

MEDIA RELEASE
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TRAVEL SPOTS TO WATCH WHALES GO BY

Wherever there's an ocean, you're sure to find a whale. Gliding gracefully through the seven seas, these beautiful leviathans of the deep, once almost hunted to extinction, are the main attraction in a growing travel trend – whale watching.

With a range of eye-catching whale antics such as spy-hopping, blowing, sailing and the two most spectacular behaviours – breaching and lob tailing - it's easy to see why watching these gorgeous creatures in their natural habitat is addictive.

Flight Centre, New Zealand's largest travel retailer, is proud to bring you the best whale watching spots around the globe. From the Northeast Atlantic across to the Southwest Pacific and Australia and New Zealand, travellers are spoiled for choice when picking a destination to indulge in a spot of whale watching.

Top spots:

Hermanus, South Africa

Listed by the WWF as one of the top spots to watch whales, Walker Bay is home to the town of Hermanus. Many feel that this is the best viewing spot in the world where Southern Right, Brydes and Hump Backs find safe shelter from open seas and comfortable water temperatures to breed. The whale-watching season runs from July to November with the annual whale festival taking place in September.

Hawaii

Ancient Hawaiians may have believed whales to be their god, Kanaloa, in physical form and they still revere these water-bound creatures. Hump Back Whales migrate to Hawaii from Alaska each year to mate, give birth and rear their calves. One of the best places to watch whales is at sunset while sipping a cocktail at Whaler's Village near Kannapali Beach. The whale-watching season is from December through to April.

Alaska

Catch a glimpse of the Beluga (or White) Whale just outside Anchorage, as they chase salmon from the Cook Inlet into a tidal estuary. Beluga's are listed as endangered so to see one will be a truly incredible experience.

San Juan Islands

With their unmistakable black and white colouring, Orcas or Killer Whales are probably the most recognisable whales in the world. To see them in their natural habitat head for the islands of San Juan in Washington State as this is their breeding ground. From April through to September you can see Orcas.

Canada (Bay of Fundy)

To catch sight of Beluga's and the highly endangered North Atlantic Right Whales head for Quebec between May and September. The Beluga's favour the extreme depth and mixture of cold fresh water from the Saguenay River into the inland end of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The Bay of Fundy is well known for Hump Backs.

Strait of Gibraltar and Canary Islands

Whale watching is excellent from the Strait of Gibraltar, the Canary Islands and the Bay of Biscay. Being the gateway to the Mediterranean, Tarifa is an ideal spot for a ringside seat to the whale migration. Here you'll find Pilot Whales, Sperm Whales, Fin Whales and Orca. While off the Canary Island you may come across the legendary Blue Whale (largest mammal in the world), Bryde's Whale, Beaked Whale and the False Killer Whale. Whale watching season is from May to September.

Australia

You can whale-watch to your heart's content from Ningaloo in the Northwest all around the southern coast to Hervey Bay on the Sunshine Coast in Australia. Each year many whales spend summer in the cold waters off Antarctica where they gorge on huge quantities of krill before the plummeting temperatures force them north to their breeding grounds. So from May through to September visitors to Australia can follow the migration of Hump Backs and Southern Right Whales who venture north along the east and west coasts.

Brazil

Southern Right and Hump Back Whales can be viewed from the coast of Brazil. Imbituba, Santa Catarina is recognised as Brazil's whale capital, where income from whale watching has bolstered many communities along the coastline.

Long Island, East Coast USA

Head to the east coast of the United States for whale-watching at its finest. Spot the Northern Hump Back, the Fin, the Minke and heavily protected North Atlantic Right Whale up and down the Eastern Seaboard. Nantucket, off the coast of Massachusetts, used to be the whaling capital of the US but fortunately that chapter has been assigned to history. Only the countries of Norway, Japan and Iceland still actively whale.

Kaikoura, New Zealand

Kaikoura is the world-famous site for whale-watching, expect to find whales all year round. Hump Backs visit during June and July, Orcas from December to March while Pilot Whales and Sperm Whales are year-round guests. The deep waters (over 1000 metres) off Kaikoura are home to giant squid – favoured food of the Sperm Whale – so it's plain to see why these giants make their home here.

Top Tips for Whale Watching:

Whales can be watched from land or from a boat, with the former being the least intrusive means of spying on these beautiful creatures. Flight Centre brings you some top tips for watching whales wherever you may be:

Land Watching

1. Binoculars – have a good set. While whales do come exceptionally close to shore, they can also be spotted hundreds of metres out to sea. You are more likely to see the spectacular behaviours such as breaching when they are in deeper waters.
2. Clear, calm days are best for whale watching from the top of a headland
3. Scan the horizon to spot 'blowing'. This is when the whale surfaces they blow air out of the blowhole. This in turn causes a cloud of spray or mist, which is an excellent sign of a whale sitting.

Boat watching

1. Stay at least 300 metres away from the whales, and do not circle the whales
2. Do not ever get between a mother and her calf
3. Do not cause any boat wake or make any noise
4. Respect these creatures in their natural habitat at all times.

Flight Centre's Guide to Whale Behaviour

Sailing

This is the raising of the tail out of the water and is thought to be a means of regulating temperature.

Spy-hopping

When the whale pops its head out of the water to take a peek at what is happening 'top-side'.

Breaching

One of the most spectacular whale behaviours is breaching. The whale launches its whole body out of the water and crashes down onto its back.

Lob-tailing

Another exciting behaviour is lob-tailing, where the whale raises its tail out of the water and slaps it down, making a huge bang (and splash).

Sun Bathing

Whales 'float' on their backs with their pectoral fins waving in the air.

Blowing

"Thar she blows!"

Being mammalian, whales breathe air and must surface often. Whales can often be spotted as they surface and blow air out through their blowhole. This causes a cloud of spray or mist, which is visible for great distances.

For more information or to book a trip to one of these top whale watching spots contact Flight Centre, on 0800 427 555 or visit www.flightcentre.co.nz

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About Flight Centre

Flight Centre New Zealand is New Zealand's largest travel agency, with approximately 900 staff in more than 140 retail stores and support businesses nationwide.

The company has won the JRA "Best Places to Work" Large Workplace category award for seven consecutive years.

Flight Centre Limited globally almost 13,000 staff in countries including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Hong Kong, India and China.

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