



How travel can work.

A guide to sustainable travel around the world

elas  **Mocean**
Meer Schutz durch Wissen



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Seidenweberstraße 9 | 40764 Langenfeld | kontakt@elasmOcean.org | www.elasmOcean.org

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Responsible for content: Friederike Kremer-Obrock

Sustainable diving trips with decency

Global diving tourism has its good and bad sides. In addition to the obvious pros for travellers like holidays, distraction, new experiences and a change of scene, there are also positive economic advantages, especially since many of the most beautiful destinations are located in economically less powerful regions of the world: travellers' cash has a local impact and improves the standard of living and prosperity of the local population.

The disadvantages arise primarily in two areas: littering and global warming. Many regions still have underdeveloped standards for waste prevention or treatment, which all too often result in careless disposal in nature, where the waste causes pollution. Almost every trip causes additional greenhouse gas emissions, especially air travel, due to water vapour and carbon dioxide, which have a particularly strong effect in the upper atmospheric layers and thus exacerbate the greenhouse effect, leading to global warming and ocean acidification.

Travellers are just as powerless to eliminate all these environmental downsides as are tour operators or local tourism providers. But we can all try to limit the damage as much as possible and reduce the adverse effects, so that the benefits offer everyone enjoyable, largely sustainable tourism.

By adhering to a few standards, every shark dive can become a fascinating experience that influences people without changing nature: diving with integrity.

ElasmOcean has compiled some advice and tips that are offered as minimum benchmarks for sustainable and decent diving tourism.

How to use this guide:

After each headline, you will find a short summary in **bold print** to help you find your way around. You may be interested in every topic, or you may not. This allows you to quickly choose what applies to you and where, in the truest sense of the word, your journey should take you.



On and above land

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Choosing a travel company

I travel with travel companies that are committed to sustainability and do not focus on maximum profit.

Sustainable tourism must be fair tourism: it is only sustainable if all parties involved receive a fair share of the profits. The positive effects of the trip must outweigh the disadvantages and burdens on the local area. Some tour operators are exemplary in this regard and have made sustainability their mission. They are preferable to companies that focus solely on maximising their own profits.

Sustainable travel agencies advise in line with our recommendations, avoid glossy brochures (and paper in general) wherever possible, and actively support planning and environmental offsetting.

Choosing a destination



I travel as short distances and with as low-emissions as possible. If I must travel long-distances trip, I choose destinations that practise sustainability locally.

Some holiday dreams cannot be realised on Germany's doorstep – in which case a long-distance trip is unavoidable. For other dreams, this does not have to be the case, and then it is sustainable to "stay close to home" because every trip taken by people and materials has a (negative) impact on nature. There are wonderful destinations in Europe – if they match your travel dreams, there is really no need to leave the continent.

Another important consideration is the situation on-site: how sustainable is my hotel? Is fair pay a priority? Are renewable energies used? Are the other sustainability criteria we describe here supported or hindered?

Travel planning; being aware of the local environment, analysing the dangers to and from nature

I find out about the environmental situation at my holiday destination – before I arrive.

As nice as it is to just go with the flow on holiday and not have to plan everything in detail, there are a few questions you should ask yourself before you set off: What is the local natural environment like? How will I and other tourists impact it? What can I actively do to prevent this? What things will I refrain from doing, what good deeds do I want to accomplish while I'm there? What do I need to buy and organise in advance so that everything is available at the right time and place? Do I need to learn and practise any skills so that my lack of knowledge doesn't cause avoidable damage at my destination?



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Transport and CO₂ compensation

I choose means of transport with the lowest-emission levels and effectively offset unavoidable greenhouse gas emissions.

Long-haul flights are harmful to the climate. Everyone knows that, so the most sustainable thing to do is to avoid them. Period. If that's not possible because the dream holiday is too tempting, I can try to keep it as short and low-impact as possible: a flight of a few hours is preferable to a full day of travel.

I off-set climate damage. There are now several providers offering this service. Here is an overview from the Energiekonsens agency in Bremen:

https://energiekonsens.de/media/pages/media/c88dccd48d-1744104370/co2-kompensation_final.pdf

– I only choose those that meet the Gold Standard.





Selecting environmentally friendly activities when planning

I only book activities for my holiday that are sustainable and nature-friendly. I make a point of leaving nature cleaner than I found it – I even pick up other people's rubbish.

Diving trips, sailing trips, rafting adventures – there so much on offer to experience on holiday. When planning, I can weigh up which activities I want to book and take my time to find out which ones are sustainable and responsible, and which ones I will avoid because they exploit nature for quick tourist bucks. Maybe I'll even find an activity that benefits nature – environmental protection or clean-up measures might welcome my involvement, following the guidance of local experts. Can I perhaps even offer something that no one else on-site can do and really make a difference?



Checklist of necessary items to take with me

I only take essentials with me on holiday because every kilogram of luggage generates greenhouse gases.

I plan carefully and think about what I need. Every kilogram of luggage is detrimental and must be compensated for. If I plan with care, I can do my research and pack the right things – and, above all, leave unnecessary things at home. This also applies to technical equipment. Can I hire equipment such as a diving suit or buoyancy compensator on site, or do I have to transport it by plane? Travelling light is not only more sustainable, but also more comfortable. Enjoy your holiday from the moment you set off.

Sustainable equipment and luggage

I use equipment and clothing that is sustainably produced and recyclable; I bring my own water bottle with me to avoid single-use plastic at my destination.

If I buy equipment, luggage or clothing specifically for the trip, I ensure that these have been sustainably produced and fairly traded. I use reusable equipment: for example, I take my own sustainably produced drinking bottle with me so that I can avoid using disposable plastic bottles on my trip. I can easily take reusable bags or nets with me as an alternative to plastic bags. I use equipment and clothing that does not release microplastics into the water.



Sustainable activities on site

I travel as sustainably as possible and only take part in sustainable activities – I take a sceptical view of advertising campaigns.

I take time to consider how I want to get around in the holiday region. Rather than hiring a car, I might decide that a rental bike is sufficient, or I might have discovered that there is good public transport, so that I can have my adventures that way. It could even mean that I see more of what the holiday region has to offer.

When it comes to impromptu activities options, I take into account whether they are sufficiently sustainable and not merely tourist traps with no regard for ethics or sustainability. I resist the allure of the most prominent advertising and rely on my research – this often protects me from rip-offs and scams.





Save resources at the hotel

I save water because it takes energy to purify it almost everywhere; this applies especially to showering, but also to brushing my teeth (the tap doesn't have to run continuously). **I use towels and bed linen for several days** before I have them changed or washed.

Consume mindfully

I look for regional, seasonal, energy-efficient and water-saving options.

I pay attention to aspects of sustainability and ask questions if necessary. I support local businesses, especially those that make a conscious effort to be sustainable.



Less fish, less meat

I am happy to eat less meat and fish.

These are often not locally sourced and sustainably caught but are often either farmed using large amounts of water and energy and transported over long distances – or they are caught in the wild, taken from the very reefs and bays that I appreciate as a tourist and wish to preserve. Unfortunately, local fishing on a scale which caters to tourists is usually not truly sustainable, so moderation is recommended here as well.

Choice of sunscreen

I use sunscreen without microplastics and octocrylene, which I bring from Germany.

I use sunscreen from Germany. I do that because there are stricter controls in Germany and I can double-check the ingredients: These products too often contain microplastics. I check this, for example, via:

<https://www.codecheck.info/>

However, they also contain chemicals such as the UV filter **octocrylene**, which damages coral, accumulates in mussels and oysters, and disrupts brain and liver development in fish.

I research whether my holiday destination has already banned octocrylene (as Aruba, Hawaii and Palau have). There are severe penalties for importing it. I ask my tour operator about this.

Incidentally, a UV shirt can also provide sun protection when snorkelling.



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Rubbish

I try to avoid generating waste. If I can't avoid it, I separate it for recycling wherever possible. I collect rubbish in nature and dispose of it properly.

This is perhaps the biggest issue on site. There is one simple rule here (which, unfortunately, is sometimes not so easy to follow in practice): avoid where possible – and dispose of sustainably if it's not.

I avoid single-use plastic products (especially drinking bottles and bags) and replace them with reusable alternatives (which I bring with me). If I notice that my rubbish is not being collected and disposed of sustainably, I intervene; either I speak to the relevant people or I take care of it myself.

It is very satisfying and sustainable to dispose of my rubbish myself – perhaps even on the return journey if I cannot find a sustainable option locally. I should plan this so that I am not overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle of the return journey.





Collecting rubbish.

I also collect rubbish (including other people's cigarette butts) that I come across on my travels – even if it's not mine. I leave my holiday region cleaner than I found it – Then I have made a lasting impact. Watching the sunset after collecting rubbish on the beach can be a very satisfying end a day's holiday.

For smokers

I never dispose of cigarettes in nature or in the sea!

A cigarette in nature contaminates 1,000 litres of water with nicotine and other toxins. The filter is particularly harmful and is also made of plastic.

Cigarette butts should never be disposed of in nature, either on land or in the sea.

Souvenirs

I choose nature-friendly souvenirs when photos and videos are not enough as a memento.

I refrain from buying souvenirs that have clearly not been produced or collected in a sustainable manner. Animals or animal parts (including shells) are taboo unless I have collected them myself on the beach – most of the time, people "organise" them by catching them alive and thus removing them from the wild. Every animal that has been taken from the wild leaves a void in its natural habitat. Incidentally, the regulations of the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) often prohibit souvenirs, and it's possible to get into unintentional (and sometimes serious) trouble when leaving or entering Germany.

For divers, the rule is: "Take nothing but pictures" – the best guideline for sustainable souvenirs.



Respect and consideration

I behave respectfully, towards nature, but also towards locals and fellow travellers.

I am not alone at my holiday destination. Even if the trip was very expensive, I have not bought the holiday country or the local population. I therefore behave respectfully and considerately towards people, animals and nature. I limit my demands and my behaviour to what is necessary, avoiding exaggeration, noise and escalation. This is not only appreciated by people, but also nature and wildlife.



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Shame and disgrace

I record abuses and try to bring about change, either alone or with others.

When I uncover abuses, I do not close my eyes and ears. I document what I have noticed and inform my fellow travellers, local staff and tour operators. My goal is not to reduce the price of the trip, but to improve conditions by raising awareness among the right people and trying to persuade them to change. I never put myself in danger – if I can't achieve anything on site, I use my documentation later in Germany to try to change mindsets from here.

I instruct my children on how to behave according to these guidelines and check on them regularly. If we all do the right thing together, it is of secondary importance how badly others behave: we are guided by decency and sustainability.



On, above and below the water

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I use the sea mindfully –
everything has an impact

I act respectfully and sustainably, never carelessly or disrespectfully.

The oceans are vast, which tempts us to underestimate the impact of our actions. Yet everything I do on, in and with them has an impact on the oceans, sometimes forever.

That is why I always act mindfully – respectfully and sustainably. I question my actions and their impact, inform myself if necessary – and if necessary, I change my behaviour, reduce the impact, and encourage others to do the right thing rather than the wrong thing.

What I do above water can have an impact below water.

I am fully aware of this, even if I cannot see what has been changed, (damaged or even destroyed) "down there". Examples include anchors or lost equipment – or even cigarettes, which should never be disposed of in the sea!



I choose my entry and exit points carefully and thoughtfully.

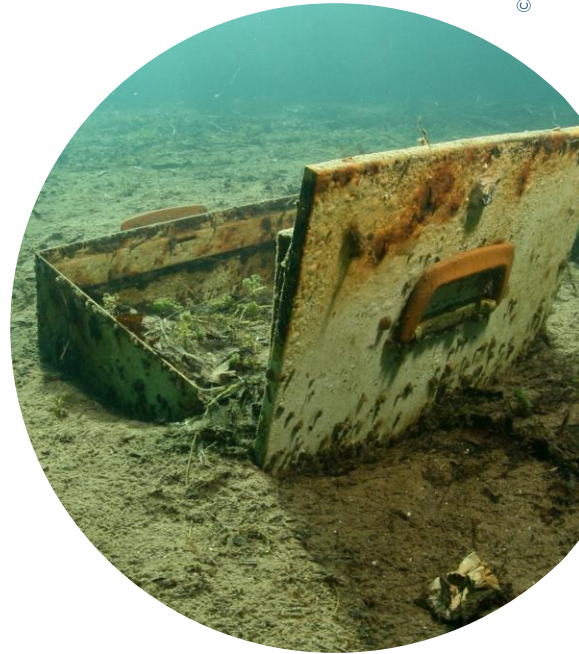
I steer clear of (and thus protect) shores and fortifications that aren't obviously set up for running around on. I use the locally designated marked areas.

Rubbish and plastic underwater

I collect rubbish and plastic from the water if it has not already become part of the ecosystem – then I ask local experts what to do.

I am prepared: I have informed myself about what I can and am allowed to do with rubbish and plastic in the water. Some older fishing nets or lost fishing lines should always be removed from the water, but they are often entangled with marine life or their ecosystem, so they cannot simply be pulled out by amateurs.

I am happy to take with me whatever plastic, rubbish, nets, lines or bags that are floating around with me – I may even have my own bag with me or attached to my equipment. And, of course, I dispose of any such finds in a sustainable manner or take them with me for recycling.



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Animals entangled in plastic or hooks

I help when I know exactly what to do – or I bring in expert help.

When I discover animals that have become entangled in plastic or rubbish, or even fish with hooks in their bodies (usually in their mouths), I alert the local experts. They know what to do – and also what dangers are involved. Not every animal remains harmless when it feels threatened – just think of sharks when you want to pull a hook out of their mouths: you need to know exactly what you are doing, otherwise you will end up in the statistics for shark accidents.



Responsible diving

I adhere to everything I learned in my diving training. I have trained, am fit in every respect, and have acquired my local knowledge during the briefing.

Every diver has learned how to dive responsibly during their training. As a pure "holiday diver" who is not regularly in the water with equipment, I read up on it again before my trip here and brought myself up to date.

So I know: "Take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but bubbles."

I respect the fascinating diversity of the underwater world and always keep a reasonable distance from corals and marine life. My respectful behaviour contributes to the preservation of these habitats – because I want to experience them again myself.

I have the necessary diving experience and, before the trip, obtained medical certification of fitness for diving, which should be a prerequisite for participation in responsible diving centres worldwide, as certified by a diving doctor.

I have critically questioned whether I still have mastery of all movements and procedures (skills) and also have the physical fitness to act safely underwater even in adverse conditions such as strong currents. When in doubt, I practised before the trip and, if necessary, took another training course. Because only if I can move and buoyancy control my diving body correctly will I not damage or destroy parts of the underwater world through clumsiness.

This also applies to self-rescue skills, which are a must at a "Scuba Revue" before the holiday.

I pay attention and listen during the briefing. That sounds trivial, but no one knows the local conditions as well as the local diving guide. I ask questions about special features and unusual circumstances – that way I am better prepared and also have a feel for what might be unexpected even for the local guides, and which I should therefore point out.



Sustainable shark diving – with common sense and decency

I book and dive respectfully with sharks, avoid open feeding and choose sustainable providers. I don't overestimate myself.

When planning my trip, I consider which shark diving experiences to book. I prefer to plan to encounter sharks in their natural environment, without any feeding. This is not possible everywhere and with every shark species. Dives with the so-called "bait box" (sharks are attracted by the smell of fish blood in the water) are offered worldwide. Not all diving operators act responsibly; often, unsafe situations are offered to satisfy the divers' hunger for a spectacular (but risky) photo. Therefore, when planning my trip, I clarify how the dives will take place, whether and how feeding will be done (more on that in a moment), which diving system will be used, and what the safety measures are.

I assess my own abilities conservatively: diving routine is a basic requirement for any shark dive. If I am still inexperienced and have only logged a few dives, I lack routine in currents or other rough conditions. I only consider diving with sharks when I can give the animals my full attention and no longer have to worry about myself.

I pay particular attention during the briefing and implement what I hear.

The briefing is particularly important when diving with sharks, as experience and rules of conduct are added to the normal diving conditions. What are the dive site, dive system, precautions, risks, emergency measures and responsibilities in the buddy system – and what sharks can I expect to encounter, and how should I behave? I always adhere to the system because it guarantees warning and assistance TOGETHER.





I avoid shark diving with open bait.

When bait box diving, I strictly adhere to the distances and guidelines from the briefing.

If the briefing states that sharks are to be attracted with open bait in the water, I REFUSE: open bait in the water carries a much higher risk of an uncontrollable situation than "just" the smell of the bait box. I talk to the dive guides to let them know that I refuse to use open bait in the water and clarify this with the other divers travelling with me.

When the sharks are attracted by the bait box, I am particularly vigilant: I maintain the agreed distance of several metres from the box and behave as recommended in the briefing and the ElasmOcean video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8NDaKVtIP4>

I have adapted equipment.

My equipment is adapted to the special situation: I wear a homogeneous black suit without contrasts, with a black hood, gloves and socks over my ankles – no colourful hoods, no baseball caps (I've seen it all before)! If the dive guides allow other divers to wear such items, it's a reason for a discussion.

This always applies when I feel uncomfortable: I leave the water and seek a conversation.



If I follow this advice, my diving trip can be sustainable and respectful, giving me an incredible experience.



Decency and sustainability are like stars:
we cannot really reach them, but we can use
them to guide us.



We are ocean conservationists!

What drives us?

If you ask our members what their favourite sea creature is, most will probably answer "the shark". After all, our name is based on "Elasmobranchii", the sharks and rays. This means that our instructors have something in common with many divers worldwide. Unfortunately, however, there are not many sharks swimming around (visibly) in local waters. To experience coral reefs, turtles, humpback whales or sharks underwater, you usually have to travel far.

We cannot and do not want to prevent travel, but we can provide suggestions on how to make it sustainable. After all, this is how divers get to know the sea and, in most cases, fall in love with it.

You only protect what you know and love!

Every year, only five to ten people worldwide die from shark attacks. In contrast, over 100 million sharks are killed by humans. Who should actually be afraid of whom?

And so we are also, and above all, shark protectors!

No species is as important at the top of the food web as the shark. With around 550 species, sharks occupy a key position as top predators across all areas of the ocean from zero to 6,500 meters deep. This is why sharks are also referred to as "keystone species". If they disappear from the food web, it will inevitably collapse, with dire consequences for future generations or humanity as a whole. The shark's home is the sea. Its fate is therefore inextricably linked to that of all other sea creatures. We humans have a responsibility to these creatures and their habitat, and we must fulfil it.

Further information about our work, background, the ocean and its threats, sustainability, downloads, activities, lectures, events, blog and, finally, our donation account can be found at:

www.elasmoocean.org

Your ElasmOcean team



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Here you will find space for notes about your sustainable diving holiday:



Sea Protection with Science.

Governance / Association ethics:

Our statutory objectives are to promote environmental and species protection, to organize scientific events and research projects, to award research contracts, and to conduct public relations work: educating young people and adults about treating the environment with care, especially with regard to sharks and the marine ecosystem.

Presented by:

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