**Whale Watching**

Gray, humpback and sperm whales migrate from mid-December through January from the icy waters of Alaska to their mating and birthing grounds in the warmer lagoons of Mexico. Their journey back to Arctic waters lasts from March to June.

Although it is the fall and spring that presents the greatest opportunity to whale watch, gray whales may be seen year-round on the Oregon coastline.

Grays are the largest species, reaching at least 35 feet in length and weighing more than 30 tons (10 times the size of a large elephant). Their coloring is a bluish white.

**What to look for:**

1. Scan the horizon for spouting or blow (vapor, water or condensation blown into the air up to 12 feet when the whale exhales). When the late afternoon sun is backlighting the whales, it is easier to spot them.
2. Once you locate a spout or blow, stay with it. Where you see one blow, you will see others, either from the same whale or other whales.
3. Whales have periodic blow patterns during their migration.
4. Usually only a small portion of a whale’s head and back show during a blow.
5. Spy-hopping is a term applied to a whale with its head partially out of the water in a vertical posture, frequently bringing the eye above the surface to see well.
6. Breaching (when a whale leaps clear out of the water), flukes and tails.

**Where to Go:** Some charter boat services offer whale-watching trips. Sightings from the beach are possible. The following locations have been proven to be excellent whale watching sites:

**South of Rockaway Beach**

***Barview Jetty*:** This rocky area is located just inside the mouth of Tillamook Bay. The intertidal area is small, but offers large boulders, which provide habitat for many common intertidal species. Parking is limited, and visitors must cross a railroad right-of-way to access the intertidal area. Fishermen frequently see whales coming here to enjoy the fresh water.

**Three Graces between Rockaway and Garibaldi:** The massive, stately rocks at Garibaldi signal great tide pooling on the shoreline at Tillamook Bay. You’ll have to cross the train tracks and the massive riprap. These pools only show during fairly low tides.

***Pirate Cove:*** Just past the Three Graces Rocks and before Garibaldi on your right-hand side. Pull over and read about Capt. Gray and our local history.

***Cape Meares:*** This area is adjacent to the town of Oceanside, 9 miles west of Tillamook.

***Cape Lookout:*** This excellent viewing area is 18 miles south of Tillamook, on the south side of Cape Lookout.

**North of Rockaway Beach**

**Nedonna Beach:**

***Manhattan Beach:*** This rocky area is located just inside the mouth of Tillamook Bay. The intertidal area is small, but offers large boulders, which provide habitat for many common intertidal species. Parking is limited, and visitors must cross a railroad right-of-way to access the intertidal area. Take Manhattan Beach access to Beach Street off U.S. Highway 101, turn west at the Manhattan Beach sign on Beach. Access is at the end of the street at Beach Drive.

***South Jetty at low tide:*** To get to the jetty, the only access is Beach Drive, which comes off Beach Street from U.S. Highway 101 at the Manhattan Beach turn. The jetty access is at Section Line Street and Beach Drive. The access path to the beach is marked by the monument sign, which states "Nehalem Bay south Jetty, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Constructed 1910 -1916.”

***Brighton Marina & Jetty Fishery****:* Both are a few miles north of Rockaway, just a few miles apart. These favorite local hangouts have spectacular tide pools when the tide is low. YouTube shows the spectacular site caught seasonally from both these areas.

***Ecola Point*:** Located 2 miles north of Cannon Beach, Ecola State Park has a large parking lot, restrooms, and a good trail to the beach and intertidal area, about a quarter-mile away. Views from the parking area are spectacular. The area is excellent for viewing seals and sea lions; please observe them from a distance to avoid disturbing them.

***Haystack Rock (Marine Garden):*** This area is located within the Cannon Beach City limits. Parking is in town near the beach or at Tolovana Beach Wayside.

***Neah-Kah-Nie Mountain:*** Located 5 miles north of Manzanita, within Oswald West State Park. A great place to view. This is where the base of Cape Falcon north of the beach and Neah-Kah-Nie Mountain at the south end.

**What to Bring:** Appropriate clothing (be prepared for stormy weather) and binoculars.