

Spring Whale Watch Week returns to the Oregon coast for spring break 2024

March 17, 2024





Oregon State Parks will host Spring Whale Watch Week along the Oregon Coast Saturday, March 23 through Sunday, March 31.

Trained Oregon State Park volunteers will be stationed at 15 sites along the Oregon Coast to help visitors spot whales and their calves and answer questions from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily March 23-31. The sites are some of the best places to watch for whales on the Oregon Coast.

The spring event is three days longer than last year and might include better odds of seeing gray whales on their journey home from the calving lagoons in Mexico in light of today's announcement from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

NOAA announced the end of an Unusual Mortality Event, a significant die-off of the gray whale population, that had affected the marine mammals since 2019.

"The latest counts indicate that the gray whale population has likely turned the corner and is beginning to recover. It's a perfect time for people to see them as they swim north with new calves to feed," said Michael Milstein, public affairs officer with NOAA Fisheries.

Researchers counted about 412 calves last year, which was almost double the number from the year before. That helped signal an end to the Unusual Mortality Event and a likely turnaround in numbers as the species begins to rebound.

An estimated 14,500 gray whales are expected to swim past Oregon's shores from late winter through June as part of their annual migration back to Alaska.

"Spring is a great time for whale watching because the gray whales are usually closer to shore on their return trip, typically around a mile or so out, and the weather can be better for viewing. But don't forget your rain gear just in case," said Park Ranger Peter McBride.

A map of volunteer-staffed sites is available online on the official event webpage: https://oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=thingstodo.dsp_whaleWatching

The Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 23-31. Visitors to the center can enjoy interactive whale exhibits and take in the panoramic ocean views. Binoculars are provided. Rangers from Oregon State Parks will also be on hand to answer questions about the whales.

All Whale Watch Week visitors are encouraged to dress for the weather, to bring binoculars and to follow beach safety guidelines such as remaining out of fenced areas, knowing the tide schedule and keeping an eye on the surf at all times. Go to <https://visittheoregoncoast.com/beach-safety/> for a list of safety tips.

For more information about coast parks and campgrounds, visit oregonstateparks.org.

Visitors are encouraged to share their photos and videos from Spring Whale Watch on social media using #OregonStateParks and #ORWhaleWatch24.