

P R A C T I C E

# Sea Turtle Friendly

S N O R K E L I N G

All species of sea turtles found in the USVI are endangered or critically endangered. Following respectful precautions while swimming with turtles will aid in the protection and recovery of these amazing animals.

## Tips to create a healthy and enjoyable experience for swimmers and turtles:

- Maintain a distance of at least 6-10 feet from the turtles. *If they come towards you, move away to maintain distance.*
- Do not chase or follow them if they are swimming away from you.
- Avoid blocking the turtle's ability to surface. *Remember they need to breathe air just like us!*
- Refrain from taking close up pictures or selfies with turtles. *Use the zoom feature.*
- Mind your flippers--excessive kicking can disturb their habitat and food source.
- Use reef-safe sunscreen and/or rash guards. *Harmful chemicals found in non-reef-safe sunscreen can be harmful to marine life and corals.* Apply 30 minutes prior to entering the water.
- Be mindful of your belongings left on the beach and ensure that nothing will blow away.

Excessive human interactions can cause turtles to spend their energy evading humans rather than carrying out their natural behaviors such as foraging, resting, and breathing. This stress can lead to overexertion and diseases such as fibropapillomatosis (FP) tumors. In addition to direct interactions, negative stressors such as pollution and habitat destruction can negatively affect the health of sea turtles.



Friends of  
Virgin Islands National Park

Did you know that riding, touching or harassing a sea turtle is a federal offense? It's against the law!

