



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES

MISSION

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES

The mission of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program is to serve as the trustee for a national system of marine protected areas and to conserve, protect and enhance its biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural legacy.

For more information about diving in national marine sanctuaries, please contact your local marine sanctuary by following the site links at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

For information about volunteering on research, monitoring or educational opportunities, you can find out more at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/visit/diving.html>

If you are planning a diving or snorkeling trip, check out the NOAA Dive Page for links to weather, navigational charts and other safe diving tips at <http://www.dive.noaa.gov>

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IMMERSE YOURSELF

IN THE BEAUTY OF YOUR NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES

Sanctuary waters are filled with unique ecosystems waiting to be explored, harboring a spectacular array of plants, animals and historical artifacts. Discover a sense of wonder as you glide through a towering forest of giant kelp or experience the thrill of spotting a nurse shark lying beneath a ledge of colorful corals. You can even dive into America's rich maritime history as you explore the numerous shipwrecks found in sanctuary waters. These and other exciting dive opportunities await you in your national marine sanctuaries! To learn more, visit <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/visit/diving.html>

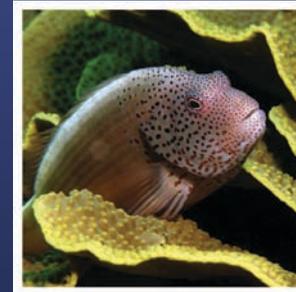


Photo: Richard Murphy



Photo: Robert Schwemmer



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BE A SMART DIVER

Join efforts to preserve dive experiences for future generations of divers by protecting and supporting your national marine sanctuaries. Practice safe and responsible diving, volunteer for habitat monitoring activities, or help out with local beach and underwater cleanups. Attend local educational events and bring diver concerns to light at sanctuary advisory council meetings. You can even help protect sanctuaries right from the shore by reducing your ecological impact when traveling. Check in with your local marine sanctuary or visit <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/visit/diving.html> on the Web for more SMART traveler tips.

Sharpen your skills. Mastering buoyancy control and streamlining your equipment will help minimize the risk of entanglement or accidental disturbance of the bottom, which can harm fragile corals and historical artifacts. Even the slightest damage can permanently alter an entire ecosystem or historical shipwreck site.

Learn the proper techniques for shipwreck diving. When diving shipwrecks, always know the orientation of the wreck site and only penetrate the wreck if specifically trained to do so.

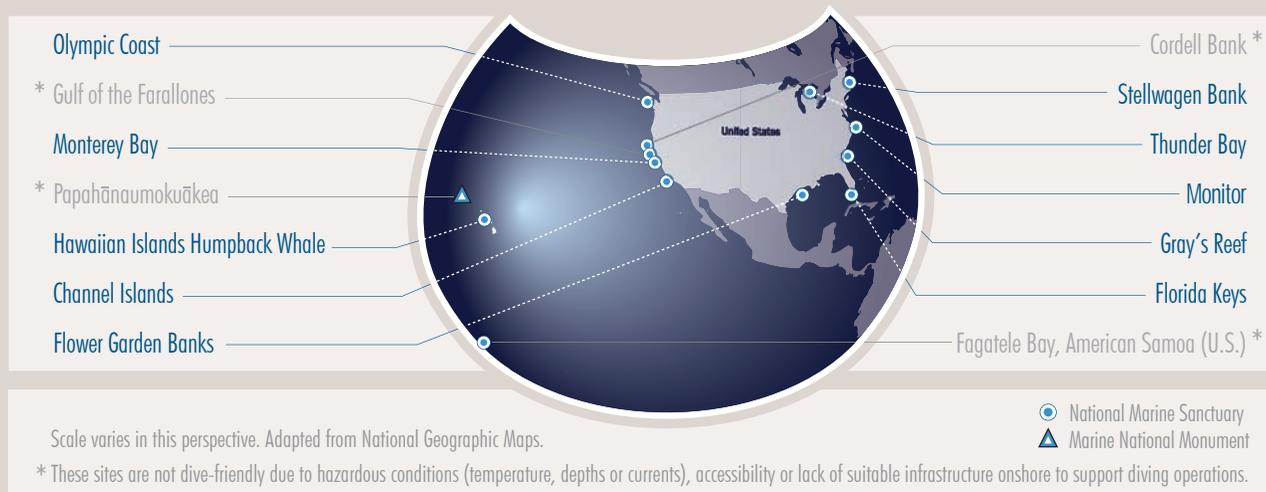
Be familiar with kelp diving procedures. Always swim below the surface of a kelp canopy and navigate with your compass. Don't panic or thrash around if entangled — slowly remove the kelp or have your buddy gently untangle it for you.

Respect marine wildlife. Enjoy viewing marine mammals and wildlife from a safe distance. If you respect them, they will respect you. Should you encounter marine mammals and observe nervous behavior, back away.

Don't collect underwater souvenirs — leave them behind for others to enjoy. Resist the temptation to collect shells, rocks or other underwater artifacts, because they provide homes for sea creatures and good surfaces for young plants and animals to settle on and grow. Additionally, removal of any historical artifacts is regulated by law.

Be a marine debris crusader. Once you finish your dive, make sure to carry away any trash you — and others — may have left behind. More than just an unsightly nuisance, beach litter poses a significant threat to the health and survival of marine organisms, which can swallow or get tangled in beverage containers, plastic bags, six-pack rings and other debris.

DIVE INTO YOUR NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES



Olympic Coast, Washington Dry suit divers can enjoy spectacular rocky reef and kelp forest diving among rockfish, sea urchins and the giant Pacific octopus at Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Remote locations and dangerous dive conditions make the Olympic Coast a destination for experienced divers.



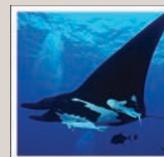
Monterey Bay, California Watch sea lions, sea otters, rockfish and other kelp-dwelling marine life within the nation's largest marine sanctuary, home to one of the most diverse marine environments on the planet. Experience excellent shore diving from many locations along the sanctuary's 270 miles of shoreline.



Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale, Hawaii Catch a glimpse of the endangered Hawaiian monk seal and view wild dolphins, manta rays, green sea turtles and white-tip sharks. Please respect a safe distance from marine life, especially North Pacific humpback whales, as they come to these waters to breed, calve and nurse their newborns.



Channel Islands, California The Channel Islands are known for their rich biological diversity, featuring northern elephant seals, California sea lions, anemones and giant sea bass. Federally protected historic shipwrecks dot the floor of the sanctuary, and its kelp forests, sea caves and coves offer some of the best diving in the world.



Flower Garden Banks, Texas Located about 115 miles off the Gulf Coast, the coral meadows of the Flower Garden Banks support a broad web of marine life, including manta rays, sea turtles and majestic whale sharks. The sanctuary offers 15 moored dive sites on three underwater formations called salt domes with dive profiles of 55-130 feet.



Stellwagen Bank, Massachusetts This sanctuary offers divers a unique opportunity to explore the offshore underwater environments of New England, including historical shipwrecks located at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay. Visibility is good up to 30 feet, but strong currents and cold water make it suitable for advanced divers only.



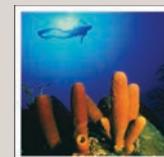
Thunder Bay, Michigan The cold, fresh waters of Lake Huron have preserved over 200 shipwrecks in and around Thunder Bay. The variety of sites allows snorkelers, recreational and technical divers to explore some of the nation's best-preserved historic wrecks. Many of the most popular dive sites are marked with seasonal mooring buoys.



Monitor, North Carolina Monitor National Marine Sanctuary, located 16 miles off Cape Hatteras in the Graveyard of the Atlantic, protects the wreck of the famed Civil War ironclad USS Monitor. The Monitor presents a challenging dive, with strong currents and deep depths limiting it to advanced divers.



Gray's Reef, Georgia Divers can see loggerhead turtles and more than 150 species of colorful reef fish as they explore the coral-covered ledges of Gray's Reef, one of the largest nearshore live-bottom reefs in the nation. Drift diving is recommended, since anchoring is prohibited and no mooring buoys are provided.



Florida Keys, Florida The Florida Keys sanctuary, an internationally renowned dive destination, protects the only living coral barrier reef in the U.S. Within the sanctuary, discover an abundance of marine life, including reef fish, moray eels and threatened elkhorn coral, and explore sites along the historic Florida Keys Shipwreck Trail.