

BEAT THE BURN: A GUIDE TO REEF-SAFE SUNSCREENS

BY KATHRYN CURZON AND BECCA HURLEY

Since Hawaii and Palau have begun banning sunscreens containing synthetic ingredients that might harm coral reefs, sales of reef-safe sunscreen are on the rise. It's a smart choice to protect our oceans and bodies, but which sunscreen should you choose? Over the past year, we've delved into ingredients, read research, and tested a range of reef-safe sunscreens in the harsh sun of New Zealand, Australia and Fiji. The results are in—here's your ultimate guide to reef-safe sunscreen.



MOOGOO

MooGoo (moogoousa.com) produces sunscreens that are ideal for sensitive skin. You can read about every ingredient on its website, including what it is and why it's used.

ACTIVE INGREDIENT: NANO ZINC

SPF RATING: 40

PRICE: \$19.90 (4.2 OZ.)

MooGoo states that the sunscreen uses nano zinc, but in a way that ensures the zinc particles are not so small as to cause harm to humans or the ocean.

How did it perform? This sunscreen is outstanding. I tested it rigorously at midday in the Australian sun, before and after being in the water and on repeat occasions. I didn't have any red skin and didn't burn—whether I applied the sunscreen sparingly or liberally.

What makes this product special? MooGoo's products are made in an Australian carbon-neutral facility. It uses recycled materials for packaging, including post-consumer plastic. The packaging is recyclable.

—Kathryn Curzon



BADGER BALM

Badger Balm (badgerbalm.com) produces a variety of natural sunscreens, including baby/kid formulas, active and sport varieties, tinted sunscreens and SPF lip balms.

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS: NON-NANO ZINC OXIDE; CLEAR ZINC OXIDE

SPF RATING: 30

PRICE: \$15.99 (2.9 OZ.)

Badger states that its clear zinc oxide formulas are made using nanoparticles in a way that ensures it's reef-safe.

How did it perform? I tested a Badger sunscreen in the harsh New Zealand summer sun, and my skin burned despite applying it liberally and testing on repeat occasions. I can see this product might be suitable for less-strong sun conditions though, as it's easy to apply and there are plenty of sunscreen options to choose from.

What makes this product special? Badger Balm uses organic plant extracts and natural ingredients. Its products are biodegradable and cruelty-free. —Kathryn Curzon

WHAT MAKES REEF-SAFE SUNSCREEN LESS HARMFUL TO CORAL?

A proposed FDA rule classifies two sunscreen ingredients "generally recognized as safe and effective" for use: titanium dioxide and zinc oxide.

While the FDA has not classified other chemicals commonly used in sunscreen as unsafe, it is requesting further studies be made to clarify their effects. This could have implications for humans using the sunscreen and marine life that comes in contact with the chemicals in the water.

One study found that oxybenzone had negative effects on the larval form of the coral *Stylophora pistillata* and the cells of seven types of coral, leading to bans on the sale of products containing oxybenzone.

While the scientific data is not conclusive regarding chemical filters in sunscreen, mineral filters offer an alternative that might better benefit both humans and marine life.

It's important to note that mineral-based sunscreens reflect the sun's harmful rays, while chemical-based products absorb UV light, which may make mineral-based sunscreens less effective during prolonged sun exposure.

To get the most effective sun protection, keep covered with hats and clothing.



RAW LOVE

Raw Love sunscreen (rawlovesunscreen.com) was created by a divemaster in Hawaii especially for people who dive, surf, swim and paddle.

ACTIVE INGREDIENT: NON-NANO ZINC OXIDE

SPF RATING: 35

PRICE: \$24.99 (4 OZ.)

How did it perform? This sunscreen smells divine and comes in a small metal tin that is easy to pop in your kit bag without fear of it breaking or leaking. Easy to apply, Raw Love sunscreen rubs in well and leaves a barely visible white tint on the skin. On each occasion I used it in New Zealand, my skin burned. However, I think this sunscreen may perform better in sun conditions that are less harsh.

What makes this product special? As well as being reef-safe, Raw Love is plastic-free, entirely natural and biodegradable.
—Kathryn Curzon



STREAM2SEA

Stream2Sea (stream2sea.com) is designed for all water lovers, and its line of products ranges from mineral sunscreens to skin and hair care products.

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS: 8.8% TITANIUM DIOXIDE (NON-NANO)

SPF RATING: 30

PRICE: \$16.95 (3 OZ.)

How did it perform? This sunscreen performed well in the Fijian sun, and I did not burn. I found this formula to be difficult to rub in, and it leaves a whiter-than-normal appearance to your skin. Stream2Sea has also created a tinted SPF 30. It helps with the issue of leaving your skin appearing extra white, which I appreciated on my face, but for the rest of my body it still left me looking a little unnatural.

What makes this product special? Stream2Sea products are safe for use in all bodies of water, and its packaging is eco-conscious.
—Becca Hurley



RAW ELEMENTS

Raw Elements (rawelementsusa.com) was created by a former lifeguard who wanted a natural alternative to the harsh chemical sunscreens he used.

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS: NON-NANO ZINC OXIDE

SPF RATING: 30

PRICE: \$18.99 (3 OZ.)

How did it perform? Raw Elements has a unique scent, but the product performed well and I did not burn. As with most mineral sunscreens, it takes a little more work to rub in smoothly. I did find it to be more difficult to reapply, even with towel-dry skin. I also tried Raw Elements' tinted facial moisturizer, which is rated SPF 30, and found it to be a great alternative to the white residue mineral sunscreens can leave behind.

What makes this product special? Raw Elements offers a plastic-free sunscreen pack that comes in a recyclable and reusable tin.
—Becca Hurley

FROM LEFT: COURTESY RAW LOVE; COURTESY STREAM2SEA; COURTESY RAW ELEMENTS