

Why We Whale Watch & How We Help!

Salt Spring Adventure Co Ltd is owned by a passionate family that is devoted to preserving our ocean and wildlife, and educating locals & tourists about our natural environment and animals, the risks they face, and how we can help to create a brighter future for our beautiful BC Coast.

Whale Watching has a positive impact on whales due to the awareness, education, inspiration and awe that it creates in guests. This education results in positive changes in our society and our guests mentality towards wild life, and how our own day to day choices affects nature. With more awareness and education in our society, comes the ability to lobby government and industry with more of an impact to make things better.

- We are a “No Take”, “Orca Friendly” industry & we work with many research groups & donate directly to non-profit groups working on Salmon restoration & whale research. In 2017 we donated \$2000.00 to the Centre for Whale Research.
- Each year we donate \$1.00/person to the Centre for Whale Research, to continue towards rehabilitation efforts. The PWWA membership collective contributes hundreds of thousands of dollars a year towards conservation, research and salmon recovery.
- Most people who work in this industry are avid naturalists, conservationists and many are biologist and active researchers, who love the whales and do all they can to help protect them. Because of our efforts whale watching is condoned and applauded by the Center for Whale Research who is the group of passionate pioneer scientists who have studied these whales for 42 years. (which makes them the most researched whales in the world)
- We pass vital whale spotting information on to the research groups currently working to help our Orca survive & thrive.
- As a member of the Pacific Whale Watch Association, we continually update our rules and guidelines we follow while watching whales, to make sure we keep up with the latest data collected, about how to minimize our impact, while we view and learn about these beautiful animals. This year, we have doubled our viewing distances to help mitigate sound disturbances to the Southern Resident Orca Whales.
- We focus on going to view our local Humpback and Transient Orca whales the most, while doing our best to give our Southern Resident Killer Whales the room they need to forage.

- We work on educating our guests about the latest information and threats our environment currently faces, and how each individual can do their part.
- We educate our guests about the most important issue our Southern Resident Killer Whales face, which is lack of food. As they are working on less than 3-5% of the original food stock, they are slowly starving. We try to educate our clients to allow them to make better decisions when choosing to eat from our Oceans.
- We are one of the most regulated Whale Watching Regions of the world, to ensure we have limited to no impact on the animals we watch.
- Our industry takes part in a daily whale census in the region providing data of not only the type of whales but the exact families and individuals, where they travelled, how fast, any noteworthy or interesting behaviors, and injuries and entanglements, pregnancies, new born whales and of course a ton of professional photography of these animals in action. All of this data is used towards the overall goal of conservation and further scientific understanding of our whales and our total ecosystem web.
- The PWWA routinely helps in disentanglement issues and has many highly trained members in this regard.
- The PWWA also collaborates with volunteer groups like SoundWatch and StraightWatch to help keep our whales safe from the many recreational boaters who are unaware of how to operate their vessels safely and lawfully around these animals. We routinely intervene to protect our whales from bad drivers!
- The whale watching industry in this region were the first industry to lobby against live capture, and were instrumental in helping end this cruel trade to stock the aquariums of the world.
- Many people in fleet are trained in oil spill response procedures and are prepared to volunteer our time and boats and gas if a problem ever occurs.
- PWWA operators perform many rescues of pleasure boaters and personal watercraft each year.
- We collect any garbage we see on any of our tours, and makes sure to dispose of it in the best way we can. We work to educate our clients about the benefits of cleaning up as you enjoy the outdoors, it can make such a big impact!
- Our region has many different issues it is facing, but there are so many positive points as well. We have never had so many Humpback and Transient Orca in our region, as we do today. Both these types of whales have been moving into our region, and calling it home, as they discover the food and safe habitat we have for them.

- Humpback whales eat the smallest creatures in the ocean, and have been moving back into the region over the last 10 years, after being totally gone since we stopped whaling. We have been seeing the same individual whales now for over 7 years, as they have decided to make our region their summer home.
- New Research shows that humpback whales that are frequently watched exhibit greater calving success rates and socialization behaviors. I.e. they enjoy our company too
- Transient Orca pods have been moving into our region more and more over the last 5-10 years. Transient Orca eat mammals, and since we no longer kill out Harbour Seals for the fishing industry, our Seal populations have rebounded up to 50,000+ individuals, which in turn is creating food for our orca, allowing them to grow their populations in our region.
- Our Southern Resident Killer Whales are the whales that are in trouble. Their struggle started when our government sold our whales to Sea World and other Aquariums around the world. They took 45 Orca out of their families, killing an additional 15 in the process. This ended up cutting the Resident population in half, and taking a ton of breeding aged orca out of the pod. After that their numbers continues to decline with the direct decline of their main food source, Chinook Salmon. These whales were also shot at routinely by the fishing industry prior to their protection and high caliber munitions were installed by the govt on hill tops along the Juan de Fuca to annihilate them.
- Our Resident Orca are currently trying to survive off of 3-5% of the salmon they used to have, as we have decimated the salmon population from over-fishing, leaving them nothing to eat. No food, on top of the food being contaminated by toxins, has lead to a steady decline in whale numbers, leaving us currently having the lowest number of whales since 40 + years ago, being only 75 whales in total.