



Safe Snorkeling Guidelines

Snorkeling in Grenada is a safe, interesting, and relaxing experience, provided a few basic rules are followed. The points below are the things we discuss in all our pre-snorkel safety briefings, and we offer them here in the interest of safe snorkeling for everybody. If you have other questions please refer to our snorkeling FAQ's.

- * Simply relax and move slowly. Marine life is less threatened by a relaxed snorkeler. Swimming slowly is not only more comfortable for you, but also is less likely to intimidate the wildlife we have all come to observe. Many creatures are extremely sensitive to vibrations in the water, and in fact depend on this sense for their survival. Quick motions of snorkelers are easily perceived as potential threats by many fish and invertebrates.
- * No matter how strong you are, humans simply cannot out swim animals such as whales, rays, turtles, fish and squid. Although the impulse may be to pursue these animals for a closer look, this will only scare them away. The relaxed snorkeler will find that aquatic mammals (including your snorkeling buddy), fish, and invertebrates will continue their natural behavior, while allowing you to approach them much more intimately.
- * Some very good Advice: Avoid Snorkeling alone. An overwhelming number of accidents happen to divers who go alone, so having a buddy with you is a valuable asset in case of mishap. Choose a buddy who you are comfortable with and stay close together while you are out. And don't snorkel if you cannot swim.
- * Try to adjust all mask and snorkel settings for comfort and fit on the boat first – it is much easier to do than when you already in the water! Don't forget – use defogger or spit saliva onto the glass of the mask and then rinse before starting the snorkel, otherwise the mask will fog up.
- * Be aware of your surroundings. Know the area that you are snorkeling in and if there are any areas to avoid. Be very careful around rocky shores or pounding surf, which can pick up a snorkeler and cause injury. We don't want to hurt the coral 😊
- * Remember to equalize the pressure in your ears if diving down while snorkeling – do it early and often (as a guide – once for every meter you descend). If it hurts – stop! Failure to do so will result in barotrauma (burst blood capillaries) in your middle ear, which then usually leads to infection.
- * Minimize contact with the reef. Learning to control our movements and position in the water benefits our own comfort and safety as well as the health of the reef. Both are important! Reefs are constructed primarily by colonies of coral animals called polyps. By secreting a limestone skeleton, covered with a thin veneer of living tissue, over many years these slow growing creatures essentially create their own geology. Although the

limestone is durable, the soft-bodied polyps can easily be damaged by contact with hands, fins etc. While the loss of one polyp doesn't appear to be such a big problem, this spot will be more susceptible to infections and can cause further mortality on the colony. Besides the impact on the coral, accidentally bumping into the reef can also harm you. Coral will easily cut through your soft skin, especially after you have spent some time in the water. Cuts in general, and coral cuts in particular, will heal slowly in the tropics, and are more susceptible to infection. For the mutual benefit of the reef and ourselves, we believe it's both prudent and responsible to master the skills needed to minimize accidental close encounters with coral.

* If swimming or snorkeling, always beware of boats coming past. Wave to make sure the boat driver can see you.

* Live and let live. In contrast to its initial appearance of grandeur, living space on the reef is very scarce. Every little niche is or will be occupied soon by an organism of some type. Empty shells are a valuable part of the ecosystem, and they get recycled many times. Besides the obvious environmental concerns, some "live shells" can be quite dangerous. Some of the most beautiful (cone shells for example) contain animals that are highly toxic and when "captured" can cause serious problems. We discourage any shell collecting, other than items found above the high tide line.

* If you see a shark while snorkeling, just keep quiet and observe it, don't panic. The sharks around the Grenadines are only reef sharks and are never aggressive towards people in the water.

* Leave nothing but bubbles. Although you don't see as many signs as along a typical highway, littering under water is just as inappropriate as it is on land. We always carry trash bags during our outings, both from shore and from boats. Please use these containers rather than disposing refuse in the water. Pay special attention to plastic bags. They blow away easily and once in the water they closely resemble jellyfish, the main diet of many turtles.

* Fish feeding. While dispersing "food" in the water seems an easy way to attract large numbers of fish, it will often attract just certain species that usually chase other species away. Clearly, this alters the natural behavior (and diet) of fish we have come to observe. We discourage feeding the fish. Turtles may be cute and relaxed, but they learn to trust humans and go to them for food. While you might not take one home to cook it, there are a great many people who will. Try not to teach turtles these bad habits.

Using the guidelines above should enhance the snorkeling experience for you and the reef, and help preserve both for generations to come.