

Restoring coral reefs around the world: TUI Care Foundation launches marine conservation programmes in the Dominican Republic and Bali

- *TUI Sea the Change Bali includes the installation of a floating pontoon for coral planting and awareness workshops for visitors*
- *TUI Sea the Change Dominican Republic restores and protects 560 hectares of seascapes and engages tourists in coral reforestation efforts*
- *Programmes are launched as part of TUI Care Foundation's Marine May, which emphasises the importance of marine conservation*

Berlin, 16 May 2024. *Padangbai is a small port town on the east coast of Bali, Indonesia, where tourism-related activities are on the rise. On the other side of the world, the coastal resort town of Bávaro in the Dominican Republic is already an established destination, with its region of Punta Cana welcoming over four million tourists every year. The two coastal communities have one resource in common: a beautiful coral reef, which, like all reefs, is one of the most biodiverse and productive ecosystems on the planet.*

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However, in both geographical locations, boat moorings and improper anchoring practices damage coral reefs and seagrass beds, contributing to the destruction of important habitats. Coral reef degradation is also a result of overfishing and pollution, which causes disruptions in the delicate balance of the underwater ecosystem. Additionally, as water temperatures increase, so does the phenomenon of coral bleaching. This is caused by the loss of algae, which is the coral's major food source. Algae also gives the coral its colour and stores environmentally unfriendly carbon dioxide.

In the Dominican Republic, the TUI Care Foundation is working in partnership with the Bávaro Reef Ecological Foundation (Fundación Ecológica Los Arrecifes de Bávaro). The programme contributes to the protection of a total of over 560 hectares of seascapes, which will be zoned and demarcated through five TUI Care Foundation buoys. Awareness workshops and coral gardening help to train local beach workers and fishermen to protect the area. Up to 30 local organisations will be engaged in Bávaro as well as the neighbouring region Cabeza de Toro to build understanding and capacity and to respond to local conservation needs. The programme relies on the creation of a sustainable tourism product, the Bávaro Snorkel Lover experience, which will engage up to 30,000 tourists through a combination of coral gardening, awareness and snorkelling. A local ranger team will patrol the beaches to protect against turtle poaching, and a coral nursery programme helps to restore the local sea urchin population.

Meanwhile TUI Sea the Change Bali, in partnership with Livingseas Foundation, is already showing strong results. During the initial stage between 2021 and 2023, almost 300 square metres of coral were planted in what was otherwise a desolate seascape. This reef has already grown and is now home to a rich and thriving marine ecosystem.

Members of the local community were also trained in scuba diving and conservation to help with the restoring and conserving the coral reef in the bay. By engaging hotel staff and the local community, the project created sustainability champions who can implement what they have learnt within hotels and across the community.

During a second phase, almost eight times as much coral reef will be planted, covering an area of over 2000 square metres. In addition to continuing to work with sustainability champions, a key component of this new stage of the project will be the construction of an offshore pontoon. Visitors with or without diving experience will be able to travel by boat to the floating platform to learn about marine conservation and coral reef restoration. The programme will also develop a reef-planting experience for tourists to provide visitors with an unforgettable and sustainable experience.

The TUI Care Foundation's 'Marine May' is a month of activities dedicated to ocean preservation. Through a series of project launches and educational activities, it emphasises the importance of sustainable practices to safeguard marine ecosystems for local communities and generations to come.

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About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands.

Website: www.tuicarefoundation.com

About Bávaro Reef Ecological Foundation (Fundación Ecológica Los Arrecifes de Bávaro)

The Bávaro Reef Ecological Foundation (Fundación Ecológica Los Arrecifes de Bávaro) is a non-profit organisation that was founded in 2016 and officially registered in 2018. The concern for the constant loss of coastal resources in the Punta Cana Bavaro tourist area and decrease in marine life biodiversity motivated the surveillance and enforcement of the areas in collaboration with local authorities. The Foundation is committed to the responsible management of coastal resources, as well as the conservation and holistic protection of the marine ecosystem of the area. We maintain coral nurseries and artificial reefs that guarantee the preservation of the endangered species that belong to the marine ecosystem affected by tourism activities.

Website: <https://bavaroreefs.org/>

About Livingseas Foundation

Livingseas Foundation aims to address the pressing needs of the ocean. From coral reef restoration to limiting ocean waste, the Foundation works with local communities to create impact projects that restore marine biodiversity to its former glory. It focuses on three main areas: direct impact through coral reef restoration projects, proper waste management in coastal towns, and the training and education of local youth in the sustainable management of these projects for the long term.

Website: <https://www.livingseasfoundation.org/>

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