



**PALM BEACH  
DOLPHIN TOURS**

# **DOLPHIN VIEWING GUIDELINES**

- RESPONSIBLE DOLPHIN WATCHING -



# DOLPHIN VIEWING GUIDELINES

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Palm Beach and Jupiter Dolphin Tours has adopted NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) guidelines for viewing whales and dolphins to ensure no animals are harmed and our dolphin expeditions/tour comply with all Federal Laws and Regulations.

We encourage everyone to bring binoculars along to assure a good view from the recommended viewing distances. Together we can assure marine mammal viewing will be as rewarding as it is today for many generations to come.

Specifically, [insert company name] adhere to the following Code of Conduct:

1. We will always approach an area of known or suspected dolphin/whale activity with extreme caution
2. We will remain a respectful and safe distance from dolphins and sea turtles (recommended 50 yards). In case we encounter any whales we will adhere to minimum recommended distance of 100 yards (500 yards in case of a right whale)
3. We will always travel at a safe speed when in the vicinity of dolphins/whales
4. We limit our time observing marine mammals and sea turtles to 1/2 hour, and will only exceed this time frame only we are absolutely sure that we are not causing disturbance or any changes in behavior.
5. We will not encircle or trap marine mammals or sea turtles between watercraft, or watercraft and the shore.
6. If approached by a marine mammal or sea turtle, we will put the engine(s) of our vessel into neutral and allow the animal to pass. We will make sure any vessel movement is from the rear of the animal(s).
7. When possible, all sonar, depth sounders, fish finders and other underwater transducers will be shut off when in the vicinity of whales.
8. We shall never pursue marine mammals and sea turtles.
9. We will never feed or attempt to feed marine mammals or sea turtles.



# Detailed Guidelines

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1. Limit your viewing time.
  - a. Prolonged exposure to one or more vessels increases the likelihood that marine mammals will be disturbed.
  - b. Viewing periods of greater than 1/2 hour should be undertaken only if you are absolutely sure that you are not causing disturbance or any changes in behavior.
2. Since individual animals' reactions will vary, carefully observe all animals and leave the vicinity if you see signs of disturbance.
3. Your vessel may not be the only vessel in the day that approaches the same animal(s); please be aware of cumulative impacts.
4. Travel in a predictable manner.
  - a. Marine mammals appear to be less disturbed by vessels that are traveling in a predictable manner.
  - b. The departure from a viewing area has as much potential to disturb animals as the approach.
5. If a marine mammal or sea turtle approaches, put your engine in neutral and allow the animal to pass.
6. Never pursue or follow marine wildlife.
7. Never attempt to herd, chase, or separate groups of marine mammals or females from their young.
8. Avoid excessive speed or sudden changes in speed or direction in the vicinity of animals.
9. If you need to move around marine wildlife, do so from behind (i.e., never approach head-on).
10. Vessels that wish to position themselves so that the animals would pass them, should do so in a manner that stays fully clear of the animal's path.
11. Be aware that marine mammals may surface in unpredictable locations.
12. Breaching and flipper slapping whales may endanger people and/or vessels.
13. Avoid approaching the animals when another vessel is near.
14. Always leave marine mammals an "escape route."
15. When several vessels are in an area, communication between operators will help ensure that you do not cause disturbance.
16. Marine mammals have sensitive hearing and many species communicate by vocalizing underwater.
17. Underwater sound produced by a vessel's engines and propellers can disturb these animals.
18. Cautiously move away from the animals if you observe any of the following behaviors:
  - a. Rapid changes in direction or swimming speed.
  - b. Erratic swimming patterns.
  - c. Escape tactics such as prolonged diving, underwater exhalation, underwater course changes, or rapid swimming at the surface.
  - d. Tail slapping or lateral tail swishing at the surface.
  - e. Female attempting to shield a calf with her body or by her movements.
19. Even if approached by a marine mammal or sea turtle:
  - a. Do not touch or swim with the animals.
  - b. Never feed or attempt to feed marine mammals or sea turtles. It can alter their natural behavior, make them dependent on handouts, and can be harmful to their health. Marine mammals, like all wild animals, may bite and inflict injuries to people who try to feed them.

Note: NMFS regulations at 50 CFR § 216.3 strictly prohibit feeding or attempting to feed a marine mammal in the wild.
  - c. Close approaches by humans to marine mammals may cause them to lose their natural wariness and become aggressive towards people. They are also vulnerable to injury or death from entanglement in fishing gear or boat strikes. NMFS strongly encourages people to follow the guidelines presented here while spending time on or near the water.



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[www.palmbeachdolphintours.com](http://www.palmbeachdolphintours.com)