

SCUBA DIVING

SAFETY BEST PRACTICES

BEFORE AND DURING THE DIVE

- **Diving should be enjoyable.** If conditions feel too challenging or very different from what you are used to, do not dive. You can always dive another time.
- **Check your equipment and your buddy's before entering the water.**
- **Listen carefully to the briefing.** In particular, remember the route, depth, signals, lost-buddy procedure and any specific instructions for the day.
- **Move away from the boat as soon as you enter the water.**
- **Keep your BCD inflated at the surface.**
- **Wait for the dive guide's signal before descending.**
- **Never descend while out of breath.** If you are out of breath at the surface, stop finning and recover before beginning your descent.
- **Equalize early and often.** Never force your ears. If you cannot equalize, stop descending and alert the dive guide.
- **On descent, your "OK" signal must be clear.** If you have any doubt or discomfort, signal that you are not OK.
- **Breathe calmly and without unnecessary effort.** Diving should remain a relaxing physical activity. Match your breathing to your effort and focus on a gentle, prolonged exhalation.
- **If your breathing rate increases sharply: focus on exhaling, alert your buddy and the dive guide, and reduce your effort.**
- **Stay with your buddy and dive group** from the moment you enter the water until you exit.
- **Keep an eye on your buddy and the dive guide at all times.**

BUDDY AWARENESS AND ASCENT

- **Stay aware of your depth, dive time, air consumption, dive computer and buoyancy.**
- **Do not let a fish or the scenery distract you.** Check your depth and buoyancy regularly.
- **Stay at the same depth as the dive guide,** unless instructed otherwise.
- **Check your pressure gauge regularly, and regularly ask your buddy about their pressure.**
- **Stay close enough to your buddy** to use their alternate air source quickly if necessary.
- **Running out of air should never happen.** Monitor your air consumption and do not let your reserve run out.
- **If you are low on air or out of air: alert your buddy and the dive guide immediately, use your buddy's alternate air source, and ascend together in a controlled manner.**
- **Never hold your breath.**
- **If you need to stop or have a problem, alert your buddy and the dive guide.** Most problems are much easier to manage when reported promptly.
- **If you lose your buddy or dive group: stop and look around you.** Do not swim around at random. Do not try to join another dive group that passes while you are searching. If you cannot find your buddy or dive group within the time set during the briefing, usually one minute, make a controlled solo ascent; do not make the safety stop (unless mandatory decompression stops apply).
- **If possible, ascend along the reef.**
- **At about 3 metres, make a 360° scan** to check that there is no boat, diver, object or obstacle above you.
- **Never ascend faster than your smallest bubbles.** Generally accepted ascent rates are between 15 and 18 m/min.

ASCENT AND RETURN TO THE SURFACE

- **Your smallest bubbles should normally stay above you.** If you overtake them, you are ascending too fast.
- **If your smallest bubbles stay level with you without passing you, slow down further.** You are close to the maximum ascent rate.
- **If you are ascending too fast: stop finning, exhale more and dump air from your BCD if necessary.** Slow down until the smallest bubbles pass you.
- **Follow the speed shown by your dive computer** if it is slower.
- **Follow your safety stop as indicated by your dive computer and the dive guide.** When conditions allow, you can add extra time as a margin.
- **If your computer calls for a mandatory decompression stop, follow its procedure carefully.**
- **If two dive computers give different readings, follow the more conservative one.**
- **Ascend at 6 m/min** between the safety stop and the surface.
- **At about 3 metres, make a 360° scan** to check that there is no boat, object or other obstacle nearby. Keep your right hand above your head and your left hand on the low-pressure inflator.
- **Do not inflate your BCD before your head reaches the surface.** As soon as your head is out of the water, inflate your BCD immediately.
- **Once at the surface, avoid unnecessary effort.** If conditions allow, stay still for one to two minutes.
- **Breathe out during any exertion after the dive,** such as climbing the boat ladder.
- **Do not make unnecessary efforts after the dive.**
- **During the surface interval, hydrate and rest.**

SURFACE INTERVAL AND AFTER THE DIVE

- **If you are tired, cold or feeling unwell, tell the dive guide** and do not hesitate to skip the next dive.
- **A dive can be shortened, changed or cancelled.** If you feel uncomfortable or the conditions do not suit you, say so.
- **After the dive, avoid strenuous physical activity for 4 to 6 hours.**
- **Avoid freediving for 12 hours after one dive and 24 hours after two dives.**
- **Avoid very hot showers and baths for about 1 to 2 hours after the dive.**
- **Watch for unusual symptoms after diving:** significant fatigue, dizziness, weakness, tingling, numbness, unusual pain, difficulty breathing, confusion, loss of coordination or unusual skin symptoms.
- **Alert your dive guide or instructor immediately if an unusual symptom appears, and seek medical advice.**
- **Follow the recommended pre-flight intervals.** After two recreational dives, wait at least 18 hours. For a dive involving mandatory decompression stops, follow the interval specified by the procedure, at least 24 hours.

PROTECTING THE REEF

- **Touch nothing.** The reef can be very abrasive and can easily cause cuts.
- **Never hold onto the reef or kneel or stand on it.**
- **Maintain good buoyancy and control your fin movements.**
- **Keep your equipment close to your body.** A trailing hose or strap can snag on or damage the reef.
- **Do not chase animals or try to touch them.** Observe them without disturbing their behaviour.