

Coral Reefs: Ten Things You Can Do To Help

Did you Know?

Coral Reefs:

- Occupy only 0.7% of the ocean floor, but provide homes and vital nursery grounds for 25% of all marine species on the planet.
- Support 4,000 species of fish, 700 species of coral, and thousands of plants and animals.
- Are composed of thousands of tiny animals called polyps.
- Are responsible for building the largest biological structure on earth - the Great Barrier Reef.
- Consist of two different types of corals: hard corals like brain, elkhorn, and pillar, and soft corals including sea fans, sea whips, and sea rods.
- Protect shorelines from erosion and storm and wave damage. Each square meter of reef protects US\$47,000 in property value.
- Provide an incredible diversity of beneficial medical pharmaceuticals, and contain compounds found to help fight heart disease, asthma, leukemia, viruses, cancer, and HIV.
- Attract millions of visitors each year. Tourism is the largest industry in the world, brings billions of dollars to local economies and sustains 10% of all jobs on earth. In 1992, tourism associated with coral reefs generates US \$1.9 trillion, over 27 times that generated by the world's marine fisheries.

Ten Things You Can Do

- 1 Do not purchase souvenirs made from coral or any threatened or endangered marine species
- 2 Support the establishment of coral reef protected areas and encourage better protection and management for those that exist.
- 3 While traveling, choose resorts and tour operators that properly treat all sewage and wastewater.
- 4 While operating a boat, navigate carefully to avoid contact with coral reefs and other vulnerable ecosystems such as seagrass beds and maintain engine equipment to prevent oil and gas spills.
- 5 As a diver or snorkeler, choose tour operators that use mooring buoys or drift diving techniques whenever possible rather than anchors that can cause reef damage.
- 6 Make wise choices in selecting seafood by avoiding menu items that are caught or farmed using destructive or unsustainable practices including reef-killing poisons, explosives, and illegal equipment.
- 7 Join Project AWARE's CoralWatch Monitoring Program and report data online at www.projectaware.org.
- 8 As a diver, practice buoyancy control skills in a pool or sandy area before diving near a coral reef. Make sure your gauges and equipment are secured to avoid accidental contact with the reef, and never touch, stand on or collect coral. Be an AWARE Diver.
- 9 Report all damage of coral reefs to dive operators and scientific or conservation groups that monitor coral reef health.
- 10 Enroll in an AWARE Specialty course like AWARE Coral Reef Conservation with a PADI Professional to increase your knowledge about coral reefs and other aquatic environments.

Divers Conserving Underwater EnvironmentsSM

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