

The Best Whale Watching in Europe

A guide to seeing whales, dolphins and porpoises in all European waters

by Erich Hoyt

WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

With the support of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture Germany (BMVEL)



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WDCS is working with tour operators, researchers, fishermen, local communities and governments to protect whales and dolphins by encouraging careful whale watching that is a real learning experience, contributing both to local research and education programmes. We believe that whales and dolphins provide the key to enable people to understand and appreciate the sea and thus to care more about its future.

WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, is the global voice for the protection of whales, dolphins, porpoises and their environment. The charity was established in 1987 and now has supporters all over the world and offices in Argentina, Australia, Germany, the UK and the USA. For more information on how you can help protect whales and dolphins around the world and to find out more about WDCS's work, please go to www.wdcs-de.org (German) or www.wdcs.org (English).



Erich Hoyt has been an authority on whale watching - writing, speaking and conducting workshops - since writing the first book on the subject, *The Whale Watcher's Handbook*, which was called a 'naturalists' classic' in BBC Wildlife Magazine. He has written more than 300 scientific articles, papers and reports; his other books include *Orca: The Whale Called Killer*, *Creatures of the Deep*, and *The Earth Dwellers*. Currently WDCS Senior Research Associate and Co-Director of the Far East Russia Orca Project, he lives near Edinburgh, Scotland.



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Foreword

For as long as I can remember, I have been attracted to and fascinated by whales. I don't really know whether it is their amazing size, gentle charisma, intelligence or the close bonds to people that make us come under their spell.

Sadly, these peaceful mammals have been hunted with industrial methods over the past century and have become almost extinct. Just in time, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) voted an emergency whaling ban in 1982 which came into force in 1986. This moratorium has helped some whale stocks to avoid extinction and even start to recover. However, we are still a long way from a recovery of all whale stocks.

Nevertheless, some IWC member states believe that commercial whaling should resume. For more than a decade now, they have tried to lift the moratorium. Never mind that such a decision comes much too early, I am convinced that the resumption of whaling is unnecessary and superfluous for another reason.

Those that support the resumption of whaling often argue that the sustainable use of living resources is not just allowed, but recommended, citing the Rio declaration. I follow this argument but question it in relation to whales: Does such sustainable use have to be lethal? Aren't there non-lethal alternatives to using resources - alternatives which are truly sustainable and also linked to economic benefits which could even be higher than the consumptive or other use?

Fortunately, there is such an alternative. It's whale watching, a robust, expanding part of the tourism industry. Whale watching offers the possibility of observing these magnificent mammals in nature and to meet them at close range. For years, the government has been trying, in association with other like-minded countries, to bring whale watching under the competence of the IWC as an important additional use of whales. Sadly, the countries that support whaling have refused to accept the IWC's competence over whale watching. This, however, will not discourage the government from continuing to encourage the full recognition of whale watching within the IWC.

Anyone who joins a whale watching trip will never forget it. The excitement of experiencing the unity of people and nature, the encounter between such different creatures, is simply amazing. I encourage everyone to take the opportunity for such an adventure. I am very pleased and thankful to WDCS for adopting the whale watching issue with such passion, to collaborate with Erich Hoyt, such a reputable scientist, and to produce this publication highlighting the best whale watching opportunities in Europe. In the pages that follow, you can discover the most important whale watching sites around Europe. I hope and trust this guide will be in great demand and receive a wide distribution.



Renate Künast

Federal Minister of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture Germany



Whale, Dolphin & Porpoise Watching is taking off all over Europe

People don't usually think of whales and dolphins when they travel around Europe, but European waters offer a wide variety of reliable whale watch opportunities in spectacular locations.

Blues, orcas and friendly minkes in the midnight sun

'Whoosh!' The sound of a whale exhaling in the low midnight sun of north-east Iceland.

The response from people on our ship was instant but extremely varied as some four or five nationalities celebrated the arrival of leviathan with the gasp of 'O!', 'Wow!', 'Merveilleux!', '¡Incréible!', or 'Wunderbar!' Some sounds even drifted toward the profane, or were so spontaneous and guttural that they seemed a coded language of their own: the exclamation of the 'first time whale watcher'.

We were a boat full of 25 people including half a dozen children, not one of us ready for bed. We were cruising across calm Skjálfandi Bay in search of shared adventure, a chance to connect with nature. The icy peaks framing the western side of the fjord reminded us that we were near the Arctic Circle, but the reappearance of the whale, seconds later, brought us back to the moment.

The boat's naturalist or guide told us that this was one of the 'friendly' local minke whales. The skipper was careful to observe a respectful 100 m minimum distance so as not to crowd the whale. But, as often happens, the whale hadn't read the regulations. Seconds later, we had a minke whale raising its head clear of the water beside our boat. More gasps and sighs and an awful lot of cameras quietly snapping, as we treasured the moment. We were all suddenly big fans of wild minke whales, never mind the smell of second-hand herring on its breath.



Fin whale surfaces - and its 20m-long body comes into view.

On Wednesday, it had been blue whales off north-west Iceland - the largest animals ever, seven of them all around the boat. On Thursday, yesterday, we'd seen humpback whales, orcas and thousands of seabirds. It was not yet the weekend and, earlier today, we'd added two species of dolphins and a sei whale. Now here was a friendly minke whale.

This was the new Iceland. Better known two decades ago as a whaling centre, Iceland has become the whale watch capital of northern Europe where last year some 62,050 people went whale watching, approximately 30% of all visitors to the country.

You can watch whales from half a dozen different ports all around Iceland. The visitors who come to the north-eastern outpost of Húsavík find a warm, friendly whale watching community with a state-of-the-art whale centre, book store, inviting restaurants by the sea and choice of whale watch boats and skippers offering 2 or 3 trips a day. Those who arrive around the longest day of the year can go whale watching in the midnight sun and join the annual whale watch festival put on by the Húsavík Whale Centre - one of the highlights of the new whale watch calendar in Iceland.

How it all began

Whale watching in Iceland really only started in 1995. The first whale watch trips in Europe were boat tours in 1980 to see dolphins resident around Gibraltar. For most of a decade, that was all that was on offer. In the late 1980s, boat-based whale watching directed toward large whales started up in three countries. From Italy, enthusiasts began travelling to a prime fin whale area in the Mediterranean with numerous dolphins; Norway offered sure sightings of sperm and minke whales, as well as orcas, just offshore; and the Azores, about 1500 km west of Portugal, invited whale watchers to meet different groups of sperm whales and a wide variety of other whales and dolphins. Since then, whale and dolphin watching has grown steadily, spreading to most of Europe.

Today, whales and dolphins are proving to have considerable value to people in coastal communities across Europe - in terms of income from whale

watch tours, public education, research, and as symbols of a healthy marine environment which makes communities proud of themselves and attractive to visitors. Yet the hunting of cetaceans persists in some parts of northern Europe. We must not forget that minke, fin and other whales range throughout European waters and know no boundaries. The minke whales that Scotland, Ireland and Iceland watch are the same species and may be from the same populations as those which are hunted off Norway. The pilot whale species that are killed in the Faeroes, although not from the same population, are the basis of an industry in the Canary Islands worth tens of millions of Euros. The sperm and other whales now watched in the Azores bring thousands of visitors to the islands producing much more income and many more benefits than the whaling industry which persisted there until about two decades ago.



Breaching humpback whales are drawing people to whale watching around Europe.

Whale watching is still very young in Europe. Compared to other continents, Europe already has the lion's share of the world's tourism - so the overall market is strong. However, as successful as Europe has been with cultural tourism, nature tourism has been slower to catch on. Most tourists planning a trip to Paris, London, or Rome would find it difficult to believe that whales and dolphins live close to shore all over Europe. If marine nature tourism is to continue to expand successfully, the perception of Europe must be expanded. At the same time, those of us living in Europe must all become caretakers of the marine environment, watching what we do and what we dump in our seas. Marine operators must lead the way, keeping to a minimum any disturbance to the whales and dolphins and their habitat.

In this guide you will find an introduction to the operators who are pioneering whale watch tours

across Europe, as well as information on land-based cetacean watching and nature tours on which whales can be seen. We are spotlighting the best programmes - those which offer educational, research and conservation opportunities that will provide solid benefits for cetaceans. There are also practical details on when and where to go, how much the tours cost and what you can expect to find. Finally, we provide contact details for whale festivals, whale centres and national phone numbers and websites for reporting cetacean sightings.

Which whales, dolphins and porpoises can be seen?

Some 36 species of cetaceans can be seen in the waters of Europe, from Greenland east to the Russian Arctic and south to the Canary Islands and the Mediterranean Sea.

Sperm whales - the largest toothed whales on Earth - are the basis of whale watching off northern Norway and the Azores, and are also found in the Mediterranean. In northern Greenland, the tusked narwhals can be found, while Iceland is the most reliable area for blue whales. Belugas can be seen in the summer passing along the shore and coming into the river mouths of Greenland, as well as Svalbard and northern Russia. Humpback whales can be seen off south-west Greenland and around Iceland, though even the UK has had a few visits by humpbacks in recent years. Minke whales and harbour porpoises are found throughout the waters of northern Europe, especially during the summer. Fin whales can be seen in many areas but most reliably off southern Ireland and in the new Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans off Italy, France and Monaco. The dramatic orcas can be seen around Norway and Iceland, as well as in the Strait of Gibraltar. Bottlenose dolphins live close to shore as part of resident populations around the UK, Ireland, France, Portugal, Croatia, Greece, Spain and the Canary Islands while farther offshore, Atlantic white-sided, white-beaked, common and other dolphins can be found in northern waters, and Fraser's, striped, and pantropical spotted dolphins are seen in warmer waters. Pilot whales are reliably found in the waters of the Canary Islands. Even beaked whale watching is becoming increasingly popular with the frequent sightings of these species off the Azores and the Canary Islands, as well as in the Bay of Biscay.

How does whale watching rate in Europe?

In general, European cetacean watch operations are of a high standard, with full attention to safety, and some consideration of education, research, and conservation values. There is still room for improvement on many tours but the cultural diversity of Europe adds considerable value to the experience of whale watching. Icelandic and Norwegian whale watching is sometimes conducted aboard classic Scandinavian sailing ships and fishing boats. In Ireland and Scotland, the European walking tour has been adapted to land-based whale watching along these rugged coasts. Azorean whale watches feature land-based viewing from the vigias, or watch towers, built by the whalers to search for whales.

In many communities across Europe, there is a growing recognition - as in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and a few other places - that the best way for whale watching to grow is to enhance its value through creating tours with trained naturalists, by inviting scientists aboard, and through making the visitor care about the conservation of whales and dolphins.

Checklist of cetaceans you can see in Europe

Some 36 species of cetaceans, 42% of the 86 cetacean species currently known around the world, can be seen in European waters. Here's a checklist to take with you next time you go whale watching, along with some notes about where they are found. With 2 or 3 trips to strategic locations such as Iceland, the Azores and southern Spain or the Bay of Biscay, and some good fortune, one might be able to see about half of these species in a matter of a few days.

Baleen Whales

- North Atlantic right whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*. Extremely rare.
- bowhead whale, *Balaena mysticetus*. Greenland, Svalbard to western Russian Arctic.
- northern minke whale, *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*. Found in the offshore and sometimes inshore waters of Europe.
- Bryde's whale, *Balaenoptera edeni*. Tropical baleen whale sometimes seen around the Canary Islands.
- sei whale, *Balaenoptera borealis*. Found throughout European waters but not in the high

Arctic. Seen inshore sometimes around Iceland and the Azores but normally found offshore.

- fin whale, *Balaenoptera physalus*. Found throughout European waters and regularly seen off Iceland, Norway, Scotland, Ireland, western Greenland, around the Azores, and in the Mediterranean.
- blue whale, *Balaenoptera musculus*. Found throughout European waters except the Mediterranean but fairly rare except for around Iceland and sometimes the Azores.
- humpback whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*. Found off Greenland and Iceland in summer. Less often seen throughout almost all European waters.



Minke whale surfacing.

Sperm Whales

- sperm whale, *Physeter macrocephalus*. Observed throughout European waters including the Mediterranean, but usually found offshore. Can be seen off northern Norway, the Azores, Canary Islands and in the Mediterranean off Greece and Italy.
- pygmy sperm whale, *Kogia breviceps*. Fairly rare, usually off the continental shelf in European waters south of Britain to the tropics, sometimes seen in the Azores.
- dwarf sperm whale, *Kogia sima*. Fairly rare, usually on the shelf edge in European waters south of Britain to the tropics.



Eye to eye with a sperm whale.

Beaked Whales

- Cuvier's beaked whale, *Ziphius cavirostris*. Found offshore in cool temperate to subtropical European waters including the Mediterranean; it can also be seen in the Bay of Biscay and Azores.
- northern bottlenose whale, *Hyperoodon ampullatus*. Found offshore from Arctic to warm temperate European waters including the Bay of Biscay, Azores, and around Iceland.
- True's beaked whale, *Mesoplodon mirus*. Rare in temperate and subtropical offshore waters of Europe; sometimes seen in the Bay of Biscay and the Azores.
- Gervais' beaked whale, *Mesoplodon europaeus*. Rare in temperate and subtropical offshore waters of Europe.
- Sowerby's beaked whale, *Mesoplodon bidens*. Rare from cool temperate to subtropical offshore European waters; seen in the Bay of Biscay.
- Blainville's beaked whale, *Mesoplodon densirostris*. Rare from warm temperate to subtropical offshore European waters; sometimes seen in the Canary Islands.



Northern bottlenose whales return from a deep dive.

Belugas and Narwhals

- beluga, *Delphinapterus leucas*. Found in western Greenland, Svalbard and Arctic Russian waters.
- narwhal, *Monodon monoceros*. Found off central to northern Greenland, especially west coast, and offshore in Svalbard and Arctic Russian waters.



A beluga prepares to descend.

Oceanic Dolphins

- rough-toothed dolphin, *Steno bredanensis*. Deep warm temperate and subtropical waters of Europe; sometimes seen in the Azores.
- bottlenose dolphin, *Tursiops truncatus*. Observed in temperate and subtropical waters of Europe including the Mediterranean, from Scotland to the Azores and Canary Islands.
- pantropical spotted dolphin, *Stenella attenuata*. Found in the most southerly subtropical waters of Europe, in the open North Atlantic.
- Atlantic spotted dolphin, *Stenella frontalis*. Found in the warm temperate and subtropical waters of Europe, including the Azores and Canary Islands.
- striped dolphin, *Stenella coeruleoalba*. Seen in the warm temperate and subtropical waters off Europe, including the Mediterranean.
- Fraser's dolphin, *Lagenodelphis hosei*. Found in deep subtropical waters of Europe.
- short-beaked common dolphin, *Delphinus delphis*. Found in temperate to subtropical waters of Europe.
- white-beaked dolphin, *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*. Found from edge of ice to cooler temperate waters from British Isles and Norway to Iceland and Greenland.
- Atlantic white-sided dolphin, *Lagenorhynchus acutus*. Overlaps white-beaked dolphin's range but more often found in warmer waters of southern Greenland, Iceland, as well as the British Isles and Norway.
- Risso's dolphin, *Grampus griseus*. Observed throughout temperate and subtropical offshore waters of Europe. Can be seen off western Scotland, west Wales, Ireland, the Strait of Gibraltar, and in the Azores.
- melon-headed whale, *Peponocephala electra*. Oceanic tropical whale rarely found in European waters.
- pygmy killer whale, *Feresa attenuata*. Oceanic tropical whale rarely found in European waters.
- false killer whale, *Pseudorca crassidens*. Found in deep, warm temperate and subtropical European waters. Can be seen in the Azores.
- orca, *Orcinus orca*. Found from Arctic to subtropical waters of Europe with reliable sightings off Norway, Iceland, Scotland's Northern Isles and the Strait of Gibraltar.
- long-finned pilot whale, *Globicephala melas*. Found in cool temperate to subtropical waters of Europe, especially cooler, offshore waters.
- short-finned pilot whale, *Globicephala*

macrorhynchus. Found in warm temperate and subtropical waters of Europe, regularly around the Canary Islands and in the Strait of Gibraltar, among other areas.



Atlantic white-sided dolphin.

Porpoises

- harbour porpoise, *Phocoena phocoena*. Found in the coastal waters of Europe, including northern Norway, Greenland and Iceland, and the warmer coastal portions of the western Russian arctic, as well as throughout the North and Baltic seas, including the waters of the UK, Denmark and Germany.



Harbour porpoises at the surface.

What's the best season for watching cetaceans in Europe?

Throughout most of Europe, the late spring to early autumn months (May to October) are the prime periods for watching cetaceans. In northern and Arctic waters, the season may be even more restricted to between June and August. One exception is Tysfjord in northern Norway where orca watching is conducted every year from October to December when orcas follow the herring schools into the fjords. In the Mediterranean, the season can extend all year round for some species, although winter weather and sea conditions may not

be as good for watching whales. In the Canary Islands, located off north-west Africa, which are also included in this guide as they are part of Spain, whale watching is year-round, except when the hot winds from the Sahara produce a thick haze over the water. Still, the Canary Islands can usually boast 300 or more good whale watching days a year.

How to choose a whale watch tour

- Look for a tour with an experienced naturalist or guide.
- Look for high quality brochures with a strong, accurate educational content.
- Try to find a recommendation through an established research group, educational facility or conservation association. Regional associations such as the Dolphin Space Programme in the Moray Firth of Scotland, and the Scottish Marine Wildlife Operators Association on the west coast of Scotland, have professional standards that provide a basic indication of quality. WDCS has a list of some operators on its website: www.wdcs.org.
- If you have any doubt or concern at all, do not hesitate to ask about safety features, such as life jackets for each person, life boats, and a mobile phone or radio.
- Ask if there is a good cetacean guide book available on board, hydrophones for listening to the whales, and any other special features or equipment.
- Before you book a tour, ask the operator to talk about the naturalist on board and describe the tour. Ask how the tour operator contributes to research, education and conservation of the whales. Are there free or sponsored school trips?

If you find an excellent tour operator, please recommend it to others as well as to us. We welcome your further comments and suggestions. Please send us your reports on whale watching trips, positive and negative, in Europe and around the world. Send your comments to: info.de@wdcs.org (in German) or info@wdcs.org (in English).

Land-based whale and dolphin watching

Whale and dolphin watching from land is becoming ever more popular. It takes more patience, but the rewards can be considerable. Best of all, it's the ideal way to watch the natural behaviour of whales

without disturbing or influencing them. Look for areas with deep water close to shore. The best spots are at least a few metres above the sea (10-20 m or more is ideal). The platform can be a rocky outcrop or headland, a lighthouse or a building close to shore. Below are some basic tips:

- Bring along good binoculars or a spotting scope.
- Concentrate on one area of the sea for 4 to 5 minutes before moving on. Remember dolphins and many whales stay down for 4 to 5 minutes at minimum so you need enough time to ensure that you have covered a given area.
- Search the sea for something unusual - a strange splash, something dark flashing above the surface, seabirds mobbing a certain area, and so on. Spend a little extra time examining these areas to confirm whether cetaceans might be present.
- Give your eyes a break by stepping back from the telescope or putting down your binoculars and watching with the naked eye from time to time. This also helps to ensure that you're not missing something obvious that's closer or off to one side.
- Bring a friend or two, if possible, to alternate your searching time and/or to cover a wider area.
- Carry a flask with a hot or cold drink, depending on the weather, and a snack.
- If you are watching for more than an hour or two, take breaks. It is difficult to keep your attention sharp for longer than 15-30 minutes. However, there is always something of interest happening on the sea - and it's always different. So even if you don't find cetaceans, there should be lots of interesting things to discover.

Taking photo-IDs of cetaceans

Amateur photographers with good cameras can help in the study of whales and dolphins. Part of the excitement of whale watch tours is that any participant with a good camera can take a photograph that contributes to scientific work, even an important scientific finding. Many casual whale watch participants - young and old - have taken valuable photo-ID shots in recent years. Who knows, it may even be possible to discover a new species visiting an area, or a species entirely new to science! Over the past decade, two new species of whales have been described. Here are some basic tips for photography - most of these tips will help you take better photographs at sea, even if they're not useful for scientists.

- 35 mm SLR cameras are ideal, with a 300 mm telephoto or a zoom lens that extends to 300 mm.
- Use high-speed colour transparency or black and white negative film - 400-1000 ASA. More and more whale researchers, however, are switching to high quality digital cameras to provide instant access to images, as well as to remove the need for storing and processing film in the field.
- From land, use a tripod; on a boat, brace your camera against a railing or use a 'tucked arm' position, with your elbows braced against your body to help keep the camera steady.
- On a boat, a camera speed of 1/1000th of a second is best, though on calm days 1/500th or 1/250th can be OK. Even on land, minimum shutter speed to photograph moving wildlife should be 1/125th of a second, with faster speeds preferable.
- Take photographs of most whales and all dolphins at right angles to the line of travel, including the dorsal fin and the surrounding back. Ideally, take photographs from both sides of the animal but the best photos are with the sun or brightest part of the sky behind you.
- Try to anticipate and take the photo after the animal spouts and just as it lifts its dorsal fin or back to the highest position above the water. For humpback, sperm, or other fluking whales, you need to photograph them from behind, waiting till the tail is high above the water and at right angles to the camera. Be careful not to crowd or chase the whales.
- Please inform WDCS if you get sharp, close-up photos so checks can be done to see if researchers have a match. It's important to send a copy of the photograph that you don't need to have returned, not the original. Note the date and time of the photograph, the location (GPS if possible), and your name and contact details.
- The parts of the body to be photographed for photo-ID vary by species:
 - all dolphins in European waters (including orcas, pilot whales, and Risso's dolphins) - dorsal fin, saddle patch and flanks, and any unusual markings or injuries;
 - humpback whale - the underside of the tail flukes;
 - sperm whale - the tail flukes and the dorsal ridge;
 - right or bowhead whale - the head showing white patches of pigmentation or callosities; and
 - all whales, dolphins and porpoises - any unusual markings, injuries, or tags, on any part of the body should be photographed and noted.

ICELAND (Lyveldi Ísland)



Friendly minke and humpback whales, huge pods of orcas and various dolphins, and the most reliable blue whale sightings in

Europe - all combine to make Iceland a magnet for whale watchers from many countries. Since 1995, Iceland has had one of the highest growth rates for whale watching in the world. In 2002, from April to October, some 62,050 people - 30% of all visitors to the country - went whale watching. Húsavík, in the north-east part of the country, has friendly minke as well as other whales and dolphins in a protected bay. It also has the Húsavík Whale Centre - a world class whale museum and whale watch centre with stunning exhibits. On the Reykjanes peninsula near Keflavík airport and easily accessible to Reykjavík, the towns of Keflavík and Hafnarfjörður offer sighting trips for various whales and dolphins. The towns of Stykkishólmur and Ólafsvík - located on the Snæfellsnes peninsula, near the snow-capped volcano that inspired 'Journey to the Centre of the Earth' - have trips mainly May to August; blue and humpback whales are featured. In 2003, at the 3rd Whale Watching Workshop, Icelandic whale watch operators agreed to form the Whale Watching Association of Iceland (WWAI). The Húsavík Whale Centre has been promoting whale watch guidelines with all the operators in Iceland; regulations are being put in place through the Ministry of Tourism.

Yet - a dark cloud hangs over whale watching and the booming tourism industry in Iceland. Iceland's government is considering a return to whaling, with exports to go to Japan. Many Icelanders - and those who visit and love Iceland - do not want a return to whaling. Is Iceland at heart a whaling country? Or is it a pristine, environmentally conscious, northern paradise? Of course, it is not simply an either/or situation, but the perception of Iceland in the world's eyes in the coming decades may partly hinge on the whaling question.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Reykjavik area - minke and humpback whales, white-beaked dolphins, orcas and harbour porpoises (sometimes fin and sei whales; blue whales rarely).

The fastest way to go whale watching for short-stay visitors to Iceland is 10 minutes from Keflavík international airport, in Keflavík. Here, Dolphin & Whale Spotting excursions aboard the up-to-94-passenger M/S Moby Dick bring regular naturalists and researchers working on white-beaked dolphins to the waters around the Reykjanes peninsula. Hydrophones record the sounds of the dolphins.

☎ +354 421 7777

✉ moby.dick@dolphin.is

🌐 www.dolphin.is

From Reykjavík harbour, the Whale Watching Centre offers 3-hour trips daily from April to end October aboard a 25 m catamaran (capacity up to 150). Trips cost ISK 3,500 (EUR 42).

☎ +354 533 2660

✉ hafsulan@hafsulan.is

🌐 www.hafsulan.is; www.whalewatching.is

From Reykjavík, Elding Whale Watching offers guided trips aboard 2 ships, carrying up to 38 and 115 passengers.

☎ +354 555 3565

✉ info@elding.is

🌐 www.elding.is

From Hafnarfjörður, 3-4 hour whale watch trips are offered aboard the spacious Húni II, an Icelandic ex-herring boat.

☎ +354 894 1388

✉ hunill@simnet.is

Sea-Marvels offers trips out of Keflavík.

☎ +354 895 2523

✉ gestur@marine-marvels.com

Húsavík - the whale watch capital of Iceland, with friendly minke whales, white-beaked dolphins and harbour porpoises as well as, sometimes, sei, humpback, blue or northern bottlenose whales.

North Sailing in Húsavík works closely with the Whale Centre to bring researchers on their trips and to encourage education. They have good naturalists and use typical Icelandic wooden fishing ships, including the 16 m Knórrinn, Iceland's first regular whale watch boat. The half-day trips will usually encounter friendly minke whales and several other cetacean species.

☎ +354 464 2350

✉ info@nordursigling.is

🌐 www.nordursigling.is

Hvalaferdir/ Húsavík Whale Watching, offers 3-hour trips from Húsavík.

☎ +354 464 2551

✉ info@hvalaferdir.is, salka@husavik.com

🌐 www.hvalaferdir.is

Snæfellsnes peninsula - the best blue whale watching in Europe, plus humpback and minke whales, white-beaked dolphins and harbour porpoises; sometimes orcas, fin and sei whales. Spectacular views of the Snæfellsjökull glacier.

Seatours has trips departing Ólafsvík from 1st June to 15th August aboard a large comfortable catamaran. 4- to 8-hour trips to see blue and other whales and dolphins costs ISK 7,950 (EUR 96). Shorter 3- to 4-hour trips mainly offered for groups.

☎ +354 438 1450

✉ saferdir@saferdir.is

🌐 www.saferdir.is

Whale Watching Tours has orca and other whale tours from Ólafsvík.

☎ +354 436 1471

Snjófell Adventure Tours has whale watch trips from Arnarstapi.

☎ +354 435 6783

✉ snjofell@snjofell.is

🌐 www.snjofell.is

Eyjafjörður area - minke and other whales, white-beaked dolphins, and harbour porpoises; sometimes humpback whales and orcas.

From Hauganes, 30 km north of Akureyri, Niels Jónsson offers whale watch tours aboard a traditional fishing boat from June to September.

☎ +354 466 1690

☎ +354 867 0000

✉ niels@niels.is

🌐 www.niels.is

Seatours, Sjóferdir Dalvík, has daily whale watch trips from 20th June to 20th August, departing from Dalvík.

☎ +354 863 2555

✉ sjoferdir@isholf.is

🌐 www.isholf.is/sjoferdir

Westman Islands area - orcas (best May and August), minke and other whales, white-beaked dolphins.

Viking Tours (Viking Bátsferdir) has whale watching from the Westman Islands.

☎ +354 488 4884

✉ viking@boattours.is

🌐 www.boattours.is

International tour operators/ companies

An excellent trip to Iceland with several guided boat excursions is offered by out of the blue, WDCS's travel arm. The 10-day trips are led by Mark Carwardine, well-known British author and broadcaster. These trips have high educational and research benefits and all profits go to conservation. Price £1,465 (EUR 2,107) not including return flight to Reykjavík.

☎ +44 1249 449 500

(within the UK: 0870 870 0027)

✉ bluetravel@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs.org/outoftheblue



A blue whale in Icelandic waters.

Whalespot, part of the Discover the World group, has been leading whale watch trips to Iceland longer than anyone and were the first to bring British tourists to see Icelandic whales and dolphins. In June and July, they offer 4-day blue, humpback and other whale tours out of Ólafsvík, with 2 days whale watching on boats, and, May to September, there are 4- to 6-day 'Whales, Fire & Ice' tours that include 2 days of minke and other whale watching on boats from Húsavík. The tours are naturalist-led and can be booked either from the boat's departure point in Iceland or from the UK.

☎ +44 1737 218 800

✉ sales@whalespot.co.uk

🌐 www.whalespot.com

www.discover-the-world.co.uk

Naturetrek offers guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a 'responsible tourism' policy.

☎ +44 1962 733 051
 ✉ info@naturetrek.co.uk
 🌐 www.naturetrek.co.uk

Explore Worldwide, which specialises in trekking, adventure and wildlife tours, offers blue whale safaris to Snæfellsnes in Iceland, in June and July, which include some whale watching.

☎ +44 1252 760 000
 🌐 www.exploreworldwide.com

Wildlife photographer and naturalist Annelie Utter leads whale and bird watching trips to Iceland in July, largely with Swedish participants; maximum 15 guests.

☎ +46 31 12 64 17
 ✉ annelie.utter@naturresor.com
 🌐 www.naturresor.com

Kon-Tiki Tours (Finland)

☎ +358 9 621 2525
 ✉ kontiki@kontiki.fi
 🌐 www.kontiki.fi

Colibri Umweltreisen (Germany)

☎ +49 30 28390232
 ✉ info@colibri-berlin.de
 🌐 www.colibri-umweltreisen.de

Abenteuerteam.com (Germany)

☎ +49 25 11445952
 ✉ info@abenteuerteam.com
 🌐 www.abenteuerteam.com

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 From the north-west tip of Snæfellsnes peninsula, around Hellissandur, minke whales can often be seen as well as, sometimes, orcas, humpback and other whales and dolphins.

🌳 From Hellnar, on the south side of Snæfellsnes peninsula, watch out for orcas, minke and other whales and dolphins.

🌳 Around Vestmannaeyjar, the Westman Islands, orcas and other whales and dolphins can sometimes be viewed from shore.

🌳 The Húsavík Whale Centre has wonderful exhibits and provides a great introduction to whales and whale watching all over Iceland. See at right: 'The Húsavík Whale Centre.'

🌳 The Nature Centre in Sandgerði, near Keflavík, has cetacean and other exhibits and is used by 'Dolphin & Whale Spotting' to present lectures, show photographs, and play the sounds of whales and dolphins.

☎ +354 423 7551

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Whale and dolphin sightings and strandings can be reported to the Húsavík Whale Centre.

☎ +354 464 2520
 +354 464 2522
 📞 +354 891 9820
 ✉ abbi@icewhale.husavik.com

The Húsavík Whale Centre

In north-east Iceland, Ásbjörn Björgvinsson is a whale watch guru and guide, helping to organise many workshops and events to promote whale watch tourism all over Iceland. He has opened the first whale watch centre/museum in Iceland - one of the finest of its kind in the world. The centre has displays on all aspects of whales and features a massive outdoor mural by noted Japanese muralist Namiyo Kubo. The centre joins art and science with elegantly designed, eye-opening yet informative displays. It also has news and information on whale watching all over Iceland and helps to coordinate national whale sighting information. The centre sponsors the annual Húsavík Whale Festival, held around the summer solstice, with extended whale watch trips, special lectures and art exhibitions, a 'sand whale' contest with prizes, and other activities for the family. Ásbjörn - Abbi to his friends - is chairman of the Whale Watching Association of Iceland (WWAI). For his efforts in support of whales and whale watching, his name was recently added to the United Nations Global 500 honour roll.

The Húsavík Whale Centre

☎ +354 464 2520
 ✉ abbi@icewhale.husavik.com
 🌐 www.icewhale.husavik.com
www.nordursigling.is



The Húsavík Whale Centre.

NORWAY (Kongeriket Norge)



Since 1988, Norway has offered superb whale watching in a fjordic, mountainous, midnight-sun setting. Andenes is the most northerly place in the world to see sperm whales, and one of the best places to observe them through the long northern summer days. Minke, fin, pilot and other whales and dolphins are also often found. Tysfjord, a few kilometres south, offers one of the easiest and most reliable locales for watching orcas which come in close to Tysfjord in pursuit of herring from October to January. Norway has no legal regulations governing whale watching but operators are encouraged to follow guidelines in Andenes and Tysfjord.

In 1982, Norway announced it would not follow the world-wide whaling ban. It currently allows itself to kill around 700 minke whales a year, conducting hunts off the mainland, Jan Mayen Island and Svalbard. Still, it is noteworthy that, even in Norway, successful whale watching in 2 communities demonstrates a valuable economic alternative to whaling.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

The world's largest, most successful Arctic whale watching operation is Whalesafari Ltd (Hvalsafari AS) from Andøya, the northernmost part of Vesteralen, some 300 km north of the Arctic Circle. Whalesafari has 2 large ships which make 1-4 times daily trips to look for the sperm whales in the deep offshore waters. The season is from 25th May to 15th September - most of it when Andenes is bathed in midnight sun. The trips take 4-5 hours and cost NOK 685 for adults (EUR 87),



One of Whalesafari's whale watch ships.

less for children and families. Success rate is 96-99% and a free additional trip is provided if no whales are seen. Besides sperm whales, orcas and minke whales are sometimes found, as well as pilot whales, harbour porpoises, white-beaked dolphins and even fin whales. One or two multilingual naturalists help guide each trip; besides Scandinavian languages, guiding is usually available in German, English, French, Italian and Spanish. The cost of the trip includes a light meal on board and a guided tour through the Andenes Whale Centre where visitors can learn more about whales and watch videos and an informative slide show.

Hydrophones carried on every trip are used to help find the sperm whales.

☎ +47 76 11 56 00

✉ post@whalesafari.no

🌐 www.whalesafari.com

Superb orca watching, close to shore, is offered through Orca Tysfjord from 10th October to mid-January, but the peak season is the 6 weeks from 10th October to late November. The orcas, which come to feed on the herring runs, stay until January but, after late November, the days are very short and the light reduced. The guided tours last 4-6 hours aboard inflatable 10-passenger boats, as well as large 90-passenger cruisers. Researchers often accompany participants on the boats. It is also possible to encounter white-tailed sea eagles on the trips.

☎ +47 75 77 53 70

✉ post@tysfjord-turistsenter.no

🌐 www.orca-tysfjord.nu (tours)

www.tysfjord-turistsenter.no (hotel)

From the harbour in Stø, south of Andenes, whale watch tours are offered by Whale Tours AS.

☎ +47 76 13 44 99

✉ whaletrs@online.no

🌐 www.whaletours.no

International tour operators/ companies

Whalespot, part of the Discover the World group, offers 4- or 5-day orca watching tours to Tysfjord during October and November. The tours are naturalist-led and can be booked either from Tysfjord or from the UK.

☎ +44 1737 218 800

✉ sales@whalespot.co.uk

🌐 www.whalespot.com

www.discover-the-world.co.uk

Naturetrek, which offers guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a 'responsible tourism' policy, has 4-day trips in November to see the orcas at Tysfjord.

☎ +44 1962 733 051

✉ info@naturetrek.co.uk

🌐 www.naturetrek.co.uk

From late October to early December, wildlife photographer and naturalist Annelie Utter leads 11 orca trips to Tysfjord largely with Swedish participants using an old sailing ship; maximum 15 guests.

☎ +46 31 12 64 17

✉ annelie.utter@naturresor.com

🌐 www.naturresor.com

Kon-Tiki Tours (Finland)

☎ +358 9 621 2525

✉ kontiki@kontiki.fi

🌐 www.kontiki.fi

Sperm whale (Andenes) as well as orca (Tysfjord) excursions are offered by Colibri Umweltreisen (Germany).

☎ +49 30 28390232

✉ info@colibri-berlin.de

🌐 www.colibri-umweltreisen.de

Arcatour SA (Switzerland)

✉ arcatour@arcatour.ch

🌐 www.arcatour.ch

Abenteuerteam.com (Germany)

☎ +49 251 1445952

✉ info@abenteuerteam.com

🌐 www.abenteuerteam.com

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 The Andenes Whale Centre, situated in an old fish-processing warehouse on the harbour, has a full-scale model of a sperm whale eating a giant squid and a full sperm whale skeleton, recovered from a local stranding in 1996. Multi-media shows introduce people to the whales and their lives at sea. Guided tours are offered through the centre. From the time the centre was set up in 1988, it has collaborated with whale researchers and students from various countries to encourage education and new research into whales. A number of students have done their graduate work based on work conducted from the centre and on the Whalesafari boats.

☎ +47 76 11 56 00

✉ post@whalesafari.no

🌐 www.whalesafari.com

🌳 In the hills above Tysfjord, overlooking the water, researchers have established land-based lookouts for the orcas. Be forewarned that these are often cold conditions for even fairly short periods of whale watching. Ask specific directions at Tysfjord 'Turistsenter'.

☎ +47 75 77 53 70

✉ post@tysfjord-turistsenter.no

🌐 www.tysfjord-turistsenter.no/safari

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Whalesafari in Andenes also offers whale watching on the internet through sperm whale researcher Erland Lettevall. Some 370 sperm whale individuals have been catalogued and it's possible to check their IDs and even to participate in the research by submitting ID photos of your own that you may have taken on the whale watching boat. Read the introduction at www.whalesafari.no/news/news1.html, and then go to <http://130.241.163.46/spermwhale> to check the catalogue.



A sperm whale off Andenes lifts its flukes.

Visitors to the Andenes Whale Centre can obtain a diploma and badge to remember their whale watch trip by joining the Royal International Whale Safari Club. Membership funds are used to support the research and information activities of the Whale Centre. Subscription is NOK 250 (EUR 32).

☎ +47 76 11 5600

✉ post@whalesafari.no

🌐 www.whalesafari.com

Svalbard (Norway)



Centuries ago, far north-west of mainland Norway, the icy Svalbard archipelago was a big whaling centre. Today, in July and August, it is possible to see a number of cetaceans offshore in the mainly ice-free western and southern parts of the archipelago. Belugas can sometimes be watched even from shore, whilst minke, fin and sometimes humpback whales can be found off the west and south coasts.



A minke whale surfaces off Norway.

International tour operators/ companies

Arcturus Expeditions, specialists in Arctic travel aboard icebreakers, offer naturalist-guided tours of remote areas that feature wildlife, including whales and dolphins. Svalbard trips, out of Longyearbyen, include voyages to North Spitsbergen, circumnavigations of the islands, as well as combined Greenland-Spitsbergen, Faeroes-Jan Mayen-Spitsbergen, and Iceland-Jan Mayen-Bear Island-Spitsbergen trips. Trips last 9 to 16 days from June through August. The ships include the Professor Molchanov, Professor Multanovskiy, and the Grigoriy Mikheev and all carry inflatable boats for near-shore and shore-based excursions. Prices start at £1800 (EUR 2,588).

☎ +44 1389 830 204

✉ arcturus@btinternet.com

🌐 www.arcturusexpeditions.co.uk

Naturetrek offers guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a 'responsible tourism' policy. Their cruises to Svalbard aboard the Professor Molchanov, are not cetacean-based but may include some cetacean sightings.

☎ +44 1962 733 051

✉ info@naturetrek.co.uk

🌐 www.naturetrek.co.uk

Wildlife Encounters, one of the Discover the World programmes, offers 'North Atlantic Explorer', a 12-day cruise in June from Oban to Svalbard, which has the chance to see a variety of large whale species and dolphins aboard the Professor Multanovskiy. Trip includes visits to the Shetlands, Hebrides, Faeroes, Jan Mayen and Spitsbergen. Guided by naturalists. Prices start at £1740 (EUR 2,502).

☎ +44 1737 218 802

✉ sales@wildlife-encounters.co.uk

🌐 www.discover-the-world.co.uk

Wildlife photographer and naturalist Annelie Utter leads polar bear trips that sometimes encounter whales, often minke whales and belugas, sometimes fin whales. Escorting mainly Swedish participants, she allows a maximum of 15 guests on each trip.

☎ +46 31 12 64 17

✉ annelie.utter@naturresor.com

🌐 www.naturresor.com

WildWings tours, out of Longyearbyen, feature voyages around Spitsbergen lasting 10 days in late June-early July. The ship is the Grigoriy Mikheev which carries inflatable boats for near-shore and shore-based excursions. Prices start at £1899 (EUR 2,731).

☎ +44 1179 658 333

✉ wildinfo@wildwings.co.uk

🌐 www.wildwings.co.uk

With Natural Habitat Adventures, you can circumnavigate Spitsbergen, the main island in the Svalbard archipelago, aboard the Professor Molchanov for 10 days in late July-early August. Belugas are seen as well as sometimes bowhead and other whales and dolphins. Also: polar bear, walrus, bearded, ringed and harp seals, reindeer, Arctic fox and extensive seabird colonies, all in a sweeping tundra and rugged ice-capped mountain landscape. Rates for a twin cabin start at USD \$4,795 (EUR 4,368) per person.

☎ +1 303 449 3711

✉ info@nathab.com

🌐 www.nathab.com

Lookouts and marine centres

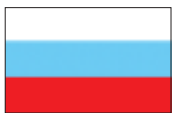
🌳 From Longyearbyen, on the western side of the Adventdalen river mouth, belugas swim close to shore.

🌲 Along the coastline near the airport outside of Longyearbyen, belugas can be seen in fairly clear waters from May (depending on ice break-up in the fjords) through the summer.

🌲 At Sveagruva, on the spit south of the airport, belugas come into the shallows to chase polar cod and capelin, sometimes getting stuck on the low tide.

🌲 The Bellsund - Van Mijenfjorden - Van Keulen-fjorden area of the west coast of Spitsbergen is the best place for belugas in summer.

RUSSIA (Rossiskaya Federatsiya)



The high northern island archipelagoes of Franz Josef Land, Novaya Zemlya and Severnaya Zemlya, and the Taymyr peninsula present a remote, forbidding picture to some. Yet, they were opened to limited tourism in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Trips here, mainly using ice-breakers, offer stark vistas and a wide array of arctic fauna featuring cetaceans such as belugas, narwhals, bowheads and more. Recently, Russian and Finnish whale researchers and enthusiasts have helped open up beluga watch tours, with a strong ecological component and whale watch guidelines, to the Solovetskiy Islands in the White Sea.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Since 2000, a joint venture by a Finnish and Russian company, Kon-Tiki Tours of Helsinki and Lukomorie based in Karelia, has offered 6-7 summer trips a year to the Solovetskiy Islands to see beluga whales. These trips are open to the public and cost EUR 640 per person. Well-guided by a marine biologist with high educational, research and conservation components, the trips offer lectures on site by a Russian cetacean scientist, part of a team conducting beluga behavioural research in the area. Hydrophones and binoculars are regularly utilised during these sessions, and films and guide books are available. Participants stay at a B & B in the area.

Kon-Tiki Tours

☎ +358 9 621 2525

✉ kontiki@kontiki.fi

🌐 www.kontiki.fi

Lukomorie

☎ +7 8142 55 24 29

✉ lukomorie@onego.ru

🌐 www.lukomorie.ru



The ghostly forms of belugas moving into Arctic rivers.

Trips to the Solovetskiy Islands to help out on beluga research are also being marketed through Ecovolunteers. 77% of what the participants pay goes directly to the project. Trips are offered June through August with a minimum stay of 2 weeks. Cost for 2 weeks is USD \$727 (EUR 662). The Ecovolunteer programme is directly available in the following countries: Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Austria, Russia, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Go to www.ecovolunteer.org and choose 'agents'.

🌐 www.ecovolunteer.org

An offshoot of the Solovetskiy Islands beluga project is a plan between researchers and the Solovetskiy Cultural Administration to establish a summer school for children and young people. The idea is to have marine biological courses lasting 5-7 days, taught by cetacean scientists working in field research.

Rauno Lauhakangas, Helsinki Institut of Physics

☎ +358 9 191 50590

✉ Rauno.Lauhakangas@helsinki.fi

Nature tours with some cetacean watching

Cruises aboard ice-breakers to the Russian Arctic are offered by Quark Expeditions, polar specialists responsible for many landmark expeditions including the first North-east Passage, the first circumnavigation of the Arctic and transpolar voyages to the North Pole, as well as many trips to Antarctica. Trips to the North Pole use the ice-breaker Yamal while the Russian Arctic trips use the Kapitan Khlebnikov. Prices start at USD \$7,750 (EUR 7,060) for a 2-week cruise in mid-July. Schedules and destinations vary from year to year. Cetaceans that can be seen include belugas, narwhals, sometimes bowhead whales, as well as polar bears and various seals.

+44 1494 464 080
 ✉ anne@quarkexpeditions.co.uk
 🌐 www.quarkexpeditions.com

International tour operators/ companies

Arcturus Expeditions, specialists in Arctic travel aboard icebreakers, offer a naturalist-guided tour of the Solovetskiy Islands in the White Sea.

+44 1389 830 204
 ✉ arcturus@btinternet.com
 🌐 www.arcturusexpeditions.co.uk

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 The Solovetskiy Islands have reliable shore-based sightings of belugas. In future, it may be possible to build a cetacean information centre for belugas along the coast.

DENMARK (Kongeriget Danmark)



Kerteminde, on the east side of Denmark, has tours to see harbour porpoises. The porpoises are also seen from land along the Danish island of Rømø, south-west Denmark, in the North Sea.

Nature tours with some cetacean watching

From Kerteminde, near Odense, Fjord & Baelt - Go under Water offers 2-hour marine nature tours in July which feature frequent sightings of harbour porpoises. There is always a naturalist on board and research is often part of the trip. Hydrophones and binoculars are carried for the public. (Please note that this wild porpoise watch opportunity is offered through an aquarium that keeps harbour porpoises captive. WDCCS believes that the arguments against the confinement of cetaceans are so overwhelming that there is no justifiable reason to keep these animals in captivity.)

+45 6532 4200
 ✉ post@fjord-baelt.dk
 🌐 www.gounderwater.com

Ferries

Harbour porpoises can be seen regularly from the Rømø-Sylt Linie GmbH ferry which runs between Havneby on the Danish island of Rømø to List, at the northern end of Sylt, a German island.



Harbour porpoises are popular off Denmark and Germany.

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 From the south end of Rømø and between the 2 islands of Rømø and Sylt, porpoises are most often seen on the flood tides especially during the summer months.

🌳 In flat calm seas, porpoises are often seen around Kerteminde in the county of Funen. Good spots include the tip of Fynshoved, at the mouth of Odense Fjord, and on the east side of the island of Romsø, especially from the lighthouse. Boat trips can be taken from Kerteminde to Romsø.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

There is no hotline for cetacean sightings, but strandings can be reported to Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, Universitetsparken 15, DK 2100 København Ø, Denmark.

GREENLAND (Kalâtdlit-Nunât or Grønland) (Denmark)



Greenland offers Arctic whale watching in among the calving glaciers, ice floes and sea ice. There is also cetacean hunting. The International Whaling Commission awards subsistence whaling quotas to indigenous hunters to catch minke and fin whales. In addition, there are poorly regulated hunts of small cetaceans including orcas, harbour porpoises, belugas and others. Yet, it is still possible to encounter and enjoy watching tusked narwhals, snowy-white belugas and orcas, especially in northern areas in autumn, as well as humpback, fin and minke whales which come to feed in southwestern Greenland waters in summer. Harbour porpoises, sperm and pilot whales are also

sometimes seen. Rare but possible sightings can be made of blue and bowhead whales, especially in west Greenland. Logistics in this vast land, more than a fifth the size of all Europe, can prove difficult with air and sea travel dependent on the unpredictable weather. Best months are usually July and August; days are often lost in September and October due to poor weather or sea conditions. As well, Greenland is expensive for travel, food and accommodation. Still, Greenland offers tremendous potential for the Arctic whale watcher.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Whale watch tours - or whale spotting as it is called in Greenland - is offered in a number of areas but can be arranged from nearly any community in Greenland. Best contacts are the local tourist offices (see below). Expect to pay DKK 500 to 900 (EUR 67 to 121) for a half- to full-day tour. It is possible to have a good whale watch experience in Greenland, but there is some risk. Some trips will not have a qualified guide or educational commentary, and there are no whale watch regulations in Greenland. Moreover, many people in Greenland still hunt marine mammals, including seals, polar bears, whales, dolphins and porpoises, and there is a chance you may encounter hunting first hand. Some local tourist offices and tour companies arrange tours to watch the hunters or, in the case of seals, to participate in the hunting. For these reasons, some people will not want to go to Greenland. Many conservationists, however, feel that the tourist to Greenland can play a valuable role simply by signing up for a whale spotting tour. In this way, the tourist's interest in whales and the willingness to pay to see whales and dolphins alive may help the long-term conservation of cetaceans around Greenland. In general, there is less hunting and more chance of having a good whale watch tour in the more southerly locations; as you go north, the level and extent of hunting increases dramatically.



A matrilineal group of orcas.

South Greenland

Nanortalik Tourism Service offers a 4-hour boat trip to the Graphite Mine on Amitsoq in July and August, with a good chance of whale spotting.

☎ +299 613 633

✉ nanortalik@greennet.gl

🌐 www.nanortalik.gl

Qaqortoq Tourism Association has a full-day boat trip to Eqalugaarsuit in spring and late summer with a good chance of encountering whales.

☎ +299 642 444

✉ qaqtourist@greennet.gl

🌐 www.qaq.gl

West Greenland

Paamiut is known for regular sightings of humpback, fin, minke, sometimes orca and other whales very close to the town, especially in late summer and autumn.

☎ +299 684 077

✉ paamiut-tourism@greennet.gl

🌐 www.paamiut.gl



Humpback whale goes into a breach.

At Nuuk, 4-hour whale watch trips are offered July to October through Nuuk Tourism.

☎ +299 322 700

✉ info@nuuk-tourism.gl

🌐 www.nuuk-tourism.gl

From Maniitsoq, some whale spotting and nature boat tours are available. Best chances for spotting whales are on the 1-day boat excursion to Ikkamiut and the seafishing trip to Ammaqoq Sound.

☎ +299 813 100

✉ mantour@greennet.gl

🌐 www.greenland-guide.gl/maniitsoq-tourist

Sisimiut, the northernmost town in the west Greenland area (north of the Arctic Circle) and the second largest town in Greenland, has many land-based hunting and even sealing trips, as well as combined trips, so be careful you don't inadvertently find yourself doing more than whale spotting.

(1) Inuit Outfitting

☎ +299 865 367

(2) Dukes Siunnersuisarfik

☎ +299 863 836

✉ dukescon@greenet.gl

(3) Sisimiut Tourist Information

☎ +299 864 848

✉ info@info-sisimiut.gl

🌐 www.info-sissimiut.gl

North Greenland

Boat and kayak tours to see cetaceans can be arranged through Kangaatsiaq Municipality.

☎ +299 871 077

🌐 www.kangaatsiaq.gl

From Aasiaat, on an island at the southern end of Disko Bay, it is possible to see narwhals and belugas, as well as fin whales and others in September and October. 3- to 5-hour whale spotting trips are offered by boat, or multi-day trips by kayak.

☎ +299 892 540

✉ aasiaat.tourist@greenet.gl

🌐 www.greenland-guide.gl/aasiaat-tourist



Humpback whale with a mouthful of food.

Uummannaq, north of Disko Bay, has a full 3 months of midnight sun and offers nearly 100% chance of seeing and hearing whales. Mostly likely are fin and minke whales, but narwhals, belugas, sperm whales, humpback whales and orcas are also sometimes seen. Various tours are offered from 2-hour midnight sun trips to 5-hour excursions from mid-July to November.

☎ +299 951 518

✉ uummannaq@icecaphotels.gl

🌐 www.icecaphotels.gl

East Greenland

Tasiilaq, situated on the island of Ammassalik, is the largest town in East Greenland. Tuning Expedition Service has 2- to 4-hour trips to see humpback, fin and other whales spouting in among icebergs and ice floes.

☎ +299 981 650

✉ tuning@greenet.gl

🌐 www.east-greenland.com

Kulusuk, near East Greenland's international airport, offers whale spotting trips.

(1) Kulusuk Trading Post

☎ +299 986 888

✉ kulusuk@greenet.gl

🌐 www.greenlandtourism.com

(2) Tobias Ignatiussen, Tuning Incoming

☎ +299 981 613

Nature tours with some cetacean watching

For a good overview of Greenland opportunities, including whale watching and other nature trips, contact Greenland Tourism.

☎ +45 3369 3200

✉ info@greenland.com

🌐 www.greenland.com

Also see: www.greenland-guide.gl

International tour operators/ companies

Arcturus Expeditions, specialists in Arctic travel aboard icebreakers, offer naturalist-guided tours of remote areas that feature wildlife, including whales and dolphins. East Greenland trips, out of Keflavik, Iceland, include voyages from Spitsbergen to north-east Greenland. Trips last 12-16 days in September. The ships include the Professor Molchanov, Professor Multanovskiy, and the Grigoriy Mikheev and all carry inflatable boats for near-shore and shore-based excursions. Prices start at £1727 (EUR 2,486).

☎ +44 1389 830 204

✉ arcturus@btinternet.com

🌐 www.arcturusexpeditions.co.uk

Explore Worldwide, which specialises in trekking, adventure and wildlife tours, offers 15-day trek-

king and boating trips to East Greenland, in July and August, which include some whale watching.

☎ +44 1252 760 000

🌐 www.exploreworldwide.com

Discover the World/ Arctic Experience also arranges trips to Greenland, either as part of their Icelandic trips, or separate trips to Greenland.

☎ +44 1737 218 800

✉ sales@discover-the-world.co.uk

🌐 www.discover-the-world.co.uk

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 Whales can sometimes be seen from local communities, among them Aasiaat, Uummannaq, Ammassalik, and even from the capital, Nuuk. As all communities are represented by tourist services, it's best to inquire on the spot about whale presence which will depend on ice and weather conditions as well as seasonal movements of whale prey. The key tourist services' contact details are listed above under 'whale and dolphin tours.'

FAEROE ISLANDS

(Føroyar)
(Denmark)



In recent years, tourism has grown in the islands, and nature tours, particularly bird watching, are offered. Some international operators also bring visitors to the islands on marine nature tours or as part of cruises from Scotland to Iceland or Svalbard. Despite the well-known pilot whale hunt, it is possible, as part of nature tours, to see whales while travelling between the islands to view the superb bird colonies on the cliffs and the seals on the rocks. Besides the pilot whales, other cetaceans can be seen from June through August including Atlantic white-sided and white-beaked dolphins. In addition, there are regular reports of sperm and minke whales, orcas, as well as sometimes fin, blue and northern bottlenose whales. Most sightings are offshore, but orcas, dolphins and pilot whales are sometimes seen close to land, even near the capital Tórshavn. Still, at present, there is no will to expand Faeroes tourism to feature whales and dolphins. Promoting the Faeroes as a whale watch destination will also depend on the cessation of the annual hunts which each year take hundreds of pilot whales as well as various dolphins and sometimes northern bottlenose whales.



Hunted in the Faeroe Islands, pilot whales are watched in the Canary Islands by a million people a year.

GERMANY

(Bundesrepublik Deutschland)



Friendly harbour porpoises swim close to popular beaches on the German island of Sylt and the Danish island of Rømø, southwest of Denmark in the North Sea.

Ferries

Harbour porpoises can be seen regularly from the Rømø-Sylt Linie GmbH ferry which runs between Havneby on the Danish island of Rømø to List, at the northern end of Sylt, a German island.

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 Along the beaches of Sylt, porpoises are most often seen on the flood tides especially during the summer months. Harbour seals and grey seals are also seen near the beaches.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings and strandings in German waters can be reported to Gesellschaft zum Schutz der Meeressäuger e.V. (GSM).

☎ +49 41 0662 0601

✉ info@gsm-ev.de

🌐 www.gsm-ev.de

Cetacean sightings and strandings around the Baltic Sea, and in all European waters, can be reported to WDCS, Goerdelerstr. 41, D-82008 Unterhaching, Germany.

☎ +49 89 6100 2395

☎ +49 89 6100 2394

✉ sightings@wdcs.org

🌐 www.dolphinsightings.org

ASCOBANS - help for cetaceans in the North and Baltic seas

ASCOBANS covers small cetaceans only - specifically in the North and Baltic seas of northern Europe. Signed in 1991, it came into force in 1994. It has no specific provisions for whale watching, but it is concerned with the conservation of cetaceans and their habitat in this large area of northern Europe and serves as a regional agreement of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).
web: www.ascobans.org

IRELAND (Eire)



Commercial dolphin watching in Ireland started with the lone bottlenose dolphin, sometimes called 'Fungi', who moved into Dingle

Harbour, County Kerry, in 1984. Since then, he has brought up to an estimated 200,000 people a year to watch on boats and from land.



Risso's dolphins are often seen from Loop Head, Ireland.

The western and southern coasts of Ireland are regarded as the best land-based cetacean watching sites in the British Isles and some of the best in Europe. A resident population of more than 100 bottlenose dolphins offers the chance of reliable dolphin watching in the Shannon River estuary with accredited commercial operators. These operators must follow a code of conduct, demonstrate competence in environmental interpretation, provide monitoring data and abide by the Conservation Plan prepared for the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) recently designated in the Shannon estuary. Outside of the Shannon estuary, from locations such as Loop Head, the most commonly seen species are harbour porpoises; common, bottlenose and Risso's dolphins; and minke whales, with the largest concentrations in autumn.

Through the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group network, news of all cetacean sightings spreads fast. Full details are available on their website at www.iwdg.ie.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Shannon estuary

Dolphin watching has become popular in the Mouth of the Shannon River estuary, out of Carrigaholt, since 1995. The first operator to offer dedicated dolphin trips here, Dolphinwatch Carrigaholt, has a 95% success rate at finding the resident dolphins. Tours last 2 to 2 ½ hours primarily from May to September. This company assists with research and encourages education; hydrophones are carried.

☎ +353 65 905 8156

+353 88 258 4711

✉ info@dolphinwatch.ie

🌐 www.dolphinwatch.ie

Dolphin watching tours last 2 to 2 ½ hours from April to October on the Lochin 40 through Dolphin Discovery Kilrush. Research is conducted on every trip with monitoring forms, a hydrophone and often photo-ID work. Trips usually carry a naturalist. Special free guide and information pack on dolphins is offered for school tours. Cost is EUR 16 for adults, EUR 8 for children under 16.

☎ +353 65 905 1327

✉ shannondolphins@eircom.net

🌐 www.shannondolphins.ie

County Cork

The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) offers excellent land-based whale watching courses based at Cape Clear.

☎ +353 23 31911 and +353 86 854 5450

✉ padraig.whooley@iwdg.ie

🌐 www.iwdg.ie

West Cork Marine Tours offers whale watch tours. No naturalist but operator Colin Barnes is knowledgeable.

☎ +353 86 327 3226

County Kerry

At Dingle, various small fishing boats offer trips to see the Dingle dolphin, Fungi.

Dingle Boatsmen's Association, c/o Harbour Master, Dingle, Co. Kerry, Ireland.

Note: Fungi has resided in and around Dingle Harbour since 1984, but it is not known how long he will stay. He has already stayed much longer than most other resident dolphins. It is also possible to see the dolphin from shore (See under 'Lookouts and marine centres' below.)

International tour operators/ companies

WildWings tours in south-west Ireland are land- and boat-based in late June and late September and cost £499 (EUR 718). This is a walking tour with 2 boat-based excursions, and various cetacean and bird species are possible. Restricted to groups of up to 7, plus 2 naturalist leaders.

☎ +44 1179 658 333

✉ wildinfo@wildwings.co.uk

🌐 www.wildwings.co.uk

Naturetrek offers guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a 'responsible tourism' policy.

☎ +44 1962 733 051

✉ info@naturetrek.co.uk

🌐 www.naturetrek.co.uk

Lookouts and marine centres

County Cork

🌳 Cape Clear Island, according to the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, is one of the premier whale watch locations on the South coast. There are 2 tried and tested vantage points on the island: Blannarragaun and Bullig. Twelve species have been seen: harbour porpoises (year-round); common dolphins and minke whales are regularly observed while Risso's and bottlenose dolphins along with orcas, humpback and fin whales are occasionally seen. A good source for directions and information is the Cape Clear observatory. There is a ferry to the island and a variety of accommodation including a youth hostel, B & B, camping and house rental. The Irish South coast has a winter inshore movement of fin, sei and humpback whales, which has, in the past few years, been best observed from land-based sites from as far east as Hook Head in Co. Wexford, but with more frequent sightings made from the headlands of West Cork, including Sevens Head, Galley Head and Toe Head.



Bottlenose dolphins are found around Ireland - especially in the Shannon estuary.

🌳 The cliffs looking down on the lighthouse at Mizen Head are good for common dolphins, harbour porpoises and sometimes minke whales, with sightings of bottlenose and Risso's dolphins much less common. You can park at the end of the road. Walk toward the lighthouse but turn right before reaching it to get to the cliffs. There is also a sea watching room in the lighthouse which is open daily (11 am to 5 pm) from June to September, less often from October to May, as well as a visitor centre in the light-keeper's house with interpretative cetacean materials.

🌳 Other locations: Sheep's Head and Dursey Island.

County Kerry

🌳 Bolus Head, near Ballinskelligs, is a good spot for watching harbour porpoises and bottlenose dolphins. At the end of the road, there is parking beside a farm where you can walk to the headland.

🌳 Sleah Head, at the far south-western end of the Dingle Peninsula, is a superb place to watch for harbour porpoises, bottlenose dolphins and minke whales in the tide rips of Blasket Sound. After parking at Dunmore Head, you can walk down to the point. Boat trips from nearby Dunquin Harbour sometimes see various cetaceans, including orcas, as they cross the sound to the island of Greater Blasket.

🌳 Lighthouse and Sláidín Beach, at the eastern mouth of Dingle Harbour, is the best place to try to see the wild solitary bottlenose dolphin, Fungi. Access is on foot along the shoreline from the Skellig Hotel.

🌳 Other locations: Valentia Island, Skelligs, Sybil Head, Blasket Islands and Kerry Head.

County Clare

🌳 In Kilrush, the Scattery Island Visitor Centre is setting up cetacean displays and a hydrophone listening station in 2003.

☎ +353 65 905 1329

🌳 Kilcredaun Point, near Carrigaholt, is one of the best spots to watch the resident bottlenose dolphins of the Shannon estuary. At the end of the lane beside the lighthouse, on the north side of the Shannon, there is parking and, from there, it's a short walk along a Napoleonic battery at Kilcredaun Head to a ruined church at the lookout.

🌳 At Loop Head, close to the lighthouse and the road, whale watching possibilities include bottlenose, Risso's and common dolphins, harbour porpoises and minke whales. August to October are excellent months to look for minke whales from Loop Head as they occasionally feed within a stone's throw of the cliffs.

🌳 Other locations: Kilkerin Point near Labasheeda and Napoleonic gun battery on the south side of Scattery Island - both for the Shannon dolphins. Also Black Head and Hags Head.

County Waterford

🌳 Locations: Helvick and Ardmore Head

County Galway

🌳 All along the north Connemara coast, from such spots as Cleggan Head and Renvyle Point, bottlenose dolphins are sometimes seen. The dolphins will enter both Ballynakill Harbour and Killary Harbour. The ferry to the offshore island of Inishbofin also provides a good dolphin watch opportunity.

County Mayo

🌳 Achill Head, with its high cliffs, used to be a lookout for the basking shark fishery. With expansive views over Achill Island and the open Atlantic, it is good place to wait for bottlenose dolphins in early summer. There is parking at Keem Strand below the lookout point.

🌳 The cliffs of Benwee Head, opposite Kid Island, are a prime spot for watching Risso's dol-

phins, as well as common and bottlenose dolphins. At the end of the bog road north of Kilgalligan, stop and park, then walk to the cliffs.

🌳 Other locations: Blacksod Bay and Erris Head.

County Sligo

🌳 The harbour at Mullaghmore is a good place to find harbour porpoises and bottlenose dolphins. Some years, the dolphins stay in Sligo Bay all through the summer. Minke whales are frequently observed in Donegal Bay.

🌳 Other locations: Aghris Head, Mullaghmore.



Bottlenose dolphins on the move.

County Donegal

🌳 From Malin Head, at the northern tip of Ireland, park by the castle and follow the path along the headland to see harbour porpoises, bottlenose dolphins and occasionally other dolphin species. There is some evidence that Malin Head and the Inishowen peninsula may well be seasonal orca hotspots, with several reports of orcas attacking grey seals on the rocks at Dunaldra in November.

🌳 Other locations: Malinmore, St John's Point, Dawros Head and Inishowen Head.

County Louth

🌳 From Clogher Head, on the Irish Sea, it is possible to watch harbour porpoises. Park at the fishing harbour in Clogherhead and walk up to the lookout point.

County Dublin

🌳 From the fishing port of Skerries, north of Dublin, on the Irish Sea, harbour porpoises are sometimes seen among the many grey seals that feed in and around the harbour. Best sightings are sometimes from the Rockabill and Lambay islands just offshore.

🌳 Other locations for watching harbour porpoises: Howth Head, Dunlaoighre Pier, and Killiney Bay.

County Wicklow

🌳 Bray Head: Regular harbour porpoise and grey seal sightings can be made on the walk across to Greystones within 100 m of the cliffs on the Bray side of Bray Head.

County Wexford

🌳 The Saltee Islands off Kilmore Quay are important seabird colonies but they also provide a good lookout for harbour porpoises and Risso's dolphins, with occasional sightings of bottlenose dolphins and orcas.

🌳 Hook Head Lighthouse in Hook Head, Co. Wexford, offers interpretative cetacean materials as well as land-based cetacean viewing.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Whale Watch Ireland, a national event held at 9 classic whale watching headlands throughout Ireland every August, attracted 1,500 whale watchers in 2002.

Every summer, the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group runs whale watching weekend courses at Cape Clear, Co. Cork.

☎ +353 23 31911

✉ padraig.whooley@iwdg.ie

🌐 www.iwdg.ie

The Shannon Dolphin Festival is held in Kilrush, Co. Clare, early summer. Check website for dates.

🌐 www.shannondolphins.ie.

Cetacean sightings and strandings can be reported to the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG).

☎ +353 23 31911, +353 86 854 5450

🌐 www.iwdg.ie

UNITED KINGDOM



Along the Cornish, Devon and Dorset coasts, in England, and in Cardigan Bay, Wales, bottlenose dolphins are resident and harbour porpoises are seen regularly. Occasionally, other dolphins, such as common and Risso's dolphins, can be seen by boat and from land along the stunning sea cliffs. Some of the most varied and productive cetacean watching in the UK is found in Scottish waters. With its lush islands, varied coastline, mountains and deep lochs, Scotland offers the wildlife tourist nearly everything, including some 24 recorded species of whales, dolphins and porpoises. Sightings range from the North Sea, to the Northern Isles of the Shetland and Orkney Islands to the extensive Western Isles, including the Inner and Outer Hebrides on the open North Atlantic.



Bottlenose dolphins live off southwest England, Wales and Scotland.

The Moray Firth and north-east Scotland offer resident bottlenose dolphins, fairly common sightings of harbour porpoises and sporadic sightings of various other cetaceans, including minke whales. The Northern Isles are home to orcas, minke whales, Atlantic white-sided and white-beaked dolphins, and harbour porpoises, among others.



Atlantic white-sided dolphins are mainly seen off northern Scotland.



Common dolphins can turn up almost anywhere around the UK and Ireland.

In the Hebridean Islands, from Mull, long-term photo-ID studies of the resident minke whales, and from Lewis, the Risso's dolphins, and Islay, bottlenose dolphins, have produced valuable findings and helped encourage the development of a marine wildlife industry which includes whale watching. You can also see common dolphins, harbour porpoises and sometimes orcas. Scotland has an abundance of good land-based whale watch sites.

Whale watch guidelines, but not regulations, have been instituted in the UK. Local codes are in place in both Cardigan Bay, West Wales, and in Pembrokeshire, and a new marine code covering cetaceans and other marine wildlife in Welsh waters, was launched in 2003. At least 3 codes are used in Scotland, the Dolphin Space Programme, specifically for dolphins in the Moray Firth, a more general wildlife code followed by the Scottish Marine Wildlife Operators Association (SMWOA), and a cetacean and seal code developed by the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) and also used by SMWOA. WDCS has also produced a boat-users' code of conduct.

UK: Scotland

Whale and dolphin watch tours



West coast and Western Isles - most below are accredited operators who are members of the Scottish Marine Wildlife Operators Association (SMWOA) and have a code of practice, recognised by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), VisitScotland, Tourism & Environment, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and Scottish Wildlife Trust (full details at www.SMWOA.org.uk).

Inter-Island Cruises carries a naturalist guide, usually a Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust graduate. Their trips are personable and fun as well as education- and research-oriented. Skipper Jeremy Matthews reported 420 sightings in 2002 - mostly minke whales, harbour porpoises and basking sharks, but also common, Risso's and bottlenose dolphins and occasionally orcas. 98% of cruises in 2000-2001 included cetacean encounters. Whale watching trips are £40 per person (EUR 58), or £30 (EUR 43) for under age 10. Trips for up to 12 passengers leave from Croig, near Dervaig, Mull and last about 6 hours. Guide books, leaflets and binoculars are on board, and the SMWOA code of conduct is followed. Co-operates with Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust and Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings and on other programmes.

☎ +44 1688 400 264

✉ jenny@mull.com

🌐 www.jenny.mull.com

www.whalewatchingtrips.co.uk

Also from the Isle of Mull, Sea Life Surveys offers naturalist-led whale watching boat trips for up to 12 passengers with highly qualified researchers or naturalists guiding the trips. Sea Life Surveys has initiated and assisted with pioneer research into minke whales and harbour porpoises for more than a decade in these waters and knows where to find and how to act around the animals. The trips also encounter common, Risso's and bottlenose dolphins and occasionally orcas and basking sharks. Sea Life Surveys co-operates with Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust and Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings and to do other programmes. Sea Life Survey data have been instrumental in more than a dozen published scientific papers. All day whale watch trips start at £45 (EUR 65). Whale watch packages (up to 8 hours at sea per day) cost £58 (EUR 84) per day, often with a slide show for participants in the evening. Family whale watches last 4 ½ hours and cost £32 (EUR 46) for adults, £28 (EUR 40) for children. Prices go up slightly in July and August. Sea Life Surveys has won several big tourism awards.

☎ +44 1688 302 916, +44 1688 400 223

✉ info@sealifesurveys.com

🌐 www.sealifesurveys.com

Ecocruz concentrates on taking tourists to see harbour porpoises and seals in the Sound of Mull and Loch Sunart. Naturalist interpretation covers fish-

ing and history, as well as marine mammals. Ecocruz runs a 3-hour 'porpoise patrol', using a hydrophone to listen to porpoises, and joins with Sea Life Surveys sometimes to conduct more ocean-going whale watch trips lasting 4 hours. They frequently carry onboard scientists. Together with Sea Life Surveys, Ecocruz shares a booking office with various educational displays. Ecocruz is currently working with HWDT to conduct winter surveys to look at what species are around in winter months when there is a gap in knowledge, and they also assist in obtaining photo-ID data. Ecocruz reported 119 sightings in 2002, mostly harbour porpoises and minke whales. A 3-hour tour costs £22 adults (EUR 32), £18 (EUR 26) children.

☎ +44 1688 302 916

✉ info@ecocruz.co.uk

🌐 www.ecocruz.co.uk



Whale watchers often contribute useful photographs for photo-ID programmes.

Sail Gairloch offers trips to see mainly harbour porpoises, followed by minke whales, common and white-beaked dolphins. Cruises are day trips for up to 12 passengers. Sail Gairloch helped to establish the Scottish Marine Wildlife Operators Association (SMWOA) and it has a code of practice. Co-operates with Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings.

☎ +44 1445 712 636

✉ mail@Porpoise-Gairloch.co.uk

🌐 www.porpoise-gairloch.co.uk

Porpoise Dive Charters, out of Oban, are mainly diving trips but some whale watching is offered in the Firth of Lorn Special Area of Conservation. Harbour porpoises are seen, along with some minke whales and bottlenose dolphins; sightings are sent to HWDT.

☎ +44 1852 300 203

✉ jean.ainsley@virgin.net

🌐 www.divescotland.com

Ardnamurchan Charters run fishing, wildlife and whale watch trips from Kilchoan, Ardnamurchan, to the islands of Staffa, Mull, Rhum, Eigg, Muck, Coll and St Kilda which feature minke whales, harbour porpoises and seals, and occasionally other cetaceans especially bottlenose dolphins. Cetacean trips aboard the 16 m *Laurenca II* are 4-hour to full-day excursions from Easter to October. Sightings are sent to HWDT.

☎ +44 1972 500 208

✉ ArdCharters@aol.com

🌐 www.west-scotland-tourism.com/ardnamurchan-charters/Whales.html

Ardnamurchan Fishing and Coaching has wildlife and fishing charters which feature minke whales, harbour porpoises and seals, and occasionally other cetaceans especially bottlenose dolphins. Uses small boats, fewer than 12 passengers; sightings sent to HWDT.

☎ +44 1972 510 212

🌐 www.fishingandcoachingscotland.co.uk

From Islay, Gus Newman of Islay Dive Centre has started up dolphin watching of the local bottlenose dolphins. He has worked closely with researchers co-operating with scientific work and offering free boat access.

☎ +44 1496 302 441

✉ ann@islaydivecentre.co.uk

🌐 www.islaydivecentre.co.uk

Out of the blue, the WDCS non-profit travel company, offers 5-night short-break packages to go whale and dolphin watching that include Mull and the Moray Firth. Naturalist-led trips, well-guided, with real enthusiasts. Cost £499 (EUR 718).

☎ +44 1249 449 500

(within the UK: 0870 870 0027)

✉ bluetravel@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs.org/outoftheblue



White-beaked dolphin in Scottish waters.

Map of Europe - Ports and land



-based sites for whale watching



Sailing cruises of the Hebrides, aboard the 17 m Sula, feature whale and dolphin encounters, including minke whales, orcas, northern bottlenose whales, harbour porpoises, and Risso's, common, bottlenose, white-beaked and Atlantic white-sided dolphins. These week-long trips from mid-July to end August are offered by the experienced, wild-life-friendly Oceanus, which formerly operated the Marguerite Explorer. Cost £800 (EUR 1,153). Departs from Mallaig, Scotland.

☎ +44 1273 321 432

✉ info@oceanus.uk.com

🌐 www.oceanus.uk.com

Moray Firth area - the following operators are registered with the Dolphin Space Programme (DSP).



Moray Firth, Scotland.

Out of the blue, the WDCS non-profit travel company, offers 3-night short-break packages to go dolphin watching from land and sea in the Moray Firth. Naturalist-led trips, well-guided, with real enthusiasts. WDCS trips use a DSP-registered operator. Cost £299 (EUR 431).

☎ +44 1249 449 500

(within the UK: 0870 870 0027)

✉ bluetravel@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs.org/outoftheblue

Operating from Cromarty, Dolphin Ecosse offers naturalist-led cetacean watches on an up-to-12-passenger boat. Bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoises are regularly seen, as well as other marine wildlife. Passengers watch a video before departing on the 2 ½-hour trip. Dolphin Ecosse carries a hydrophone and co-operates with Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings. Cost is £20 per person (EUR 29).

☎ +44 1381 600 323

✉ info@dolphinecosse.co.uk

🌐 www.dolphinecosse.co.uk



Dolphin watching near Inverness.

From Inverness, £10 trips are available from Moray Firth Cruises.

☎ +44 1463 717 900

From Nairn Harbour, the Phoenix has dolphin trips.

☎ +44 1667 456 078

From Portmahomack ('The Port' near Tain), dolphin cruises aboard the Scorpion travel on the calm waters of the Dornoch Firth.

☎ +44 1862 871 257

✉ agrimole@aol.com

Dolphinicity, based in Lossiemouth, carries up to 6 passengers on a 10 m yacht, hydrophone listening included. Also does short breaks with passengers living on board.

☎ +44 1343 820 339

✉ enquiries@mfwc.co.uk

From 1st June to 28th October, the Cromarty Ferry Company offers regular ferry crossings throughout the day between Cromarty and Nigg to encounter dolphins, as well as evening cruises on Wednesdays and Fridays in July and August. (Cruises are £10 (EUR 14); ferry crossings £6 (EUR 9) for car and driver.

☎ +44 1381 610 269

✉ info@cromarty-ferry.co.uk



Bottlenose dolphin spyhopping.

From Avoch (Black Isle), Dolphin Trips-Avoch, offer cruises for £9 (EUR 13), with reduced rates for children.

☎ +44 1381 620 958

In Buckie, dolphin sighting trips are offered aboard an ex-trawler, the BenBola. Before the trip, you can visit the office of the Friends of the Moray Firth Dolphins at the Loup Inn at Buckie harbour for a video and more information (www.loupers.com).

☎ +44 1542 832 289

✉ benbola@bushinternet.com

Nature tours with some cetacean watching

Isle of Mull Wildlife Expeditions is a land-based operator who invites visitors to see seals, otters and cetaceans as part of the trip. Good interpretation is offered by David Woodhouse, an operator active in local conservation.

☎ & 📠 +44 1688 500 121

✉ info@scotlandwildlife.com

🌐 www.holidaymull.org/members/wildlife/main.htm



Land-based whale watching is popular off north-east Scotland.

Island Encounters is run by Richard Atkinson, a land-based operator who introduces visitors to seals, otters and cetaceans as part of wildlife and birding trips. Good interpretation and conservation too.

☎ +44 1680 300 441

🌐 www.mullwildlife.co.uk

Discover Mull has land-based trips to see seals, otters and cetaceans as part of its programme. Good interpretation is offered by the operator.

☎ +44 1688 400 415

✉ enquiries@discovermull.co.uk

🌐 www.discovermull.co.uk

From Armadale Pier on the Isle of Skye, Sea.fari Adventures has wildlife cruises on a rigid inflata-

ble boat for up to 12 passengers. General wildlife sightings include regular appearances by harbour porpoises, dolphins and minke whales; hydrophones are carried. Sea.fari co-operates with Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust and Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings and is an accredited SMWOA member.

☎ +44 1471 833 316

✉ Skyeseafari@aol.com

🌐 www.whalespotting.co.uk

From Kyle of Lochalsh, Seaprobe Atlantis has 1- 2-hour boat trips to see marine nature from Easter to October. The trips, which carry hydrophones and a remote operated vehicle, sometimes encounter harbour porpoises, dolphins and minke whales.

☎ +44 1471 822 716

✉ seaprobe@msn.com

🌐 www.seaprobeatlantis.com

On the Isle of Lewis, Sea Trek offers marine wildlife cruises that include Risso's and white-beaked dolphins, harbour porpoises and minke whales. The trips travel aboard a rigid inflatable boat. Sea Trek co-operates with Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings and is an accredited SMWOA member.

☎ & 📠 +44 1851 672 464

✉ murray@seatrek.co.uk

🌐 www.seatrek.co.uk

From Scarfskerry, by Thurso, in north-east Scotland, North Coast Marine Adventures takes up to 12 passengers on rigid inflatable boats to see seabirds and seals and cetaceans (white-beaked dolphins, harbour porpoises, minke whales) are sometimes seen. Co-operates with Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings.

☎ +44 1955 611 797

✉ mcexplorer@northcoast.fsnet.co.uk

🌐 www.northcoast-marine-adventures.co.uk



Bottlenose dolphin leaping.

From John O' Groats, near Wick, in northern Scotland, wildlife day-trip cruises are offered on a 250-passenger ferry. Trips focus on seals and seabirds but harbour porpoises, minke whales and white-beaked dolphins are sometimes seen. Co-operates with Sea Watch to report cetacean sightings.

☎ +44 1955 611 353

✉ David@jogferry.co.uk

🌐 www.jogferry.co.uk

Marine nature cruises on the MV Cuma, owned by Island Cruising, run as far north as North Rona and Sula Sgeir and west to the Flannan Isles and St Kilda with frequent cetacean sightings.

☎ +44 1851 672 381

✉ cuma@sol.co.uk, info@island-cruising.com

🌐 www.island-cruising.com

Rua Reidh Lighthouse offers hiking holidays that include marine wildlife and cetacean sightings from land. Trips are based out of the lighthouse itself which has been converted for accommodation.

☎ +44 1445 771 263

Brigadoon Boat Trips (Isle of Skye)

☎ +44 1478 613 405

South Skey Boats (Isle of Skye)

☎ +44 1471 844 321

Arisaig Marine Ltd (Arisaig Harbour)

☎ +44 1687 450 224

✉ info@arisaig.co.uk

Doune Marine (Mallaig)

☎ +44 1687 462 656

✉ andydoune@clara.net

🌐 www.doune-marine.co.uk



Bottlenose dolphin breaches in the Moray Firth.



Orcas sometimes appear in Scottish waters - especially around Shetland.

Loch Etive Cruises

✉ lochetive@aol.com

🌐 www.oban.org.uk

Yacht Corryvreckan has sailing holidays with bird and whale watching out of Oban from April to October. Member SMWOA.

☎ +44 1631 770 246

✉ yacht.corryvreckan@virgin.net

🌐 www.corryvreckan.co.uk

Scenic Cruises (Isle of Harris)

☎ +44 1859 530 310

✉ Hamish@scenic-cruises.co.uk

🌐 www.scenic-cruises.co.uk

Strond Wildlife Carters (Isle of Harris)

☎ +44 1859 520 204

✉ aj@erica.demon.co.uk

Badnaban Cruises

☎ +44 1571 844 358

In Shetland, 3-hour Shetland Wildlife cruises travel from Lerwick to Noss National Nature Reserve promising outstanding seabird sightings, along with harbour porpoises and the chance to see orcas and minke whales.

☎ +44 1950 422 483

✉ info@shetlandwildlife.co.uk

🌐 www.shetlandwildlife.co.uk

International tour operators/ companies

Week-long dolphin trips to the Moray Firth are also handled by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society in Germany. A German-speaking member of staff will be on all trips.

☎ +49 89 6100 2395

✉ jneider@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs-de.org

Research study trips from May to October to work with the Cetacean Research and Rescue Unit are offered through Ecovolunteers. Please note that this operator is not registered with the Dolphin Space Programme. The Ecovolunteer programme is directly available in the following countries: Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Austria, Russia, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Go to www.ecovolunteer.org and choose 'agents.' In Britain, the agent is WildWings based in Bristol.

☎ +44 1179 658 333

✉ wildinfo@wildwings.co.uk

🌐 www.wildwings.co.uk

From May to September, Whalespot, part of the Discover the World group, offers 6-day boat tours out of Tobermory, Mull, to see minke whales; common, bottlenose and Risso's dolphins; harbour porpoises; and, occasionally, orcas. The tours are naturalist-led on research boats doing minke whale work. They also offer the 'North Atlantic Explorer', a 12-day cruise in June from Oban to Svalbard, which has the chance to see a variety of large whale species and dolphins.

☎ +44 1737 218 800

✉ sales@whalespot.co.uk

🌐 www.whalespot.com

www.discover-the-world.co.uk

Whaqua, The Dolphin Experience, based in Germany, hosts week-long 'dolphin camps' to the Moray Firth.

☎ +49 471 9418857

✉ the-dolphin-experience@freenet.de

🌐 www.the-dolphin-experience.de



Seals can be seen on nature and dolphin watching trips all around Scotland.

Ferries

Various whales and dolphins are regularly seen from the 8-hour ferry between the Orkneys and the Shetlands, departing from South Ronaldsay.

Lookouts and marine centres

West coast and Western Isles

🌳 The Marine Discovery Centre in Tobermory on the Isle of Mull, has cetacean exhibits, videos, interactive displays and hosts special events every year on local cetaceans. Run by the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT), it is a base for cetacean research and education on the Isle of Mull. The centre works closely with the local community and has hosted researchers and volunteers.

☎ +44 1688 302 620

✉ hwdt@sol.co.uk

🌐 www.hwdt.org

🌳 In Gairloch, the Gairloch Marine Centre is a ticket office for Sail Gairloch and has displays and information on local sightings and provides a lookout for cetaceans.

☎ +44 1445 712 636

✉ mail@Porpoise-Gairloch.co.uk

🌐 www.porpoise-gairloch.co.uk

🌳 From Greenstone Point, looking out on North Minch, north of Loch Ewe, it is possible to see harbour porpoises especially April to December and, less often, minke whales and dolphins.

🌳 From the Eye Peninsula on the Isle of Lewis, you can watch Risso's and white-beaked dolphins, along with harbour porpoises and minke whales, with some sightings year-round depending on weather and sea conditions.

🌳 Ardnamurchan Lighthouse (near Kilchoan, Ardnamurchan, Lochaber) has excellent cetacean, especially minke whale viewing. The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust has conducted valuable land-based cetacean research at the lighthouse in recent years. The lighthouse visitor centre has displays on whales and dolphins.

🌳 On the Isle of Islay, overlooking Loch Indaal, it is possible to watch regularly a group of about 10 resident bottlenose dolphins. The Islay Natural History Trust has an education centre overlooking

the loch which acts as an information centre for the best marine wildlife tour operators in the area.

🌿 The Eilean Ban Visitor Centre in Kyleakin (near the Skye Road Bridge) has excellent displays on coastal and marine wildlife, including cetaceans and especially otters. It also has displays on the life of the famous naturalist Gavin Maxwell (*Ring of Bright Water*). This children-friendly centre is run by the Born Free Foundation.

🌿 Other locations: around Gairloch including Carn Dearg Youth Hostel on the coast road to Rubha Réidh, just west of Lonemore, where the road turns inland; the southern entry point to Loch Gairloch, Sron na Carra, just off the coast road south of Gairloch; the high ground at Red Point looking out over North Minch, as well as south to Loch Torridon; and on the other side of Loch Torridon, where the south entry point at Rubh na Fearn allows a wide view of the Loch and the open North Minch.

Northern Isles

🌿 Sumburgh Head, at the southernmost tip of the Shetlands, is a good lookout for harbour porpoises, various dolphins, as well as minke, orcas and sometimes humpback whales, among the 22 cetacean species recorded in Shetland waters.

🌿 Other locations for watching harbour porpoises include Mousa, Boatsroom Voe, Quendale Bay (particularly between November and April) East Yell Sound, Out Skerries, Whalsay and between Noss and Sumburgh Head (all 4 sites also good for Risso's dolphins), as well as, on the west coast, Scalloway and West Burra Isle. Risso's dolphins have also frequently been sighted, mainly between April and September, at Balta Sound. Also sometimes sighted from shore are white-beaked dolphins, pilot whales, orcas and minke whales.



Humpback whales are sometimes seen in Shetland and other Scottish waters.

North-east coast, Moray Firth and Grampian

🌿 The Moray Firth Wildlife Centre (MFWC), located at Spey Bay, is the best place to start learning about the Moray Firth dolphins. It features shore-based dolphin watching from the centre itself, along with seals, otters, ospreys, and many other bird species. Teaming up with WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, the MFWC has developed an excellent series of programmes to aid awareness and understanding of cetaceans, other local wildlife and the environment. Besides the exhibition (admission free), there are outreach programmes such as school visits and mobile exhibits at wildlife fairs.

☎ +44 1343 820 339

✉ enquiries@mfwc.co.uk

🌐 www.mfwc.co.uk

🌿 At the Dolphin and Seal Centre, North Kessock (near Inverness at the mouth of Beauly Firth), it is often possible to see the dolphins from shore, and there is an exhibition area. Sightings can be year-round but it's best from late May to September with the 2-3 hours before high tide offering almost guaranteed dolphin watching.

🌿 Opposite North Kessock, on the north edge of Inverness, where the bridge crosses the Kessock Channel, there is a good viewpoint.

🌿 Chanonry Point, near the mouth of the Firth of Inverness, is one of the best land-based sites. The dolphins often pass enroute to and from the open Moray Firth.

🌿 At Fort George, opposite Chanonry Point and accessible by road, is another spot.

🌿 At the mouth of the Cromarty Firth (the Sutors), one of the best year-round lookouts for bottlenose dolphins is along the coast outside of the town of Cromarty. An old lighthouse cottage here is the base for research into the bottlenose dolphin and seal populations of the area.

🌿 At the harbour, in Cromarty, the whale watch operator Dolphin Ecosse has a small exhibition centre for cetaceans.

☎ +44 1381 600 323

✉ info@dolphinecosse.co.uk

🌐 www.dolphinecosse.co.uk

🌳 On the north (opposite) side of the mouth of Cromarty Firth, a good lookout can be found at the end of the road, south of Nigg.

🌳 From Tarbat Ness, near the lighthouse beyond Portmahomack, walk to the point where there is a superb view of the open Moray Firth, North Sea and parts of the Dornoch Firth, and, sometimes, sightings of dolphins and even harbour porpoises.

🌳 At Burghead, accessible by road, the point sticks out into the Moray Firth, and is close to deep water, making it a good year-round viewpoint for the bottlenose dolphins as well as minke whales in late summer and autumn.

🌳 Cullen is a good place for seeing bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoises, as well as minke whales, later in the season (August to October).

🌳 Other locations: Lossiemouth, on the coast north of Elgin; Buckie; Portknockie; headlands north of Banff; Kinnairds Head, near Fraserburgh; and Rattray Head.

South-east coast

🌳 The Scottish Seabird Centre (SSC), at the harbour, in North Berwick, has solar-powered remote control cameras on nearby islands for watching seabirds, seals and other wildlife, and various exhibits, some of which feature cetaceans. There are also excellent spotting scopes on an outdoor deck overlooking the Bass Rock (world's largest gannet colony) and other islands at the mouth of the Firth of Forth. The gannets and puffins are reliable through the spring and summer, while dolphins and minke whales are occasionally seen from the deck.

☎ +44 1620 890 202

✉ info@seabird.org

🌐 www.seabird.org

🌳 St Abb's Head has paths along stunning cliffs with views over the North Sea. Harbour porpoises are common and dolphins are occasionally sighted. Nature centre is open April to October (May to July is best for seabirds).

☎ +44 1890 771 443

🌳 Isle of May - accessible via boat from Anstruther, Fife (☎+44 1333 310 103) - has occasional sightings of minke whales, bottlenose and common dolphins, sometimes pilot whales. Seals

pup on the island. Best for breeding seabirds in June and July. The island is open to the public April-September.

☎ +44 1334 654 038



Puffins live on the islands off North Berwick and can be seen from the Scottish Seabird Centre.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Every summer, the Marine Discovery Centre, in Tobermory, Mull, hosts talks on whales and dolphins and offers guided coastal walks and children's activity days. In addition, there is an annual environmental fair with games, stalls, music and children's activities. The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust also presents talks to local schools and community groups on cetaceans and has developed activity packs, books, posters, and mobile displays, including a 20 m yacht converted into a floating education centre. Cetacean sightings and strandings in the Hebrides can be reported here.

☎ +44 1688 302 620

✉ hwdt@sol.co.uk

🌐 www.hwdt.org

In North Berwick, at the mouth of the Firth of Forth, the Scottish Seabird Centre has summer dolphin sighting workshops and talks on cetaceans. Cetacean sightings and strandings in the Firth of Forth and adjacent North Sea can also be reported.

☎ +44 1620 890 202

✉ info@seabird.org

🌐 www.seabird.org

An annual Environmental Festival is held at the Moray Firth Wildlife Centre. The festival is held early in June (to coincide with World Oceans Day), 6-13th June 2004. WDCC and the Wildlife Centre team up with local ranger services and wildlife and environment organisations to put on various family-oriented events - guided walks, slide talks, a life-size blue whale model (30 m long), a wildlife

art exhibition, wildlife watching (otters, badgers, dolphins, ospreys), and boat trips.

☎ +44 1343 820 339

✉ enquiries@mfwc.co.uk

🌐 www.wildlifefestival.co.uk

Whale watchers are encouraged to report cetacean sightings in Shetland. The records will become part of the annual Shetland Sea Mammal Report and are displayed on a website.

✉ cetaceanews@nature.shetland.co.uk

🌐 www.nature.shetland.co.uk

Cetacean sightings in Scotland can also be reported to WDCS and Sea Watch (see under UK: England, below).

UK: Wales

Whale and dolphin watch tours



West Wales Chartering Company offers daily trips through most of the year to see bottlenose dolphins and other marine wildlife, including harbour porpoises and common dolphins. Trips on board the Sulaire last 2, 4 and 8 hours, with the longer offshore trips offering the chance of turtles and cetaceans found in deeper waters. Trips cost £6 an hour (EUR 9). Owner-operator Steve Hartley is very knowledgeable about local wildlife including cetaceans and, with recent funding from the Countryside Council for Wales, a researcher will be present on every trip. Whale watchers on the boat are encouraged to help with sightings.

☎ +44 1545 560 032

🌐 www.marine.wildlife.centre.freeservers.com

Out of the blue, the WDCS non-profit travel company, offers 3-day short-break packages to go whale and dolphin watching from New Quay, West Wales. Naturalist-led trips, well-guided, with real enthusiasts. Trips use West Wales Chartering Company. Cost £299 (EUR 431).

☎ +44 1249 449 500

(within the UK: 0870 870 0027)

✉ bluetravel@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs.org/outoftheblue

Between April and September, Voyages of Discovery in St Davids, offers its 2 ½- to 3-hour 'offshore islands voyage' (sometimes up to 4 hours) to see harbour porpoises, various dolphins and minke whales in the Irish Sea aboard a rigid-hull inflatable. Grey seals, gannets, basking sharks and other wildlife are also seen. Trips depart from St Justinian, 3 km from St Davids. Cost is £40-60 (EUR 58-86), depending on length of trip, half price for children. Observation reports are made available to research groups.

☎ +44 1437 721 911

✉ john@ramseyisland.co.uk

🌐 www.ramseyisland.co.uk

Nature tours with some cetacean watching

Winston Evans Boat Trips offers marine nature excursions that include dolphin and porpoise sightings. The 1- to 2-hour guided trips, with these long-time operators in New Quay, run from April to October.

☎ +44 1545 560 800, +44 1545 560 375

✉ newquayboattrips@euphony.net

🌐 www.cardiganshirecoastalandcountry.com/newquayboat.htm

Marine nature trips which include dolphin sightings operate out of Aberaeron from Easter to October aboard a 10 m aluminium catamaran.

☎ +44 1545 570 142

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre, located on the waterfront at New Quay, Dyfed, Wales, offers exhibits and good dolphin sighting opportunities with its superb view over the harbour. Best sighting times tend to be early morning and evening and immediately after high tide, but all times are possible. Dolphins are sighted in all months of the year, though number of sighting days rises



Harbour porpoises can be found in the Irish Sea.

sharply from April through October. Dolphin watch boat tours can be arranged at the centre. Expansion and new programmes are planned over the next 3 years.

☎ +44 1545 560 032

🌐 www.marine.wildlife.centre.freeservers.com



The Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre.

🌳 Cardigan Island and Cardigan Island Coastal Farm Park, 5 km from Cardigan near Gwbert, is home to thousands of seabirds and a colony of grey seals which breed below the cliffs and give birth September and October. The Cardigan Bay dolphins can often be seen from the cliffs, especially during calm seas.

☎ +44 1239 612 196

🌐 www.cardiganshirecoastandcountry.com/cardiganisland.htm

🌳 At Mwnt, South Cardigan Bay, from the hills around Mwnt beach and even from the beach itself, bottlenose dolphins can be seen.

🌳 Ynys Lochtyn offers good sighting chances for the Cardigan Bay bottlenose dolphins.

🌳 From St Davids Head, it is sometimes possible to see harbour porpoises close to shore.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

West Wales Chartering Company, owned and operated by Steve Hartley, offers volunteers a chance to stay at the Cardigan Bay Wildlife Centre and contribute to the upkeep of the centre, selling tickets for the dolphin cruises, showing people around the centre and helping with research. There is no

charge, as the labour of the participants contributes to the project. Volunteers get a chance to go out on the research and tourism boats to see dolphins. Some volunteers come to the centre to do specific university research projects on the dolphins or other species or ecological aspects.

☎ +44 1545 560 032

🌐 www.marine.wildlife.centre.freeservers.com

Cetacean sightings in Wales can be reported to WDCS and Sea Watch (see under UK: England, below).

UK: England

Nature tours with some cetacean watching



Dorset Belles has general wildlife and scenic cruises for up to 12 passengers to see seabirds and occasionally dolphins

out of Bournemouth on the Dorset coast.

☎ +44 1201 558 550

✉ info@dorsetbelles.co.uk

🌐 www.dorsetbelles.co.uk

MER has marine wildlife research cruises which include bottlenose and common dolphins, harbour porpoises, and basking sharks, and sometimes whales. 5-day trips go from 1st May to end September. Cruising area centres on the waters of Devon and Cornwall out to the Isles of Scilly but extends up through Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

☎ +44 1326 373 360 (Colin Speedie)

+44 1326 378 588 (David Marshall)

✉ colin.speedie@mer.org.uk

david.marshall@mer.org.uk

🌐 www.wisescheme.org

Ferries


Ferries crossing the deep waters of the Bay of Biscay allow for the possibility of seeing a wide variety of whales and dolphins. See also 'Bay of Biscay bonanza', below, for naturalist and researcher-led tours across the Bay of Biscay to Spain. To arrange your own trip from Plymouth, England, to Santander, Spain, contact Brittany Ferries.

🌐 www.brittanyferries.com

For trips aboard the P&O ferry from Portsmouth, England, to Bilbao, Spain, contact P&O.

🌐 www.poportsmouth.com

Lookouts and marine centres

 Durlston Country Park and Marine Project, at Durlston Head, south of Swanage, has a Visitor Centre where you can listen to bottlenose and other dolphins and porpoises live, as they pass by in the English Channel. The listening system has speakers hooked up to a mounted hydrophone offshore in Durlston Bay. The Durlston Marine Project conducts acoustic research using a towed hydrophone system to survey the area, as well as a device called the POD (POrpoise Detector) developed by Nick Tregenza which records sounds whenever echolocation clicks are heard (about once a month the unit is retrieved, the batteries changed and the information downloaded to PC). The POD can identify dolphin and porpoise presence at night and during stormy conditions. The dolphins can sometimes be seen, too; the best viewing spots are below the centre, accessible on foot. There is also good bird watching, and the area has been made a volunteer marine nature reserve.


 +44 1929 424 443

 info@durlston.co.uk

 www.durlston.co.uk




Durlston Marine Project, based at Durlston Country Park.

 The Silver Dolphin Centre is a new centre set up in Porthleven by a dive operator and WDCS local co-ordinator, David Ball, with lectures and other educational programmes.

 +44 1326 572 002


 conservation@silverdolphin.freeserve.co.uk

 www.silverdolphinmarineconservationanddiving.co.uk

 Bempton Cliffs has 5 view points along the 5 km sheer chalk cliffs from where it is possible to watch occasional harbour porpoises and seals, along with puffins, gannets and other seabirds be-

tween April and August. The visitor centre is open daily March to November; winter, weekends only. It is also the site of an RSPB Nature Reserve.

 +44 1262 851 179

 WDCS is hoping to open a cetacean centre in Porthleven in 2004, to be called the Cornish Marine Wildlife Centre which will focus on education, research and conservation in a variety of exhibits and programmes.

 info@wdcs.org

 www.wdcs.org

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

WDCS has various cetacean events including an annual 'walk for whales', conferences, lectures in some areas of the UK and sponsored whale watches.

 info@wdcs.org

 www.wdcs.org

Whale sightings for UK and all European waters can be reported to www.dolphinsightings.org. Fill out the easy on-line survey form, or print out the form and return it to WDCS; sightings can also be reported by telephone, fax or regular mail. Sightings will appear with your name on the WDCS website.

WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, Brookfield House, 38 St Paul Street, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 1LJ England

 +44 1249 449 500

 +44 1249 449 501

 sightings@wdcs.org

 www.dolphinsightings.org

Sea Watch Foundation has a large ecological database for cetaceans around the UK and Ireland, based on sightings and photo-IDs. Sea Watch trains observers to help monitor whale and dolphin populations, their ecological characteristics, and the conservation threats they face. Sea Watch has a volunteer network of land- and boat-based cetacean observers who report sightings around Britain. The organisation also hosts a 'national cetacean sightings weekend' and conducts regular year-round surveys aboard several boats based in England, Wales and Scotland.

 +44 1865 764 794

 peter.evans@zoology.ox.ac.uk

 www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk



The dolphin watching lookout at Durlston.

A new training and accreditation scheme for marine wildlife operators has been set up in southwest England. Long-time marine wildlife operator and researcher Colin Speedie has set up a partnership called MER whose first project is the WiSe scheme which has to date trained 35 existing and prospective operators using a wide variety of boats. The operators learn about species identification, life history and behaviour and how to record their sightings for use in scientific research. They must agree to abide by a code of conduct. The website will have links to all these operators after they go through the training scheme, organised by region (for Cornwall, Devon and Dorset).

☎ +44 1326 373 360 (Colin Speedie)
+44 1326 378 588 (David Marshall)
✉ colin.speedie@mer.org.uk
david.marshall@mer.org.uk
🌐 www.wisescheme.org

UK: Northern Ireland

Lookouts and marine centres

County Antrim



🌳 From the cliff-top trail along Benbane Head, above the Giants Causeway, harbour porpoises and sometimes bottlenose dolphins can be seen. There is parking in the National Trust car park and a marked trail.

🌳 Ramore Head, Fair Head and Torr Head all produce frequent harbour porpoise and occasional bottlenose and Risso's dolphins and minke whale sightings.

County Down

🌳 St John's Point and Copeland Islands have frequent harbour porpoise sightings as well as occasional observations of bottlenose and Risso's dolphins and minke whales.

County Derry

🌳 Lough Foyle mouth.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings and strandings can be reported to the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG).

☎ +353 23 31911, +353 86 854 5450

🌐 www.iwdg.ie

See additional listings for Ireland above.

Out of the blue - a new kind of whale watching company - all for conservation

Out of the blue is a non-profit travel company operated by WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. WDCS's expertise in whale and dolphin watching is acknowledged world-wide. WDCS has been closely involved in the whale watch industry through the monitoring of its growth and development, running training programmes for operators and naturalists, and advising on setting up guidelines and regulations. Through its network of researchers, it has a handle on the best places and times to visit, the best boats and local experts to use, and how to watch cetaceans responsibly. Groups are kept as small as possible to ensure that the experienced guides on every trip can give everyone attention, making the trips informative as well as fun. Best of all for the whales, the proceeds from all out of the blue trips go toward conservation work in the field. Out of the blue is the only non-profit travel company in the UK specialising in whale and dolphin watching.

Out of the blue trips include 3-night dolphin short-breaks to the Moray Firth of Scotland and Cardigan Bay in Wales, combined whale and dolphin trips to Mull and the Moray Firth, as well as 8- to 9-night trips to watch cetaceans around Iceland and the Azores. Out of the blue has many other trips to destinations such as Canada, South Africa, Patagonia and the Maldives and is developing new trips all the time, so check the website or send for a brochure.

☎ +44 1249 449 500
 (within the UK: 0870 870 0027)
 ✉ bluetravel@wdcs.org
 🌐 www.wdcs.org/outoftheblue



Pilot whales 'logging' at the surface.

Bay of Biscay bonanza

In summer 1995, a small group of researchers boarded the P&O and Brittany Ferries that regularly travel between England and Spain to do cetacean surveys from the deck. Some 14 cetacean species were seen on those early cruises and the idea of using a regular ferry to do scientific research, as well as to have fun whale watching, was born. Since then, because of their efforts, the Bay of Biscay has become one of the great cetacean spectacles in the world. All the more amazing is that the Bay of Biscay was where whaling first became commercial - the site of intensive early Basque whaling dating from around 1000 AD.

Some 20 cetacean species have been seen, including up to 10 on one day. July and August are the best months, but most species are also present in May, June and September. Rounding the Brittany coast, the researchers often meet bottlenose dolphins, harbour porpoises, minke whales and basking sharks, with common and striped dolphins and long-finned pilot whales appearing as the ship moves into deeper waters. The prime area for sightings of the mainly larger species begins roughly half way between the Brittany coast of France and northern Spain when the boat moves into very deep water above the abyssal plain and canyons, off the continental shelf. The species here include fin, sei, blue, sperm, short-finned pilot, and false killer whales; orcas; Risso's, Atlantic white-sided, and white-beaked dolphins; as well as beaked whale species including the northern bottlenose whale and Cuvier's, Sowerby's, and True's beaked whale. There are also ocean sunfish, basking shark, tuna and occasional swordfish sightings.

The Company of Whales offers 2 basic trips, both of which depart Portsmouth, England, and include two 18- to 35-hour ferry crossings with excellent cetacean, seabird and marine nature watching and highly qualified naturalists and researchers. The main trips are the 3-day summer trips at a cost of £199 (EUR 287), which run on average once or twice a week from 21st June to 23rd September.

Participants stay on the ship and have full access to all the ship's facilities. There is a morning-long land-based excursion around Bilbao, Spain. The first 2 and the last summer trips offer participants the chance to learn cetacean survey techniques in addition to the usual sighting opportunities. Another offering 'Springtime in the Picos,' is a week-long trip given only from late April to early June, which costs £699 (EUR 1,007). This trip includes a few days' nature excursions in Spain. All cetacean records on the surveys are submitted to Organisation Cetacea (ORCA) (www.orcaweb.org) for an annual report on the distribution, ecology and conservation status of the Bay of Biscay cetaceans. In addition to supporting this research, the Company of Whales uses some of its profits to support the conservation and research projects of WDCCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (www.wdcs.org); the Marine Connection (www.marineconnection.org); and the Cetacean Section of La Société Guernesaise (www.cidolphins.org.uk). For more Bay of Biscay trips, see under Spain.

The Company of Whales

☎ +44 1950 422 483
 📄 +44 1950 422 430
 ✉ info@companyofwhales.co.uk
 🌐 www.companyofwhales.co.uk

PORTUGAL

(República Portuguesa)



The Sado Estuary, south of Lisbon, has resident inshore bottlenose dolphins. One of Europe's longest-studied dolphin populations (since the early 1980s), the dolphins that habitually use the estuary number only 31 to 39 individuals. Occasionally, common dolphins and harbour porpoises are also seen. There are no whale watching regulations yet in Portugal but the dolphin watch boats aim to follow a code of conduct.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Vertigem Azul offers year-round 3-hour boat trips along the Sado Estuary and the Arrábida coast to see the resident bottlenose dolphins. The trips use a semi-rigid inflatable boat with a capacity of 20 passengers. The captain and an assistant guide provide the commentary. The dolphins are seen on 95% of all trips. This company also offers programmes for schools and sometimes carries researchers on the trips.

☎ +351 265 238 000

✉ vertigemazul@mail.telepac.pt

🌐 www.vertigemazul.com

Ferries

The short ferry from Setúbal to Tróia crosses the part of the estuary where dolphins are often seen.

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 At the northern tip of Peninsula de Tróia, beside the ferry dock on the beach, looking back toward Setúbal, it is possible to see the resident bottlenose dolphins of the Sado Estuary.

MADEIRA (Portugal)



Volcanic Madeira, off Morocco, north-west Africa, has inshore bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoises and off-shore sightings of sperm, pilot and other whales. In addition, Madeira has declared its entire waters the Madeiran Marine Mammal Sanctuary.

International tour operators/ companies

Naturetrek offers guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a responsible tourism policy. Their trips to Madeira are not cetacean-based but may include some cetacean sightings.

☎ +44 1962 733 051

✉ info@naturetrek.co.uk

🌐 www.naturetrek.co.uk

Lookouts and marine centres

Ilhas Desertas, Ponta de S. Lourenço, and Ilhéu da Viúva are natural reserves and proposed marine protected areas that have regular bottlenose dolphin sightings in inshore waters.

AZORES (Açores)

(Portugal)



In the Azores, whale watching started to flourish by boat and from land in 1989 - 2 years after the end of traditional whaling in the islands. The 'vigias' or small watch towers, originally used by whalers to find whales, are being restored and some, such as the Vigia da Queimada, allow sightings on a clear day for up to 30 km. On offer is an astonishingly wide variety of cetaceans due to the islands' central Atlantic position on the mid-Atlantic Ridge and the sheer drop-off close to shore. Hunting in the canyons around the volcanic Azores are sperm, blue, fin and sei whales; northern bottlenose and other beaked whales including Cuvier's; bottlenose, spotted, common, Risso's and striped dolphins; false killer and pilot whales; and orcas. The season lasts from mid-April to mid-October. Whale watch permits are issued by the Dept. of Tourism and regulations have been developed but are not fully enacted. Hence, compliance is patchy, and the quality of whale watching - particularly the educational component - can vary.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

For the past decade, from April to October, Whale Watch Azores has sailed the waters around the Azores, consistently leading excellent trips combining research, education and fascinating insights into cetaceans and their world. Their 7- to 11-day excursions employ a new power catamaran which carries 12 guests and departs from Horta, Faial, Azores. There is also a land-based component. The company is building a research and education centre on São Jorge Island which will offer accommodation to trip participants beginning in 2005. Researchers Lisa Steiner and Chris Beer are on board as naturalists as well as scientists who do photo-ID of sperm whales, and bottlenose and Risso's dolphins. They also collect skin samples from the sperm whales for DNA studies, and tow a 100 m hydrophone for locating and recording cetaceans.

☎ & 📠 +44 1295 267 652

✉ info@whalewatchazores.com

🌐 www.whalewatchazores.com

Pico Sport, Blue Ocean Whale Watching Azores, has a field project based at Pico, Faial and São Jorge Island where a group of 6 marine biology

students is guided by 2 marine biologists. They operate in a rotation system monitoring the sea from the land-based spotting towers or joining the boat tours to act as naturalist guides. For the past 5 years, Pico Sport has also run a 'dolphin school for kids' in the European summer holidays - a 2-week camping programme to learn about whales and dolphins and observe them from land. Trips depart from Madalena, Pico Island.

☎ +49 162 183 6064

✉ whales@gmx.net

🌐 www.whales-dolphins.net



Sperm whale breaching off the Azores.

Education and research has also been part of the 3- to 4-hour guided trips offered by Espaço Talassa. 10-12 passengers are carried on the trips which depart from Lajes do Pico on Pico Island; Horta on Faial Island; and Ponta Delgada on São Miguel Island. A hydrophone is carried.

☎ +351 292 672 010

✉ espaco.talassa@mail.telepac.pt

🌐 www.espacotalassa.com

Peter Café Sport offers guided 4-hour whale watch trips with the choice of a catamaran (capacity 12 passengers) or an inflatable boat (capacity 8), departing from Horta harbour, Faial. They carry hydrophones and offer free school and local group programmes.

☎ +351 292 292 327

✉ peter.pt@mail.telepac.pt

🌐 www.petercafesport.com

Futurismo Azores Whale Watching

☎ +351 296 628 522

✉ futurismo@mail.telepac.pt

🌐 www.ciberacores.com/futurismo

Aquaçores

☎ +351 912 153 904 (mobile)

✉ aquaacores@aquaacores.com

🌐 www.aquaacores.com

Gaspar Ocean Adventures

☎ +351 292 292 193

🌐 www.gaspar-ocean-adventures.com

Horta Cetáceos

☎ +351 292 293 076

✉ informacoes@hortacetaceos.com

🌐 www.hortacetaceos.com

Nauticorvo

☎ +351 292 596 287

✉ nauticorvo@mail.telepac.pt

Norberto Diver

☎ +351 292 293 891

✉ norbertodiver@mail.telepac.pt

Rota das Baleias

☎ +351 296 283 288

Sealine

☎ +351 292 679 550

✉ sealine45@mail.telepac.pt

Searide Açores - Atividades Náuticas e Recreativas Lda

☎ +351 292 623 761

✉ searideacores@mail.telepac.pt

Seawatch

☎ +351 296 584 670

Toste Mendes, Lda

☎ +351 295 515 335

☎ +351 962 813 059

✉ joaotoste57@hotmail.com

🌐 www.geocities.com/joaotoste57/index

International tour operators/ companies

From June to August, out of the blue, part of WDCS, runs its high quality, conservation-oriented 9-night trips in the Azores with Whale Watch Azores (see above), but they take their own naturalist as well. Profits go to conservation. Along with contributing research, talks and educational material in the effort to better understand Azorean cetaceans, WDCS has been working with a local school to create a special Azores research trip-holiday for them.

☎ +44 1249 449 500
 (within the UK: 0870 870 0027)
 ✉ bluetravel@wdcs.org
 🌐 www.wdcs.org/outoftheblue

The People's Trust for Endangered Species offers tours with Whale Watch Azores.

✉ enquiries@ptes.org
 🌐 www.ptes.org

Whalespot, part of the Discover the World group, has 7-day sperm and other whale watching out of Pico Island, with departures from June to September, starting at £364 (EUR 525). The tours are naturalist-led and can be booked either from the boat departure point in the Azores or from the UK.

☎ +44 1737 218 800
 ✉ sales@whalespot.co.uk
 🌐 www.whalespot.com
www.discover-the-world.co.uk

Kon-Tiki Tours offers whale watch tours through Futurismo.

☎ +358 9 621 2525
 ✉ kontiki@kontiki.fi
 🌐 www.kontiki.fi

Arcatour SA (Switzerland)

✉ arcatour@arcatour.ch
 🌐 www.arcatour.ch

Naturetrek offers guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a 'responsible tourism' policy.

☎ +44 1962 733 051
 ✉ info@naturetrek.co.uk
 🌐 www.naturetrek.co.uk



Searching for whales from a vigia on the Azores.

Explore Worldwide, which specialises in trekking, adventure and wildlife tours, offers 14-day walking trips, from May to September, covering various islands in the Azores with some whale watching.

☎ +44 1252 760 000
 🌐 www.exploreworldwide.com

WildWings offers tours to the Azores in early August with Whale Watch Azores (see above).

☎ +44 1179 658 333
 ✉ wildinfo@wildwings.co.uk
 🌐 www.wildwings.co.uk

Whaqua, The Dolphin Experience, based in Germany, hosts week-long 'dolphin camps' to the Azores.

☎ +49 471 941 8857
 ✉ the-dolphin-experience@freenet.de
 🌐 www.the-dolphin-experience.de

Colibri Umweltreisen (Germany)

☎ +49 30 2839 0232
 ✉ info@colibri-berlin.de
 🌐 www.colibri-umweltreisen.de

Abenteuerteam.com (Germany)

☎ +49 251 1445952
 ✉ info@abenteuerteam.com
 🌐 www.abenteuerteam.com

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 On Pico and Faial, various 'vigias', the lookouts originally used by whalers to find the whales, have been restored by individual whale watch companies and are now used by the operators to spot whales; visiting whale watchers can watch from the vigias of the company they travel with.

🌳 One vigia in Lajes on Pico, Vigia da Queimada, is available for the use of tourists.

🌳 The national whaling museum is on the island of Pico.

Museu do Pico: Museu dos Baleeiros

☎ +351 292 672 276
 ✉ museupico@mail.telepac.pt

🌳 The MARE Project in the Azores is going to develop an interpretation centre in Faial that focuses on marine conservation with some emphasis on cetaceans.

🌐 www.horta.uac.pt/projectos/life

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

In Lajes, on Pico, it is possible to take a marked 3-hour walk designed for whale watchers, which includes the Vigia da Queimada, the whaling museum, the old whalers' boat house and the whaling factory.

A biennial whale festival and conference promoting whale research and education, features whale watch trips, international speakers, workshops and events. The next one is autumn 2003. For more information, see:

www.virtualazores.com/baleias/en/default.html

Whale watch regulations, recently formulated, can be accessed at

www.horta.uac.pt/species/Cetacea/Disclaimer.htm

There is no hotline for cetacean sightings but strandings can be reported to Rede de Arrojamento de Cetáceos dos Açores (RACA), Universidade dos Açores - Departamento de Oceanografia e Pescas, Horta Faial, Azores, Portugal

☎ +351 292 292 988

Some operators in the Azores take participants to swim with whales. Please note that swimming with whales is illegal in Azorean waters, though it is permissible to swim with dolphins. WDCS, among other groups, does not encourage people to swim with any species of cetacean.



Vigias are small watchtowers built by whalers; today, whale watchers use them.

GIBRALTAR (UK)



In this British colony and outpost at the southern tip of Spain, dolphin watching began in 1980 when an ex-fisherman found that common, striped, and sometimes bottlenose dolphins could be seen within a couple hours of port. The company, Dolphin Safari, is still going today. Dolphin watch regulations were drawn up several years ago. Some operators follow them but they are not enforced.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Dolphin Safari, the first Gibraltar whale watch company, offers some commentaries on its tours and has a glass-bottom viewing chamber on the boat.

☎ +350 71914

✉ dolphin@gibnet.gi

🌐 www.dolphinsafari.gi

Dolphin Explorer

☎ +350 76378

✉ dolpexplor@gibnynex.gi

🌐 www.dolphinexplorer.co.uk

Nautilus IV, Dolphin Bay Ltd

☎ +350 73400

Dolphin Discovery Cruises

☎ +350 47333

Dolphin World

☎ +350 5448 1000

Jolly Joevan

☎ +350 74430

The Helping Hand (uses the 10 m Nimo)

☎ +350 73719

✉ helpinghand@gibnet.gi

🌐 www.gibraltar.gi/helpinghand.

(For calls to all Gibraltar numbers from Spain, substitute 9567 for 350.)

International tour operators/ companies

Whalespot, part of the Discover the World group, offers 4-day dolphin watching out of Marina Bay, Gibraltar, from May to October. The boat operator acts as a guide. The trips can be booked either from the UK or joined in Gibraltar.

☎ +44 1737 218 800
 ✉ sales@whalespot.co.uk
 🌐 www.whalespot.com
 www.discover-the-world.co.uk

Whaqua, The Dolphin Experience, based in Germany, offers week-long 'dolphin camps' to Gibraltar in June and August.

☎ +49 471 9418857
 ✉ the-dolphin-experience@freenet.de
 🌐 www.the-dolphin-experience.de

Lookouts and marine centres

🌳 Europa Point, at the southern tip of Gibraltar, is a 15 m cliff overlooking a tide rip near the Mediterranean entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar. Most days, a pod of common dolphins will come in at some point to feed in the tide rip. About once a month, bottlenose dolphins appear. Some years, the spouts of young fin whales can be seen. However, in moderate to rough seas or if visibility is impaired by fog, the dolphins are impossible to see.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings and strandings should be reported to the Spanish Cetacean Society.

☎ +34 918 565 429
 ✉ sec@cetaceos.com
 🌐 www.cetaceos.com

Some operators in Gibraltar take participants to swim with dolphins although it is against local guidelines. WDCS, among other groups, does not encourage people to swim with any species of cetacean.



Common dolphins are frequently encountered inshore in the Strait of Gibraltar.

SPAIN (Reino de España)



Spain has at least 5 distinct regions for whale watching:

In the Bay of Biscay, from Gijón to San Sebastián, regular inshore sightings are made of common, striped and bottlenose dolphins, with offshore sightings of Risso's dolphins, orcas, and minke, fin, sperm, long-finned pilot and various beaked whales. (See Bay of Biscay bonanza, p. 42).

In Galicia (north-west Spain), bottlenose dolphins have been followed for more than a decade by researchers. Farther offshore, they also sometimes see striped, common, and Risso's dolphins, as well as minke, fin and long-finned pilot whales. Occasionally, they also see false killer whales, orcas, harbour porpoises, and Cuvier's beaked whales. However, these cetacean and other marine animals are being affected by the large coastal oil spill of 2002.

Out of Cádiz and Tarifa, on the Strait of Gibraltar, in south-west Spain, bottlenose, common and striped dolphins and pilot whales can be seen year-round. Sperm whales (April-July) and orcas (mainly July and August) can also be found, as well as sometimes fin whales (especially early summer).

The near-shore waters of the Alboran and western Mediterranean seas, from the Costa del Sol to the Costa Blanca, have some of the best areas in the Mediterranean for dolphins, particularly just east of the Strait of Gibraltar. Inshore, common, striped, and bottlenose dolphins can be seen, with Risso's dolphins, long-finned pilot, fin and sperm whales offshore.

From the Golfo de Valencia to the Costa Brava, including the Balearic Islands (Balears), are additional possibilities for cetacean tourism. There are common, striped and bottlenose dolphins inshore, with long-finned pilot, fin and sperm whales offshore.

Regulations have been formulated for Spain, particularly to address the problems in the Strait of Gibraltar with the rapidly-growing whale watch industry and the background presence of considerable shipping, marine tourism, and fishing boat traffic.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

The research group CIRCE invites volunteers to help with orca and other cetacean research in the Strait of Gibraltar with 12-day stints from mid-July to mid-September. CIRCE (Conservación, Información y Estudio de Cetáceos - Conservation, Information and Research into Cetaceans). Cost is EUR 1,000 (not including accommodation and meals, except lunch). Besides orcas, CIRCE works with sperm, fin, and pilot whales, as well as bottle-nose dolphins.

☎ & 📄 +34 956 679 181

✉ neus_perez@terra.es

🌐 www.circe-asso.org



Orcas are frequently seen in the Strait of Gibraltar.

In Tarifa, west of Gibraltar, a Swiss group, FIRMM (Foundation for Information and Research on Marine Mammals), offers day trips as well as week-long courses in marine mammals, in German, from April to October. They also do public education programmes in the schools and with local people, and have regular whale watch 'tourist' day trips, suitable for families, with briefings in 5 languages about Gibraltar Strait and the marine wildlife, focusing on whales and dolphins. On all cruises, they record sightings of animals, with number, behaviour, tide, weather and GPS position. The week-long courses include land-based lectures about biology and threats to cetaceans, as well as trips to see them; cost is EUR 310 per person. The 2- 2 ½-hour boat trip uses a 12 m boat and costs EUR 27, with reduced rates for children.

☎ +34 956 627 008

(Swiss offseason ☎ +41 1 700 1521)

✉ firrm98@aol.com

🌐 www.firrm.org

In Tarifa, Turmares operates year round with 2 boats carrying up to 12 and 200 persons. They have naturalists on every trip and contribute their cetacean sightings and other observations to the Spanish Cetacean Society and the research group CIRCE.

✉ turmares@turmares.com, info@turmares.com

🌐 www.turmares.com

Whale Watch España is a non-profit association, based in Tarifa, which conducts educational trips with a good research background, and is careful around the whales. From April through July, it offers 2-hour trips to see dolphins and pilot whales. It is sometimes possible to find sperm whales, too. In July and August, 3-hour trips take people to see orcas. In September and October, more whales and dolphins can be seen with their new young of the year. Tours start at EUR 27 with reduced prices for children.

☎ +34 639 476 544, +34 956 682 247

🌐 www.whalewatchtarifa.com

Also in Tarifa, Mar de Ballenas has 2 boats, capacity 10 and 39, and focuses on dolphin trips of 2 ½ hours. In summer, special orca trips are organised which take 4 hours.

☎ +34 956 682 253

✉ seaofwhales@nostracom.com

mardeballenas@nostracom.com

🌐 www.nostracom.com/seaofwhales

In La Línea, near the Gibraltar border, Dolphin Bay Cruises operates mainly to take short trips to see the dolphins (1 ½ hours to day trips). Boat departs from Puerto de Poniente, La Línea. The large boat carries up to 103 passengers and a small boat carries up to 26 passengers. Offered year-round except at Christmas. All sightings are logged and a naturalist guide is present.

☎ +34 956 173 537

✉ dolphin_safari@yahoo.co.uk

🌐 www.dolphinsafarispain.com

Since 1990, the Alnitak research group has brought groups of volunteers and students to do environmental investigations in the Mediterranean Sea using the historic 18 m ketch, Toftevaag. Since 1999, programmes have been sponsored through Earthwatch. For information about future programmes, contact Alnitak.

☎ +34 619 108 797

✉ alnitak@cetaceos.com

🌐 www.geocities.com/tofte2000

Ferries

Ferries crossing the deep waters of the Bay of Biscay allow for the possibility of seeing a wide variety of whales and dolphins. See also 'Bay of Biscay bonanza', above, for naturalist and researcher-led tours across the Bay of Biscay to England. To arrange your own trip from Santander, Spain, to Plymouth, England, contact Brittany Ferries.

www.brittanyferries.com

For trips aboard the P&O ferry from Bilbao, Spain, to Portsmouth, England, contact P&O.

www.poportsmouth.com

International tour operators/ companies

Naturetrek has guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a 'responsible tourism' policy. It offers weekend, week and 11-day cruises and land-based trips that include some cetacean watching in the Bay of Biscay.

[+44 1962 733 051](tel:+441962733051)

info@naturetrek.co.uk

www.naturetrek.co.uk

WildWings tours across the Bay of Biscay, land- and boat-based in August and early September, cost £199 (EUR 287). This is a ferry-based tour with excellent cetacean naturalists.

[+44 1179 658 333](tel:+441179658333)

wildinfo@wildwings.co.uk


www.wildwings.co.uk

The People's Trust for Endangered Species is planning guided Bay of Biscay tours.

enquiries@ptes.org

www.ptes.org

Lookouts and marine centres

 From Punta del Carnero, at the western end of the Bahía de Algeciras, at the Mediterranean entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar, there is a good lookout over the straight toward Ceuta, the Spanish territory bordering Morocco across the strait in Africa. There is the chance to see various dolphins as well as possibly fin and sperm whales. Nearby is an old whaling factory, as whaling was formerly done from this point.

From the castle in Tarifa, it is possible to look out over the Strait of Gibraltar at its narrowest point. Both fin whales and sperm whales have been seen

passing through the Strait, sometimes fairly close to shore.

At Barbate, orcas often come close to shore while the fishing nets are taking red tuna from April through June.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings and strandings should be reported to the Spanish Cetacean Society.

[+34 918 565 429](tel:+34918565429)

sec@cetaceos.com

www.cetaceos.com

CANARY ISLANDS

(Islas Canarias)

(Spain)



Some 500+ short-finned pilot whales as well as bottlenose dolphins resident to the waters off south Tenerife have made this one of the world centres for whale watching. However, few of the hundreds of thousands who go whale watching from Tenerife each year realise that an abundance of other whale and dolphin species are found throughout these waters, just offshore - sperm whales, rare beaked whales, various tropical dolphins. This is also one of the few places in the world where whale watching is truly year-round. With some notable exceptions, the overall standard of whale watching, however, has been low with a lack of understanding about the potential impact on the animals as well as too few educational, scientific and conservation benefits for the community and for the visiting whale watchers. Regulations and some enforcement are now in place and things are improving, but more boats need to carry naturalist guides if Canary Islands whale watching is to meet the standards set in other parts of Europe. You can do your part by asking any operator, before you book the tour, if they carry a qualified naturalist guide.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

La Gomera

Half-day trips are offered aboard open Canarian fishing boats and a steel ketch for 5 to 11 passengers. Club de Mar carries biologists, while the cap-

tain acts as the guide. The pilot whales, Atlantic spotted and bottlenose dolphins are regularly seen, with the chance of common, striped and rough-toothed dolphins, beaked whales and, sometimes, large baleen whales.

☎ +34 922 805 759

✉ gomeranews@arrakis.es

MEER, a German research and conservation group based in La Gomera, offers practical courses on behavioural biology of cetaceans for students and interested public for 2 months of the year. The group works with the local La Gomera operator, Club de Mar, in Valle Gran Rey (see above).

☎ & 📠 +49 30 8507 8755

✉ meer@infocanarias.com

🌐 www.M-E-E-R.org

Lanzarote

Tropical Delfin SL

☎ +34 928 512 323

✉ info@bluedelfin.com

La Palma

Charter Maria, SL

☎ +34 609 531 376

Tenerife

The 'Nostramo Group' has guided 3- to 4-hour trips out of Puerto Colón, Tenerife, on a choice of 3 large boats, including a catamaran with underwater viewing ports to see the whales and dolphins underwater.

☎ +34 922 750 085

✉ info@tenerifedolphin.com

🌐 www.tenerifedolphin.com



Whale watching off Tenerife -- a year-round activity.

Atlántida Submarine SL

☎ +34 922 715 080

Blue Sea Cruiser SL

☎ +34 922 860 671

Exp. Blue Sea Cruiser SL

☎ +34 922 862 411

CB Excursiones Los Gigantes

☎ +34 922 860 671

Chartemar Tenerife SL

☎ +34 922 714 459

Eden Charter Sailing SL

☎ +34 660 452 045

Ensueño de Mar SL

☎ +34 922 862 120

European Waves SL

☎ +34 922 719 603

Fun y Gestión SL

☎ +34 922 714 459

Funbird de Gestión SL

☎ +34 922 715 780

Heiko Emer Kuschnik - Katrin

☎ +34 922 861 479

Jaime Ricardo Vergara Delgado - Travelin' Lady

☎ +34 922 798 015

José Antonio Hernández Martín - Bonadea II

☎ +34 922 794 638

Mare Nostrum Resort SL

☎ +34 922 757 549

Marítima Acantilados, trips with Nashira Uno from Los Gigantes.

☎ +34 922 861 918

✉ nashira@teleline.es

🌐 www.losgigantes.com/nashira.htm

Marítima Ludomar SL

☎ +34 922 795 264

Nautisport SL

☎ +34 922 751 576

Naviera Mar de Ons, SL

☎ +34 922 751 576

Promotora Avanti, SA

☎ +34 922 732 488

Puerto Costa SL

☎ +34 922 212 627

Sea Quest 99 SL

☎ +34 922 712 095

✉ seaquest@fastnetSpain.net

Vision Submarine SL

☎ +34 922 752 416

Whales Sea, SL

☎ +34 922 751 576

International tour operators/ companies

TUI works with the La Gomera research trips established by MEER e.V. to bring participants from Germany. TUI and MEER have also jointly produced a brochure on sustainable whale watching for prospective whale watchers.

☎ +49 511 5662202

☎ +49 511 5662222

✉ andreas.koch@tui.de

🌐 www.tui-umwelt.com

Sailing cruises around La Gomera in April and May, aboard a 13 m yacht, feature whale and dolphin encounters, including sperm and pilot whales, orcas, and various beaked whales and dolphins. These week-long trips are offered by the experienced, wildlife-friendly Oceanus, who formerly operated the Marguerite Explorer. Departs from La Gomera.

☎ +44 1273 321 432

✉ info@oceanus.uk.com

🌐 www.oceanus.uk.com

Naturetrek offers guided, multi-day package trips focusing on nature and culture and follows a 'responsible tourism' policy.

☎ +44 1962 733 051

✉ info@naturetrek.co.uk

🌐 www.naturetrek.co.uk

La Gomera research study trips in March and April focusing on human-cetacean interactions are also being marketed through Ecovolunteers. 77% of

what the participants pay goes directly to the project. The Ecovolunteer programme is directly available in the following countries: Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Austria, Russia, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Go to www.ecovolunteer.org and choose 'agents'.

🌐 www.ecovolunteer.org

Whaqua, The Dolphin Experience, based in Germany, offers 'dolphin camps' on La Gomera, working with MEER.

☎ +49 471 9418857

✉ the-dolphin-experience@freenet.de

🌐 www.the-dolphin-experience.de

Wellenreiter Reisen offers dolphin watching out of La Gomera.

☎ +34 922 805 717

✉ info@wellenreiterreisen.de

🌐 www.wellenreiterreisen.de

www.dolphinlick.de

Colibri Umweltreisen (Germany)

☎ +49 30 2839 0232

✉ info@colibri-berlin.de

🌐 www.colibri-umweltreisen.de

Abenteuerteam.com (Germany)

☎ +49 251 144 5952

✉ info@abenteuerteam.com

🌐 www.abenteuerteam.com

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings and strandings should be reported to the Spanish Cetacean Society.

☎ +34 918 565 429

✉ sec@cetaceos.com

🌐 www.cetaceos.com



Resident pilot whales are the main species attracting whale watchers in the Canary Islands.

The UK-based Atlantic Whale Foundation has worked closely with several operators in Tenerife to establish the Confederation of Whale Watching Boats of Tenerife. Through the confederation, the foundation promotes ethical whale watching and various other educational, research and conservation initiatives. It also sponsors the European Festival of the Whale which is held every July and August in Tenerife and includes parades, a world music concert, children's workshops, exhibitions, a cetacean conference and other activities. For information on whale watching in Tenerife, on participating in the European Festival of the Whale, on volunteering (year-round, minimum 2 weeks) and on assisting in various research projects, see the contact details below.

✉ edb@huron.ac.uk

🌐 www.whalefoundation.org.uk

On La Gomera, the research and conservation group MEER organises film and slide shows, lectures and other public events in Valle Gran Rey. They also help educate skippers of the whale watch tours.

☎ & 📠 +49 30 8507 8755

✉ meer@infocanarias.com

🌐 www.M-E-E-R.org

Some operators in the Canary Islands take participants to swim with pilot whales and dolphins. WDACS, among other groups, does not encourage people to swim with any species of cetacean.

FRANCE (République Française)



Bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoises are found along the Brittany and Normandy coasts.

Off the Atlantic coast of France, the Bay of Biscay has a wide variety of cetaceans (see Spain). In the Mediterranean Sea in general - and specifically in the Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans in the waters of France, Monaco and Italy - bottlenose and striped dolphins can be seen reliably, sometimes close to shore, while farther out, fin, sperm, and long-finned pilot whales as well as Risso's and short-beaked common dolphins can be seen fairly reliably. It is also possible to see Cuvier's beaked whales. Bottlenose dolphin sightings are also possible around Corsica.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

The 'Whale and Dolphin Monitoring Project' is a Swiss research project to study the cetaceans off the Côte d'Azur and in the Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans. The week-long cruises, which depart from St Raphaël on a 14 m sailing vessel, are open to 6 ecovolunteers per week from June to early August. Fee is CHF 1'500 (EUR 996) including all food and accommodation but exclusive of travel to the port. Main language on board is German. These cruises offer the interested public a chance to encounter cetaceans in their natural environment as well as to do something practical for cetacean conservation.

ASMS (Marine Mammal Protection) (Switzerland)

☎ +41 17 806 688

✉ si.frey@bluewin.ch

🌐 www.asms-swiss.org, www.swisswhales.org

'The Whales of the Mediterranean' is a programme giving ecovolunteers a chance to work with researchers from the Swiss Cetacean Society (SCS) on their study of the fin whale and other species in the Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans. The study is a collaboration of French, Italian and other researchers. Nine 6-day stages are offered from late June through late August, with 4 to 6 ecovolunteers per stage. Data collection is supervised by specialised naturalists who work with established scientists at various Mediterranean research institutes. Trips depart Port de Saint-Mandrier (Toulon). Participants should speak French. Cost is CHF 1'100 (EUR 760).

☎ +41 76 403 2114

✉ cetacean@ip-worldcom.ch

🌐 www.oenology.ch/scs



Fin whales can be seen in the Mediterranean off France and Italy.

The Swiss Cetacean Society (see above), also offers 6-day Côte d'Azur - Ligurian Sea sailing camps from late June to early July for 14- to 18-year-old French-speaking youths. The objective of 'Camp Mer SCS' is to study cetaceans as part of their environment in the Mediterranean, including an analysis of the methods of acquiring knowledge, the importance of scientific rigour, and the crucial impact of pollution and other human actions on the environment. As the organisers say, this is not a whale and dolphin watching safari but a chance to learn more about marine animals and to respect and admire them. Trips depart on the 25 m sailboat Jean-Dominique from Port de Saint-Mandrier (Toulon). Cost is CHF 1'100 (EUR 760).

☎ +41 76 403 2114

✉ cetacean@ip-worldcom.ch

🌐 www.oenology.ch/scs

Cetus has set up 4 different kinds of programmes for families and children between early July and late August aboard a 14 m sailboat. The trips focus on teaching respect for cetaceans and all the marine environment. The trips last 3, 4 or 6 days. Trips are open to families, including children of various ages down to 1-3 years old. Adult price is EUR 100 per day, about half price for children. The ship carries field guides as well as a hydrophone for some trips.

✉ cetus@association-cetus.com

🌐 www.association-cetus.com

Association Ophrys, a new conservation and scientific group at the University of Montpellier in France is developing a programme of whale watch trips for 30-50 people per trip. The 17-hour-long trips travel through the Golfe du Lion. All cetacean sightings and tracks are sent to the CIESM databank.

☎ +33 616303883, +33 467592928

✉ aophrys@yahoo.fr

✉ flarrey@biotope.fr

International tour operators/ companies

The British-based Atlantic Whale Foundation offers extended sailing trips with a week-long stage in the Mediterranean including Corsica and the Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans.

✉ edb@huron.ac.uk

🌐 www.whalefoundation.org.uk

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

The CIESM Sightings data bank for cetaceans covers the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea and contains more than 15,000 sightings. CIESM, the International Commission for the Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean Sea, is a consortium of some 500 scientific institutes and 2500 researchers in 22 countries, with funds from all member states. Dating from 1910, CIESM's goal is to promote marine science for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea and the well-being of coastal residents. Along with various publications and activities, it also collects cetacean sightings. For more information about CIESM, see www.ciesm.org. For specific queries about the cetacean database, or to report sightings, contact Pierre Beaubrun, Secretary/ Manager, CIESM Cetacean Databank, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Biogéographie et Ecologie des Vertébrés, Université Montpellier 2, Case 94, Place Eugène Bataillon, 34095 Montpellier cedex 5, France.

✉ beaubrun@univ-montp2.fr

Cetacean sightings in the Mediterranean Sea can also be reported to Tethys' Cetacean Sighting Database either on line or by printing out and sending the sighting form provided on the website.

🌐 www.tethys.org/index_e.htm

MONACO



Whale watch trips organised in France and Italy sometimes depart from Monaco to watch fin whales and various dolphins in the sanctuary (see The Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans). Species that can be seen include bottlenose and striped dolphins, sometimes close to shore, while farther from shore are fin, sperm, long-finned pilot and Cuvier's beaked whales as well as Risso's and short-beaked common dolphins.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Various French and Italian trips work off Monaco and sometimes use the port (see France, above, and Italy, below).

International tour operators/ companies

See Italy, below.

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings in the Mediterranean Sea can be reported to Tethys' Cetacean Sighting Database either on line or by printing out and sending the sighting form provided on the website.

📄 www.tethys.org/index_e.htm

ITALY (Repubblica Italiana)



With its unique central position protruding into the Mediterranean Sea, and the longest coastline of any southern European country,

Italy is well situated for watching a variety of cetaceans:

From the north-west, the Ligurian Sea has fin, sperm, long-finned pilot and Cuvier's beaked whales, as well as striped, short-beaked common and Risso's dolphins. In the Tyrrhenian Sea are bottlenose dolphins especially in summer, along with striped dolphins, long-finned pilot and fin whales, among others. In the Adriatic Sea, off eastern Italy, are mainly bottlenose dolphins in the northern part and striped and Risso's dolphins in the south. Around Sardinia are resident bottlenose dolphins, along with, offshore, short-beaked common, Risso's and striped dolphins, and fin and sperm whales.

Italian researchers, along with researchers from other Mediterranean countries, have helped formulate whale watch regulations as part of the ACCO-BAMS agreement but the regulations have yet to come into force in Italy.



Short-beaked common dolphins are studied and watched off Italy and Greece and are one of the resident species of the new Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Working in the Mediterranean since 1987, the Tethys Research Institute has developed a special blend of field study cruise and high-quality marine nature tourism. Participants pay to accompany the scientists and help out on exciting research cruises. These cetacean field-study tours resemble Earthwatch programmes but are less formal and there is more flexibility for individual participants. Tethys field study tours take visitors to the Ligurian Sea as well as to other areas in the Mediterranean. In past years they have also sponsored excursions to study dolphins in Croatia and Greece, and pilot whales in the Canary Islands and various other cetaceans in the Caribbean.

The 'Cetacean Sanctuary Research' course focuses on the various cetaceans of the Ligurian Sea in 2 different habitats. The first is the pelagic area where fin whales are found in summer between the French-Italian coast and Corsica. Here, participants join the Mediterranean Fin Whale Programme which has focused on the ecology and the behaviour of fin whales since 1990. The other habitat is the coastal continental slope area where toothed whales feed on squid and other species. The Squid Loving Odontocete Project (SLOPE) includes assorted mainly squid eaters: the sperm, Cuvier's beaked and long-finned pilot whales, as well as Risso's, short-beaked common and bottlenose dolphins. Project participants are given lectures on cetaceans and marine biology. Together with the researchers, they participate in all field activities, including photo-ID work, sound recording, suction-cup tagging, and sighting shifts day and night; they may also be involved in friendly 'cooking competitions'. If weather conditions are poor, the participants take inland trips and visit local towns and museums including San Remo, and the Monte-Carlo Oceanographic Museum.

☎ +39 02 72001947

✉ tethys@tethys.org

📄 www.tethys.org

Tethys Research Institute also has 'training courses,' or specialised training workshops, for more serious participants and prospective researchers. The Cetacean Sanctuary Research Workshop is highly recommended for students and those considering a career studying marine mammals but it is not suitable for tourists looking for a casual whale watch trip.

☎ +39 02 72001947

✉ tethys@tethys.org

📄 www.tethys.org

The Ischia Dolphin Project is a field course operated by StudioMare in collaboration with Tethys Research Institute around the islands of Ischia and Ventotene and along the deep Cuma Canyon in the Gulf of Napoli and the southern Tyrrhenian Sea. StudioMare is an Italian research and conservation group founded in 1991; since 1997 they have been working on the photo-ID of about 100 resident short-beaked common dolphins. They also have sightings of striped, bottlenose and Risso's dolphins, as well as fin and long-finned pilot whales. Participants learn about cetacean conservation, evolution, ecology, classification and bioacoustics, through a combination of instruction and first-hand experience.

☎ +39 02 72001947

✉ tethys@tethys.org

🌐 www.tethys.org

For commercial whale watching, bluWest has used Tethys naturalists and scientists and has been developed to a high standard. Departing from Imperia and Andora, they offer 5-hour trips for up to 200 people to the Ligurian Sea, the Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans. They carry hydrophones.

☎ +39 0183 769 364

✉ bluwest@uno.it

🌐 www.whalewatch.it

Whale watch trips out of San Remo from June to September to the Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans are offered by Sanremo Navigazione. The 5 ½-hour trips take up to 130 passengers and are guided by a marine biologist. Cost is EUR 30 (half price for children). A new educational programme is planned.

☎ +39 0184 505055

✉ rivieraline@rosenet.it

🌐 www.rivieraline.it

International tour operators/ companies

The Tethys dolphin research trips are also handled by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society in Germany.

☎ +49 89 6100 2395

✉ jneider@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs-de.org

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings in the Mediterranean Sea can be reported to Tethys' Cetacean Sighting Database either on line or by printing out and sending the sighting form provided at the site.

Tethys Research Institute

🌐 www.tethys.org/index_e.htm

ACCOBAMS - help for cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea

ACCOBAMS is an agreement which covers all aspects of marine conservation between countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and the contiguous Atlantic. Signed in 1996, ACCOBAMS came into force in 2001. Whale watching is one of the concerns of the ACCOBAMS agreement and, during the 'first meeting of the parties' preliminary guidelines were produced as part of 'Cetaceans of the Mediterranean and Black Seas: State of Knowledge and Conservation Strategies.' These guidelines will be refined at future meetings of the parties. The agreement calls for the range states and the European Community to put in place conservation measures regarding marine habitats in the ACCOBAMS region. ACCOBAMS is highly regarded and could be a good model for marine and other agreements in other parts of the world.

🌐 www.accobams.org

www.accobams.mc

www.accobams.org/index_science.htm

The Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans

The Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans, established in late 1999 by Italy, France and Monaco, is a landmark achievement. Informally referred to as the Ligurian Sea sanctuary, it is located both in the national waters and on the high-seas off Italy, France and Monaco (see map, p. 30). The sanctuary has also been entered into the list of Special Protected Areas of Mediterranean Interest (SPAMI) under the Barcelona Convention. Protecting cetacean habitat in the Mediterranean is important as is the worldwide significance of the international high-seas designation and the implications for other potential areas in terms of co-operation between countries.

The motivation for creating the Pelagos Mediterranean Sanctuary for Cetaceans - originally called the Pelagos Project - came from the regular research cruises of the Tethys Research Institute. At the same time, through the 1990s, pelagic drift-net

fishing was shown to be a big problem because of the large number of species that were being accidentally caught and killed. Tethys' cruises revealed the presence of substantial cetacean concentrations within the area, resident populations of striped and other dolphins, Cuvier's beaked and sperm whales, as well as seasonal concentrations of fin whales. The cruises also found a conspicuous variety of other pelagic species such as tunas, swordfish, sunfish, sharks and occasionally sea turtles and devil rays - a high degree of marine diversity in a productive ecosystem with a large krill and other zooplankton biomass.

The pelagic driftnet fishing in the area was banned by the European Union as of January 2002. However, French fishermen are now using a new kind of oceanic drift-net to catch tuna - controversial because they claim it is not a drift-net and some try to anchor it to the seafloor with rocks to prove the point - but it is a drift-net and it has a bycatch of cetacean and other marine life. A key part of the new economic mandate for the sanctuary will be whale watching and marine ecotourism. This is also crucial for the public education and research components of the sanctuary.

In 2001, an inventory of biological, cultural and other features was prepared for the area, which is now on file with the secretariat of ACCOBAMS - the agreement between Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea countries on marine conservation. For more information about the sanctuary, contact Tethys Research Institute.

☎ +39 02 72001947

✉ tethys@tethys.org

🌐 www.tethys.org. ACCOBAMS can be accessed at www.accobams.org



The fluke of a sperm whale.

CROATIA (Republika Hrvatska)



A strong candidate marine protected area in the waters surrounding the wooded offshore islands of Cres and Losinj is home to a resident population of bottlenose dolphins. Researchers from Tethys worked here for most of the past decade. Since 2001, the project's management has been passed to the Croatian organisation Blue World. Blue World now offers dolphin tours during the peak season of June through September, following a code of conduct.



Croatian waters - site of the Adriatic Dolphin Project.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

12-day dedicated bottlenose dolphin research tours are offered by Blue World to Veli Losinj, Croatia. The trips are led by researchers from the Adriatic Dolphin Project who act as naturalists and present special lectures. Participants travel in a 6 m rubber inflatable or 5.2 m plastic boat, each carrying up to 8 passengers. GPS, hydrophones, and binoculars are available. Research on the project includes work on population dynamics through the monitoring of population size, genetic analyses and acoustic work. The dolphin researchers regularly present lectures in schools, universities, hotels and to community groups.

✉ adp@blue-world.org

🌐 www.blue-world.org

International tour operators/ companies


The Blue World dolphin research trips are also offered by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society in Germany.

☎ +49 89 6100 2395

✉ jneider@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs-de.org

Lookouts and marine centres

 In 2003, a new Marine Education Centre is to be opened on the island, with full-time office, exhibition and lecturing facilities. The Adriatic Dolphin Project plans to present lectures each night in Croatian, Italian, German, and English according to the audience.

✉ adp@blue-world.org

🌐 www.blue-world.org

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Cetacean sightings in the Mediterranean Sea can be reported to Tethys' Cetacean Sighting Database either on line or by printing out and sending the sighting form provided at the site.

🌐 www.tethys.org/index_e.htm

GREECE (Elliniki Dimokratia)



Aristotle first observed and wrote about dolphins in the Greek islands more than 2,000 years ago; today, it is still possible find bottlenose and common dolphins here as well as sperm whales.

Whale and dolphin watch tours

Working in the Mediterranean since 1990, the Tethys Research Institute has pioneered a special blend of field study cruise and marine nature tourism. Participants pay to accompany the scientists and help out on exciting research trips. These cetacean field-study tours resemble Earthwatch programmes but are less formal and there is more flexibility for individual participants. Tethys field study tours take visitors to the Ligurian Sea as well as to other areas in the Mediterranean Italy. In past years they have also sponsored excursions to study dolphins in Croatia and in the Canary Islands. Prices range from EUR 630 to 850, depending on length and type of trip. The Greek trips - the Ionian Dolphin Project - focus on bottlenose and short-beaked common dolphins around the island of Kalamos, Greece, in the eastern Ionian Sea. The project is land-based, with daily surveys on inflatable boats, and participants live in a comfortable Greek-style house.

☎ +39 02 72001947

✉ tethys@tethys.org

🌐 www.tethys.org

Tethys Research Institute also has 'training courses,' or specialised training workshops, for more serious participants and prospective researchers. The Ionian Dolphin Project Workshop is highly recommended for students and those considering a career studying marine mammals but it is not suitable for tourists looking for a casual whale watch trip. These 6-day workshops, held in July, are based at the Ionian Dolphin Project field station in Kalamos, Greece. Both bottlenose and short-beaked common dolphins are studied. Participants learn the basics of studying dolphins with a conservation approach. Highly recommended. Cost is EUR 850, which includes room and board but not transportation to the field station.

☎ +39 041 2750206

✉ tethys@tethys.org

🌐 www.tethys.org

Nature tours with some cetacean watching

Nidri Travel has marine nature day-trips for families sailing through the Ionian islands which include some dolphin watching. Marine biologist is on board for part of the trip.

☎ +30 2645 093116

✉ enquiries@uniqueexcursions.com

🌐 www.uniqueexcursions.com

International tour operators/ companies

The Tethys dolphin research trips are also on the programme offered by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society in Germany.

☎ +49 89 6100 2395

✉ jneider@wdcs.org

🌐 www.wdcs-de.org

Special attractions, events, cetacean hotlines, and other information

Greece has a national sighting and stranding archive. The Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute is eager to receive both sighting and stranding reports, but they must be accompanied by photographs or video which allow confirmation of identification. These photos can also be valuable for photo-identification of individuals. In a few cases, sperm whale fluke photographs sent in by the public have allowed important comparisons to existing photo-IDs. Send images together with details of the sighting and stranding to:

Alexandros Frantzis, Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute, Terpsichoris 21, 16671 Vouliagmeni, Greece.

☎ & 📠 +30 210 8960108

✉ afrantzis@otenet.gr

🌐 www.pelagosinstitute.gr

Cetacean sightings in the Mediterranean Sea can also be reported to Tethys' Cetacean Sighting Database either on line or by printing out and sending the sighting form provided on the website.

🌐 www.tethys.org/index_e.htm

OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Various coastal European countries are not listed in this guide including several in the Baltic Sea (Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland), the North Sea (Belgium and the Netherlands), the Black Sea (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Georgia) and the Mediterranean Sea (Malta, Albania, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia and Cyprus). Most of these countries have historic or somewhat offshore and inaccessible populations of whales, dolphins and porpoises, but none of these countries currently offers commercial or educational whale watch opportunities. Finland, for example, has records of porpoises and even larger whales and dolphins, but has no currently known population in its waters. The Black Sea countries of Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, as well as Turkey and Russia, however, do have, despite formerly intense exploitation, populations of bottlenose and common dolphins, as well as harbour porpoises, yet at present there is no commercial whale watching. It is our hope that this guide will stimulate the growth of new high quality whale watch opportunities in some of these countries. To prospective whale watch operators, as well as readers of this publication, we ask you to please tell us about these efforts as they develop in new countries so that we can help with technical expertise and suggestions as needed.

Erich Hoyt

✉ ehoyt@compuserve.com

Nicolas Entrup (Germany)

✉ nentrup@wdcs.org

Vanessa Williams (UK)

✉ vanessa.williams@wdcs.org

BOOKS ABOUT WHALES AND DOLPHINS - ESPECIALLY IN EUROPE

📖 Berrow, Simon and Sarah Ferriss. 2001. *The Shannon Dolphins*. Shannon Dolphin and Wildlife Foundation, Kilrush, Ireland, 31 pages.

📖 Butler, Jay and Anna Levin. 1998. *Was it a whale?* A handy guide to the marine mammals of the Hebrides. Brown & Whittaker, Tobermory. 20 pages.

📖 Carwardine, Mark. 2003. *Whale Watching in Britain and Europe: An Essential Guide to Where to Go and What to See*. New Holland, London. 192 pages.

📖 Carwardine, Mark and Erich Hoyt (eds.) 1998. *Whales & Dolphins: The Ultimate Guide to Marine Mammals*. HarperCollins, London. 288 pages. (This book is also available in German, Spanish, Italian and Danish.)

📖 Carwardine, Mark. 1995 (revised 2002). *Whales Dolphins and Porpoises*. Dorling Kindersley, London, 256 pages.

📖 Evans, Peter. 1987. *The Natural History of Whales and Dolphins*. Christopher Helm, London, 343 pages.

📖 Frohoff, Toni and Brenda Peterson (eds.) 2003. *Between Species: Celebrating the Dolphin-Human Bond*. Univ. of California and Sierra Club Books, San Francisco. 352 pages.

📖 Hoyt, Erich. 1998. *Seasons of the Whale*. Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, Bath, UK, 104 pages.

📖 Hoyt, Erich. 2000. *Meeting the Whales*. Firefly, Toronto and NY. 72 pages.

📖 Hoyt, Erich. 1992. *Riding with the Dolphins*. Camden House, Toronto and Vermont. 64 pages.

📖 Klinowska, Margaret. 1991. *Dolphins, Porpoises and Whales of the World*. The IUCN Red Data Book, IUCN, Cambridge, UK, 429 pages.

📖 May, John (Ed.) 1990. *The Greenpeace Book of Dolphins*. Century Editions, London, 160 pages.

📖 Perrin, William F., Bernd Würsig and J.G.M. Thewissen (eds.) 2002. *Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals*. Academic Press, San Diego, CA. 1414 pages.

📖 Reeves, Randall R., Brent S. Stewart, Phillip J. Clapham, James A. Powell and Pieter A. Folkens. 2002. *Guide to Marine Mammals of the World*. Chanticleer Press/ Knopf, New York. 527 pages.

📖 Thompson, Paul and Ben Wilson. 1994. *Bottlenose Dolphins*. Colin Baxter Photography, Grantown-on-Spey, Scotland, 72 pages.

Reporting and accessing whale and dolphin sightings in Europe

A number of scientific and conservation groups in various countries have schemes for reporting whale and dolphin sightings. In addition, the WDCS website is set up to handle sightings for all European countries. Sightings can be reported by any member of the public, students, people who go on whale watch holidays or who make casual sightings, as well as WDCS supporters. Sightings can be reported to the website www.dolphinsightings.org by filling out the easy on-line survey form, or printing out the form and returning it to WDCS. Sightings can also be reported by telephone or regular mail. A brief summary of your sighting information will appear with your name on the WDCS website. It is possible to browse all the sightings collected to date from all parts of Europe.

WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
Brookfield House, 38 St Paul Street, Chippenham
Wiltshire SN15 1LJ England
tel: +44 (0)1249 449 500
fax: +44 (0)1249 449 501
email: sightings@wdcs.org
web: www.dolphinsightings.org

If you are reporting sightings without using the form, please remember to include:

- your name, address, plus the date and exact location of the sighting,
- duration of sighting and distance of the animal from you (metres),
- species seen (please note if definite, probable or possible),
- number of animals in the group, including any calves,
- behaviour if known (feeding, resting, active, travelling),
- any distinguishing features (eg. obvious deformities), and
- other vessels or wildlife in the area.

Note to all operators of whale watching and marine nature tours in Europe

Things change. If you are listed in this guide and your contact or other details have changed, please let us know. Contact ehoyt@compuserve.com, and please cc: nentrup@wdcs.org and vanessa.williams@wdcs.org. Similarly, if you operate high-quality whale watching trips in Europe and have not been featured, please send us your brochure and other supporting information about your trips for future editions of this guide and for other publications. If your company or group is already featured on the whale watch pages of the WDCS website (www.wdcs.org), you may also want to update your listing. If you are not currently featured on the website but would like to be considered, please email info@wdcs.org to receive a questionnaire.

Over the years, WDCS has received numerous reports, positive and negative, from its supporters about whale watching operators and tours. Common complaints include lack of a good naturalist-guide, too many boats, and boat operators driving too aggressively toward cetaceans or approaching too close. Of course, many others write to us to tell us about the trip of a lifetime.

WDCS's primary aim, through this guide, is to celebrate and support high-quality whale watching with a trained naturalist present on every trip - whale watching which contributes to education and research as well as to the conservation of cetaceans around Europe. WDCS believes that high-quality whale watching is best not only for the whale watch customer, but also for operators, as well as the whales and dolphins themselves. Let's make every whale watch trip a potential trip of a lifetime!

Photo credits: 4-5, 23, 42, 51, 52, 54, 56 (left): COER/Schoßleitner; 7, 56 (right): Tethys; 8, 21 (right), 47, 48: Ingrid Visser; 9 (top): Hal Sato; 9, 10 (bottom), 11 (top), 22: William Rossiter; 10 (top), 27 (bottom): Hal Whitehead; 11 (bottom): John Y. Wang; 13, 14, 18, 36, 37: COER/Schacherl; 15: The Húsavík Whale Centre; 16, 17: Fernando Ugarte/Whale Centre Andenes, Norway; 19: GREMM; 20: Graeme Cresswell; 21 (left): Bob Talbot; 24: Alison Gill; 25, 26, 32 (bottom right), 32 (top right), 33 (right), 34 (left): Aberdeen University; 27 (top): Charlie Phillips; 28: Colin Wood; 29 (left), 33 (left), 39: WDCS; 29 (right): M. de Boer; 32 (left), 35: Paul Thompson; 34 (right): Peter Thomas; 37: Mark Carwardine; 38: Per Berggren; 40, 41: Durlston Country Park; 44: Frank Wirth - Pico Sport; 45, 46: Whale Watch Azores; 50: Alison Wood



What is high-quality whale watching (HQWW)?

Whale watching: tours by boat, air or from land, formal or informal to see and/or listen to any of the some 86 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises

High quality whale watching (HQWW)

- is a prime recreational and educational experience for participants which motivates them to care about whales and the sea and to work for or contribute to its conservation;
- provides scientific benefits to researchers and public knowledge about cetaceans;
- is built around a naturalist or nature guide who can tell good, accurate stories and build the bridge between the urban participant and the sea;
- can be practiced by independent businesses, researchers, communities, conservation groups or co-operatives;
- involves the community/region in its work, leading communities/regions to have a financial interest in whale watching and the conservation of whales and the sea.

Some of the world's most successful whale watching is HQWW. However, less than half of all existing whale watch tourism worldwide qualifies as HQWW. WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, believes that whale watching would be much more successful for operators, as well as beneficial for participants and the whales themselves, if all of it could be HQWW.