

## **MEDIA FACTS**

### **Who is Whale Watch®?**

Whale Watch is New Zealand's only vessel-based whale watching company offering visitors an exciting up-close encounter with the world's largest toothed predator the Giant Sperm Whale in their natural environment at all times of the year. Whale Watch scheduled tours operate daily. Our 95% success rate means we guarantee an 80% refund if your tour does not see a whale. Whale Watch tours are extremely popular so we recommend booking early.

### **Where is Whale Watch®?**

Whale Watch is located in the small coastal town of Kaikōura on the East Coast of New Zealand's South Island a scenic two and a half-hour drive north from Christchurch and two hour drive south from Picton. Kaikōura is a special place of lush pastures and towering, snow covered peaks that fall to the sea. This rare magic continues just offshore where a deep undersea canyon combines with unusual sea currents to attract an extraordinary abundance of marine life, the most famous being the Giant Sperm Whale.

### **Giant Sperm Whales**

Kaikōura's resident Giant Sperm Whales are the biggest of the toothed whales and the worlds' largest toothed predator. They are equivalent in size to four elephants. Each of their teeth can weigh more than a kilogram and grow to 20cm long. Giant Sperm Whales dive 2km into the dark abyss of the Kaikōura Canyon to hunt prey such as the Giant Squid. Many of Kaikōura's Giant Sperm Whales wear battle scars from close encounters with this monster of the deep.

### **The Whale Watch® Tour Experience**

Kaikōura is the whale watching capital of New Zealand, every Whale Watch tour is a unique experience and the sightings vary. Giant Sperm Whales are the stars of the show and year-round residents. A typical Whale Watch tour may encounter New Zealand Fur Seals, pods of Dusky Dolphins and the endangered Wandering Albatross. Depending on the season you may also see migrating Humpback Whales, Pilot Whales, Blue Whales and Southern Right Whales. Kaikōura often hosts the world's largest dolphin - the Orca - and is home to the world's smallest and rarest - the Hector's. Kaikōura also attracts the largest concentration and variety of seabirds on mainland New Zealand including 13 species of Albatross, 14 varieties of Petrels and 7 types of Shearwater. If your Whale Watch tour does not see a whale we will refund 80% of your fare.

### **Whale Watch® Tour Vessels**

Specifically designed for whale watching, our modern catamarans are equipped with engines that minimise underwater noise and toilets that never pollute the sea. The main passenger cabin is enclosed and large outside decks offer great viewing and photo opportunities. Spacious air-conditioned interiors are fitted with comfortable seating while large plasma screens display our award-winning marine wildlife animations. Passenger numbers for each tour are kept well below our vessel carrying capacity to ensure your tour experience remains a personal one.

### **Whale Watch® Crew**

Whale Watch vessels are crewed by a friendly team of Skippers and Guides who are very experienced in interacting with the local marine wildlife. They have expert knowledge of Kaikōura's sea conditions and are fully trained in all aspects of safety. Whale Watch staff constantly monitor the weather and respond professionally to any changes. This may mean a tour is cancelled or safety restrictions placed on children or passengers with medical problems. The safety and comfort of our passengers is of the utmost importance to us.

### **Whale Watch® Animation**

Our on-board plasma screens display a virtual animated whale watching tour while the tour is actually taking place! You will experience your own tour through the eye of the albatross in real-time. As your vessel approaches the Kaikōura Canyon the ocean will be 'removed' to show the sheer scale of the abyss that plunges kilometres beneath you.

Whale Watch have also created a unique, award-winning series of animation sequences designed to reveal Kaikōura's hidden wildlife wonders. Discover how a Giant Sperm Whale survives in the dark and freezing depths of the Kaikōura Canyon or why the green-eyed Plunket Shark is easy prey for a Giant Squid.

### **About Whale Watch® the Company**

Whale Watch is a multiple national and international award winning nature-based tourism company owned and operated by the indigenous Ngāti Kuri people of Kaikōura, a Maori sub-tribe of the South Island's larger Ngāi Tahu Tribe.

Whale Watch was formed in 1987 at a time when Māori were casualties of Kaikōura's declining economy. At this time of difficulty, Ngāti Kuri leaders like Bill Solomon believed the local Giant Sperm Whales held the answer to the unemployment problems of the Māori community. They knew their ancestor Paikea had journeyed to a new life in New Zealand on the back of the whale Tohorā. It seemed appropriate for Paikea's descendants to again ride on the back of the whale to a new life. And so it proved to be.

The Ngāti Kuri founders of Whale Watch mortgaged their houses to secure a loan to start the business. In the early days passengers travelled aboard a small 6.7m inflatable vessel that carried 8 passengers at a time. In time, the inflatable was replaced by a larger boat with an upper viewing deck until today the Whale Watch fleet numbers four modern catamarans each specifically designed for whale watching. The expansion of the Whale Watch fleet required the building of an entire marina in South Bay. It is from here that all whale watching tours now depart.

Due to the phenomenal success of Whale Watch, Kaikōura is now one of New Zealand's leading eco-tourism destinations offering a diverse range of exciting marine wildlife encounters. The company has stimulated investment in new accommodation, restaurants and an impressive array of cafes and galleries filled with the work of local artists.

Paikea and Tohorā still form the symbolic centre of Whale Watch. They represent the spiritual bond between the human world and the natural world and speak of the possibilities that reveal themselves when the world of nature is revered rather than exploited.

### **The Whale Watch® Philosophy**

Whale Watch is committed to providing a quality whale watching experience while carefully managing the use of a rare natural resource. We are visitors to the world of the whales and respect it as such at all times. As a Māori-owned company, Whale Watch cherishes the twin values of hospitality to visitors and reverence for the natural world. It is a philosophy that embraces people, the land, the sea and all living things as one.

### **Who is Paikea the Whale Rider?**

According to legend, Paikea came to New Zealand from the Pacific Islands on the back of a whale many centuries ago. His descendants include the Ngāti Kuri people of Kaikōura.

Paikea was the youngest and favourite son of the chief Uenuku from the island of Mangaia in the present day Cook Islands. This favouritism made Paikea's elder brothers extremely jealous. They conspired to kill Paikea while fishing offshore and tell Uenuku he drowned. But the night before the trip Paikea feigned sleep and overheard his brothers plotting. When far out to sea Paikea foiled their plan by deliberately sinking the canoe and drowning his brothers.

Now adrift in a great ocean, Paikea clung to a canoe plank and awaited his own death. It was then that Tohorā the whale appeared and lifted Paikea onto his great back. Tohorā took Paikea south to New Zealand and the settlement of Whangara just north of present day Gisborne. Here, Paikea began a new and prosperous life.

Many years later one of Paikea's sons, Tahupotiki, travelled further south and became the founder of the great South Island tribe of Ngāi Tahu. It is from Tahupotiki and Paikea that the Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Kuri of Kaikōura claim descent.

### **Description of Whale Watch Kaikoura**

Whale Watch is committed to providing a quality whale watching experience while carefully managing the use of a rare natural resource. As a Māori-owned company, Whale Watch cherishes the twin values of hospitality to visitors and reverence for the natural world. It is a philosophy that embraces people, the land, the sea and all living things as one.

Whale Watch is New Zealand's only vessel-based whale watching company offering an exciting up-close encounter with the world's largest toothed predator the Giant Sperm Whale in its natural environment at all times of the year. Our 95% success rate in sighting a whale means we guarantee an 80% refund of your fare should a whale not be sighted on your tour.

Whale Watch is located in the small coastal town of Kaikōura on the East Coast of New Zealand's South Island, a scenic 2.5 hour drive north of Christchurch and a 2 hour drive south from Picton. Kaikōura is a special place of lush pastures and towering, snow covered peaks that fall to the sea. This rare magic continues just offshore where a deep undersea canyon combines with unusual sea currents to attract an extraordinary abundance of marine life, the most famous being the Giant Sperm Whale.

They share their unique world with a host of other whale and dolphin species, seals and albatross - all regular sightings aboard Whale Watch tours.

Designed specifically for whale watching, our modern catamarans are equipped with engines that minimise underwater noise and toilets that never pollute the sea. The main passenger cabin is enclosed and outside decks offer great viewing and photo opportunities. Spacious air-conditioned

interiors are fitted with comfortable seating while large plasma screens display our award-winning marine wildlife animations.

### **Kaikōura's protected marine environment**

Kaikōura's world-renowned wild marine environment is now protected by a marine reserve, whale and fur seal sanctuary, five customary fishing areas and new amateur fishing regulations.

The Hikurangi marine reserve is focused on the very deep waters of the area's canyon, connecting with the land for about two kilometres just north of Goose Bay and extending out to 23 km. The new reserve, banning mining, fishing or harvesting of any kind in the area, is larger and deeper than any existing marine reserve on New Zealand's three main islands.

The Kaikōura whale sanctuary extends 45 kilometres north and south of the Kaikōura peninsula and 56km out to sea, protecting the sperm, humpback, southern right, blue, killer and other whales that frequent the area and prohibits high-level seismic survey work.

The Ōhau Point New Zealand fur seal sanctuary extends 700m along the coastal side of State Highway 1 out about 50 metres to the low water spring mark, covering an approximate area of four hectares and takes in the most significant breeding colony of New Zealand fur seals on the country's main islands.

Kaikōura's extraordinary marine environment needs the protection and recognition of these sanctuaries and reserves. This is the most biologically rich ocean anywhere in the world of over 500 metres depth because of its deep canyon so close to shore. These measures benefit Kaikōura's whales, dolphins, seals, albatross, rock lobster, shellfish and finfish as well as helping to sustain Kaikōura's tourism industry - defined by its wild coastline, whales and crayfish.