

Whale Watching Season in Queensland

March 2011

Whale Watching is a real wow in Queensland!

Queensland's annual whale watch season begins as the humpback whales enter the final stages of their 5000 kilometre journey up the east coast of Australia. This highlight for nature lovers is the perfect opportunity to get up close and personal with the giant creatures of the sea and to watch them as they frolic, blowing, tail slapping, wave their pectoral fins and breach.

The Humpbacks

These awesome marine mammals can weigh up to 45 tonnes, the size of approximately 11 elephants or 600 people. They can grow to be between 10 and 19 metres long yet they only feed on krill, plankton and small fish.

As one of the more active whales of the sea, the humpback whales are a photographer's delight because of the variety of behaviours they like to display – surging out of the water for spectacular breaches, waving pectoral fins and making massive tail flaps.

The whales swim up the coast in pods and the mother's among them give birth to their babies in northern Queensland before taking them back to their home in the Antarctic.

Where to Watch

There are a number of fine whale watching destinations in Queensland – at Hervey Bay on Queensland's Fraser Coast as well as the Whitsundays, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast.

Hervey Bay, Fraser Coast

Queensland's most famous whale watching destination has been dubbed Australia's whale watch capital because of the sheer numbers of humpbacks that congregate in the sheltered waters behind Fraser Island on their way back south.

The season opening includes a blessing of all nine vessels in the Hervey Bay Whale Watch Fleet on which guests in the coming months will enjoy dawn trips, morning and afternoon half-day journeys and full day cruises. The choice of vessels includes everything from a large rigid inflatable to sailing and motor-powered catamarans. Whale watchers can choose from two hour, half day, three-quarter day and full day cruises departing Urangan Boat Harbour. www.whalesherveybay.com.au

For more information on individual Hervey Bay whale watching operators please visit the following websites:

www.whalesong.com.au

www.awesomeadventure.com.au

www.tasmanventure.com.au

www.spiritofherveybay.com

www.shaylacruises.com.au

www.mikat.com.au

www.kingfisherbay.com

www.herveybaywhalewatch.com.au

www.freedomwhalewatch.com.au

www.bluedolphintours.com.au

Research expeditions – The Oceania Project provides a long term research for the research and study of humpback whales in Hervey Bay. Participants can join the project for five nights, six days at a time between August and the beginning of October. www.oceania.org.au

Twitter Whale Watching Updates

Get the latest updates from Hervey Bay whale watch tours below on the conditions, sightings and activities during the Whale Watch season.

www.queenslandholidays.com.au/fraser-coast-holidays/whale-watching/updates-and-sightings.cfm

Gold Coast

The waters off the Gold Coast are the first to welcome the humpbacks each year and the last to farewell them. Daily cruises operate from late May through to November passing by South Stradbroke Island on "The Humpback Highway". A number of vessels including Sea World's Whale Watch offer daily cruises.

www.whalewatchgoldcoast.com.au

www.whalesinparadise.com.au

Brisbane and Moreton Bay

Whale watch cruises operate out of Brisbane from the Redcliffe Peninsula and guests at Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort, Moreton Island are collected enroute to the viewing area. North Stradbroke Island in Moreton Bay, off Brisbane is another popular vantage point for whale watchers with many gathering at Point Lookout to spot the leviathans on their journeys north and south between June and October.

www.brisbanewhalewatching.com.au

www.tangalooma.com/info/day_cruises/whale_watch_cruise/

Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast whale watch experience is a popular Australia Zoo encounter aboard Steve's Whale One, departing Mooloolaba. Tours departs daily seven days a week from June through to November.

www.whaleone.com.au Humpback Whales are the acrobats of the ocean. Watch them in action now on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/p/C612F5FBBA21BA16&hl=en_US&fs=1

Whitsundays

While there are no specific whale watch cruises operating out of the Whitsundays, guests on day trips to the reef or staying on the islands often spy a humpback whale or two at play as they reach the northern end of their journey.

www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au

The Minke Whales

In Tropical North Queensland, the delightful dwarf minke whales, the smallest of the baleen whales, can be seen on the outer ribbon reefs of the Great Barrier Reef between March and October, with the best viewing times during June and July.

Dedicated minke whale expeditions cruises run during the season when guests have an opportunity to see and dive with these inquisitive creatures. Visitors on Great Barrier Reef day cruises are often lucky enough to catch a glimpse of them.

www.mikeball.com/minke-whale-expeditions

www.marineencounters.com.au/expeditions.htm

www.cairnsgreatbarrierreef.org.au/

Awesome in Size and Behaviour

Did you know?

Humpbacks...

- Breathe in and out within 2 seconds yet their lungs are the size of a small car!
- Are mammals that feed on krill, plankton and small fish.
- Weigh up to 45 tonnes - about 11 elephants or 600 people.
- As calves consume 600 litres of milk and can gain up to 90kgs a day.
- Grow up to 10-19 metres long!

Despite their enormous size, humpbacks are one of the more active whales, displaying a variety of behaviours from the simple 'blow' to tail slapping, waving their pectoral fins, or best of all, the spectacular 'breach', the most prized of subjects for every visitor armed with a camera. These mighty mammals surge out of the water in an awesome display before falling backwards into the sea with a massive splash that can send up a plume of water almost as large as the whale itself.

www.queenslandholidays.com.au/experiences/natural-encounters/animalencounters/whales.cfm