



Oregon Coast Whale Watching

Park staff are ready to answer your questions and help you spot Gray whales at the Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay. Perched on the seawall with expansive ocean views, the center is a perfect spot to see whales.

Hours: Daily, 10am - 4pm
(call ahead for winter hours)
Address: 119 SW Hwy. 101, Depoe Bay
Information: 541-765-3304



oregonstateparks.org



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This brochure is available in alternative formats on request. Write to OPRD, 725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301; or call 1-800-551-6949 (for the hearing impaired 1-800-735-2900).

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Whale watching is one of the most popular activities on the coast, enjoyed by tens of thousands of visitors per year. Oregon has more than two dozen excellent whale watching spots on the coast; many are in or near state parks.

When is the best time to see whales?

Gray whales are the most commonly sighted whales on the coast. Their seasonal migration patterns bring more than 20,000 of them past the coast each year.



Whale Watch Week, Dec. 2018.

In the **winter**, from mid-December through mid-January, the whales travel south to the warm lagoons of Baja Mexico.

Spring watching begins with a surge in late March as the gray whales travel north to Alaska. Whales are northbound through May.

About 200 Gray whales remain in Oregon's coastal waters every year. **Summer and fall** you may see them feeding closer to shore. The central coast is a hot-spot for whales from May through October.

Whale Watch Week

Oregon State Parks celebrates the migrations twice per year with **Whale Watch Week** during late December and late March. Volunteers are stationed at more than 20 of the best whale watching sites along the coast, ready to help visitors spot whales and offer fun facts about the marine mammals. For Whale Watch Week dates and locations, visit whalespoken.org.

Be a volunteer

The **Whale Watching Spoken Here** program places volunteers at great whale watching sites during the two official whale watch weeks. Volunteers help visitors see and learn about migrating and resident Gray whales. Are whales your passion, too? Visit whalespoken.org to sign up.





The Blow

Gray whales usually surface every 20 seconds as they swim, but will often stay under for 3 to 5 minutes when they are eating. If they have been down for 5 minutes they usually blow 5 times when they surface to replenish their oxygen supply. The blow, or spout, shoots nearly 12 feet high and expels 400 liters of air in a single blast. The whales take a few breaths at the surface then dive again. If they are frightened they can stay down for 30 minutes, hiding on the bottom or traveling great distances.

The Breach

The ultimate in whale sightings is a breach: a whale launches itself out of the water in a spectacular show of power and grace. Scientists aren't sure why whales breach. Possibly they do it to remove parasites, communicate with each other or maybe it's just for fun. Gray whales aren't known for breaching nearly as often as Humpback whales, but young Gray whales seem to be the most common breachers along the Oregon Coast.



The Spynop

Whales are intelligent and curious, and are often seen "spynopping," or lifting their heads above the surface of the water. They like to rise out of the water to get a better sense of their surroundings. During the summer, Gray whales have been known to spynop regularly, especially when local tour boats are near. Perhaps this means the whales enjoy watching us as much as we enjoy watching them?



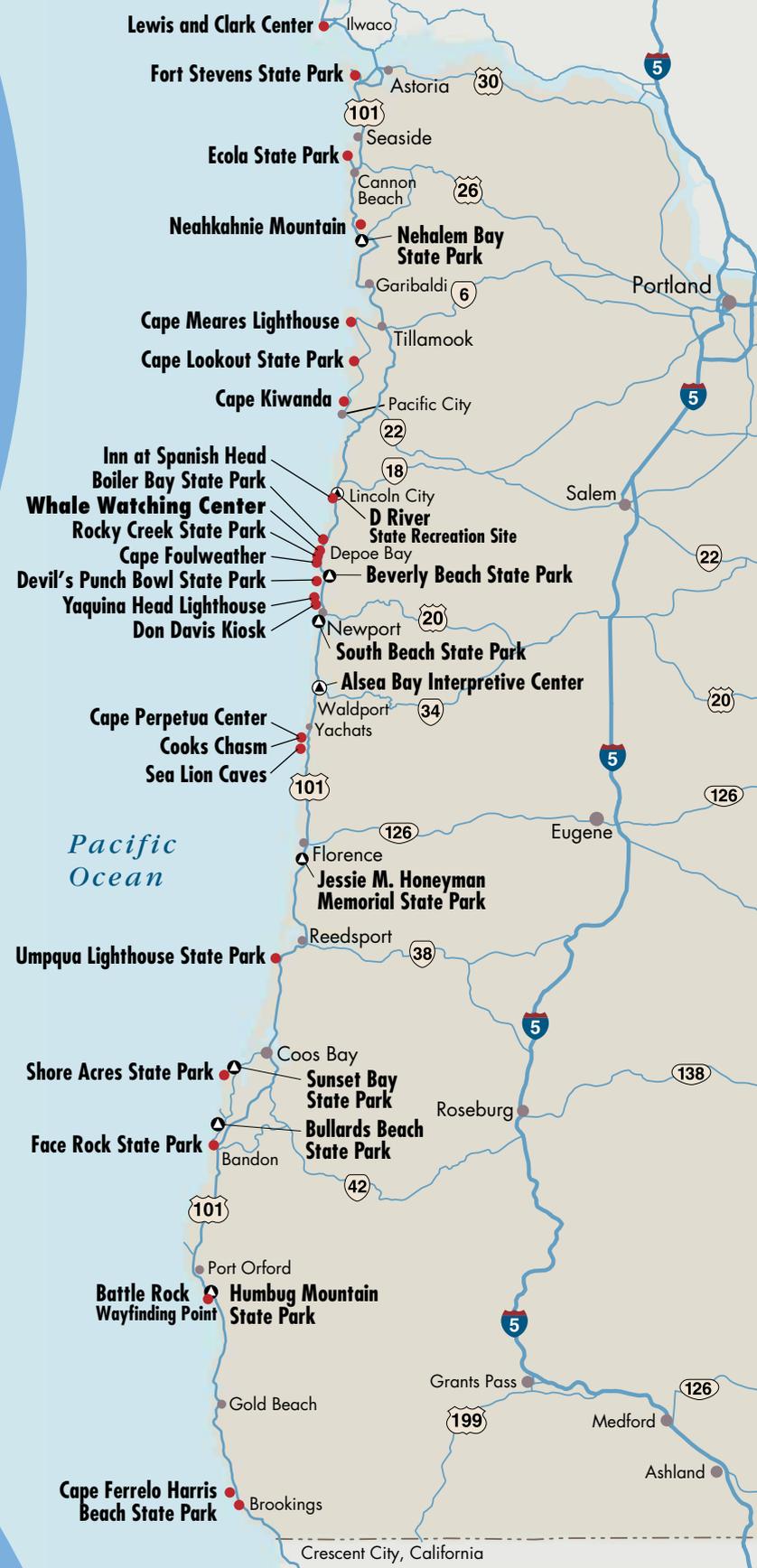
The Dive

A deep dive, also known as sounding or fluking, happens when a whale lifts its tail flukes out of the water. This helps propel the whale downward at a steep angle to the bottom, where they feed on zooplankton and amphipods. After the flukes disappear under the water, the turbulence of the dive will cause a circle of smooth water, known as a fluke-print.

Other Species

Humpback whales are the second most common whale on the coast; the best time to spot them is August and September. Orcas, also known as killer whales, can also be sighted. Look for them April - June.

The Best Whale Watching Sites



Watching Gray Whales

Studying the swimming and diving patterns of whales helps us to locate whales by watching their blow as they surface. The blow, or spout, is about 12' high.

