

Diving with Whale Sharks

Whale sharks seasonally visit Gladden Spit, a promontory midway along the Belize Barrier Reef, to feed on the spawn of aggregating snappers. This is the only place this has been documented and known to occur worldwide. Due to the importance of both snapper spawning aggregations and associated whale sharks, Gladden Spit and the Silk Cayes were declared a marine reserve in May 2000. Whale shark tourism regulations were drafted to regulate the increasing number of whale shark tours.

Relatively slow moving animals, whale sharks are curious but docile. At Gladden Spit whale sharks will readily approach boats, divers and snorklers if they do not feel threatened. They often will remain close to divers if not chased or harassed.

To ensure that whale sharks are not harmed by tourism or boating activities, please follow the guidelines below to good whale shark etiquette - as summarized from the Gladden Spit & Silk Cayes marine reserve regulations:

- ◆ Make sure to get a whale shark interaction briefing from your whale shark licensed guide.
- ◆ Do not touch, ride or chase a whale shark - a BZ \$10,000 finable offence!
- ◆ If diving, remain above 80 feet to avoid disturbing reef fish spawning aggregations.
- ◆ Remain at least 10ft away from the whale shark at all times.
- ◆ Do not block the whale shark's path.
- ◆ When your tour guide tells you to leave the water, please pay attention and get in the boat as quickly as possible. Please follow all instructions of the tour guide.
- ◆ Relax and let the whale shark approach you. It's only curious!

Violating these guidelines can ruin the trip for everyone. Hamanasi reserves the right to deny any violator further participation in any dive or snorkel trip without compensation.

I agree to abide by the above guidelines and will take full responsibility for my actions.

Name: _____ Room #/Hotel: _____

Signature: _____