

When You Get Back

When you get back from your trip make a commitment to do something good to help the whales and their Salish Sea home.

Here are some ideas:

- Reduce your footprint!
 - Reduce energy and water use
 - Reduce! Re-use! Recycle!
 - Vote where it counts!
 - Support efforts, funding, and legislation that protect and restore healthy marine ecosystems worldwide, especially the Salish Sea
 - Get Involved!
 - Learn more about the Southern Resident community of killer whales by adopting a whale 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 to hotline@whalemuseum.org)
 - Listen for the whales and other sounds of the Salish Sea at www.OrcaSound.net
- Find links to all this and more at: www.whalemuseum.org



photo credit: Soundwatch

Spread the word!
Help others "Be Whale Wise"
... pass this information on to others.

Watching Whales in the Wilds of the San Juan Islands



photo credit: Julie Corey

Watching whales in the wild is a thrilling experience.

However, we need to minimize our potential impacts to the whales. Just like us, whales 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 the whales unnecessary stress.

"I want to see whales in the wild. How do I make an informed choice?"

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

The orcas in the Salish Sea are a population of wild endangered animals.

If they are to survive, those of us who love them must act to protect them. Orcas and other marine wildlife are affected by human actions. The cumulative effects of declining fish species, new and persistent toxins, rapid human population growth, as well as the effects of global climate change all threaten their ability to survive. There is also growing scientific evidence that whales may be further stressed by vessel traffic and noise.

Information in this guide will help you to make responsible choices for your viewing experience whether you choose to watch from shore, go out with a commercial company or view from your own vessel.

Watching whales from a private powerboat or sailboat.

If you choose to go whale watching 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.



photo credit: Soundwatch

Watching whales from a kayak or other human-powered craft.



photo credit: Soundwatch

In addition to the laws and Be Whale Wise guidelines discussed in this brochure, please follow the Kayakers Code of Conduct for Paddlers available at www.whalemuseum.org. Kayaks and other small rowing crafts are virtually silent above and below the water. They can startle marine wildlife close to shore and may actually cause the whales to change course.

Watching whales with a commercial whale watch company.

If you would rather watch whales with a commercial whale watch company, choose a vessel or kayak operator who is committed to following local, state, and federal viewing regulations and guidelines. Research your 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 whale watch operators who are members of the U.S./Canadian Pacific Whale Watch Association (www.pacificwhalewatch.org).

Be a smart consumer: support conscientious companies by choosing to go with them.

- **Choose a company that employs locally certified professional 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? What fits within my budget?
- **Make your experience count.** Get to know your captain and naturalist. Ask questions and have a conversation with them about how they follow the regulations & guidelines and about issues facing the whales. Tell your captain that you chose their boat because of their commitment to protecting the whales. If you feel they did a good job, tell them!...and if you don't feel they did a good job, let them know!
- **Don't hide away behind that lens!** Watching wild whales is more exciting than getting the perfect photo. Allow yourself to truly experience and appreciate the extraordinary ecosystem—the precious home of the whales you came to see.

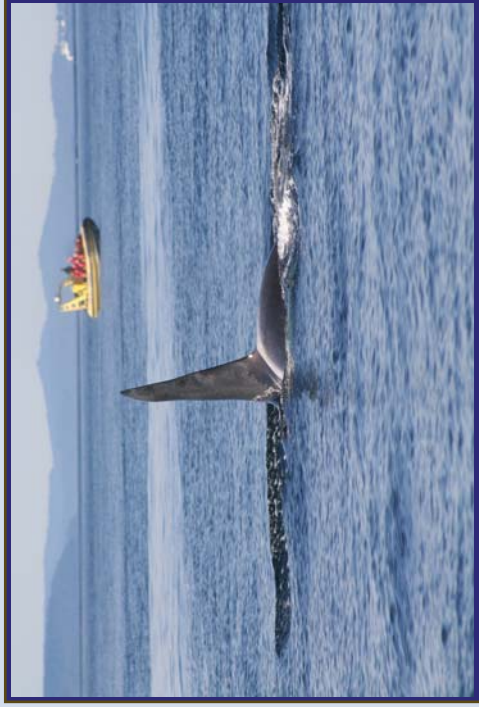


photo credit: Debbie Giles

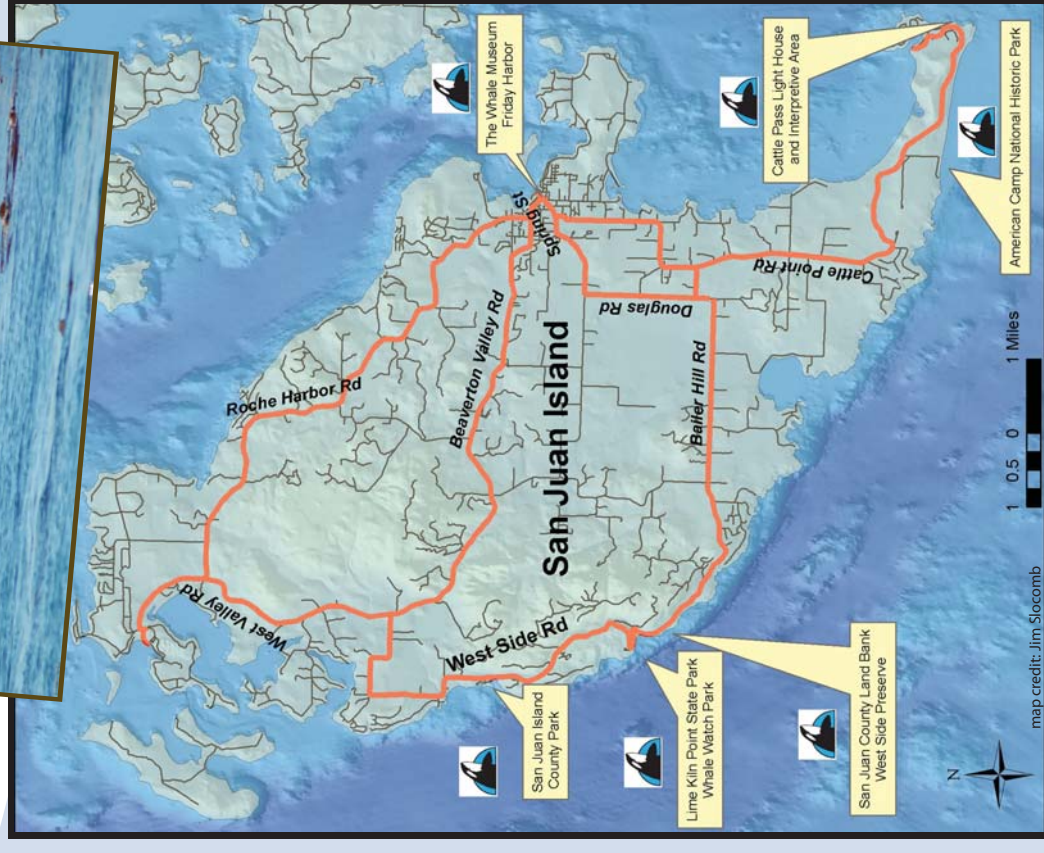
Watching whales from shore.

Take the time. 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. Perhaps the best-known shore-based whale watching area is Lime Kiln Point State Park (also known as Whale Watch Park) on San Juan Island.

In addition to the possibility of seeing whales pass close to shore, The Whale Museum has an active research laboratory in the Lime Kiln lighthouse. There is also a Washington State Park Interpretive Center with docents. Both are good places to learn more and get your questions answered. Come prepared for the weather conditions and be sure to bring your binoculars and natural history field guides. Pack a picnic and plan to stay awhile...**you never know what marine wildlife you might see passing by.**



photo credit: Jeanne Hyde



Note: Visit The Whale Trail for more shore-viewing opportunities in the region (<http://thewhaletrail.org>).

Report all observations of possible wildlife harassment.
Report online at: www.bewhalewise.org or call 1-800-853-1964