

IWC/J16/CCPM/02

Report on progress with Whale Watching Handbook

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INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

Whale Watching Handbook update.

- During May, a small group convened to further develop the online whale watching Handbook.
- The online Handbook builds on work previously undertaken and is structured around four portals providing targeted advice and guidance.
- Each portal will have a further two tiers of progressively more detailed information.
- 'Planning a Trip' – targeted primarily at the public and will include what to look for in a responsible whale watching operator, and an interactive map providing basic information on in-country whale watching activities, and where and when to see certain species.
- 'Responsible Management' – targeted primarily at managers/decision makers and will include information on existing policies, guidance, and regulation. Case studies will be also included exemplifying best practice (potentially Argentina and Canary Islands)
- 'Industry Support' – targeted primarily at the industry to provide advice and guidance on establishing a responsible whale watching operation.
- 'Training and Education' – targeted at groups wishing to access educational and support materials and to access capacity building initiatives of the IWC.

Next steps

- Will continue to be populated with information.
- Draft Handbook and proposed next steps will be presented to the Commission in October 2016.
- Looking for external funding opportunities to complete the Handbook.
- Looking for photos to use in the Handbook.

Home Screen

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the homepage of the International Whaling Commission's Whale Watching Handbook. The browser's address bar shows the URL <https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/>. The page features a dark blue header with the IWC logo and the text "INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION" and "Whale Watching Handbook". A teal navigation bar highlights the "HOME PAGE" link. A sidebar on the left lists various sections: ABOUT WHALEWATCHING, ROLE OF IWC, PLANNING A TRIP, RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT, INDUSTRY SUPPORT, TRAINING & EDUCATION, SPECIES INFORMATION, and RESOURCES. The main content area includes the IWC logo, a paragraph explaining the IWC's role since 1975, and a description of the handbook's purpose. Below this are four blue boxes representing key sections: "Planning a Trip" (with sub-points: What to expect, Where can I go, What can I see), "Responsible Management" (with sub-points: Policies and guidance, Regulations, Case studies), "Industry Support" (with sub-points: Responsible practices, Operator resources, Success stories), and "Training and Education" (with sub-points: Capacity building, Regional Action, Outreach materials). The footer contains the copyright notice "Copyright 2016, IWC" and the Windows taskbar with the date and time "20:13 08/06/2016".

Planning a Trip

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.handbook.iwc.int/planning-a-trip/>. The browser's address bar and menu bar are visible at the top. The page content is as follows:

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION
Whale Watching Handbook

HOME PAGE
 ABOUT WHALEWATCHING
PLANNING A TRIP
 RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT
 INDUSTRY SUPPORT
 TRAINING & EDUCATION
 SPECIES INFORMATION
 RESOURCES

Whale watching offers a unique opportunity to see cetaceans in their natural environment from land, air or sea. However, it has the potential to cause harm to the animals, such as disturbing their behaviour or causing them injury. Responsible operations will minimise potential impacts and offer you the best quality and greatest educational opportunity. They also provide social and economic benefits to the local community.

When planning your trip, look for operators that:

- Follow regulations and best practice guidelines;
- Have taken steps to reduce their impact on the environment;
- Allow the animals to control the nature and duration of the interactions;
- Remain an appropriate distance from the animals to minimise disturbance;
- Do not chase or harass animals;
- Keep vessel noise to a minimum;
- Provide you with information and educational materials; and
- Ensure your safety.

About the animals

- [Humpback](#)
- Gray
- Right
- Blue
- Fin
- Minke
- Orca
- Bottlenose
- Other

Map

The map section features a world map with a red location marker in the North Atlantic. Navigation controls for the map include a home button, a plus sign for zooming in, and a minus sign for zooming out.

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The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the system tray with the time 20:14 and date 08/06/2016, along with various application icons.

Responsible Management

Over 13 million people^[1] are now taking whale watching cruises and flights every year. Whale watching and the tourism it brings, presents an economic opportunity for many communities around the world. The industry has an estimated annual worth of over \$2.5 billion US dollars^[2].

There are potential impacts of poorly managed whale watching on individual whales, their populations and their habitats. These include injury, mortality, changes in behaviour and habitat use, and decreased feeding and reproductive success. The IWC's Scientific Committee [continues to look](#) at both the short and long term impacts of whale watching on individual whales, their populations and their habitats. This ongoing research has led the IWC to develop principles and [guidelines for whalewatching](#), which have helped guide the development of whalewatching regulations around the world.

^[1] O'Connor et al, 2009
^[2] Cisneros-Montemayor et al, 2010

Current practices and regulations

Over fifty countries and various regional organizations have produced guidelines or regulations for whalewatching. These have been drawn together in a [compendium](#). Whilst issues can vary between species and locations, there are common strands of good practice that can inform and complement new and existing management measures.

Key management considerations

There are a number of ways for managers to ensure whale watch operations are sustainable. These include:

- Limits on vessel numbers, speeds, approach distances and time spent with whales;
- Zoning or time /area closures;
- Training schemes;
- Licensing or permitting;
- Enforcement and compliance mechanisms for all vessel types;
- Introduction of regulations, guidelines or codes of conduct
- Monitoring and data collection
- Setting conservation objectives

Case Studies

Argentina

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Canary Islands

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Stellwagon

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