

An Environmentally Friendly Operation

- Always respect the underwater environment and encourage your clients to do the same
- Know local environmental laws that apply to scuba diving (e.g. no spearfishing), including special rules in protected areas
- Emphasise low-impact skills during dive training courses e.g. stress the importance of correct buoyancy and fin control
- Suggest refresher courses for clients who have not dived recently, so they can sharpen their skills
- Design your tours to help your clients appreciate and understand the underwater ecosystems you visit
- Train divemasters to emphasise the significance of any protected areas you visit and the potential of divers to damage them
- Make sure your staff understand the ecology of the areas you visit so they can teach clients to minimise their impacts on the dive sites
- Follow general minimal impact boating guidelines (see *Green Guide to Blue Seas*)
- Support local marine research and conservation efforts

Prior to Departure

- Consider the experience of your clients and take them to the dive sites which they are best suited to
- Give clients a pre-dive talk on the logistics of the dive site, low-impact diving techniques and the general rules of diving, and stress the importance of underwater conservation
- Separate experienced and inexperienced clients into different groups
- Provide your clients with educational materials to help them learn about and respect underwater environments

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Note: For general environmental guidelines see also the CRC Tourism *Green Guide to Blue Seas*

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GREEN GUIDE TO SCUBA DIVING

best-practice environmental management for scuba diving tours



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Low Impact Diving Techniques

Before you begin diving:

- Secure diving equipment such as gauges and spare regulators that may drag on coral or along the bottom
- Check you are weighted correctly for neutral buoyancy, and make any buoyancy adjustments away from coral areas
- Choose water entry points which lie over sand or rubble, not coral, so that you can make adjustments and check gear with minimal impact

While you are diving:

- Move carefully and always be aware of exactly where your body and equipment are, relative to coral and other underwater features
- Be careful not to touch anything with your fins, so as not to break coral or stir up sediments
- Be especially aware of your buoyancy and placement at night and when taking photographs, as your path of vision is limited
- When you are hovering over a reef, keep your eyes fixed on a reference object so you don't drift or sink onto coral
- Avoid holding onto or resting on coral; if necessary, hold onto dead coral or rock
- Watch the divemaster as an example of how to move through the water with minimal impact

General Rules of Diving

- Do not touch any living underwater plants or animals, including corals
- Do not collect any souvenirs, living or dead
- Do not harass marine wildlife or interrupt their normal behaviours such as mating, feeding or resting
- Do not chase, lure, ride or block the path of free-swimming animals such as turtles, dolphins or whales
- Do not move closer than 300 metres to a whale or 100 metres to a dolphin
- Do not feed any marine animals
- Be careful not to disturb marine wildlife when taking underwater photographs

Anchorage

- Use pontoons and moorings where available, check they are suitable for your boat and current weather conditions
- Be aware of 'no anchor' zones
- Make sure your vessel's anchor is large enough to avoid dragging and has enough chain for the type of anchorage
- Check out an area before anchoring and avoid lowering onto sensitive areas such as coral or seagrass
- Use an accurate GPS or DGPS to anchor on the same place each time you visit a dive site
- Once anchored, get the divemaster to check the anchor is well secured in a suitable place
- For small boats making brief stops in calm waters, consider using a sandbag as a low impact temporary anchor
- Use heavy plastic tubing over the anchor chain wherever possible
- Motor toward the anchor when hauling in
- Maintain regular anchor watches

Managing Dive Sites

- Install or lobby for permanent buoyed mooring at dive sites which are experiencing anchor damage
- Maintain mooring buoys at dive sites you use
- Rotate dive sites to avoid over-using a particular site
- Limit group sizes to make sure the divemaster can monitor the behaviour of all clients
- Monitor wildlife and coral cover at dive sites you use so you are aware of any degradation; e.g. take underwater videos and photographs and record their dates
- Consider keeping a 'nature diary' of wildlife observations, useful for client education
- Alert local authorities to any environmental disturbance you observe at dive sites
- Bring back to shore any garbage you find at dive sites
- Organise an underwater clean-up day where diving is free in exchange for picking up garbage

Note: Specific guidelines for diving with whalesharks are also available in Western Australia. If diving with whales or dolphins, see the *Australian National Guidelines for Cetacean Observation*, available from Environment Australia, and the *Green Guide to Whale Watching*, from CRC Tourism.