

GUIDELINES

FOR WHALE WATCHING
AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



North Sailing Guidelines

for observing cetaceans in Skjálfandi Bay

- *Based on experience and research since 1995*

Human activity in the vicinity of marine mammals that is deemed as harassment can result in a range of impact varying from no observable effect, to modifying their behavior, to causing physical harm to the animals. When boats go too close, approach too fast, or make too much noise, cetaceans may be disturbed and stressed. Such activities can cause effects such as: separation of mothers from calves; disruption of social groups; disruption in migratory patterns; interference in feeding; interference in breeding and reproductive activities and abandonment of nursing calves. It can be difficult to assess the more long-term effects so a precautionary approach is best.

North Sailing is committed to the educational value of whale watching in enabling the sharing of the wider marine conservation message with as many people as possible. North Sailing also provides a platform for research and the gathering of routine information that will help in the wider understanding of whales and dolphins in the area.

By following these whale watching guidelines, North Sailing will reduce any possible negative effect on whales and dolphins in Skjálfandi Bay as well as providing better encounters with more relaxed animals. North Sailing aims to set an example for other boaters and help protect the area's spectacular wildlife resources.



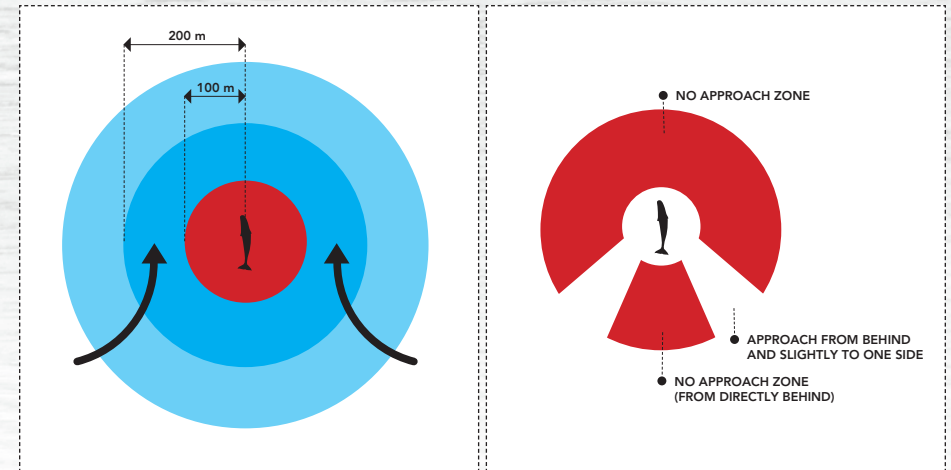
Avoidance and stress behaviour

Boats should not perform any action that disrupts the normal behavior of the cetacean. A disturbed marine mammal may take the following actions in response to vessel approach:

- Rapid change in direction, speed.
- Escape tactics such as prolonged diving and changing course underwater.
- Underwater exhalation, slapping the surface or breaching are sometimes a sign of distress.
- Evasive swimming patterns such as rapid swimming or "porpoising" at the surface away from potential danger.
- Attempts of a female whale to shield a calf from a vessel by tail swishing or other protective movements.

Guidelines for operating vessels around cetaceans

1. Approach the area of marine mammal activity with extreme caution. Look in all directions before planning your approach or departure.
2. Reduce speed to less than 5 knots when within 200 meters of the nearest cetacean. Avoid sudden course or speed changes.
3. Avoid driving towards any cetacean closer than 100 meters while the engine is in gear, unless you are approaching from the right angle.
4. Aim to approach and depart from whales from the side, following the direction of travel of the animal. Never approach from the front or from the behind. See figure.
5. If you are approached by a whale or dolphin you should:
 - a. Continue on your course with little change in direction or speed
 - b. Stop the vessel to allow the animal to interact with you or move away.
6. Limit your time engaged in viewing to a maximum of 30 minutes, to minimize the cumulative impact of many vessels.
7. Limit the number of boats around an animal to 2 and try to stay on the same side where possible.
8. Keep clear of the path of the animals.
9. Do not attempt to drive through groups of porpoises or dolphins for the purpose of bow riding. Should these animals choose to ride the bow wave of your vessel, gradually reduce speed and avoid sudden course changes.



Environmental policy



North Sailing has adopted an active environmental policy based on the idea of sustainable development. All North Sailing boats are old Icelandic oak boats that no longer serve their role as fishing boats. Therefore, instead of destruction, the boats have been given a new life and at the same time cultural heritage is preserved. Furthermore two of the boats have been rebuilt as traditional Icelandic schooners, the only ones in Iceland nowadays. North Sailing takes great pride in restoring, maintaining and conserving these traditional boats.

The oak boats have many advantages to plastic and steel boats. They are more silent and environmentally friendly by the means of a low fuel consumption rate. Whenever possible, wind power is utilized on board the schooners – making the power of an engine unnecessary. On board, the crew maintains respect for the wildlife at all times and the captains slow down as much as possible before reaching the area where the animals are.



North Sailing opposes whale killing and supports the protection of endangered species. The company contributes to sustainable development of wildlife tourism by being a partner of The Wild North.



Consequently North Sailing is certified by the Blue Flag, a voluntary eco-label, awarded to beaches and marinas that work towards sustainable development.

In the future, North Sailing will continue working on their environmental policy and goals. New ideas and progress in the field of sustainable development and renewable energy inspire North Sailing to achieve higher goals with every year.



Responsible Whale Watching

North Sailing aims to be a Responsible Whale Watching Operator according to the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society's (WDCS) definition. That includes being truly responsible and sustainable to cetaceans and the marine environment as well as being truly beneficial to passengers, operators and communities.

North Sailing's whale watching tours therefore include:

- A prime recreational and educational experience for our guests, which motivates them to care about cetaceans.
- An experience that seeks to reduce the impact on whales, so that whales are watched with the lightest "footprint" possible.
- Opportunities for researchers to gather scientific information and publish findings to managers and the public.
- An experience built around a nature guide who can provide accurate information, help to find the whales and describe their behavior.
- The active involvement of the community, enabling a financial as well as a personal interest in whale watching and the conservation of cetaceans and the sea.

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