Give taonga the space they need



Manta rays, sea turtles and whale sharks are incredible to see in their natural environment but also need your protection. Follow these guidelines based on international best practice to help protect these taonga (treasures) while still having amazing encounters.

1

Approach animals with care

- Approach slowly and predictably from the side or behind – never from in front
- Reduce your vessel speed to 5 knots at 300 metres to minimise wake – ‘keep it off the plane’
- Keep noise levels low above and below the water
- Only one vessel should be within a 300-metre radius at any one time

2

Keep your distance

Vessels

- Cut the engine at 50 metres and go no closer (unless the animal comes to you)
- Give the animal more space if it becomes agitated
- Do not stay longer than 90 minutes when viewing whale sharks or manta rays
- When leaving, reverse slowly away from the animal, keeping good visibility of its location at all times – and stop the engine if it approaches

Divers/snorkellers/swimmers

- Do not block the animal’s direction of travel when entering and while in the water
- Keep noise to a minimum
- Stay at least 5–10 metres away from the head and tail, and allow extra space for bigger animals
- Do not remain with any individual manta ray, sea turtle or whale shark for more than 10–15 minutes
- A maximum of 10 people should be in the water at any one time, including staff

3

Keep it wild

- It is illegal to touch, feed, chase or harm manta rays, sea turtles and whale sharks
- Allow them to feed and move naturally and rest undisturbed
- Give sea turtles space to surface and breathe – like us, they need air

More ways you can help

- Assign a lookout onboard vessels to advise the captain of sightings
- Install propellor guards to minimise the risk of animal injuries
- Report all sightings and interactions to the Department of Conservation:
  - Call **0800 DOC HOT**
  - Email **sharks@doc.govt.nz** or **turtles@doc.govt.nz**
- If you are a tourism operator, place signage onboard your vessels so your guests also understand how to behave around these taonga





PROTECTED

Manta rays, sea turtles and whale sharks are protected in New Zealand waters under the Wildlife Act 1953.

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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

0800 DOC HOT
362 468
For safety hazards and conservation emergencies

New Zealand Government
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa