

Watching Whales with a Commercial Whale Watch Company



Rhapsody (J-32) Photo by Jeanne Hyde

When watching whales from a boat or kayak, go with a commercial company committed to following local, state, and federal viewing regulations and guidelines. **Research the commercial whale watch or kayak company.** Ask the company what they are doing to help minimize their potential impacts and how they are contributing to conservation efforts for the whales and the ecosystem.

- **Look Before You Book** for operators who are part of the Pacific Whale Watch Association at www.pacificwhalewatchassociation.com
- **Choose a company that employs locally certified naturalists.** Having a knowledgeable guide makes the experience more rewarding.
- **Decide what trip is right for you.** Ask yourself: Where do I want to leave from? What type of vessel is right for me? How long do I want to be out?

Make a Commitment to Do Something Good to Help Whales and the Salish Sea

- **Reduce your footprint!** Decrease your own energy and water uses.
- **Reduce! Reuse! Recycle!**
- **Vote where it counts!** Support efforts and legislation that protect and restore healthy marine ecosystems locally and worldwide.
- **Get involved!** Learn more about the Southern Resident Killer Whales.
- **"Adopt an Orca"** through The Whale Museum's Orca Adoption Program.
- **Support boater education programs** like The Whale Museum's Soundwatch Program.
- **Report your sightings to The Whale Museum's Sightings Hotline (1-800-562-8832) or by email hotline@whalemuseum.org.**
- Listen for the whales and other sounds of the Salish Sea at www.seasound.org
- Find more at www.whalemuseum.org

Spread the Word!
Help Others "Be Whale Wise!"



WATCHING WILD WHALES IN THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS



Granny (J-2) Photo by Jeanne Hyde

Watching Whales in the Wild is a Thrilling Experience

However, we need to minimize our potential impacts on the whales. Just like us, whales and other animals need space to find food, choose mates, raise young, socialize, and rest. When we get too close, approach too fast, or make too much noise, we may be disturbing these activities, causing them unnecessary stress.

The Orcas in the Salish Sea are a Population of Wild Endangered Animals

If they are to survive, we must protect them. The cumulative effect of declining fish species, new and persistent toxins, rapid human population growth, vessel traffic and noise, as well as the effects of global climate change all threaten their ability to survive.



Understand the Very Real Issues

Annually more than 500,000 people go whale watching in the Salish Sea onboard commercial whale watch boats, private boats, and kayaks. The transboundary waters of the Salish Sea are also extremely busy due to commercial shipping, fishing, whale watching, and recreational boating.

Watching Whales from Shore

One of the best ways to see whales, with the least amount of impact, is to watch them from shore. The Salish Sea has some of the best shore-based viewing opportunities in the world. Lime Kiln Point State Park on San Juan Island is a well-known shore-based whale watching area where whales pass close to shore. The Whale Museum has a whale research laboratory in the Lime Kiln lighthouse and there is a Washington State Park interpretative center with docents available to answer questions.

Come prepared for all weather conditions! Be sure to bring binoculars, pack a picnic, plan to stay awhile and be patient... you never know what marine wildlife you might see passing by.



At Lime Kiln Point State Park you can listen to orcas vocalize over a hydrophone connected to The Whale Museum's Listening Station. You can also listen live from anywhere by visiting www.seasound.org.



Visit The Whale Trail at www.thewhaletrail.org for more shore-based viewing opportunities in the region.

Watching Whales from a Kayak or other Human-Powered Craft

In addition to following all boating laws and guidelines, please follow the Kayakers Code of Conduct for paddlers available at www.whalemuseum.org. Kayaks and other small crafts are virtually silent but can startle marine wildlife close to shore and may actually cause the whales to change course.



Watching Whales from a Private Powerboat or Sailboat

Know the area and have a safe water plan; observe all maritime laws as well as marine wildlife regulations and guidelines. Find and download the current regulations and Be Whale Wise guidelines at www.whalemuseum.org and www.bewhalewise.org

