



While travelling from Hol Chan Marine Reserve back towards Caye Caulker, he spotted a loggerhead sea turtle in the water. Carefully, he slowed the boat. Grabbing my underwater camera and snorkelling gear, I got into the water and swam closer to the majestic sea creature. It was my first time seeing and swimming with a loggerhead, and I was thrilled to have this encounter. I took a few photos as the sea turtle swam by. To my surprise, the curious animal swam back to me, checking me out before swimming down and returning for a third look. It was amazing to witness its curiosity.

On my last snorkelling trip with Captain Amado, I witnessed the negative sides of wildlife tourism here off Caye Caulker. When we went to Shark and Ray Alley in the Caye Caulker Marine Reserve, we were the only boat at first. The nurse sharks rested on the sea floor as if they knew that Amado is not the boat that would feed them. I slipped into the water, taking photos of the southern stingrays and nurse sharks resting in the swaying seagrass. Suddenly, more and more sharks started to wake up and swim away and soon, all the rays and sharks that were resting in this area of the reef were gone. I popped my head out of the water to see what was happening and noticed that another snorkelling boat just joined us on the reef.

I swam over to the other boat, curious to witness the different experience and behaviour of the animals. A large, swirling ball of sharks was gathered off the side of the boat, each fighting for their chance to grab a piece of the sardines being thrown into the water by the tour guide. Giant southern stingrays circled the sharks, and most snorkellers were not even watching this spectacle as they stood with their heads out of the water.

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