

The waters between Maui, Lanai, Molokai, and Kahoolawe that Kaanapali Ocean Adventures tours traverse form part of one of the most ecologically significant marine areas in Hawaii. The Maui Nui basin is the primary breeding and calving habitat for the North Pacific humpback whale population, making it one of the most important whale habitats in the world. The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary encompasses the waters around Maui and neighboring islands. This federal designation provides formal protection for the humpbacks that winter in these waters and establishes the approach and interaction guidelines that Kaanapali Ocean Adventures follows for all whale watching activities. The sanctuary status reflects the importance of these waters beyond tourism. The research conducted in Maui Nui waters on humpback behavior, communication, and population dynamics has advanced scientific understanding of whale biology globally. Many of the world's leading [Kaanapali Snorkel Tours](#) whale researchers have worked in these waters.

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For snorkelers on Kaanapali Ocean Adventures tours, the sanctuary status translates into healthy, protected reef ecosystems around Lanai and West Maui. The protection of the marine environment extends to the reef fish, coral, and turtles that make snorkeling in these waters consistently exceptional. Hawaiian green sea turtles encountered on snorkel tours are also protected under the Endangered Species Act. Their numbers have recovered significantly in Hawaiian waters following decades of [Kaanapali snorkel trips](#) protection, and snorkelers today regularly see turtles that were far less common a generation ago. Understanding the protected status of the marine environment informs the responsible viewing practices that Kaanapali Ocean Adventures builds into every tour. The wildlife that makes these tours memorable exists because of protections that guests, operators, and the state of Hawaii have collectively honored. Experience the marine sanctuary at +1 808-633-3138.