



Welcome to Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary! The Blue Star Program promotes safe and responsible water recreation in order to protect the Florida Keys marine ecosystem. By booking with a Blue Star recreational operator you are doing your part to protect Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary for future generations!

What is Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary?

- The sanctuary is part of a system of national marine sanctuaries, managed by NOAA, that protect unique marine environments and maritime history.
- The sanctuary protects all waters surrounding the Keys, from Miami through the Dry Tortugas. If you dip your toes in the water in the Florida Keys you are probably in the sanctuary!

Sanctuary Zones: Are you in a special zone? What are its rules and regulations?

- The sanctuary is divided into “zones” that determine what activities are, or are not allowed.
- Some zones separate different user activities, such as fishing and diving. Other zones are for research only, or preserve large spawning and nursery areas.
- Today we *will/will not* be recreating in a special zone [*name zone type and explain regulations*]

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Ecosystems: Primarily features three habitat types: coral reefs, seagrass meadows, and mangroves.

- All three habitats are interconnected with each other and us on land and depend on each other to have a healthy ocean.



FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

- Mangroves provide air for us to breathe, homes for animals, clean water, and protect our homes as the first line of defense against flooding or waves from powerful storms.
- Seagrass meadows are the ocean's rainforest. They offer food and shelter for many marine creatures and filter debris and pollutants to create clear water necessary for coral reefs to survive.
- Corals are alive! Colonies of tiny animals called polyps create hard exoskeletons to protect soft, anemone-like bodies that build our coral reefs.

Special Rules: Sanctuary-wide regulations to allow you to enjoy everything that the beautiful Florida Keys has to offer while protecting our marine environment and cultural heritage!

- Protect coral animals! Despite being commonly mistaken for rocks, corals are relatives of jellyfish and anemones and are very sensitive. Be respectful when swimming and diving and do not touch or remove coral.
- Be careful when dropping your anchor. If you cannot tell what is on the seafloor, do not drop anchor. Shallow water with a sandy bottom is ideal.
- Be aware of your surroundings! Operate your vessel in such a manner which does not endanger people, wildlife, or property.
- Help wildlife stay wild! Feeding marine mammals is illegal and risks the health of the animal. Watch from a distance and appreciate their natural behavior.
- The sanctuary also protects shipwrecks that tell stories of our past. Leave protected artifacts in place for others to enjoy.

Where can I learn more about Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary?

- Pick up brochures located in our lobby/gift shop
- Download the Marine Sanctuary Explorer App: marinesanctuary.org/explorer/
- Visit the sanctuary website: floridakeys.noaa.gov/