Institutional Framework

The Presidential Decree on the establishment of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos was signed on the 1st of December 1999 by the President of Greek Republic (Gov. Gazzette 906D, 22 December 1999). The Management Agency of the protected area of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos was the first of its kind in Greece. It is operated by a Management Board comprising eleven members, including representatives of the local government and local professional agencies, the constituency of Ionian Islands, the Ministries of Public Works, Agricultural Development and Commercial Shipping plus delegates from Non Governmental Organisations.

The Management Agency is a private law legal person, non-profit and under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Energy. The Marine Park Organisation is the administration agency that is responsible for realizing the aims to achieve the integrated management of the protected areas within the National Marine Park. The Organisation is responsible for the protection of all flora, fauna and natural formations within the Marine Park, ensuring suitable sustainable development and providing an effective education and public awareness programme for both children and adults. According to Article 9 of the Presidential Decree for the establishment of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos, the Management Agency aims at the compilation and application of the regulation management and project management of N.M.P.Z. in the framework of existing national and Community legislation on environmental protection in the area, principles and policies for the sustainable development of the region, coordination of all stakeholders Government, Government, Private Sector, awareness of residents and stakeholders to ensure the active participation in the development program of the region implementing campaigns, commercial promotion in Greece and abroad and action plans to attract and develop sustainable tourism.

Guidelines for the protection of marine ecosystems
Professional middle scale fisheries (e.g. trawlers, purse-seiners) and recreational fishing (e.g. spear fishing, long lines, nets) as well as motorized water sports (e.g. waterskiing, jet-skis) are forbidden year-round to protect the loggerhead sea turtle and the marine ecosystem. You may discover the beauty of the sea by boat (attention: boat speed should not exceed 6 nautical miles
per hour and mooring is only allowed in Zone C), swimming, canoeing and diving.

Guidelines for the Observation of the sea turtle
To make your trip a more fulfilling experience, you may observe the loggerhead turtle in its natural marine environment. If you encounter a turtle, do not approach it from the front and keep a minimum distance of 15 metres. Maximum observation time should be limited to 15 minutes, when the turtle is not on the water surface, or 10 minutes when it is near to the water surface. During this time, do not feed nor touch the turtle. If you do not want to scare the turtle away, stay calm, do not shout or make abrupt movements (and keep boat movements to a bare minimum!). In the case that the turtle is stressed, keep away; you will have the opportunity to observe others.

Protection measures for the sea turtle nesting beaches *Caretta caretta*

1. The general publics are permitted on the sea turtle nesting beaches of the N.M.P.Z. from 07:00 am to sunset.
2. Please keep the beaches clean both for yourselves and the sea turtles, and remove your rubbish and cigarette butts when you leave the beach.
3. Limit all activity to a narrow strip of beach near the water (approximately 5 meters from the sea). Higher up the beach nests are likely to be present.
4. Any nests close to a human activity zone are marked by a cage for their protection; keep away from these nests, as you may disturb the incubation and hatching process.
5. Stay close to the sea (1-2 metres) when making sand sculptures or playing in the sand (building sand-castles, beach sports, etc.). Before you leave, please flatten these creations, as they could be an obstacle to sea turtle hatchlings when crawling to the sea.
6. If you happen to be present as hatchlings emerge from a nest, do not touch them, as you could negatively impact their survival. Immediately inform a Park Ranger and follow any directions you receive.
7. Cars, motorbikes, bicycles, horses and dogs are not allowed on nesting beaches as they may present a hazard.
8. Do not remove natural materials (sand, shells or pebbles) from the nesting beaches. Similarly, do not remove sea urchins, starfish and other marine species from the sea. The beauty and the natural wealth of the area depend on your assistance.
9. Do not use umbrellas on the nesting beaches of Gerakas, Dafni and
Marathonisi – (except for permanent furniture that has been officially endorsed by the N.M.P.Z.

10. The ‘Glines’ (clay pinnacles) on Gerakas beach constitute a unique geological monument of the area. Do not remove or use the clay.

11. Fish stock conservation and enrichment is important for the immediate and surrounding area of the N.M.P.Z. Recreational (e.g. spear fishing, rod fishing) and medium scale professional (e.g. trawlers, purse seiners) fishing is, therefore, not permitted in the protected area.

You are kindly requested to follow the instructions of the N.M.P.Z Agency Park Rangers, because each nesting beach is subject to special protection measures depending on local conditions.

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