



LOVE THE OCEANS
DIVE POLICY STANDARDS AND
PROCEDURES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Diving at the Love The Oceans site takes place in a remote environment with limited access to decompression facilities and emergency medical services (EMS). The nearest decompression chamber is located in Richards bay, South Africa. To minimise risk it is critical that safety is the primary factor in dive planning during any courses, science dives and recreational dives. The minimum standards governing this policy are the PADI standards and general procedures for all sites. The standards and procedures at some of the sites are more stringent to take into account the remoteness from EMS and hyperbaric chambers.

1.1 DEFINITION OF A DIVE

An Open Water dive is defined as below 5m/15ft for longer than 20 min. Confined water training is defined as not submerging below 5m/15ft. Confined water training can take place in the ocean but will mostly take place in the diving pool on site. A deep dive is defined as below 18m/60ft for any length of time.

Free diving is a specialised form of diving and is supervised closely with a professional from Jay's Pro Dive Centre, LTO's partners.

2. LOVE THE OCEANS DIVE STANDARDS

The following standards are applicable to all diving undertaken with Love The Oceans.

2.1 MAXIMUM BOTTOM TIME

The maximum surface-to-surface dive time for all open water dives is 50 minutes. Surface-to-surface time allows 2 minutes ascent to the safety stop, minimum 3 minutes (preferred 5 minutes) for the safety stop and 1 minute to surface. This practise is more conservative than PADI Recreational Dive Planner (RDP) due to the remote nature of our diving and ensures that inexperienced divers who may struggle with a safety stop will at a minimum meet the RDP requirements of 3 minutes at 5 metres. Therefore the maximum dive time of 50 minutes would equate to 44 minutes bottom time. No maximum dive time is to come within 3 pressure groups of the No Decompression Limit (NDL) on the RDP table or 5 minutes on the NDL computer. The only exception to this is when diving within the definitions of a confined dive, when the bottom time is unlimited.

An additional profile can be used during PADI Open Water training. This profile has an extended surface-to-surface time of 60 minutes. Surface-to-surface time allows 2 minute ascent to the safety stop, 3 minutes for the safety stop and 1 minute to surface. Therefore a maximum dive time of 60 minutes would equate to 54 minutes bottom time. This allows additional bottom time to complete skills during Open Water training and cannot be used for any other dives. See below for maximum depth limits relating to this specific profile.

2.2 MAXIMUM DEPTH

The maximum depth for a PADI Scuba Diver is 12m. For all qualified Open Water Divers, the maximum depth is 18m/60ft. The only exception to this is for the Advanced Open Water deep dive when the maximum depth is increased to 30m/100ft. The maximum depth for a confined dive is 5m; anything below this depth must be classed as an open water dive.

With regards to the profile for PADI Open Water extended dive times outlined above (2.1), the maximum depth for this dive is 10m/33ft. This dive must be approved by the Dive Operations Manager as it can only be used at times where it will not have detrimental effects on other scheduled dives.

2.3 AIR REQUIREMENTS

All divers entering the water for open water dives must have sufficient starting pressure to complete a 50 minute dive to 18m, and all qualified divers are expected to check their starting pressure for all their dives under the supervision of the dive staff prior to entering the water. Our optimal minimum starting pressure is between 200bar – 220bar or 2900psi. Divers should inform their dive professional when they reach 100bar or 1450psi and must begin their ascent with a minimum of 50 bar or 725psi on a shallow dive or 70 bar or 1050psi on a deep dive. All divers for both confined and open water dives must be on the surface with no less than 30 bar or 435psi. While PADI Professionals will monitor air consumption wherever possible, all qualified divers should also take responsibility for monitoring their own air consumption and communicating with dive leaders as necessary.

2.4 SAFETY STOPS

A safety stop at 5 metres for a minimum of 3 minutes (5 minutes preferred) must be performed prior to surfacing from all open water dives. Exceptions to this include missing diver procedures and emergency recalls as stated in the emergency procedures.

2.5 SURFACE INTERVAL

A surface interval which ensures all divers are well within their RBP tables and profiles. Divers should enter the water in at least pressure group F, preferably A (according to PADI RDP) must be adhered to at all times. Where logistically possible a 3 hour surface interval will be employed, which guarantees an ending pressure group of A.

2.6 REPETITIVE DIVING

The maximum number of open water dives in one day is 4 for PADI Professionals, science staff volunteers and volunteers who are qualified divers with agreement of the Dive Operations Manager. The maximum number of consecutive diving days is 6. After this a compulsory 24 hour de-gas period must be undertaken.

2.7 FLYING AFTER DIVING

Love The Oceans' flying after diving regulations are more conservative than PADI's in light of our remote location. Love The Oceans' recommends a minimum of 24hrs post dive pre-flight surface interval regardless of single dives or repetitive/multi-day dives.

2.8 OVER-PROFILING

If a diver over profiles they should correct their depth and continue with the dive if they are still within their no decompression limits. If they are beyond their NDL, they should abort the dive following the necessary safety stops. They will then receive a verbal warning by Love The Oceans' Venture Leader. This may result in them missing the next planned dive at the discretion of the Venture Leader in consultation with Jay's Pro Dive Centre's Dive Operations Manager. This dive will not be refunded.

Discipline for over profiles is at the Venture Leader's and Dive Operations Manager's discretion, however continued over-profiling may result in the diver being made to re-do areas of their dive training at their own cost such as peak performance buoyancy to ensure their dive skills are up to standard before they are allowed to dive again.

In the event of severe over-profiling, the dive may be aborted at the discretion of the dive leader, in which case the buddy pair must abort the dive by ascending at a safe rate of no more than 18metres per minute up to 5 metres and perform a 5 minute safety stop before ascending to the surface. No dive is to come within 3 pressure groups of the NDL on the RDP table or 5 minutes on the NDL computer.

2.9 SUPERVISION

At least one member of Jay's Pro Dive Centre's dive staff (PADI Professionals or equivalent) must be present on all boats where students or staff are taking part in in-water activities.

Love The Oceans dive standards are more conservative than those of PADI. We have set our standards to incorporate student: staff ratios feasible for Jay's Pro Dive Centre and the conditions under which we dive. If, however, unforeseen circumstances do arise, Love The Oceans reserves the right to revert back to PADI standards on supervising dives. This will be a decision made by the Venture Leader or senior member of Love The Oceans staff volunteers on site, based on the advice of Jay's Pro Dive Centre Dive Operations Manager.

2.10 PADI TRAINING COURSES

All PADI training courses are to be in-water supervised by a qualified, registered PADI instructor working for Jay's Pro Dive Centre. In cases of 5 or more students the Instructor must be assisted by a PADI Divemaster. For 4 students or less a Divemaster is required. The maximum ratio is 8 students to each Instructor + Divemaster pairing. The maximum ratio is 4 students when only an Instructor is present. These maximum ratios may be reduced depending on site and conditions.

2.11 ALL COURSE DIVES AND SNORKELS

All Love The Oceans' volunteers must hold a PADI Open Water certificate or equivalent with any other recognisable organisation before participating in course dives and coral reef surveys. When on course dives, volunteers will descend with a Jay's Pro Dive Centre PADI Professional. This dive leader may remain with the volunteer group but if the divers are confident or PADI Advanced Qualified or above, the dive leader may leave the transect area and lead the rest of the dive group on a recreational dive. If the Dive Operations Manager or the Venture Leader determines a volunteer is not a confident diver, the Jay's Pro Dive Centre PADI Professional or a Love The Oceans staff volunteer member must stay with the group through the whole dive. If that individual is the snorkeler, they are observed by the boat on the surface at all times and the dive leader may move off. All snorkelers must be observed by the boat captain and the boat must not move more than 100m away from the divers in line with PADI regulations. Each snorkeler must be a competent swimmer and wear a life jacket or floating device when snorkelling. Snorkelers must not wear weights and free dive while snorkelling during course dives as the snorkeler is alone in the water. Weights must only be worn after explicit agreement with a Jay's Pro Dive Centre staff member during free dives supervised by a PADI Professional.

Love The Oceans staff volunteer must not lead dives, they are there to assist and instruct scientific research but not help out with dives even if they are a PADI Professionals. LTO Volunteers must not lead or assist with dives, even if they are PADI Professionals. For the purpose of training and recreational dives LTO Volunteers are considered Volunteers of LTO and clients of Jay's Pro Dive Centre even if they are PADI Professionals and must therefore not lead or assists with dives, including supervising or guiding other divers.

2.12 ALL NON-COURSE AND NON-TRAINING DIVES AND SNORKELS

All dives, snorkels and in water activities are to be led and supervised by a dive professional. The maximum ratio for in water supervision is 10 qualified volunteers: 1 dive professional. Dependent on conditions, dive professionals may choose out of the water supervision as the most effective form of supervision for snorkelers, for example, shore or boat cover.

All certified divers and snorkelers must be in buddy pairs at all times during in water activities, all buddy pairs must stay in close contact at all times. Teams of snorkelers in areas where there is boat traffic must carry a surface marker buoy (SMB) with them so they are clearly visible.

Dive professionals may dive in a three in accordance with PADI regulations. At no point are divers allowed to dive solo.

Neither divemaster trainees nor science staff volunteers are included as students in the supervision ratios. If a member of science staff volunteer is collecting data, who is also a renewed PADI professional, has 3 or less students under their direct supervision, they may act as both a scientist and a PADI professional in these circumstances.

3. LOVE THE OCEANS DIVE PROCEDURES

All diving with Love The Oceans is to be done within the Love The Oceans dive standards as stated above and must be in line with PADI standards and procedures. Where diving outside of recreational limits takes place at the Love The Oceans expedition site, this is restricted to appropriately qualified divers who are not Love The Oceans volunteers, and who accept responsibility during these activities. All divers participating in such activities require their own suitable diving insurance and risk assessment.

3.1 GENERAL DIVE AND BOAT PROCEDURES

It is the responsibility of the Dive Operations Manager or an Owner of Jay's Pro Dive Centre to complete a roster slate before departure. The date, departure time, destination and names of all the divers and snorkelers on the boat, together with their starting air pressure should be recorded on the slate; this slate must be handed into the diving base (e.g person on radio duty).

Before leaving the dive base the Dive Leader must brief the divers on the key features of the dive site, any potential hazards, the duration and the profile of the dive (max depth; max dive time; safety stop; minimum return tank pressure; recall signal and other underwater signals) and must assign buddy pairs.

LTO Volunteers must stay clear of the boat and tractor during launching and must not approach until the boat is in the water, clear of the tractor and it is deemed safe by the Dive Leader or Boat Captain.

Once on the boat the Boat Captain must ensure the required safety equipment is on board and all divers have the required safety equipment. The Boat Captain must ensure working communication with the base or local authorities exists (e.g perform an initial radio check before leaving site).

On arrival at the site a second communication check is completed confirming contact with base. At sites where mobile phone signal exists, a battery and signal check will suffice, but where radio communication is used, a full communication check must be carried out.

If the dive site chosen is unsuitable for diving that day (e.g strong currents, high winds), the Dive Leader will abort the dive at that site and proceed to an alternative site after informing the base of the changing plan. The Dive Leader will then ensure that each buddy pair has completed their buddy check.

During the period when the divers are underwater, the Boat Captain must remain alert and watch the surface for divers. They must also continuously observe snorkelers.

Divers are to ascend slowly and safely from each dive. The ascent rate for all divers is as per PADI standard rate of a maximum 18m per minute. The ascent to the surface should only begin after completion of the required safety stop at 5 metres. The Boat Captain and other

Jay's Pro Dive Centre staff and Love The Oceans staff volunteer members will help the divers aboard the boat upon surfacing.

Jay's Pro Dive Centre staff must ensure that the boat is beaching in a way that safely allows LTO Volunteers and staff volunteers to exit the boat onto the beach.

On return to base, the Love The Oceans staff volunteer diver or Jay's Pro Dive Centre staff must note the remaining air pressure, maximum depth and maximum dive time for each diver and record the information on the roster slate. This roster slate must be handed in for the information to be written up.

3.2 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All staff and staff volunteers are to be briefed on emergency procedures. Copies of the Love The Oceans risk assessments, emergency action plans and evacuation procedures are to be available to staff and staff volunteers throughout the season and can be found on our website.

3.3 MISSING DIVER PROCEDURES

If a diver loses sight of their buddy they must stay where they are and search for no longer than one minute in the immediate area, before ascending to the surface at a safe rate (maximum of 18metres per minute) omitting the safety stop only if they have remained with Love The Oceans diving standards. The diver should then reunite with their buddy on the surface. If the diver has dived outside of the recommended profile they must complete necessary safety stops according to PADI's RDP or eRDP ML. If the diver is still unable to locate their buddy they must signal immediately to the boat who will recall all divers/snorkelers from the water (using recall methods stated below) and begin following the missing diver procedures in line with PADI.

3.4 INJURED DIVER PROCEDURES

Injured divers are to be brought to the surface at the safe maximum ascent rate of 18m per minute. If they have dived within Love The Oceans' standards then the safety stop may be omitted, if however either the victim, or rescuer, have dived outside of the profile they must complete necessary safety stops according to RDP regulations providing their injuries mean adhering to the safety stop does not put them under additional risk. On reaching the surface the rescuing diver is to alert the dive boat by using visual or audible safety signal.

3.5 BOAT RECALL PROCEDURES

If at any point during the dive the boat needs to recall all divers and snorkelers the recall system will be 3 long revs of the engine followed by a pause and another 3 long revs. Divers should ascend at the safe rate of 18m per minute having deployed an SMB at 5m. If the dive has remained within Love The Oceans' standards they may omit the safety stop and return directly to the surface. If the diver has dived outside the profile they must complete the necessary safety stops as advised by RDP.

4. DIVE EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

4.1 PADI DIVE TRAINING

All students taking part in PADI dive training must have all equipment and required materials as stated in the PADI standards. All PADI professionals teaching/assisting with PADI training must also have the required materials and equipment as stated in the course standards.

4.2 CERTIFIED DIVERS/SCIENCE STAFF VOLUNTEERS

All certified divers are responsible for diving within Love The Oceans' standards and therefore must have a depth gauge and a submersible pressure gauge (SPG). Dive computers are not compulsory but are highly recommended. Each PADI Professional must have a dive computer and all divers without computers must never descend below the Dive Leader.

All divers and snorkelers must wear appropriate protection from the temperature and environment; this can vary due to the time of year but generally a full 5mm wetsuit is recommended.

All dive professionals must carry one audible (whistle) and one visual (SMB) safety-signalling device. It is recommended that certified divers diving with a professional should also have either an audible or visual signalling device. Groups of snorkelers should always carry an SMB to signal their presence to boat traffic. There should be a minimum of 1 SMB to every 6 snorkelers. Groups should still be divided into buddy pairs, and all individuals must stay within 5 meters of each other and 10 meters of the SMB.

5. REQUIRED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

It must be ensured that each dive professional is happy with how to use the equipment if the situation should arise. Equipment available at the dive base should include a minimum of:

- Oxygen kit suitable for both breathing and non-breathing patient with sufficient oxygen supply to return to site
- First aid kit including hot water thermos and vinegar to deal with marine organism injuries

Each dive boat must have the following equipment on board. It is the responsibility of the Dive Leader to check all equipment is on board prior to each dive. It is also the responsibility of the Dive Operations Manager to regularly check all equipment is in good working order.

- Oxygen kit suitable for both breathing and non-breathing patient with sufficient oxygen to supply to return to base
- First aid kit including hot water thermos and vinegar to deal with marine organism injuries
- A floatation device/life ring
- A radio for contact to base and other dive boats
- A fully completed dive roster detailing all volunteers, students and staff on the boat

These dive policy standards and procedures were last reviewed on 21st March 2020

6. DEFINITIONS OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 DIVE OPERATIONS MANAGER

- It is the responsibility of the Dive Operations Manager to ensure that all dives and in water activities are scheduled and planned ensuring that staffing ratios meet Love The Oceans' and PADI requirements
- Ensure that student record files are accurately completed and kept for all student divers
- Ensure that all PADI forms for student divers; certified divers and PADI professionals are correctly completed before any in water activities
- The Dive Operations Manager must ensure that all PADI training courses meet PADI requirements
- Ensure that all non-training dives, snorkels and in water activities meet Love The Oceans' standards
- A hard copy of the dive rosters must be reviews and a record kept
- Overseeing the care and maintenance of all dive equipment including boats, compressors, dive equipment and safety equipment
- All other duties and responsibilities as stated in individual contracts

6.2 DIVE INSTRUCTORS

- It is the Dive Instructor's duty to carry out dive training as required of them by the dive operations manager
- It is the Dive Instructor's responsibility to ensure all training is done within PADI and Love The Oceans' standards
- Ensure that student record files are accurately completed and kept for all student divers
- Ensure all PADI forms are correctly completed before any in water activities and that all students meet the requirements for their course
- Any other duties and responsibilities as stated in individual contracts

6.3 DIVEMASTERS AND DIVE LEADERS

Dive Leaders are defined as a PADI Divemaster or above, who have been assigned to lead and supervise in water activities. Their roles are as follows:

- Ensure that all diving is done within Love The Oceans' dive standards and PADI standards and procedures
- Have knowledge of Love The Oceans' Emergency Action Plans (EAP's)
- Plan the dives/snorkels as directed by the Dive Operations Manager, including assigning buddy pairs
- Brief all divers and snorkelers prior to any in water activities
- Ensure that buddy checks are carried out and each diver carries with them the required safety equipment

These dive policy standards and procedures were last reviewed on 21st March 2020

- When supervising boat dives and snorkels ensure that all necessary medical and safety equipment is on board
- It is the Dive Leader's responsibility to carry out all duties, which are required of them by the Dive Operations Manager and their individual contracts

6.4 CERTIFIED DIVERS AND SCIENCE STAFF VOLUNTEERS

- It is the responsibility of all certified divers to ensure that they follow all Love The Oceans' dive standards and procedures and that all dives are performed within PADI standards
- Certified divers must listen carefully to dive briefings and follow instructions of the dive leader
- Certified divers must be fully aware of all emergency procedures and recall systems
- All divers must carry out buddy checks prior to each dive
- It is the responsibility of all divers to ensure that their equipment is in safe working order and that they have all the required safety equipment

7. INSURANCE

All students, volunteers and science staff volunteers must have their own diving insurance. Love The Oceans' recommends DAN diving insurance.

8. NIGHT DIVING SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND PROTOCOLS

Night dives will never be taken as a course dive. Night dives are optional recreational dives and volunteers and staff can participate in as long as they will not exceed the maximum dives a day or the minimum surface time. Night dives are only to be undertaken by PADI Advanced Open water divers (or equivalent) or above. The exception to this is when a night dive is completed as part of the Advanced Open Water course or as an individual Adventure Dive under PADI standards.

- Max. depth for a night dive is 18metres. Max dive time is 50 minutes including the preferred 5 minute safety stop at 5 metres. All divers must enter the water at pressure group A or be completely off gassed
- Supervision levels remain the same as stated in the general standards and procedures
- Each diver must have at least one main torch. A glow tube or cyalume stick should be attached to the tank valve of each diver
- The boat must be marked with a strobe at the surface to indicate its location. A glow tube should be placed at 5 meters on the buoy line to indicate the safety stop position.
- Throughout the dive, the Boat Captain should remain on the surface and alert for surfacing divers. Each boat should carry equipment as stated in the general standards but also carry a dive torch and a torch suitable for a surface search

9. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Love The Oceans is a marine conservation and we therefore strive to minimise our impact on the marine environment by abiding by international codes of conduct for wildlife encounters as well as following environmentally responsible diving practices.

9.1 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WHALE SHARK ENCOUNTERS

- Divers or snorkelers must stay min. 3 metres from the body of the shark and min. 4 metres from the tail of the shark
- Divers or snorkelers should avoid swimming directly under or over the shark as this is likely to induce avoidance behaviour
- Divers or snorkelers must at no point touch or make contact with the shark
- Divers, snorkelers and dive boats must not obstruct or limit the whale shark's movements by blocking its path
- Use of flash when taking photos is not permitted
- Dive boats in contact with the whale shark must stay at min. 20 metres distance from the shark. If the shark approaches the dive boat the engines must be turned off to minimise the risk of injuries to both the whale shark and divers or snorkelers in the water with the shark
- When approaching the whale shark, dive boats must approach from ahead of the shark's direction
- Max. 1 group of divers or snorkelers must be in the water with the shark at any time. Other dive boats not in contact with the shark must stay min. 50 metres distance from the whale shark
- If the whale shark exhibits avoidance behaviour by diving or 'banking' (i.e. turning its back towards the divers or snorkelers) the encounter must be terminated

9.2 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MANTA RAY ENCOUNTERS

- Divers or snorkelers must stay min. 3 metres from the manta ray
- Divers or snorkelers should avoid swimming directly under or over the manta ray
- Divers or snorkelers must at no point touch or make contact with the manta ray
- Divers, snorkelers and dive boats must not obstruct or limit the manta ray's movements by blocking its path
- Use of flash when taking photos is not permitted
- Dive boats in contact with the manta ray must stay at min. 20 metres distance from the ray. If the ray approaches the dive boat the engines must be turned off to minimise the risk of injuries to both the ray and divers or snorkelers in the water with the shark
- Max. 1 group of divers or snorkelers must be in the water with the manta ray at any time. Other dive boats not in contact with the ray must stay min. 50 metres distance from the manta ray
- When approaching the manta ray, dive boats must approach from ahead of the ray's direction

- When encountering a manta ray under water divers must stay low on the reef, at or below the manta rays level, and to the side of the ray
- Divers or snorkelers must not chase the manta ray by swimming after it – not even the purpose of obtaining ID photos
- Manta rays have a blind spot in their field of vision directly behind them. To avoid scaring the animal, divers and snorkelers must approach slowly from the front or side

Manta rays visit cleaning stations on the reef to be cleaned. This cleaning behaviour is essential to manta rays and must therefore not be disrupted. To avoid disrupting cleaning behaviour divers must abide by the following guidelines:

- Divers must not enter cleaning stations, regardless of whether manta rays are cleaning in the stations or not. Entering the cleaning stations, even when these are ‘empty’, may negatively impact the cleaning fish on which the manta rays rely, and hence disrupt cleaning behaviour

9.3 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR HUMPBACK WHALE ENCOUNTERS

- There must not be more than three dive boats at any one time surrounding one group of whales or one individual. If multiple boats are present, the boats must stay on the same side of the whale to ensure the whale does not feel encircled
- Dive boats must operate at a constant speed of less than 6 knots
- Dive boats must not approach closer than 100 metres to a whale. If a whale approaches the boat or is spotted less than 100 metres from the boat engines must be put in neutral if the Boat Captain deems it safe to do so. If the whale approaches within 50 metres the engines must be turned off and not re-engaged until the whale is observed well clear of the dive boat
- Dive boats must slowly approach whales sideways, never from the front or rear
- Dive boats must not obstruct or limit the whale’s movements by blocking its path or causing the whale to surface within 100 metres of the boat
- Avoidance behaviour must be respected: If the whale exhibits avoidance behaviour (i.e. sudden changes in direction or speed, sharply veering away from boats and/or divers/snorkelers, changes in breathing pattern, aggressive behaviour) or protective behaviour when calves are present, the encounter must be terminated by the dive boat by withdrawing immediately
- Noise levels must be kept to a minimum
- Interactions must be limited to 20 minutes, if the whale ends the encounter during this time, the whale must not be pursued
- Divers or snorkelers must not enter the water for their own safety. If whales are encountered underwater, divers should exhibit caution and not attempt to make contact with the whales
- Mother and calf units should be avoided. Divers/snorkelers must not enter the water with newborns or calves

9.4 GENERAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR DIVING

- Do not touch anything. If needed divers can stabilise themselves by holding onto the reef with two fingers – when doing so divers must ensure that they are holding onto rock and not coral
- Do not take anything out of the ocean, the only exception being trash and/or discarded fishing gear
- Do not chase or harass animals
- Secure alternate air source, SPG, depth gauge and other loose appendages to avoid dragging on the reef and damaging corals