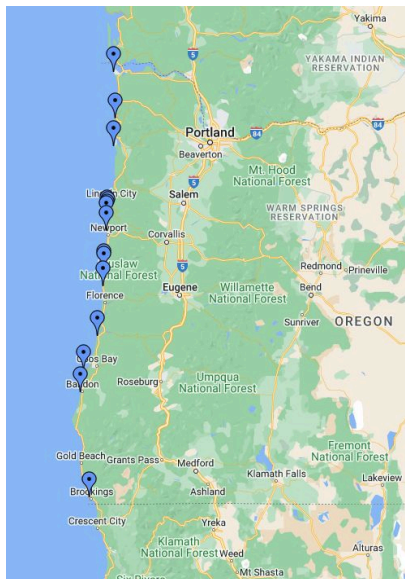


Photos / Sight to See: Winter Whale Watching Week returns

December 16, 2023





Oregon State Parks will once again host Winter Whale Watch Week at 15 sites along the Oregon Coast Wednesday, Dec. 27 to Sunday, Dec. 31.

Every year thousands of gray whales migrate south through Oregon's waters at the end of December, and state parks invites visitors to the coast to see their journey.

In a previous interview with Country Media, OPRD spokesman Chris Havel said people are fascinated by the whales for good reason.

"People are clever and good at inventing and building ways to survive and thrive, and wildlife, like whales, do the same thing through sheer awesome power," he said. "There's still some mystery about their lives, and seeing them in action is a thrill. Seeing them in real life is also a reminder of how we affect all marine life, and have a responsibility to eliminate pollution and be careful stewards of the planet's resources."

Havel adds that people are naturally attracted to the whales' beauty, mystery, and power.

"But we also appreciate being reminded of our place in these natural systems," and it makes us all feel part of the family," he said.

Trained volunteers will be stationed at 15 sites to help visitors spot whales, share information and answer questions from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily during Whale Watching Week.

Volunteer opportunities are still available along the north and south coast if you register by Dec. 11

<https://orwhalewatch.org/volunteer/>

The Whale Watch Week sites are some of the best places to spot whales on the Oregon Coast.

"We are excitedly waiting for the migration of the gray whales to come down from Alaska," OPRD Park Ranger Peter McBride said. "We really enjoy sharing the experience with visitors. It's been a tradition at Oregon State Parks for more than 40 years."

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 Week sites include:

Fort Stevens State Park--Peter Iredale Shipwreck
Neahkahnie Mountain Overlook
Cape Meares Lighthouse
Boiler Bay State Scenic Viewpoint
The Whale Watching Center Depoe Bay
Rocky Creek State Scenic Viewpoint
Cape Foulweather
Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area
Yachats State Recreation Area
Cape Perpetua Turnout
Heceta Head Lighthouse
Umpqua Lighthouse
Shore Acres State Park
Face Rock Scenic Viewpoint
Harris Beach State Park

An estimated 14,500 gray whales swam past Oregon's shores last winter, according to the most recent population estimates from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The journey is part of their annual migration south to the calving lagoons near Baja, Mexico, and the end of December is the peak time to see their migration south. An estimated 30 whales pass per hour.

The Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay will be open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. 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 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 Winter Whale Watch on social media using #OregonStateParks and #ORWhaleWatch23.