

Whale Watching Season Started

Contributed by SABBWWA
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The Whale Season has started once again, with the arrival of these protected species close inshore along our coastline. They are great animals to view and experience, but are nevertheless still protected under the Marine Living Resources Act.

In terms of the Act, no person may approach a whale closer than 300metres without a Permit. These Permits are issued by DEAT (Marine and Coastal Management, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism) after an extensive period of application and successful applicants having to adhere a strict code of conduct and stringiest training methods on how to approach whales from the correct angle.

The 300metre restriction applied to all craft and vessels, including yachts, power boats, kayaks, canoes, rafts, fishing vessels, helicopters and aircraft. Should any such vessel be in an area and a whale surface close to the vessel, it must move away immediately.

The Act also caters for harassment of whales, dolphins, turtles and other vulnerable species, and the Permit Holder are authorized to operate under a strict Code Of Conduct only - rules to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the resource and minimal harassment.

Therefor, unless boat operators are in possession of a valid Permit, in terms of the Marine Living resources Act, they would be breaking the law by taking passengers out to view whales at close quarters. In addition, should they be taking paying passengers (i.e. tourists), they are also breaking the SA Tourism Amendment Act. In both cases they (the boat operators, owners and passengers) could be liable to a fine.

However of great concern to the South African Boat-Based-Whale-Watching Association (SABBWWA), is the additional stress being placed on the animals through non-Permit holding operators illegally approaching these creatures and therefor harassing them. In line with this practice in the rest of the World, we would like this industry to continue to flourish to the benefit of all.

PLEASE THEREFOR SUPPORT US BY NOT ENCOURAGING illegal Boat Based Whale Watching Operators. Use the Permit Holder in your area. [Click here](#)