

# SIXTEEN OF THE BEST ECO RESORTS IN ASIA PACIFIC

If you're looking for a dive resort with a difference, look no further. Whatever your budget, we've got an eco resort ready and waiting to welcome you for a mind-blowing dive holiday that will also score you some karmic brownie points...

## WAKATOBI DIVE RESORT

At Wakatobi, environmental and social responsibility work together to create benefits for both Nature and mankind. When resort founder Lorenz Mäder came upon one of the world's most pristine and magnificent coral reef environments in a remote corner of Indonesia's Wakatobi island group, he wanted to share it with fellow divers, but in a manner that would protect and preserve this special place.

Before breaking ground on the first bungalow, he reached out to local villages and native fishermen with a unique proposal: in exchange for honouring specific no-take zones, and halting certain destructive fishing practices, the resort would share a portion of revenue with the community. This led to the Wakatobi Collaborative Reef Conservation Program, one of the world's premier privately managed reef conservation initiatives. Today, the programme

protects more than 20 kilometres of reef habitat, and provides substantial economic benefits to the local community.

Some of the dive sites are fitted with mooring buoys to prevent damage caused by anchoring. With the assistance of experienced dive guides, Wakatobi guests practise smart diving techniques for viewing the reefs and soft encounters with a plenitude of wildlife.

Because guests share the resort's sandy beach with nesting sea turtles, the staff clearly mark and monitor all nesting sites, and transfer hatchlings to an on-site turtle nursery, where they are nurtured and then later released into the wild.

To minimise the impact of the resort property itself, all structures are made from local materials by local craftsmen, using traditional construction methods. To preserve a beachside palm grove, guest accommodations and resort

amenities are spaced among the trees in individual buildings. Equally important to reef health is an innovative wastewater treatment system that uses natural biological processes to reduce nutrient levels, and channels treated water into the landscaping rather than into the ocean.

Social responsibility is another important component of Wakatobi's vision. In addition to employing nearly 200 residents and making lease payments on protected reef zones, the resort provides electricity and purified water to local communities at no charge, and has sponsored waste management projects in surrounding villages. Resort revenue funds schools, sporting events and public awareness campaigns, along with a range of community enhancements that affect 17 villages. A micro-credit plan encourages local business development, and the resort

A sustainable operator should:

## THE ECO OPERATOR CHECKLIST

By Marissa Stein, Communications Manager for the Coral Reef Alliance

Armed with this checklist, you can be sure that the operators you choose to dive with are really committed to sustainable diving tourism.

The Coral Reef Alliance works with people around the world—from fishermen to government leaders, divers to scientists, Californians to Fijians—to protect our most valuable and threatened ecosystem. They lead holistic conservation programmes that improve coral reef health and resilience and are replicated across the globe. [www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org)



Ensure and educate on sustainable diving practices, such as:

1. Using the buddy system
2. Maintaining proper buoyancy
3. Not touching or standing on reefs
4. Using properly fitted equipment needed



Protect wildlife by:

1. Not touching corals or coral reef animals
2. Not feeding or providing food to attract animals
3. Rotating among dive sites with fragile habitats



Practise sustainable boating behaviours, such as:

1. Using mooring buoys when available
2. Complying with all local, national, and international laws and regulations
3. Refraining from littering or polluting the water
4. Using boat ramps and piers when available
5. Taking proper measures to anchor boats into sand instead of coral reefs when necessary



Limit waste and pollution by:

1. Maintaining a zero-waste policy
2. Properly securing and disposing of trash
3. Maintaining equipment to prevent hazardous waste from entering the marine environment
4. Complying with local, national, and international laws regulating the disposal of sewage



commissions widows to produce natural sago palm roof tiles so they can be financially independent. As the value of sustainable dive tourism becomes evident, the local people have not only changed their own methods of harvesting, but have

also become proactively involved in defending their reef resources from foreign fishing vessels.

Together, these practices and initiatives have garnered Wakatobi Dive Resort a plethora of awards. But more important than any

accolades is the example set, which provides ongoing proof that tourism can be a positive force for not only the protection of a pristine environment, but also enhancing a traditional way of life.

**[www.wakatobi.com](http://www.wakatobi.com)**



Support and encourage community engagement and ownership by:

1. Complying with any user fee systems that are in place
2. Complying with local regulations and guidelines
3. Educating on the environmental, physical, and biological features of the sites they visit
4. Providing guests with information about local practices and sustainability efforts
5. Employing local staff where possible
6. Enter revenue sharing or shareholder agreements with the local community



Maintain a reef-friendly landscape by:

1. Using design techniques that reduce water runoff
2. Limiting use of pesticides and herbicides
3. Planting native plants that do not require high-levels of irrigation
4. Using recycled water for irrigation



Reduce water usage by:

1. Using water-saving fixtures such as low-flow showerheads and toilets
2. Adjusting irrigation schedules
3. Properly maintaining all HVAC and pool equipment



Purchase sustainable products, such as:

1. Paper goods made from recycled materials
2. Environmentally-friendly cleaners
3. Contracting services with green providers



Reduce waste by:

1. Reducing the amount of waste produced
2. Recycling
3. Reusing, repurposing, or donating materials



Educate guests through:

1. Outreach materials
2. Signage
3. Presentations
4. Activities and events