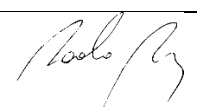


# Friend of the Sea Sustainable Whale Shark Watching Standard



## Friend of the Sea non Seafood Standard

REV	DATE	REASON	ISSUED BY	APPROVAL
1	01/04/2020	First issue	Mario Passoni	

## Foreword

Friend of the Sea is a non-governmental organization, which was established in 2008. Its aim is to safeguard the marine environment and its resources by incentivising a sustainable market and implementing specific conservation projects.

Requirements are classified as Essential or Recommendations, according to their level of importance.

**Essential Requirements:** 100% conformity to essential requirements is mandatory in order to be certified. The company has to propose effective corrective actions (declaration of intents and implementation plan), to be submitted to the certification body within three weeks from the issuing of the non conformity. This proposal shall also include a timetable concerning the implementation of each corrective measure. Each proposed corrective action shall be fully implemented within the following 12 months and verified during the surveillance audit.

**Recommendations:** Compliance with recommendations is not mandatory for the company to be certified. However, compliance with recommendations will be verified during the audit and any deficiency will be included in the Audit Report as a recommendation. The company shall inform the certification body, during the following audit, regarding any corrective measures implemented.

Requirements which are not applicable to the audited company will be marked with 'N.A.'

## **Description of the company to be audited**

<b>a) Name of the company under audit</b>
<b>b) Is the company under audit part of a group? If yes, specify the name</b>
<b>c) Address of the company under audit</b>
<b>d) Name, role and contact of the representative(s) of the company under audit accompanying the auditor during the inspection:</b>



<b>h) Period of the year during which whale sharks can be spotted in the area.</b>
<b>i) Coordinates of the whale watching target area</b>
<b>j) Number of employees (specify seasonal or permanent employees)</b>
<b>k) Certification and awards</b>
<b>l) Date and type of the audit (initial audit, surveillance audit, recertification audit)</b>

**m) Other relevant information**

- The Friend of the Sea project has been outlined to the company under audit**  
*(If not the auditor shall provide a short description to the company)*
- The organization was informed of the opportunity, in case of approval, of using the Friend of the Sea logo in association with its whale shark watching activity** (e.g. boats, marketing material and website)
- The duration of the audit has been agreed upon**
- The information included in the Preliminary Information Form (PIF) has been confirmed as valid** (in the case of changes to the PIF, an updated version has to be promptly provided).

### ***Notes to the auditor***

- 1)** The auditor shall fill out all fields in the checklist.
- 2)** The Auditor shall provide an explanation when requirements are not applicable.
- 3)** The Auditor shall write YES when the unit of certification complies with a requirement and NO when it does not.
- 4)** The Auditor shall comment and explain the positive or negative answers. Mere "YES," "NO," or "N.A." are not considered as sufficient and additional certification will be requested.
- 5)** Each relevant document shall be added to the final audit report in a separate and numbered attachment.
- 6)** Photographic and videos added to the checklist or attached can represent valid onsite evidence.

## 1 - Authorisations and permits

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
1.1	Whale shark watching operations are authorised by a permit granted by the responsible authority, for a given area, where applicable.	Essential	Image of the permit		
1.2	All vessels used in whale shark watching operations are authorised under the national legislation, where applicable.	Essential	Image of the authorization		

## 2 - Boats authorized location and approach

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
2.1	In the whale shark area, the maximum speed allowed is 7 knots. Once a whale shark is spotted, boats must have a speed $\leq 3$ knots. Chasing whale sharks is not permitted.	Essential	<p>Procedure and evidence of conformity.</p> <p>Whale shark area can vary from place to place, therefore it is not possible to give a precise definition.</p>		



<p><b>2.2</b></p>	<p>Only one boat can interact with whale sharks. If there are more than one boat, the interaction can be allowed alternately.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>i.e. only the participants of one boat at a time can swim with the shark. Once swimmers are back on the boat, the second boat can allow its participants to swim with the shark and so on, in order to guarantee interaction with the whale shark for everyone.</p>		
<p><b>2.3</b></p>	<p>The boats never intentionally approach whale sharks from the rear. The approach must begin with an inclined route of approximately 30° with respect to the route of whale sharks, to become gradually parallel to their route.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>Procedure and evidence of conformity.</p>		
<p><b>2.4</b></p>	<p>The boats shall not intentionally approach whale sharks which appear to be avoiding boats.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>Procedure and evidence of conformity.</p>		
<p><b>2.5</b></p>	<p>Engines shall be placed in neutral when boats stop to observe whale sharks.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>Procedure and evidence of conformity.</p>		

<b>2.6</b>	The crew is aware of the position of the whale sharks at any time, in order to avoid collisions or getting too close to the whale sharks. Particular attention must be paid when the tour participants enter the water, and when they get back on the boat.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
<b>2.7</b>	The captain and crew of the boat must always pay attention to avoid collisions with marine animals during the cruise phase. If the boat has to anchor, care must be taken to avoid damaging marine organisms.	Essential			

### 3 - Swim-with whale sharks

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
<b>3.1</b>	The boat must be at least 5 meters away from the whale shark to let participants get into the water and swim with the whale shark. In the case of aggregation of whale sharks, the boat must be at least 10 meters from the closest whale shark.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity. An aggregation is made by 2 or more whale sharks.		

<p><b>3.2</b></p>	<p>People must enter the water in a gentle way, trying to reduce the noise to a minimum. Jumping into the water is not recommended.</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Procedure and evidence of conformity. it is recommended to have a dedicated staff member who takes care of the entry of the participants into the water.</p>		
<p><b>3.3</b></p>	<p>Swim gently, if you are snorkelling keep your fins under the top of the surface while swimming, in order to reduce the noise.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>Staff shall explain how to behave with whale sharks during the initial briefing and give a reminder to the participants before getting into the water.</p>		
<p><b>3.4</b></p>	<p>Whale Sharks shall be approached never from the front nor from the rear, from above or from below, but always from the side.</p>	<p>Essential</p>			

<p><b>3.5</b></p>	<p>Do not touch whale sharks.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>Touching whale sharks can annoy and stress these animals and consequently lead them to move away from the group, thus reducing the interaction time.</p>		
<p><b>3.6</b></p>	<p>Do not use the flash while taking pictures of the whale shark.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>Same as above.</p>		
<p><b>3.7</b></p>	<p>Keep always a minimum distance of 3 meters from the whale sharks, and minimum 4 meters from the tail.  If a shark swims towards you, stay calm and move so as not to hinder its path.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>The minimum distance has been calculated in order to keep safe both participants and whale shark.</p>		
<p><b>3.8</b></p>	<p>It's forbidden to use scooter or jet ski.</p>	<p>Essential</p>			

<b>3.9</b>	Intentional scuba diving with whale shark is forbidden.	Essential	If a whale shark encounter happens while diving, apply all the requirement listed about how to interact and swim with them.		
<b>3.10</b>	The maximum number of swimmers with each whale shark shall be maximum 6 plus a professional guide.	Essential	If the number of participants is greater than 6 people, it is recommended to form groups, in order to allow alternate interaction.		
<b>3.11</b>	Maximum interaction time into the water with each whale shark is up to 30 minutes.	Essential	This also includes situations where you swim, get back on the boat and reach the shark again to swim again. In cases like this, the interaction time is considered in its entirety, from the first interaction in the water.		

## 4 – Interaction with whale sharks

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
4.1	Feeding whale sharks and/or other animals is forbidden.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
4.2	Accurate information is provided to tour participants on how to behave when the whale sharks are sighted.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
4.3	Accurate information is provided to tour participants about environmental issues related to whale sharks and the marine habitat and how everybody can contribute to reduce the impact.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
4.4	Training programs for operators and crew on the biology and behavior of target species and on responsible whale shark watching operations are carried out.	Essential	Training and courses planning and content. Certificates of attendance.		

## 5 – Waste management

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
5.1	The company recycles all waste when recycling option is provided locally. In alternative, it appropriately disposes waste.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity by means, as an example of recycling bins		
5.2	The company implements measures to prevent dispersion of waste at sea (including fuels, lubricants and plastic materials).	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
5.3	The company uses non-toxic alternatives available in order to avoid the use of toxic, persistent or bio-accumulating substances.	Recommendation	Procedure and purchase orders evidence.		
5.4	The company does not use CFC, HCFC, HFC or other refrigerants that cause ozone depletion.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
5.5	If spotted, crew must collect floating fishing gear and equipment lost from other boats.	Recommendation	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
5.5.1	All material collected shall be properly disposed of at port. If appropriate disposal facilities are not available, the company shall endeavour to work with port operators to provide adequate, affordable and accessible disposal facilities.	Recommendation	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		

<b>5.5.2</b>	Where applicable, the company shall work with ports to implement gear collection and/or recycling programs for end-of-life gear.	Recommendation	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
<b>5.6</b>	The company does not hold or handle mono-use plastic (e.g.: drinks plastic bottles; straws; cutlery; plates, etc.) on the boat(s).	Essential	Procedure and onsite inspection. Received invoices review.		
<b>5.7</b>	Snorkellers are invited to collect any type of garbage found during the dive and bring it back on board the boat. The company will take care to properly dispose of this waste.	Recommendation			



## 6 – Energy management

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
<b>6.1</b>	The company shall keep a file of energy consumed per use and type of sources (e.g.: gasoline, solar, other), updated at least once a year.	Recommendation	File to be included in the audit report.		
<b>6.2</b>	The company shall set yearly objectives to improve its energy efficiency.	Recommendation			

## 7 – Social accountability

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
7.1	The company shall comply with the following requirements:				
7.1.1	Compliance with International Labor Organization and National Laws on child labor.	Essential	<p>The Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No. 138) sets “the general minimum age for admission to employment or work at 15 years (13 for light work) and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 (16 under certain strict conditions). It provides for the possibility of initially setting the general minimum age at 14 (12 for light work) where the economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed”.</p> <p>Refer to ILO:  <a href="https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/child-labour/lang-en/index.htm">https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/child-labour/lang-en/index.htm</a></p>		

<p><b>7.1.2</b></p>	<p>Pay the employees adequate salaries compliant at least with the minimum legal wages.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>The minimum wages vary depending on the country. The Auditor shall verify that the company is aware of the minimum wages of the countries in which it operates.</p> <p>Refer to ILO: <a href="https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/wages/lang-en/index.htm">https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/wages/lang-en/index.htm</a></p>		
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7.1.3	Grant employees access to health care.	Essential	<p>The company shall have workers' compensation insurance to cover their employees when an illness or injury happens at work.</p> <p>The auditor shall verify that the company provides, where necessary, measures to deal with emergencies and accidents, including adequate first-aid arrangements</p> <p>Refer to ILO:  <a href="https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/occupational-safety-and-health/lang-en/index.htm">https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/occupational-safety-and-health/lang-en/index.htm</a></p>		
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<p><b>7.1.4</b></p>	<p>Apply safety measures required by the National Law. Nonetheless, compliance with the minimum safety requirements are mandatory, even if not required by local law.</p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>To assess the minimum safety requirements, the auditor shall verify and collect evidence of hazards and risks in the work environment, dangers to life, safe drinking water, health and safety training and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).</p> <p>Refer to ILO: <a href="https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/occupational-safety-and-health/lang-en/index.htm">https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/occupational-safety-and-health/lang-en/index.htm</a></p>		
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7.1.5	Keep records of accidents or injuries.	Recommendation	These records shall be used to take corrective measures and identify the causes of the incidents, preventing future occurrences.		
7.1.6	No forced or compulsory labor.	Essential	<p>All work, including overtime, must be voluntary.</p> <p>The hours worked in excess of the normal working hours must be remunerated at the rates prevailing in the case of overtime for voluntary labour.</p> <p>Refer to ILO: <a href="https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm">https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm</a></p>		

7.1.7	No discrimination.	Essential	<p>Opportunities for recruitment, access to training, promotion, compensation, termination and retirement shall not be made based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin.</p> <p>Physical, verbal or sexual abuse, bullying or harassment are prohibited.</p> <p>Refer to ILO: <a href="https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/equality-of-opportunity-and-treatment/lang--en/index.htm">https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/equality-of-opportunity-and-treatment/lang--en/index.htm</a></p>		
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<p><b>7.1.8</b></p>	<p>Rights on board.  <b>Only applicable to safari boat tour.</b></p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p>The auditor shall verify if the boats are maintained in a clean and habitable condition and check if regular periods of rest of sufficient length are given to the crew.</p> <p>Refer to ILO: <a href="http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C188">www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C188</a></p>		
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## 8 - Sustainability commitment

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
8.1	The company introduce to all its tour participants Friend of the Sea Sustainable Whale Shark Watching project.	Essential	Procedure and evidence of conformity.		
8.2	In order to continuously improve, the company shall recommend all its tour participants to report Friend of the Sea ( <a href="https://friendofthesea.org/contact-us/">https://friendofthesea.org/contact-us/</a> ), in case they perceive that the company does not comply with some of these requirements.	Essential	Feedback forms available.		

## 9 – Other recommendations

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N	Comments
9.1	The company promotes the undertaking of an assessment of size, distribution and other characteristics of the target whale sharks' population, in order to also assess potential impact of whale shark watching.	Recommendation	A marine biologist or a figure who has similar training performs these operations.		
9.2	The company cooperates with universities, research groups and NGOs, providing data on local whale sharks.	Recommendation			
9.3	At least one marine or natural sciences biologist is part of the company's team.	Recommendation	CV must be attached to the audit report.		
9.4	The company is carrying on citizen science project(s). Data collected is shared with universities, and/or research groups, and/or NGOs that are working on local whale sharks' populations.	Recommendation	Project description.		

9.5	The company keeps a logbook with sightings of wounded whale sharks and it shares the information with the competent authority.	Recommendation	Logbook.		
9.6	It is requested to use only sustainable sunscreen cream, where applicable.	Recommendation	For further information regarding sustainable sunscreen refer to: <a href="https://friendofthesea.org/sustainable-standards-and-certifications/sustainable-omega-3-oil-and-uv-creams/">https://friendofthesea.org/sustainable-standards-and-certifications/sustainable-omega-3-oil-and-uv-creams/</a>		

**CONCLUSIONS:**

The Auditor shall fill out the following fields:

**The company COMPLIES with Sustainable Whale Shark Watching requirements**

**The company DOES NOT COMPLY with Sustainable Whale Shark Watching requirements**

**ESSENTIAL NON-CONFORMITIES (corrective plan to be produced within 3 weeks and correction within 1 year)**

*List essential Non-conformities*

**RECOMMENDATIONS (to be communicated within the next inspection)**

*List recommendations*