



The Whale Watching Center

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Memorial Day–Labor Day:

10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Daily

September–May:

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Wednesday–Sunday

119 SW Highway 101, Depoe Bay, OR 97341
Phone 541-765-3304 • Fax 541-765-3402

If you would like to know more about whales or about volunteering for the “Whale Watch” visit our web site: www.whalespoken.org

Check out other Oregon State Parks by visiting www.oregonstateparks.org

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
725 Summer St. NE, Suite C
Salem, OR 97301



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Write to OPRD, 725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301;
or call (503) 986-0707 (for the hearing impaired 1-800-735-2900).

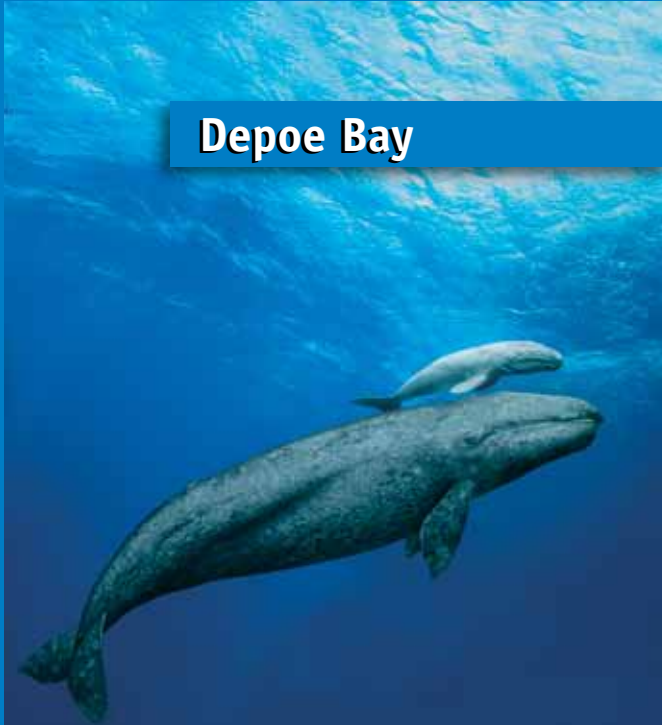
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Whale Watching Center

Depoe Bay



The Oregon State Parks Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay is the home of the “Whale Watching Spoken Here” program. Since 1978, more than 1,100 volunteers have been trained to help visitors enjoy the fun and excitement of spotting whales.

Gray whales migrate past the Oregon coast twice a year; these migrations take place roughly the same time as winter break in December and spring break in March. “Whale Watching Spoken Here” takes advantage of the abundance of whales and visitors during these times, and provides volunteers at 24 sites along our coast from Ilwaco, Washington to Crescent City, California. These volunteers help visitors spot whales and share their knowledge of marine mammals and our coastal environment. During watch weeks our sites are staffed from 10:00 am–1:00 pm daily. But the Whale Watching Center is open every week for your year ’round enjoyment.



Located on Highway 101 in scenic Depoe Bay, The Whale Watching Center is dedicated to sharing information about whales.

The central Oregon coast is the perfect spot for visitors to locate and watch whales as they blow, dive, spyhop and breach.

Whale Watching takes place almost all year ’round on the Oregon coast. Peak **Winter Watch** is the last week of December and the first week of January. **Spring Watch** begins the last week of March and lasts through June. **Summer Watch** runs June through mid-November, when whales are best seen in the central coast area. Whales come close to the shore, diving, feeding and rubbing against the rocks. Whales are rarely seen mid-November to mid-December or mid-January to mid-March.



Minke (30') Gray (45') Humpback (50') Sperm (60') Fin (90') Blue (100')



The Blow

Gray whales usually surface every 45 seconds as they swim, but will often stay under for 3 to 5 minutes when they are eating. If they have been down for 5 minutes they usually blow 5 times when they surface to replenish their oxygen supply. If they are frightened they can stay down for 30 minutes, hiding on the bottom or traveling great distances. Sometimes they dive and reappear 1/4 mile away. The blow or spout shoots nearly 12 feet high expelling 400 liters of air in a single blast.

The Breach

The ultimate in whale sightings is a breach—when a whale launches as much as 3/4 of its body out of the water in a spectacular show of power and grace. Scientists aren't sure why whales breach. Possibly they do it to remove parasites, communicate with each other, or maybe it's just for fun. Gray whales aren't known for breaching nearly as often as their cousins, the humpback whales, but young Grays seem to be the most common breachers along the Oregon Coast.



The Spyhop

Whales have the largest brain of any animal on earth. They are very intelligent and curious, often seen "spyhopping," or lifting their heads above the surface of the water. They like to rise out of the water to get a better sense of their surroundings. Resident Gray whales have been known to spyhop regularly, especially when local tour boats are near. Behaviors like this make us wonder if the whales enjoy watching us as much as we enjoy watching them!



The Dive

A deep dive, also known as sounding or fluking, happens when a whale lifts its tail flukes out of the water. This helps propel the whale downward at a steep angle to the bottom, where they feed on small crustaceans. After the flukes disappear under the water, the turbulence of the dive will cause a circle of smooth water, known as a fluke-print.

Other Species

Other whales we see are Minke, Humpback, Blue, and Sperm whales. Orcas, the largest of the dolphins, are also seen in Oregon.

All whale photos courtesy Carrie Newell, Whale Research Excursions, Depoe Bay

The 24 Best Whale Watching Sites



Watching Gray Whales

Studying the swimming and diving patterns of whales helps us to locate whales by watching their blow as they surface. The blow, or spout, is about 12' high.

