

DWM Newsletter – Spring 2024 (ENG)

A very warm greeting to our friends and family at Dive with Martin.

From our beautiful island paradise, we want to share information that we believe can help us conserve and protect Cozumel's natural resources, especially the delicate reef ecosystems that gives all of us so much enjoyment.

The state of Quintana Roo, in which Cozumel lies, plays a very important role in the tourism industry of Mexico. Since the Covid epidemic of 2020, tourism worldwide has experienced a strong recovery. Mexico was ranked sixth in the world of the most visited countries in 2022, and fifth in the world in 2023. The local marine and land ecosystems, in one way or another, help to maintain the economic wellbeing of 90% of the 100,000+ Cozumeleños who live on the island. This is very good for the area, and it also creates unique responsibilities for both locals and visitors, which we cannot and should not avoid. Many take the sea and its coral reefs and marine life for granted. We believe they are there only to entertain us. Many individuals, as well as corporations and hotels which profit from these resources, do not invest in the protection and care of the resources as they should. Perhaps it's not because they don't want to, but because there is very little awareness of the need due to a lack of environmental education. The good news is, now there are many organizations that focus on educating and raising awareness of the vital need for protection of the island's natural resources. However, there is still a lot to do. For this reason, the Dive with Martin team would like to share specific strategies you can use to be an active participant in the care of our reefs. In doing so, we hope we can all continue to enjoy the reefs of Cozumel for years to come. We hope these will become habits for all of us that we will pass on to our family and friends since we should all work toward a healthy ocean for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

Strategies to Save our Sea

- 1: NO Plastic: bring your own reusable drinking bottle, do not ask for single use plastic bags, and do not accept plastic straws for your drinks on the Island.
- 2: A resounding NO to the use of sunscreen (any type). There are multiple studies that show that no sunscreen is good for the reef. It inhibits solar radiation to the coral (which is an animal) and lives in symbiosis with an algae called Zooxanthellae. It uses the solar energy to carry out photosynthesis, which is half of the energy that coral needs to live. Instead, use long-sleeved sun shirts, hats, sunglasses and shade. There are many options for sun wear for children and adults, including full jumpsuit-type suits that adults and children wear when exposed to beach bathing or diving from boats.
- 3: Take your garbage with you back to your home, hotel or cruise ship when you visit the beaches that surround the island. Do NOT leave it for someone else to pick up. The island is not capable of dealing with the garbage of all the locals and visitors (approximately 250,000 per day between locals, cruise passengers and those who stay on the island.)

4: Do NOT throw any organic waste into the sea, such as apple cores, orange peels, etc. A greater amount of oxygen is needed for the sea to decompose these, which upsets the balance of oxygen needed by the marine life. Also, these are not good food for the marine organisms, as they belong on the land, not the sea.

5: If not offered, demand your bracelet for the Cozumel Marine Park or any other protected area in Mexico. Request an explanation of what the boundaries for use are and what the protected areas of the Mexican Oceans are. The funds for these bracelets go directly toward maintaining the health of the Marine Park.

6: Absolutely NO to touching or getting too close (especially when you want to take a photo) to any specimen of the fauna and flora of our island. It has been shown that if you get too close or touch turtles, they can become stressed and scared which causes weakness in their immune system. The same thing happens with fish and other animals such as corals and even plants. Remember everything lives, everything communicates, let us please respect that bond with the earth, its seas and thus create a balance between humans, animals and plants. If they die, so do we.

7: This last point is very controversial but extremely important. When you go snorkeling, diving, sailing, or on any excursion in the Marine Park, make sure you are boarding a vessel that has a current Marine Park tourism permit. Ask the boat's crew to see the permit. The boat owners who pay their fees to operate legally are helping to ensure the Marine Park has a balanced load of boats, which will protect the marine ecosystems. The protected sea areas are studied and guided by biologists and experts in the sustainability and maintenance of healthy marine and terrestrial ecosystems. They have determined the maximum number of boats and passengers the marine ecosystem can sustain and they advise the Marine Park on how many boat permits should be allowed. If you knowingly participate in activities on illegal boats, you are helping to promote the destruction of the park's protected areas which will result in a terrible loss of fish, invertebrates, corals, mammals, reptiles, birds, among others.

We carefully follow these recommendations at Dive with Martin because we are committed to the protecting our precious environment. We have seen how tourism has increased on our Island, and this is a blessing for us, but we believe the nature of the island CANNOT remain in balance if we do not take care of our main asset, which is our reefs and their surrounding ecosystems.

Please share this information with your family and friends. There are more than 8 billion people in the world, and there is no other planet that we know of to live on. It is our responsibility to take care of it!