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SNORKEL GUIDE

Snorkelling in the Batemans Marine Park

by Bill Barker

Snorkelling is great fun and is easy to do. It is suitable for people of all ages, as well as children who are properly supervised. Anyone who can swim and is reasonably comfortable in the water can enjoy snorkelling. It opens up a whole new world of appreciation of our South Coast marine critters.

What you need

- A reasonable level of confidence in the water - while snorkelling is not complicated it can be useful to do an appropriate training course
- Some basic skills such as donning and adjusting equipment, clearing mask and snorkel and duck diving
- A mask, snorkel, fins and, desirably, a good wetsuit. Local dive shops can advise on quality gear.

Where to snorkel

The best snorkelling is generally over rocky reefs. Snorkelling over sand may provide some good experiences, but generally there is much less to see. When selecting snorkelling sites, you should look for substantial areas of sub-tidal reef, preferably sheltered from wind and waves. Visibility is often better in the morning especially if it is high tide.



A co-operative seal at Montague Island – photo by Rachel Green

Snorkellers should also be aware of the zoning of the marine park. Maps providing detailed guidance are readily available in fishing and tackle shops, dive shops and information centres. In sanctuary zones it is illegal to take or harm anything.

Tips for your safety and comfort

Never snorkel alone. Always have a buddy, so that you can keep an eye on each other, help each other entering and exiting the water and share the wonderful experiences that you will enjoy.

Be aware of the wind, rain and sea conditions before you go snorkelling anywhere. Large swells and strong winds make snorkelling dangerous, especially near rocks. In any case, you will not be able to see much if the bottom sediments are being stirred up by wind and waves or if runoff from creeks and rivers is discolouring the water.

Protect yourself - the conditions vary with the season. Water temperatures lag behind the air temperature. It can still be quite chilly in the water in December, with warmer water – perhaps 23 degrees – being encountered in March or April. In late winter or spring the water temperature may drop to 13 or 14 degrees. Surprisingly, weather conditions are often more stable in autumn or winter so the snorkeller is well advised to invest in a good wetsuit so that they can take advantage of year round snorkelling. It will also protect you against sunburn.

Look but don't touch - snorkelers should be aware of hazards such as stings from bluebottles, scorpionfish or stingrays, cuts from barnacles and oysters, and bites from moray eels.

For more information about places to snorkel on the Batemans coast, search for ***Eurobodalla snorkelling*** on the web. There are several sites that suggest good spots to try.

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