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# Sustainable Marine and Coastal Tourism Tips

How to explore oceans, beaches,
and reefs while keeping them thriving

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Coastal and marine destinations are some of the most remarkable places to explore whether diving along coral reefs, kayaking through mangroves, or walking across sandy shores. These same environments that attract travelers are continually shaped by tourism. How you interact with them can either preserve or damage these natural treasures. This guide outlines how travelers can help protect them to ensure healthy oceans and rewarding experiences.

> **If the ocean inspires you, explore it in ways that keep it alive and thriving.**

# Protect
## Sensitive Habitats

Coastal and marine ecosystems encompassing reefs, dunes, mangroves, seagrasses, and salt marshes protect shorelines and support a diverse array of ocean life. But they are fragile and vulnerable to impacts.

- Never touch, step on, or anchor over coral or seagrass.
- Enter and exit through designated access points.
- Stay off dunes and fragile vegetation that help prevent erosion.
- Keep a safe distance from mangrove roots and shallow areas when boating.
- Use mooring buoys instead of anchors whenever possible.
- Avoid stirring sediment with fins, anchors, or propellers; it can smother coral and seagrass.
- Slow down boats near shorelines to reduce wake and erosion.
- Use paddles or electric motors in calm lagoons and channels.
- Avoid collecting shells, coral, or sand, and refrain from purchasing souvenirs made from these materials.
- Book with hotels and tours that contribute to the restoration of reefs, seagrass, or mangroves.
- Choose hotels that preserve natural buffers and design their properties around existing habitats, rather than removing them.

# Minimize Wildlife Disturbances

Animals need space to feed, breed, and nest. Even small disturbances can stress them and alter their natural behavior.

- Observe marine life from a respectful distance—never touch, chase, or feed animals.
- Limit bright lights on turtle nesting beaches at night, as artificial light can disorient hatchlings.
- Avoid operators that handle or display wildlife for photos.
- Leave pets at home to prevent disturbing nests or wildlife.
- Keep noise levels low when boating or diving.
- Use dive lights sparingly; avoid shining them directly on marine animals.
- Choose dive operators that follow Green Fins or marine park standards.

# Keep Beaches and Waters Clean

Healthy oceans begin on land. Litter, chemicals, and wastewater pollute beaches and harm wildlife when they flow into the sea.

- Reduce single-use plastics, which often end up in the sea.
- Dispose of trash in designated bins or carry it out when none are available.
- Use reef-safe sunscreen or UV-protective clothing.
- Book hotels and operators that treat wastewater and reduce and recycle plastics.
- Secure trash, food, and gear on boats to prevent anything from blowing overboard.
- Prevent chemical pollution by maintaining boats properly and avoiding fuel spills or harsh cleaners near the water.
- Participate in local beach and coastal cleanups.

# **Choose**
# Sustainable Seafood

What you eat affects what's left in the ocean.

- Order seafood caught by small-scale fishers using low-impact gear, such as handlines or traps.

- Avoid endangered or overfished species, as well as dishes made from turtle, shark, or ray.

- Check which species are in their closed season before ordering to avoid eating seafood during breeding or recovery periods.

- Ask where seafood comes from and favor restaurants that source from local fishers or verified sustainable suppliers.
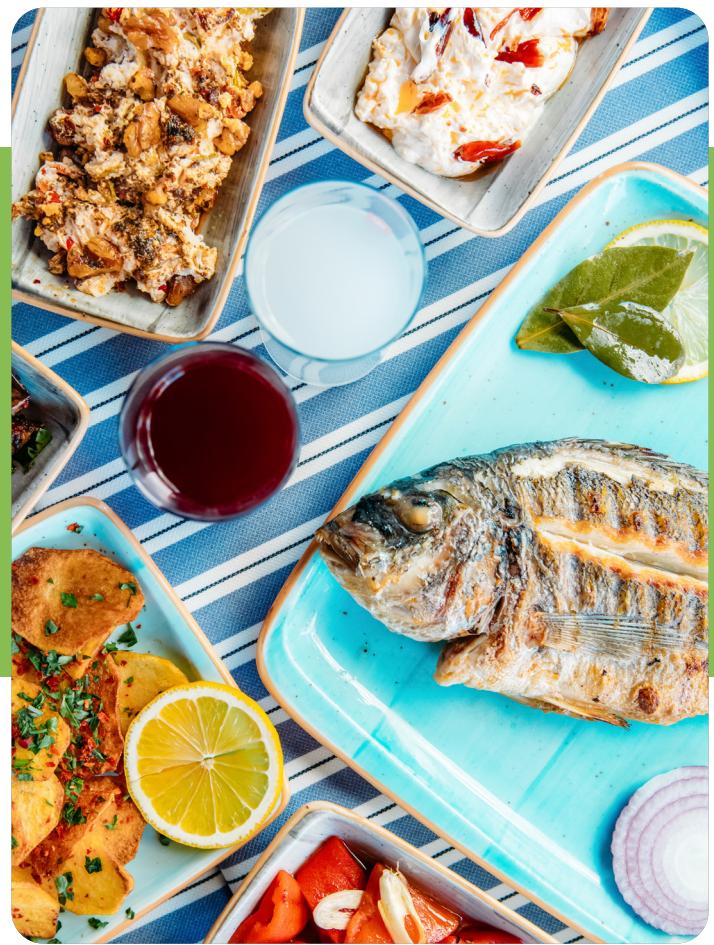
# Travel Low-Carbon

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to marine and coastal ecosystems. Reducing emissions helps limit ocean warming, acidification, and coral loss.

- Take trains instead of short-haul flights whenever possible.

- Carpool or share transfers to reduce emissions from ground travel.

- Choose nonstop flights or efficient routes.

- Stay at accommodations that utilize renewable energy and minimize fuel use.

- Walk, bike, use public transit, or rent electric vehicles to explore your destination.

- Support tour operators, cruise lines, and ports adopting cleaner fuels or electric vessels.

- Conserve energy during your stay by turning off lights and AC when not needed.

- Offset unavoidable travel emissions to support carbon reduction and removal.

# Empower Coastal Stewards

Coastal residents are the ocean's frontline stewards.
Tourism can help strengthen their role and show that.

- Choose locally owned operators who contribute to marine conservation.

- Buy local products and experiences that create income for coastal communities.

- Respect traditional fishing areas and community-managed zones.

- Support guides who share knowledge about local marine life and ecosystems.

# **Give Back**
## to the Ocean

Help ensure that the ecosystems you enjoy continue to thrive.

- Share what you learn to inspire other travelers and businesses to act responsibly.

- Support projects that protect or restore coastal ecosystems, such as mangrove restoration, marsh protection, sargassum removal, or coral planting.

- Take part in citizen-science programs that track marine and coastal wildlife to support ongoing conservation research.

- Report injured or nesting animals to local conservation groups or apps.

- Volunteer only with reputable, science-based conservation organizations.

## Make your **next trip** part of the solution.

Offset your travel and support blue-carbon and ocean restoration projects.

**CALCULATOR**

## **Tourism business?**

Learn how to engage your travelers and take climate action as a member of Sustainable Travel International.

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