ships and fishing and liveaboard boats with bright lights are of also of particular concern

Signs of disturbance in seabirds

Indicators of disturbance include:

- **Freezing:** Wing opening, beak clacking, alarm calls
- **Flight:** Flushing, diving, paddling away
- **Fight:** Dive-bombing, defensive defecation
- **Adults Departing Nest Sites:** Leaving eggs and chicks vulnerable

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING SEABIRDS

By following best practices for marine tourism, we can enjoy watching and learning about seabirds in a way that supports their conservation. Let's work together to protect seabirds in the Pacific by adopting the following guidelines.

Viewing Seabirds on Land

Know the Law: Know the regulations that apply to viewing seabirds in the location you are conducting the activity

Respect Nesting Colonies: Keep a safe distance from seabirds, especially nesting colonies and feeding areas. Avoid approaching too closely, as this can cause stress and disturbance. Supply binoculars for viewing if guests do not have their own or set up a spotting scope to share viewing. This reduces the need to get too close

Biosecurity: Always maintain biosecurity protocols, checking boats for stowaways (such as rats) and clothing for plant seeds when near breeding colonies

If Seabirds Start Dive-bombing: Retreat in the direction you approached from, without walking backward to avoid nests or young

Approaching Nesting Colonies: Approach slowly and retreat if signs of disturbance occur. Choose landing points far from bird groups/colonies. Once onshore, walk slowly and observe birds from outside the colony without entering it. Keep group together and not scattered

Take Care: Be careful in sand or grassy areas where birds may be nesting below ground as their burrows can easily collapse. Avoid these areas altogether if you are unsure

Access: Stay on trails and paths or walk along the water line of the beach where possible. Find good viewing areas that can be used on repeat visits to allow visitors the chance to experience the colony without disturbing birds

Night Limits: Avoid visiting nesting areas after sunset and before sunrise. If near colonies at night, refrain from using bright lights. Avoid anchoring offshore from breeding colonies at night, and if necessary, use low intensity shielded lights only

Photography: Use flash sparingly and watch bird behaviour to avoid startling or distressing them

Drones: Where permitted, drones must be flown at least 50 meters above seabird nesting areas. Do not use drones for bird photography

Record Your Observations: Post your at-sea observations on eBird and social media to support seabird research and monitoring efforts

VIEWING SEABIRDS ON WATER

Approaching Foraging Flocks: Reduce speed to 5 knots when approaching seabird rafts to reduce disturbance. No chasing or pursuing of flocks

Disturbances: If the proximity of your boat causes birds to be visibly disturbed (flocks scattering, birds ceasing plunge diving etc), then back off until behaviour returns to normal

Other species: Remain aware of other marine species in proximity, especially cetaceans (whales and dolphins)

No handling! Do not attempt to handle or catch seabirds, as this can cause injury and stress to the birds

Overnight Vessels and Tour Boats: Do not anchor overnight vessels or tour boats close to breeding colonies on islands. If unavoidable, anchor as far away as possible to minimise disturbance

Lighting: Reduce or eliminate external lighting on boats at night to prevent disorienting and attracting seabirds, which can lead to collisions withmvessel infrastructure and injury or death

Noise: Minimise noise from engines, generators, and onboard activities, especially during the night, to avoid disturbing breeding seabirds

Environmental Responsibility: Ensure no litter or pollutants are released into the water, as these can harm seabirds and their habitat. Avoid anchoring or landing on islands or coastlines where seabirds are known to nest or rest

Record Your Observations: Post your at-sea observations on eBird and social media to support seabird research and monitoring efforts

MARINE TURTLES

Marine turtles play an important ecological role in the shaping and regulation of marine communities by contributing to the maintenance of healthy seagrass beds and coral reefs, helping balance marine food webs and facilitating nutrient cycling. Globally distributed and highly migratory, marine turtles spend most of their lives in coastal waters and the open ocean, although little is known about their lives in this environment.

Marine turtles are slow growing and take decades to reach sexual maturity. A marine turtle can be aged 30-50 before it begins to breed. Combined with this, the breeding season might be once in only two to eight years. Hatchlings have a low chance of survival, with perhaps only one in 1000 reaching maturity. All these factors make the sea turtles vulnerable to human interference.

Geographically, a single marine turtle will pass through numerous habitats on land and at sea, cross the borders of several countries, and swim through international waters during its life. The Pacific Ocean is home to six species of the world's seven sea turtle species. Green; Hawksbill; Loggerhead; the Leatherback, Olive Ridley; and the Australian endemic Flatback. The Green and the Hawksbill are the two most common turtles in coastal habitats of the Pacific Islands.

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species lists the Western Pacific subpopulation of Leatherback Turtles and Hawksbill Turtles as critically endangered. The Green Turtle is listed as endangered and is present in many parts of the Pacific. The Loggerhead Turtle is listed as endangered and the Olive Ridley Turtle is listed as vulnerable.

Many Pacific nations are signatories to international conventions that address marine turtles and their nesting, migratory and feeding habitats including: Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the associated Indian Ocean and South-East Asia Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC).

Why we need to be careful

The population of each of the world's seven marine turtle species have declined dramatically in the last century. Key threats to marine turtles in the Pacific region include unsustainable consumption and trade of adults and eggs, fishing bycatch, coastal development, predation by animals, and climate change. Chemical pollution, plastic pollution and light pollution are also key conservation challenges.

Turtles have evolved to nest and hatch at night because danger from predators (both on land and in the water) is lowest under the cover of darkness. This makes turtles vulnerable to human disturbance and disorientation from artificial lights. Coastal development can also lead to loss of nesting habitat on land, and loss of food sources in the water through the destruction of valuable seagrass, mangrove, and coral and coral habitats. Nesting habitats are already under pressure from sea level rise and increasing severity of storms.

These guidelines does not provide guidance on hatchery management, or head starting. **Relocating turtle eggs to hatcheries for tourism is not considered best practice nor supported in the Pacific**. There is little evidence to support the effectiveness of head starting programmes for conservation. Governments should regularly review turtle hatcheries and head starting facilities in operation or proposed and apply an evidence-based assessment of threats to eggs and/or hatchlings in-situ, and potential mitigation actions at the individual clutch- and beach level before permitting this activity for conservation purposes only, as published by IOSEA guideline, 2024

Understanding the Impact of Tourism on Marine Turtles

Marine turtles are an important attraction for tourists to the Pacific, with many operators marketing both chance encounters and the opportunity to swim with turtles. The capture, handling and retention of marine turtles for tourism is not best practice. Viewing turtles in the wild is.

Hatchlings need to make the crawl down the beach and enter a frenzied swim to deep pelagic waters with energy from yolk supply. Preventing them from doing this weakens them making it harder for them to reach safer waters and affects the imprinting on the beach so they may not be able to find their way "home" to mate and lay their eggs when they are mature enough to breed. **Marine tourism activities can also impact turtles in the following ways:**

- **Injuries or death due to collision with boats**
- **Destruction of feeding and nesting habitats**
- **Changes in distribution and habitat use from coastal development**
- **Changes in behaviour due to disturbance or harassment**
- **Inappropriate behaviour such as touching and catching turtles can lead to stress and reduced fitness**
- **Light pollution from tourism developments**

Signs of Disturbance in Marine Turtles

- **Change in Behaviour:** Interruption of feeding, resting and breathing
- **Avoidance Tactics:** Abandoning nesting, swimming away, swimming actively towards deeper areas, surfacing and fast diving
- **Change in Surface Activity:** Shorter breathing intervals or won't surface to breathe if stressed

A note about captive rearing: These guidelines support viewing marine wildlife in the wild. Captive rearing of turtles or taking from the wild and holding in captivity for viewing by the public is not supported. Conservation projects which include these activities should be assessed separately by the relevant government authority.

Provisioning or feeding in the wild is also not considered global best practice.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING MARINE TURTLES

By following best practice guidelines for marine tourism, we can enjoy watching and learning about marine turtles in a way that supports their conservation. Let's work together to protect marine turtles in the Pacific by adopting the following guidelines.

Viewing Marine Turtles on the Water

Know the Law: Know the regulations that apply to viewing sea turtles in the location you are conducting the activity

Take Care: There are turtles down there! Use wide, deep channels away from shallow areas, seagrass beds, and coral reefs. Avoid narrow channels at low tide

Slow Down: Maintain a no-wake speed in foraging areas or when turtles are sighted. Engage in neutral gear if you see a turtle or a turtle approaches the boat and wait for it to pass. Consider the use of propeller guards to prevent injury to turtles

Clear Their Path: Always provide a clear route for turtles to leave the area if they choose. Maintain a constant and predictable direction. Move away if turtles show signs of distress

Anchoring: Always anchor with care. Avoid anchoring on seagrass or coral reefs to protect turtle habitat

Protect Nesting Areas! Avoid activities such as swimming and boating in front of nesting beaches during the nesting season.

10m - Minimum Distance. Stay away from turtles

20m - Caution zone. No more than 2 boats

100m Waiting Zone. When 2 boats are within caution zone already

Let Them Breathe: Never drive over the top of a turtle, even if it appears to be deep underwater. Avoid impeding their ability to surface and breathe

Watch the Time: Limit your interaction to 30 minutes. Conduct tours up to a maximum of 8 hours per day

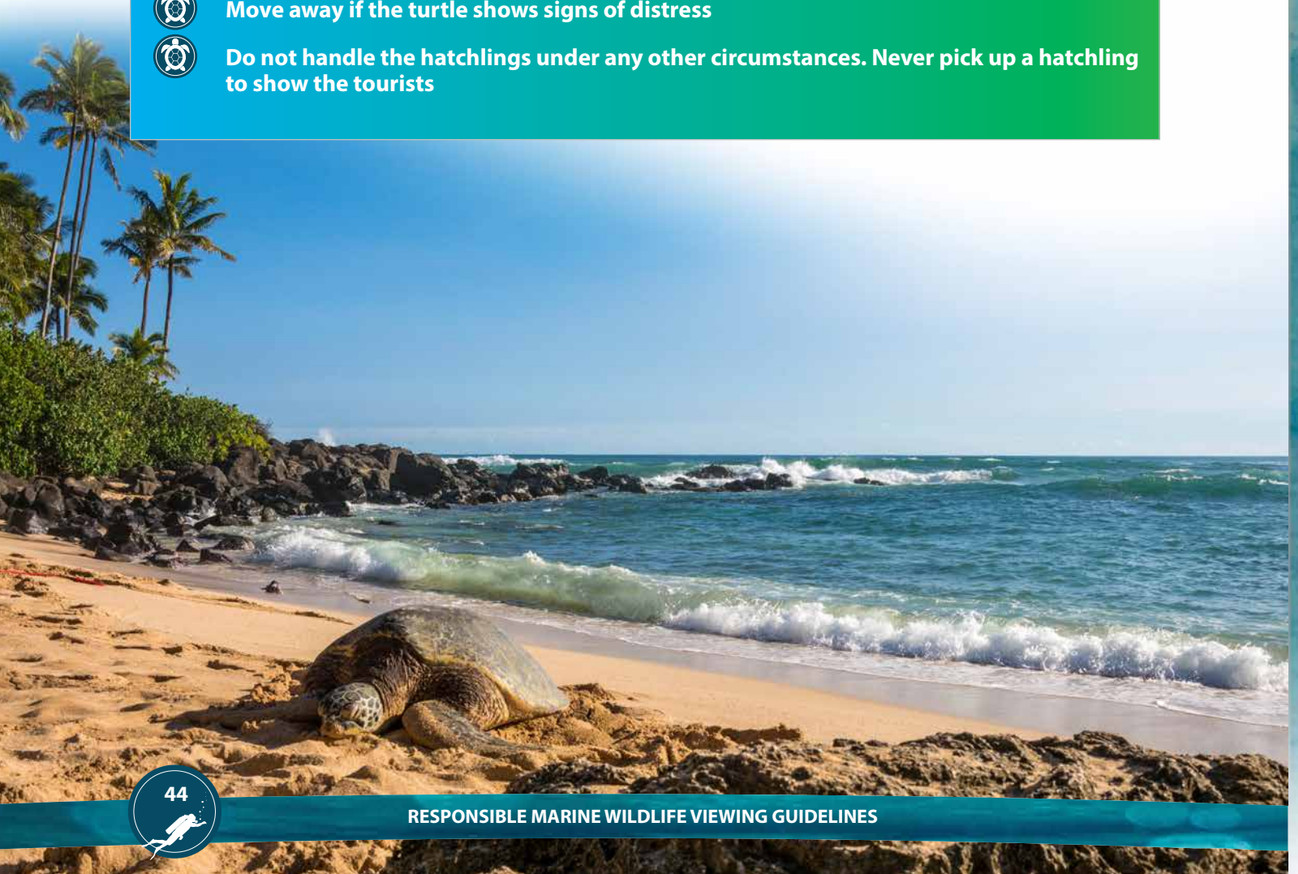
Maximum Number of Boats: No more than two boats within the caution zone at any one time

Approach From the Side: Approach turtles from the side at no-wake speed

Don't feed turtles and always leave mating turtles in peace!

Viewing Marine Turtles at the Beach

- Keep a safe distance from nesting turtles (at least 10 meters) to avoid disturbing them
- Limit viewing to 30 minutes at a time
- If viewing at night, use red lights or low-intensity flashlights with redfilters and only after the turtle has started laying her eggs
- When walking on the nesting beach, walk close to the water line to avoid bumping into turtles as they nest
- Allow the turtles to move unimpeded and do not approach as they are coming ashore and moving up and down the beach
- Limit group size - less than 10 people per turtle is best
- When finding a turtle track on the beach, have one person quietly approach the turtle from behind, following the track and keeping low to the ground, to check its nesting stage
- Do not approach or photograph any turtles that have not yet laid their eggs
- Only approach once egg-laying has begun
- Approach from behind and keep low to the ground
- Never disturb the nesting turtle or touch turtle eggs or hatchlings
- Only turn on lights after the turtle has started laying her eggs
- Move away if the turtle shows signs of distress
- Do not handle the hatchlings under any other circumstances. Never pick up a hatchling to show the tourists



Swimming with Marine Turtles

Get Permission First: Only offer 'swim with' turtle experiences if you have a license or permit to do so

Approach from the Side: Approach turtles from one side to avoid enclosing them and inhibiting their ability to surface and breathe

Night Diving: During night dives, minimise disturbance to resting or sleeping turtles. Use red lights or low-intensity flashlights with red filters, as white light can disorient turtles. Avoid areas near main nesting beaches

Remember! You must always leave mating turtles in peace

Brief your Guests and Supervise: Before entering the water brief swimmers/divers on no-feeding, no-touch, no-dive, no-chase and no-ride protocols

Photography: No flash photography or selfie sticks

Keep Watch: Supervise swimmers/ divers and make sure they and ready to follow your instructions

Noise Minimisation: Minimise noise and splash when entering the water

Maximum Numbers:

Four swimmers plus guide

Maintain a minimum ratio of one guide for every four guests in the water

3m - Minimum Distance. Stay away from turtles

(Keep distance of two human body lengths or 3 metres, whichever is greater)

Drones: Where permitted, drones must be flown at least 20 meters above turtles

CORAL REEFS

Coral reefs are some of the most diverse and valuable ecosystems on Earth supporting more species per unit area than any other marine environment, including fish, hard corals and hundreds of other species. Healthy coral reefs support commercial and subsistence fisheries as well as jobs and businesses through tourism. Local economies receive income from visitors to reefs through diving tours, recreational fishing trips, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses based near reef ecosystems.

Coral reef structures also buffer shorelines against 97 percent of the energy from waves, storms, and floods, helping to prevent loss of life, property damage, and erosion. When reefs are damaged or destroyed, the absence of this natural barrier can increase the damage to coastal communities from normal wave action and storms.

Why we need to be careful

Coral reefs are severely threatened by pollution, warming seas from climate change, disease, and habitat destruction. Once coral reefs are damaged, they are less able to support the many creatures that inhabit them and the communities that depend on them. When a coral reef supports fewer fish, plants, and animals, it also loses value as a tourist destination.

Currently, 75% of the world's reefs are threatened. According to the World Resources Institute, by the 2030s, more than 90% of the world's reefs will be threatened by local human activities, warming and ocean acidification. Projected increases in tourist numbers visiting reefs will further threaten them through preventable, irresponsible business practices and tourist behaviours.

Understanding the impact of marine tourism on coral reefs

The consistent presence of small and large groups of people in shallow coral reefs can lead to impacts over time. Inexperienced snorkellers and divers can crush and break corals and other reef dwelling organisms with fins and equipment. This damage usually occurs because of people who are unable to maintain buoyancy control in the water, stand or walk in a shallow area, fight a current, or try to get a closer look at or photograph wildlife.

Fish feeding by tourists also impacts on coral reefs and their ecosystems by disrupting natural feeding behaviours, leading to altered diets, malnutrition, and behavioural changes in fish. This can result in overcrowding, coral damage, and reduced grazing pressure on algae, causing unchecked algae growth that smothers corals. The introduction of inappropriate foods, such as bread, can harm fish health, increase nutrient levels in the water, and lead to algal blooms. Feeding practices often attract certain species, creating an imbalance in fish populations and altering predator-prey relationships, while increased fish density around feeding sites heightens predation risks and the spread of diseases. It also encourages fish to bite.

Marine tourism activities can also impact on coral reefs, in the following ways:

- **Anchor Damage:** Boats anchoring on reefs can break and damage corals
- **Waste:** Improper disposal of waste from resorts, boats, and tourists can lead to pollution. Plastics, chemicals, and other waste materials can smother corals and disrupt marine life
- **Chemical Sunscreens:** Certain chemicals in sunscreens, such as oxybenzone and octinoxate, can be toxic to corals and contribute to coral bleaching
- **Oil and Fuel Spills:** Spills from boats and ships can coat coral reefs, blocking sunlight and poisoning marine organisms
- **Overfishing:** Overfishing disrupts the balance of the reef ecosystem

All these impacts can lead to a decline in living corals and other reef-dwelling organisms, increases in sedimentation, and disturbance to wildlife. Educating tourists and encouraging them to change their behaviour can help protect coral reefs. Dive and snorkel operators are uniquely positioned to enact positive, lasting changes by educating their customers on ways to help protect reef ecosystems.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR CORAL REEF PROTECTION

By following these guidelines, marine tourism operators and their customers can help protect coral reefs in the Pacific. Let's work together to protect our coral reefs by adopting the following guidelines.

Protecting Coral Reefs and Other Critical Habitats (Snorkelling, Diving and Boating)

Know the Law: Know the regulations that apply to accessing coral reefs in the location you are conducting the activity

Protected Areas: Adhere to marine protected area regulations, including no-go zones around sensitive habitats like coral reefs and mangroves. Limit access to these areas and follow local guidelines on tourism activities

Educate and Build Awareness: Provide educational materials and briefings for tourists about the ecological importance of seagrass beds, mangroves, and coral reefs. Highlight the role these habitats play in biodiversity, coastal protection, and carbon sequestration

Brief your Guests and Supervise: Before entering the water brief swimmers/divers to never touch, rest, or stand on the reef. Adjust your equipment before entering the water, and practice snorkelling skills away from the reef to avoid kicking coral or stirring up sediment.

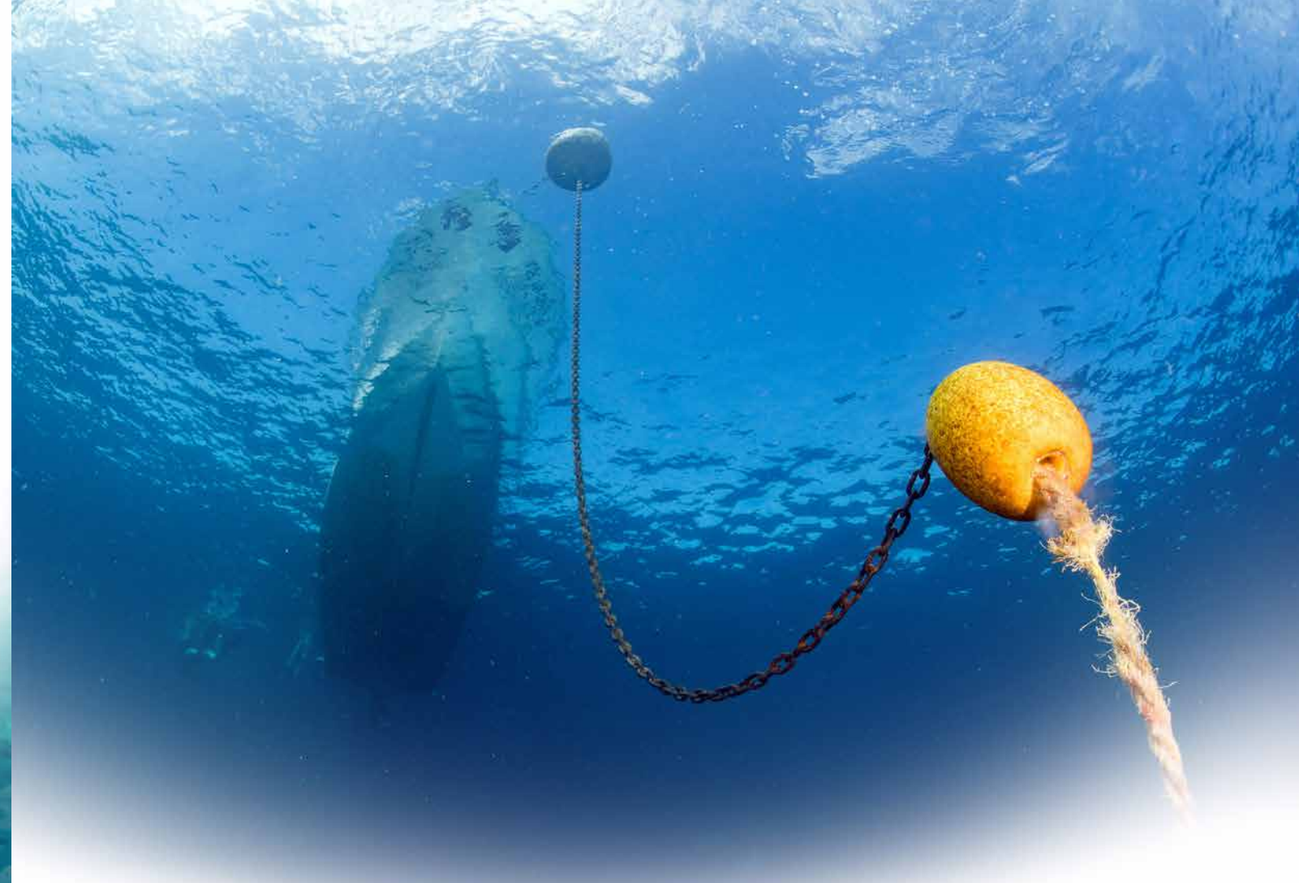
Supervise: Watch swimmers/divers and make sure they follow your instructions

In the Water: Avoid all contact with corals and other marine life. Divers secure your equipment and maintain neutral buoyancy. Swim in a horizontal position without using your arms. Do not touch, chase, harass, or feed marine life. Encourage or provide reef safe sunscreens

Avoid Physical Contact! Ensure that boats, anchors, and equipment do not come into contact with seagrass beds, mangroves, or coral reefs. Use designated mooring buoys and avoid shallow areas where seagrass beds are present

Boat Sewage: Use pump-out facilities where available. Recommend that participants use land-based restroom facilities prior to taking a trip. Treat sewage prior to release from vessel. Keep marine vessel sanitation devices in good operating condition

Garbage: Keep garbage contained and avoid the use of single use plastics. Contribute to improving the environment by picking up damaged or discarded fishing nets or lines cut away from propellers and other marine debris



Anchoring

Anchor Elsewhere: Consider whether you need to anchor or if drifting while people are in the water is possible**.** Examine the area before anchoring to find the best location

Mooring: If areas are regularly used, consider setting up mooring systems to reduce the impact of repeated anchoring

Away From the Reef: Anchor in sand or mud away from corals

Coral Heads: Never wrap the anchor rope or chain around bommies or large coral heads

Anchoring Ashore: Carefully place the anchor to minimise shore and coastal damage

Prepare: Carry enough chain and line for the depth you want to anchor in

Retrieval: Take up the anchor when the line is vertical

When Caught: If the anchor is caught on the reef, free it by hand wherever possible. Do not force the anchor free by motoring forward

Chain: Use only as much chain as you need to hold the vessel, without compromising safety

Dragging: Keep watch to make sure the anchor is not dragging

Hauling In: Motor towards the anchor when hauling it in

APPENDIX - GUIDELINE AND GENERAL INFORMATION SOURCES

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Sustainable Tourism and Migratory Species, UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.23

Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-based Wildlife Watching, Resolution 11.29 (Rev.COP12)/Annex

Guidelines for Recreational In-Water Interactions with Marine Wildlife, UNEP/CMS/COP14/CRP27.3.1/Annex 2

Resolution 13.5/Annex National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (Dugong dugon) and their Habitats throughout their Range

Sharks and Rays - Guidelines

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife UNEP/CMS/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2

Lawrence, A.J., Budziak, A., Campbell, I., Cornish, A., Ender,I., Jeffries, B., Kanstinger, P., Macdonald,C., Marston, J., Stevens, G., Ward-Paige, C. A. (2016). Responsible Shark & Ray Tourism: A Guide to Best Practice. Gland, Switzerland: WWF, and Rancho Santa Margarita, USA: Project AWARE and Dorset, UK: Manta Trust.

Manta Trust Code of Conduct

Sharks and Rays - General information

https://marinemegafauna.org/human-threats-sharks-rays/tourism

Lawrence, A.J., Budziak, A., Campbell, I., Cornish, A., Ender,I., Jeffries, B., Kanstinger, P., Macdonald,C., Marston, J., Stevens, G., Ward-Paige, C. A. (2016). Responsible Shark & Ray Tourism: A Guide to Best Practice. Gland, Switzerland: WWF, and Rancho Santa Margarita, USA: Project AWARE and Dorset, UK:
Manta Trust.

https://pipap.sprep.org/content/sharks-and-rays

https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/BEM/shark-ray-policy-brief.pdf

Pacific islands regional marine species programme 2022–2026. Apia, Samoa: SPREP, 2022

https://swimwithmantas.org/

https://marinemegafauna.org/human-threats-sharks-rays

https://www.wwfpacific.org/what_we_do/wwf_pacific_shark_heritage_programme/

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife UNEP/CMS/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2

Cetaceans - Guidelines

General Principles for Whale Watching, International Whaling Commission, IWC68 (2022) Revision Of General Principles for Whale Watching

International Whaling Commission Whale Watching Handbook (iwc.int)

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife UNEP/CMS/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2

Lewis, S. & Walker, D. (2018). Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching: Tourism activities involving wild cetaceans. A guide by the World Cetacean Alliance with support from ClubMed. Brighton, UK.

Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines For Whale And Dolphin Watching, 2008

Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching 2017, Commonwealth of Australia 2017

Niue Reg 2016-03 Whale Watching Regulations

Tonga Whale Watching and Swimming Regulations 2013

Guidelines for Observing Dolphins Whales in French Polynesia - pt 1/pt 2

Timor-Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines

Cetaceans - General information

https://www.cms.int/en/legalinstrument/pacific-islands-cetaceans

www.cms.int/pacific-cetaceans

Convention On Migratory Species – A Review to Support the Development of a Second CMS Cetacean Programme Of Work (2024-2035) - UNEP/CMS/COP14/Inf.27.5.1a/Rev.1

Miller, C. 2023. Review of cetacean diversity, status and threats in the Pacific Islands region 2021. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia, Samoa. 87 pp.

Dugongs- General information

Dugong | Dugong (cms.int)

Vanuatu Environmental Science Society (VESS) Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs

Home - The Dugong & Seagrass Conservation Project (dugongconservation.org)

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife

Dugongs - Guidelines

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife UNEP/CMS / Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2

Vanuatu Environmental Science Society (VESS) Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs

Vanuatu Environmental Science Society (VESS) Code of Conduct for Tourism Operators Interacting with Dugongs

Code of Practice for Sustainable Management of Dugong and Marine Turtle Tourism in Australia

Marine Turtles - Guidelines

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Species-specific Guidelines for Boat-based Wildlife Watching, Resolution 11.29 (Rev.COP12)/Annex

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife UNEP/CMS / Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2

DCCEEW 2023, National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra

Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism Standards - A project of the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN)

Code of Practice for Sustainable Management of Dugong and Marine Turtle Tourism in Australia

Coral Reef Alliance Turtle Watching Good Practice Guide

NOAA Fisheries guidelines for viewing marine wildlife in Hawaii https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/marine-life-viewing-guidelines/viewing-marine-wildlife-hawaii

Marine Turtles - General information

Pilcher N.J. 2021. Review of the status of marine turtles in the Pacific Ocean 2021. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia, Samoa.

Pilcher NJ, 2023. The SPREP Sea Turtle Monitoring Manual - A guide to selecting the best tools for sea turtle research and monitoring. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia, Samoa.

Coral Reef Alliance Good Environmental Practices Turtle Watching

DCCEEW 2023, National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching

Convention on Migratory Species /UNEP Brochure on the Convention on Migratory Species

McLellan, E., Arps, E, and Donnelly, M. (2009). WWF Global Marine Turtle Strategy 2009 – 2020. WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

SPREP, Protecting our turtles, now and into the future | Pacific Environment (sprep.org)

Seabirds - General information

Seabirds of the Pacific Ocean - SPREP

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-specific Guidelines for Boat-based Wildlife Watching

Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands, prepared by WBM Oceanics Australia and Gordon Claridge for Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority And Environment Australia-Biodiversity Group

DCCEEW 2023, National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra Guidelines

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching

International Association Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) Guidelines for Birdwatching

Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands, WBM Oceanics Australia and Gordon Claridge for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Environment Australia-Biodiversity Group

Resolution 13.5/Annex – Australian Government National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds, January 2020

DCCEEW 2023, National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra

BirdLife Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines

BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics

Safety

Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Safety guidelines for marine adventure tourism operators.

Outdoor Council of Australia, Australian Adventure Activity Standard

Outdoor Council of Australia, Australian Adventure Activity Core Good Practice Guide

Outdoor Council of Australia, Australian Adventure Activity Good Practice Guide Snorkelling
Habitat Protection

United Nations Environment Programme (2007). Marine Litter Guidelines for Tourists and Tour Operators in Marine and Coastal Areas. https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/26256.

Coral Reef Alliance, Best Environmental Practices: Snorkelling & Diving

Reef Resilience Network

https://greenfins.net/coral-reefs-and-tourism/

J. Sweeting; 2018; A Practical Guide to Good Practice: Managing Environmental Impacts in the Marine Recreation Sector.

National Ocean Service, The Importance of Coral Reefs: Corals Tutorial (noaa.gov)

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Overarching Principles and Best Practice Guidelines for Marine Mammal Watching In The Wider Caribbean Region.

RESPONSIBLE MARINE WILDLIFE VIEWING GUIDELINES

A guide to industry best practice for viewing marine wildlife in the pacific

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