

International Year of the Reef

Tips to Protect Coral Reefs

Conserve Energy

Switch off lights and appliances (including TV and computers) when not in use; adjust thermostats to conserve energy; make sure your house is fully insulated and draft proof; use shades and/or curtains or insulated windows and doors to reduce heat transfer.]

Say no to plastic!

Don't use plastic bags – recycle bags or use baskets and textile bags; buy in bulk to reduce use of package material. Place all trash especially non-biodegradable plastics in proper receptacles; minimise use of party balloons and puncture them after use and dispose of properly.

Spread the word

Remember your own excitement at learning the value and importance of coral reef ecosystems. Sharing this excitement gets everyone involved.

Stay informed

Find out about existing and proposed laws, programs, and projects that could affect the world's coral reefs. Many Web sites [provide information about coral reefs](#) and what you can do to [become involved](#).

Respect local guidelines when you visit a reef

Help keep coral reefs healthy by respecting local customs, recommendations, and regulations. Ask local authorities or your dive shop how to be a reef-friendly tourist.

Participate in the Great Annual Fish Count

The Great Annual Fish Count What better way to enjoy your vacation than snorkeling or diving in America's coral reefs? The Fish Count helps scientists better understand coral reef fish populations.

Don't anchor on the reef

If you are boating near a coral reef, use mooring buoy systems when they are available.

Hire local guides when visiting coral reef ecosystems

This will help you learn about local resources, and protect the future of the reef by supporting the local economy.

Be a marine debris crusader!

Ask what your dive shop, boating store, tour operator, hotel and other coastal businesses are doing to save coral reefs. This is especially important in coastal areas with reefs. Let them know you are an informed consumer and care about reefs.

Report dumping or other illegal activities

Help be the eyes and ears of the reef! Your involvement can make a big difference.

Become a volunteer monitor!

Participate in community coral reef monitoring programs. If you do not live near a coast, get involved in protecting your watershed.

Conserve water

The less water you use, the less runoff and wastewater eventually find their ways back into the oceans.

Recycle

This helps keep trash out of the oceans and also out of landfills where it can have an adverse impact on the water quality of our rivers and oceans.

Support reef-friendly businesses

Ask what your dive shop, boating store, tour operator, hotel and other coastal businesses are doing to save coral reefs. This is especially important in coastal areas with reefs. Let them know you are an informed consumer and care about reefs.

If you dive, don't touch!

Take only pictures and leave only bubbles. Keep your fins, gear, and hands away from the reef, as this contact can hurt you and will damage the delicate coral animals. Stay off the bottom because disturbed sediments can smother the corals.]

Visit your local aquarium or zoo

Ask what they are doing and how you can help conserve our coral reefs. The answer may pleasantly surprise you. Visit the [American Zoo and Aquarium Association](#) to find a zoo or aquarium near you.

Be an informed consumer

Only buy marine fish and other reef organisms when you know they have been collected in an ecologically sound manner. Ask store managers where the organisms come from and how they were collected. Does the country have a management plan to insure the harvest was legal and sustainable over time? Be sure to look at more information on [how to find sustainably harvested reef fish](#)

Volunteer for a reef cleanup

You don't live near a coral reef? Then consider visiting a coral reef on your next vacation. Spend an afternoon enjoying the beauty of one of the world's treasures while helping to preserve it for future generations.

Don't use chemically enhanced pesticides and fertilizers

Although you may live thousands of miles from a coral reef ecosystem, these products end up in the watershed — the area that drains to a common waterway, such as a stream, lake, estuary, wetland, and ultimately, the ocean. — [...]

Support organizations that protect coral reefs

Many groups have coral reef programs, and your support will make a big difference.

Be a wastewater crusader!

Make sure that sewage from your boat and home is correctly treated. Excess nutrients in wastewater can negatively impact coral reef ecosystems.

Educate yourself about coral reefs and the creatures they support

How many different species live in reefs? What new medicines have been developed from reef organisms? Participate in training or educational programs that focus on reef ecology. When you further your own education, you can help others understand the fragility and value of the world's coral reefs.