



DIVE INTO YOUR SANCTUARIES

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



Immerse yourself in the beauty of your national marine sanctuaries. Sanctuary waters are filled with unique ecosystems waiting to be explored, harboring a spectacular array of plants, animals and historical artifacts. Discover a sense of wonder as you glide through a towering forest of giant kelp. Experience the thrill of spotting a nurse shark lying beneath a ledge of colorful corals. Explore some of the numerous shipwrecks that are part of America's rich maritime history. These and other exciting dive opportunities await you in your national marine sanctuaries! To learn more about what each sanctuary has to offer and the rules for diving in them, visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov/diving.



SHIPWRECK PHOTO: Tane Casserley/NOAA; ABOVE PHOTO: NOAA

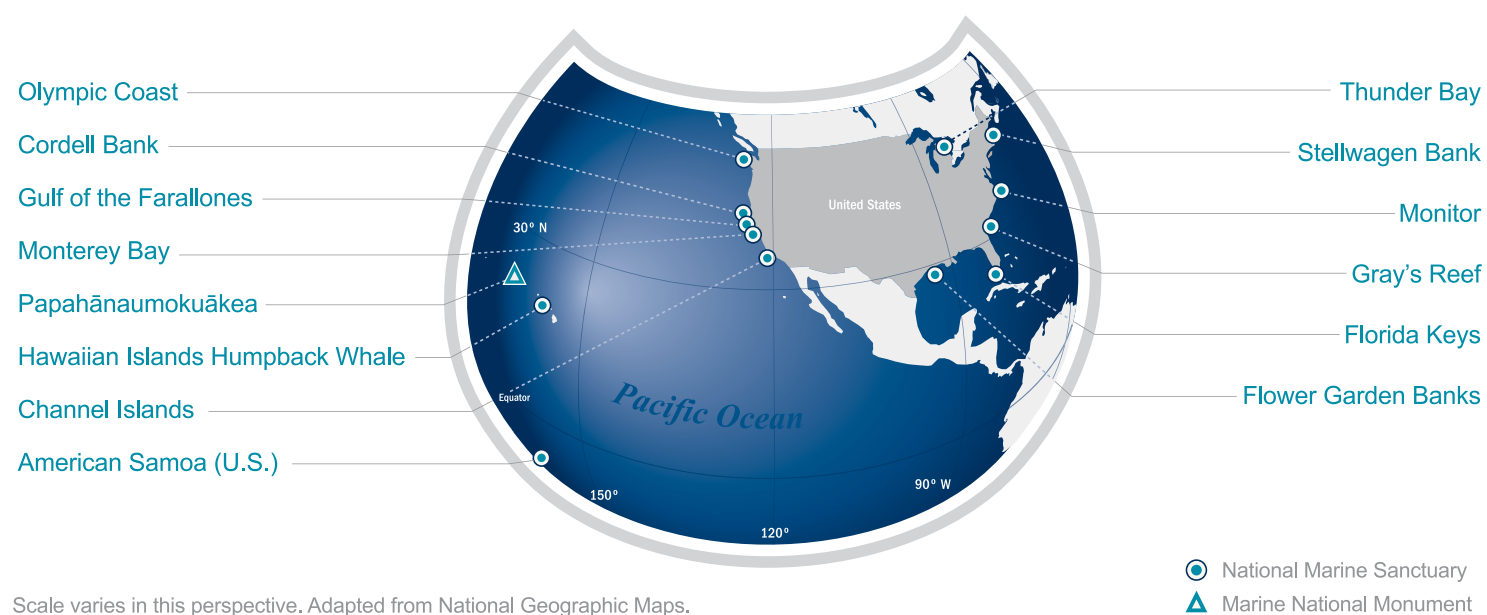


ABOVE PHOTOS (left to right): Greg McFall/NOAA, Greg McFall/NOAA, Greg McFall/NOAA, Joseph Hoyt/NOAA, Tane Casserley/NOAA, Steve Lonhart/NOAA

Your National Marine Sanctuaries

The mission of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is to serve as the trustee for a national system of underwater parks and to conserve, protect and enhance the biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural legacy of these special places.

For more information about diving in national marine sanctuaries, either for recreation or to participate in research, monitoring or educational opportunities, please visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov/diving.



Be a Smart Diver

Join efforts to preserve dive experiences for future generations of divers by protecting and supporting your national marine sanctuaries. Practice safe and responsible diving. Volunteer for habitat monitoring, fish population monitoring, exotic species removal, or local beach and underwater cleanups. Attend local educational events and raise any diver concerns at sanctuary advisory council meetings. You can even help protect sanctuaries right from the shore by reducing your ecological impact when traveling. Contact the national marine sanctuary in your local area or visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov/diving for more smart traveler tips.

Learn the rules. Prior to diving in a national marine sanctuary, familiarize yourself with the specific rules and regulations within its boundaries. Visit each sanctuary's website to learn more.

Sharpen your skills. Mastering buoyancy control and streamlining your equipment will help minimize the risk of entanglement or accidental disturbance of the bottom, which can harm fragile corals and historical artifacts. Even the slightest damage can permanently alter an entire ecosystem or historical shipwreck site.

Learn the proper techniques for shipwreck diving. When diving shipwrecks, always know the orientation of the wreck site and only penetrate the wreck if specifically trained to do so. In addition, learn the proper wreck diving protocols in order to minimize impacts to cultural resources.

Be familiar with kelp diving procedures. Always swim below the surface of a kelp canopy and navigate with your compass.

Don't panic or thrash around if entangled — slowly remove the kelp or have your buddy gently untangle it for you.

Respect marine wildlife. Several sanctuaries have specific regulations prohibiting harassment or take of marine animals. Enjoy viewing marine wildlife from a safe distance.

Don't collect underwater souvenirs. Collection of natural and cultural items is regulated in sanctuaries, and often is prohibited or require a permit. Resist the temptation to collect shells, rocks or other underwater artifacts, because they provide homes for sea creatures and good surfaces for young plants and animals.

Be a marine debris crusader. Carry away any trash you or others may have left behind. More than just an unsightly nuisance, beach litter poses a significant threat to the health and survival of marine organisms, which can swallow or get tangled in beverage containers, plastic bags, six-pack rings and other debris.



BELOW PHOTOS (top to bottom, left to right): Steve Fisher/NOAA, Glen Allen/NOAA, Robert Schwemmer/NOAA, Claire Fackler/NOAA, Richard Murphy/NOAA, G.P. Schmah/NOAA, TBNMS, Matthew Lawrence/NOAA, NOAA, Leah Cooling/NOAA, NOAA

Divers know better than anyone the wonder national marine sanctuaries hold, because they can immerse themselves in the splendor.

Please read this section regarding habitats, species and conditions of each dive-friendly sanctuary. Sanctuaries that are not included in this section have hazardous conditions (temperature, depths or currents), limited accessibility or lack of suitable infrastructure to support dive operations.



1. Olympic Coast, Washington

Dry suit divers can enjoy spectacular rocky reef and kelp forest diving among rockfish, sea urchins and the giant Pacific octopus. Remote locations and dangerous dive conditions make this a destination for advanced divers.

2. Monterey Bay, California

This cold-water destination is one of the most diverse marine environments on the planet, home to sea lions, sea otters, rockfish and other kelp-dwelling marine life. Experience excellent shore diving from many locations along the sanctuary's 270 miles of shoreline.

3. Channel Islands, California

This cold-water area is known for its rich biological diversity, featuring northern elephant seals, California sea lions, anemones and giant sea bass. Federally protected historic shipwrecks dot the floor of the sanctuary, and its kelp forests, sea caves and coves offer some of the best diving in the world.

4. Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale, Hawaii

View monk seals, dolphins, manta rays, green sea turtles and white-tip sharks. Please keep a safe distance from marine life, especially North Pacific humpback whales, as they come to these waters to breed, calve and nurse their newborns.

5. American Samoa

With water temperatures around 82°F year round, this sanctuary is one of the most untouched marine environments in the world. Divers view rich marine life and tropical reefs, including turtles, whales, sharks, giant clams, anemones, clown trigger fish, manta rays and tuna. It is recommended that you bring your own gear, rent air tanks on island and charter a vessel to get out to the dive sites.

6. Flower Garden Banks, TX/LA

This sanctuary offers acres of magnificent coral reefs and a broad array of marine life, including brain and star corals, sea turtles, fish, crustaceans, mollusks, sponges, manta rays, and majestic whale sharks. There are 15 moored dive sites, with typical dive profiles of 55-130 feet. Due to the distance offshore (115 miles) and the lack of shallow habitat, this site is recommended for advanced divers. Most visitors experience the sanctuary via a live-aboard vessel.

7. Thunder Bay, Michigan

The cold, fresh waters of Lake Huron have preserved more than 200 shipwrecks in and around this sanctuary. The variety of sites allows snorkelers, recreational and technical divers to explore some of the nation's best-preserved historic wrecks. Many of the most popular dive sites are marked with seasonal mooring buoys.

8. Stellwagen Bank, Massachusetts

Explore the seldom visited, offshore underwater environments of New England, including shipwrecks located at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay. Visibility is usually good, but depth, strong currents and cold water make it suitable for advanced divers only.

9. Monitor, North Carolina

Located 16 miles off Cape Hatteras in the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," this sanctuary protects the wreck of the famed Civil War ironclad USS *Monitor*. This wreck presents a challenging dive, with strong currents and deep depths limiting it to technical divers.

10. Gray's Reef, Georgia

Located 17 miles off Georgia's coast is a dynamic and diverse underwater community teeming with life. Visit this remote sanctuary and explore the rocky ledges and crevices that are home to loggerhead turtles, more than 200 species of colorful reef fish and over 900 species of invertebrates. Depth and strong currents are suitable for advanced divers only.

11. Florida Keys, Florida

This sanctuary is an internationally renowned dive destination that protects the only living coral barrier reef in the U.S. Discover an abundance of marine life, including reef fish, moray eels and threatened elkhorn coral, and explore sites along the historic Florida Keys Shipwreck Trail. Mooring buoys are located throughout the sanctuary to limit anchoring into the coral reefs and other precious resources.

