How to Protect Our Coral Reefs

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CORAL REEFS are unique, biologically rich, and complex ecosystems that are sometimes called the "rainforests of the ocean." However, pollution, disease, invasive species, and unaware tourists all cause them harm. The decline of coral reefs destabilizes the world ecology and can have negative economic impact. Coral reefs control the amount of carbon dioxide in the ocean, making them critical to the food chain. There are ways that you can help protect coral reefs.

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A Tourist's Guide: Protecting Our Coral Reefs

1. Avoid striking or touching a coral reef.

Running your boat into a coral reef can cause serious damage. Protecting coral reefs depends on what experts call proper "vessel management." Understand where coral reefs are so your boat doesn't strike them, even incidentally. People can also damage coral reefs simply by touching them.

2. Don't fish or boat near a coral reef.

Contact with things like anchors and fishing nets is a key way that coral reefs die or suffer damage.

3. Do not litter on the beach or in the ocean.

Leaving behind things like fishing nets or general garbage on a beach can harm coral reefs. Throwing litter into the ocean itself can eventually cause the trash to come into contact with the coral reef.

4. Snorkel and scuba dive with care.

Many people enjoy snorkeling near coral reefs because of their unique beauty. Snorkelers and divers can cause serious damage to coral reefs, especially in areas with heavy tourism.

5. Don't purchase coral souvenirs.

You shouldn't take anything out of the ocean that's alive, or buy it in a store, either. In some countries, you will find jewelry and other souvenirs made out of coral. Don't buy them.

6. Choose a hotel that embraces environmentalism.

Hotels can make a big impact on the environment. They are often close to shores, and a lot of people pass through them. Support hotels with policies designed to reduce pollution.

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Fun Fact

Scientists are breeding coral reefs and testing different varieties in environments with greater acidity and other conditions. They have also found ways to plant corals in the ocean and to spur their growth by using electrical currents.