

GreenFin

The Green Diver's Guide

Your Checklist for Holding Dive Operators
Accountable on Sustainability

Why This Guide Exists

The dive industry has a greenwashing problem. Over 70% of dive operators claim to be "eco-friendly" — but fewer than 15% have any verifiable sustainability practices in place.

This guide arms you with the specific questions to ask and the red flags to watch for. Use it before you book, during your trip, and after you surface. Rate each operator honestly — the ocean depends on divers like you holding the industry accountable.

How to Use This Guide

1. Review each section before booking a dive operator
2. Ask the questions directly — legitimate operators welcome scrutiny
3. Check the boxes as you verify each practice
4. Use the scoring rubric on the last page to rate the operator
5. Share your rating at greenfin.eco to help other divers

Waste Management & Disposal

How does the operator handle waste generated by their operation and guests?

Where does your waste go after collection?

Look for: specific landfill/recycling partnerships, not "we dispose of it properly"

Do you have separate bins for recyclables, organics, and landfill waste?

Verify on-site. Single mixed bin = red flag

How do you handle hazardous materials (fuel, cleaning chemicals)?

Should have certified hazmat disposal, not dumping at sea

What is your policy on single-use plastics on boats?

Best: completely banned. Acceptable: actively reducing. Bad: no policy

Do you participate in underwater or beach cleanup programs?

Ask for dates and photos of recent cleanups, not just claims

How do you manage sewage and greywater from your boats?

Must comply with MARPOL regulations — holding tanks, not direct discharge

Do you track and report your total waste output?

Quantified tracking shows genuine commitment vs. lip service

Section Score: ___ / 7

Reef & Marine Life Protection

How does the operator actively protect the underwater ecosystems they profit from?

Do you enforce no-touch and no-collection policies for all divers?

Should be briefed pre-dive with consequences for violations

What is your maximum group size per dive guide?

Best: 4-6 divers. Acceptable: 8. Red flag: 10+ per guide

Do you use permanent mooring buoys instead of anchoring?

Anchoring destroys reef — mooring buoys are the standard

How do you handle encounters with marine megafauna?

Should follow species-specific approach distances and time limits

Do you report marine life sightings to conservation databases?

Look for partnerships with Reef Check, REEF, or local marine parks

Do you participate in coral restoration or monitoring programs?

Active participation vs. just donating money — both count but differ

What sunscreen policy do you enforce?

Should require reef-safe (no oxybenzone/octinoxate) or provide alternatives

Section Score: ___ / 7

Plastic Reduction & Materials

What concrete steps does the operator take to eliminate unnecessary plastic and packaging?

Do you provide reusable water bottles or a refill station?

Single-use water bottles are the #1 plastic waste item on dive boats

What packaging do your provided meals/snacks come in?

Best: reusable containers. Acceptable: compostable. Bad: plastic wrap

Do you use biodegradable cleaning products on boats?

Standard boat cleaners contain chemicals toxic to marine life

How are rental wetsuits and gear maintained to extend lifespan?

Regular repair vs. discard-and-replace shows genuine resource consciousness

Do you offer alternatives to disposable dive accessories?

Reusable mesh bags, silicone straps, metal clips instead of plastic versions

Is there a visible commitment to reducing single-use items on premises?

Look for: refill stations, bulk dispensers, reusable cups/plates

Section Score: ___ / 6

Local Community Impact

Does this operator give back to the community they operate in, or just extract from it?

What percentage of your staff are local residents?

Best: 75%+. Good: 50%+. Red flag: all expat/imported staff

Do you pay a living wage by local standards?

Ask directly. Operators who dodge this question often underpay

Do you source food, fuel, and supplies locally?

Local sourcing circulates money in the community instead of extracting it

Do you fund or support local marine education programs?

Training local youth as divemasters and marine biologists creates lasting impact

How do you involve the community in conservation decisions?

Look for community advisory boards, not just top-down charity

Do guests have opportunities to engage with local culture?

Tourism that respects and integrates culture vs. isolated resort experiences

Section Score: ___ / 6

Certifications & Transparency

Third-party certifications and transparent reporting show operators who walk the talk.

Do you hold Green Fins certification?

Gold standard for dive operator sustainability — run by Reef-World Foundation & UNEP

Are you a certified PADI Eco Center or Green Star Dive Center?

PADI programs have specific environmental requirements

Do you hold Blue Flag or similar beach/marina certifications?

Applies to shore-based operations and boat marinas

Do you publish an annual sustainability report?

Public reporting creates accountability — ask to see the latest one

Can you show carbon offset records for boat operations?

Fuel is diving biggest carbon cost — offsets should be verifiable, not vague

Do you have a written environmental policy available to guests?

If they can not show you a written policy, they do not have one

Are your sustainability claims independently audited?

Self-reported claims without third-party verification = greenwashing

Section Score: ___ / 7

Scoring Rubric

Add up your checked boxes from each section. Use this scale to rate the operator.

Waste Management & Disposal	___ / 7
Reef & Marine Life Protection	___ / 7
Plastic Reduction & Materials	___ / 6
Local Community Impact	___ / 6
Certifications & Transparency	___ / 7
TOTAL	___ / 33

28-33

Ocean Champion

Truly sustainable. Book with confidence and tell everyone.

20-27

Making Waves

Solid effort with room to improve. Worth supporting.

12-19

Treading Water

Some good practices but significant gaps. Push them to do better.

0-11

Sinking Ship

Likely greenwashing. Consider alternative operators.

Share your operator ratings at greenfin.eco

Every rating helps the next diver make a sustainable choice.