

# Code of Ethics for Divers

Support ratification and  
compliance with the UNESCO 2001  
Convention on the Protection of the  
Underwater Cultural Heritage!

find out more at  
[www.unesco.org/culture/en/underwater](http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/underwater)

## Photos

Cover - Wreck of the *SS Severance*, Australia

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Fish - Wreck of the *Umbria*, Port Sudan

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Turtle - The *Fujikawa Maru* wreck, Micronesia

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Anchor - Anchor at Chinchorro Bank, Mexico

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United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



The Protection of the  
Underwater Cultural Heritage

## Protect underwater cultural heritage for future generations

Underwater cultural heritage encompasses all traces of human existence having a cultural, historical or archaeological character, lying under water. Over the centuries, thousands of ships, entire cities, and even landscapes have been swallowed by the waves. They constitute a precious heritage that needs to be protected.

## Leave wrecks and submerged ruins untouched; only archaeologists may remove objects! Do not take souvenirs

The site of a wreck or a submerged ruin is historically important. When objects or any other kind of remains are displaced they are deprived of their context and lose part of their significance. Furthermore, objects extracted without proper conservation risk deterioration.



## Obey legal protection of archaeological sites

Many underwater heritage sites are protected by the law. Know and understand the applicable regulations before you dive!

## Seek permission to dive on designated sites

Diving on designated wreck or ruin sites often requires a specific permission. Do not dive at the site without a licence, when it is required, as you may put the site or yourself in danger. Protected sites are often indicated on admiralty charts and marked by buoys or warning notices on the shore.



## Respect measures that protect sites

Any protection measure (metal cages, sand layers, sonar buoys), placed over archaeological sites safeguard them from erosion, irresponsible intruders and looting. They should be respected. Any damage to a protection device opens the way to damage to the site. If you note any damage done to such a device, report it to the authorities.

## Report discoveries to the responsible authorities

If you discover a historic site, immediately contact the national competent authorities, who will advise you about the next steps. If your find is important it may be researched or designated a protected site.

## Document discovered sites

If you discover a wreck or submerged ruin document its precise location and its state (photos, drawings or notes). Make a report about it and accompany it with your documentation.

## Be careful when taking photographs

When taking photographs, be careful to avoid contact with the wreck or ruin site. A camera is not a licence to move or disturb cultural heritage. Many objects are fragile regardless of size! Make sure to secure equipment and be properly weighted to avoid contact damage.

## Do not sell our common heritage

Objects coming from a submerged archaeological site should not be commercially traded, but protected. We can learn much about the development of civilisations and our own past from the remains of wrecks and ruins under water. Dispersing this heritage robs us of our past. If you note the sale of illegally acquired artefacts, notify the competent authorities.

## Hand over objects that you took

Should you have taken an object from a submerged archaeological site to protect it from extreme risk or loss, report it to the competent national authority. If ever you discover an ancient object in the water or at a beach, likewise contact the competent authority. It could indicate the presence of an archaeological site off the coast!

## Stay safe

Diving wrecks or ruins can be dangerous. Respect safety and health requirements appropriate to the sites in question. Pay attention to depth, time and currents and do not enter cavities without taking the highest safety precautions. Never dive unaccompanied.

## Be a role model

Be a role model for other divers and non-divers when diving submerged heritage sites! Encourage other divers to follow this Code of Ethics. Help create conservation awareness amongst the local community, the general public and among divers.

