



ROYAL RESORTS® A CANCUN TURTLE CONSERVATION PIONEER

Every May, Cancún pioneer resort group Royal Resorts prepares to welcome its very special summer visitors, the sea turtles that lay their eggs on the beaches in front of its hotels in Cancún, Puerto Morelos and the Riviera Maya.

From May to October, security guards patrol the shoreline at night on the look out for female sea turtles emerging from the waves and they watch over them as they dig their nests. Later in the season, guests may be lucky enough to witness one of nature's greatest spectacles, baby turtles scuttling down the beach towards the sea. The turtle season begins in May and draws to a close at the end of November.

The 2017 Royal Resorts turtle-nesting season was record-breaking, 1,063 turtle nests were protected in turtle nurseries at The Royal Sands, The Royal Caribbean and The Royal Islander in Cancún and security staff released 111,226 baby turtles to begin life at sea. A further 20,000 baby turtles from 228 nests were released at Grand Residences by Royal Resorts® to the south of Puerto Morelos and there were five nests at The Royal Haciendas®, which is located on a stretch of beach five minutes to the north of Playa del Carmen where turtles rarely come ashore.

Formal record keeping began at Royal Resorts in 1998 and to date 7,995 nests have been protected and 741,042 baby turtles had been released, a number that is sure to rise even further in the 2018 season.

The Mexican Caribbean, One of the World's Most Important Turtle Nesting Areas

The Mexican Caribbean is an important nesting area for the green (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) turtles and also receives occasional visits from the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the largest and rarest turtle to swim the oceans.

Seven of the world's eight species of sea turtle inhabit Mexican waters and lay their eggs on the nation's beaches. They are protected under Mexican law and it is a





criminal offense to persecute and hunt them, steal their eggs, consume their meat or purchase tortoiseshell products such as jewelry or combs.

Every year, female sea turtles emerge from the sea at night to lay their eggs on the beaches of Cancun, the Riviera Maya, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres and other parts of the Mexican Caribbean. From May to October, the Royal Resorts turtle guardians, the security staff at The Royal Sands[®], The Royal Caribbean[®] and the Royal Islander[®] in Cancún, Grand Residences to the south of Puerto Morelos and The Royal Haciendas in the Riviera Maya conduct nightly patrols in search of the turtles that scientists believe return to the beaches they were born on year after year to lay their eggs.

When they come across a turtle, they wait until she has finished digging her nest and has entered into an egg-laying trance before beginning to collect the eggs. They stand guard over her until she covers the nest with sand and returns to the waves, then they move the clutch of eggs to an enclosure where they are protected from the waves, predators such as seabirds and crabs, and the passage of human feet. Each nest is labeled with the date and time, species of turtle and number of eggs, and members of the sea turtle protection team guard the corral round the clock.

Forty-five to 60 days later, the eggs hatch and staff and local biologists prepare to release the baby turtles after dark. On the count of three, the tiny creatures are set free to scuttle down the beach towards the waves.

Spreading the Message about Turtle Conservation

During the sea turtle season, Royal Resorts does all it can to make its guests aware of these very special ocean-going visitors and the need to protect them. A documentary produced by Royal Channel, the in-house TV station, is screened regularly and guests can read about the sea turtles at the Royal Resorts blog on www.royalresorts.com and the company's Facebook page. They learn about the dangers that sea turtles face in the wild from large-scale fishing and pollution to habitat loss, poaching and global warming, among others. They are also told about the nesting season rules, which cover what visitors must and must not do when they come across a female





turtle laying its eggs on the beach or when they go snorkeling or diving on local reefs. The rules include watching from a distance of ten meters, not touching the creature and keeping quiet at all times. The use of torches and flash photography to take photos is prohibited. When turtles are startled, they will return to the sea without laying their eggs and the entire clutch of eggs will be lost.

Royal Resorts became involved in sea turtle protection in 1985 and was among the first resort groups to sign up when Cancun municipal authorities subsequently launched a conservation campaign. At state level, the turtle program is coordinated by SEMARNAT, the Mexican Department of the Environment.

In another move to protect sea turtles and other marine life and keep beaches and oceans clean, in 2017 Royal Resorts joined the global campaign to reduce the use of plastic straws, a major source of pollution. Its restaurants and bars no longer serve drinks with straws.

About Royal Resorts

Founded in Cancun in 1975, Royal Resorts is a pioneer in the Mexican tourism industry with a collection of beachfront resorts in Cancún and Playa del Carmen. A beautiful beach south of Puerto Morelos is the location for its latest resort, Grand Residences Riviera Cancun[®], an exclusive and award-winning luxury property affiliated with The Leading Hotels of The World[®] which opened on December 7, 2013.

Turtle protection aside, Royal Resorts is committed to a role of environmental stewardship and sustainable development. The Mesoamerican Reef Tourism Initiative (MARTI) has certified it as a company with eco-friendly policies.

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