

# GO GREEN: OPERATING IN A MARINE PROTECTED AREA

Setting up shop in a marine protected area (MPA) is certainly no simple feat; just ask these liveaboard and dive resort owners and reps behind some of Asia Pacific's most well-known green businesses

Running a dive business in a regular tourist hotspot is one thing, but to do it in a marine protected area (MPA) – that's a whole new ball game. It's clear that it's all about finding that right balance of profit and conservation, so what does it take to ensure the scales aren't tipped in a negative way? We zoom in on three MPAs and three dive operations that – after overcoming plenty of hurdles – have managed to make their green businesses work.

Wakatobi is home to one of the most pristine reef systems in the region

## Wakatobi Dive Resort



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**(INDONESIA)**

### WHY ESTABLISH A DIVE RESORT IN AN MPA?

■ It actually started the other way around. When resort founder Lorenz Mäder first discovered the site that is now Wakatobi, he wanted to protect it. To do this, he made agreements with fishermen and villagers in the area before he opened the resort; in exchange for halting destructive fishing practices and agreeing to honour no-take zones, the local people would receive a portion of resort revenue and other civic benefits such as electricity and funding for village schools. This led to the creation of Wakatobi's Collaborative Reef Conservation Programme, which now protects more than 20 kilometres of reef.





## WHAT STEPS IS WAKATOBI DIVE RESORT TAKING TO MAKE THE RESORT SUSTAINABLE AND ECO-FRIENDLY?

■ Conducting reef monitoring and cleaning whenever needed; ensuring resort structures are created by local craftsmen using locally-sourced, sustainable materials; treating all wastewater in biological ways (microbiological decomposition under ideal conditions at 28°C/leach fields/ other treatments to prevent nutrients from entering the sea) – just to name a few. We also work together with

Project AWARE to advise operators worldwide how to contribute substantially towards the marine ecosystem, and we're managing a turtle nursery on the resort grounds – this operation is returning hundreds of healthier, stronger hatchlings to the wild each year.

## DOES THE RESORT HELP OR SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES?

■ We provide direct employment for over 100 local people and share revenue with 17 village areas and hundreds of fishermen in the form of lease payments for the protected reef zones. We supply clean water and electricity to villages. We fund schools and other social programmes, and we employ widows to fabricate the palm-thatch roof tiles used on all buildings.

“ **Wakatobi started with nothing more than one man's passion to protect a very special place.** ”

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES WAKATOBI DIVE RESORT HAS TO DEAL WITH?

■ One of our greatest challenges is the remoteness of the property. In the past, it took more than 36 hours to reach the resort from Bali. We now provide direct charter flights to the resort. To reduce our dependency on the outside world, we source all appropriate materials and commodities locally.

## HOW DO YOU MARKET THE ECO RESORT?

■ Our primary message is that Wakatobi is a place where you can discover one of the world's most

pristine marine environments and enjoy the pleasures of a luxury resort while at the same time benefitting and sustaining this natural setting so that all can enjoy it for many years to come.

We also promote that our privately sponsored reef sanctuaries lie within the Wakatobi Marine Reserve; in 2012 this National Marine Park was designated as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, and is recognised as one of the most biodiverse marine ecosystems on Earth.

## WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN SETTING UP AN ECO RESORT LIKE WAKATOBI?

■ Start small but be willing to dream big. Wakatobi started with nothing more than one man's passion to protect a very special place. Working with limited resources, on a remote beach in an area the world scarcely knew, our founder created a simple dive lodge. Two decades later, it has grown to become one of the world's premier diving destinations.



Didi Lotze



Richard Smith

◉ Macro critters like pygmy seahorses are a common sight