

CAYMAN ISLANDS - TODAY A MARINE PARADISE, BUT TOMORROW?



Some ninety miles south of Cuba, there is an island group favored by tourists from all over the world. Local outstanding coral reefs and unbelievably clear waters have been attracting eco tourists, scientist and scuba divers for several decades. Not idly are the Cayman Islands considered a marine paradise. The quality of life here is good, due to its status as a tourist Mecca. Visitors come here to enjoy the amazing beaches and five-star accommodation facilities, the vibrant night life and excellent cuisine; however, all this may soon come to an end. In spite of strong environmental laws, nearly 50 percent of hard corals have died in the last decade here.

There are several threats to the corals. Global warming is, naturally, one of them. The temperature of the water is rising, which leads to coral bleaching. Colorful corals turn white. This disease is nowadays killing corals all over the world and presents one of the major threats to marine life.

Another problem endangering the life of the corals are cruise ships, even though they have become an important and growing part of the Cayman's tourist industry. They have already damaged large areas of living coral with their heavy anchors and chains. Therefore, local government has banned cruise ships from anchoring near the ports. The scientists believe that a cruise ship anchoring for one day can destroy nearly an acre of intact reef, and that is a risk none of the officials want to take anymore.

The coral reef is further harmed by storm activity, such as the Ivan and Wilma Hurricanes. The impact however is not as severe as in the case of global warming and the cruise ships. Local officials are highly alarmed by the current situation, and believe that by putting strict limits on fishing and other activities connected to tourism, they may help preserve the treasures hiding beneath the Cayman Islands.

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