

Welcome to Bass Coast

We acknowledge the Boonwurrung/Bunurong as the Traditional Custodians of this land.

Our waters are alive with whales

Follow the Whale Discovery Trail and explore the natural beauty of our coast that provides important habitat and food for some of the ocean's largest residents.

Whales are warm blooded, air breathing marine mammals that give birth to live young.

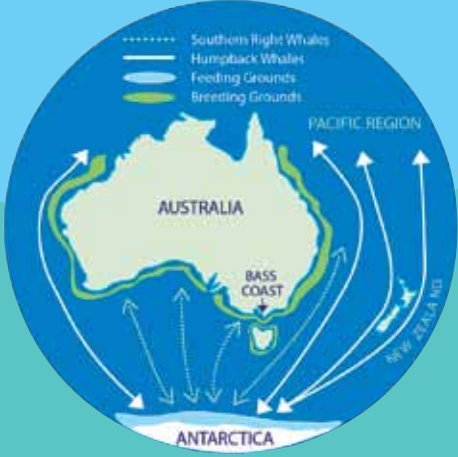
Mighty migrations

Whales pass Bass Coast on their annual migrations north and south between April and November.

Southern rights and humpbacks feed in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica in summer before travelling incredible distances to breed in shallower, warmer waters along Australia's coast. Starting their journey in late autumn, they travel alone or in small pods of two to five, meeting up at traditional breeding and feeding grounds along the way.

Humpbacks travel up to 10,000 kilometres return - one of the longest migratory journeys of any mammal. Navigating using sound and landmarks such as headlands, whales travel close to the Bass Coast, giving keen whale watchers an experience they'll never forget.

Migration paths



Discover beautiful Bass Coast and Phillip Island

Plan your whale watching adventure with our friendly teams at Bass Coast Visitor Information Centres. Take to the water on a whale watching cruise or walk, ride or drive along the discovery trail to spot whales and discover our natural environment.

Let us provide you with all the local knowledge, book your accommodation, tickets and tours, and assist you with planning your unique whale watching break.

Phillip Island Visitor Information Centre
895 Phillip Island Road Newhaven VIC 3925
1300 366 422

Cowes Visitor Information Centre
91-97 Thompson Avenue Cowes VIC 3922
1300 366 422

Inverloch Visitor Information Centre
16 A'Beckett Street Inverloch VIC 3996
1300 762 433



www.visitbasscoast.com



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Cover image: Wildlife Coast Cruises - Renee de Bondt | Illustration & Design: Christine Larsen

Bass Coast Whale Discovery Trail

Watch in wonder



Meet the whales

Whale wonders

Songs and echoes: Male humpbacks use song to communicate. The singing can last up to an hour with some parts being heard kilometres away. Toothed whales use echolocation for hunting and navigation.

Next generation: Humpback whale pregnancy lasts for up to 12 months. Calves are born weighing over a tonne and drink around 240 litres of milk each day.

Long lived: Southern right and humpback whales are thought to live for over 50 years and killer whales are believed to live up to an age of 80 years in the wild.

Just cruisin': Southern rights cruise at an average of three kilometres per hour, humpbacks average eight and killer whales win the race at 13 kilometres per hour.

Thar she blows: Humpback whales have lungs the size of a small car and when they take a breath they exchange up to 90% of their lung capacity. They exhale with great force.

Back from the brink: Whaling in the late 18th century took many species to near extinction. Whales are now protected and populations are slowly recovering.

Killer whale

Orcinus orca
Largest member of the dolphin family. Weighs over three tonne and can reach up to 7-8 metres long.
Look for: Distinctive black and white colouring.

Fluke

A whale's tail is known as a fluke. It is one of the most powerful muscles in the animal kingdom driving the whale through the water using up-and-down movements.

Southern right

Eubalaena australis
Threatened in Victoria. A large, black baleen whale up to 16-18 metres long and weighing up to 80 tonne.
Look for: No dorsal fin. Short, paddle-like pectoral fins. Distinctive callosities (raised light-coloured patches) on their head, chin and lower jaw.

Humpback

Megaptera novaeangliae
Threatened in Victoria. Large baleen whale 12-16 metres long and weighing up to 40 tonne.
Look for: Black upper body and white underneath. Small dorsal fin located nearly two-thirds of the way down their back.

Say aaah

Southern rights and humpbacks use baleen (bone-like) plates to filter tiny krill and plankton for food. Killer whales have teeth and actively hunt larger fare such as sharks, seals and squid.

Dorsal fin

Humpbacks have a small dorsal fin, about two-thirds down their back. Southern rights do not have this top fin. Male killer whales each have a very tall and unique dorsal fin.

Blowhole

Whales are able to breathe air through nostrils on the top of their heads called blowholes. Baleen whales have two blowholes and toothed whales have one blowhole.

Pectoral fins

These side fins are important for swimming, steering and communication.

Bass Coast Whale Discovery Trail

Follow the Whale Discovery Trail and stop at iconic bays, headlands and beaches to enjoy magnificent views as you search for whales. The Trail leads you to a range of coastal viewing points where interpretive signage provides an insight into the majesty and mystery of whales and their behaviours.

Grossard Point

This point, in Ventnor, became the site of the lonely grave of Captain Grossard in 1868 after a tragic accident. Watch for whales entering the bay close to shore.

Summerland

Home to great surf and the world's largest colony of little penguins that return home to their burrows at sunset. Managed by Phillip Island Nature Parks, this is also an important breeding, feeding and roosting site for short-tailed shearwaters and hooded plovers.



Short-tailed shearwaters

Pyramid Rock

From these high rocky cliffs you may see passing whales and dolphins. Pyramid Rock is a basalt outcrop shaped by waves over thousands of years. Managed by Phillip Island Nature Parks, this is an important breeding, feeding and roosting site for short-tailed shearwaters, black-faced cormorants and sooty oystercatchers.



Sooty oystercatcher

Western Port

Humpbacks have been spotted from this jetty, so keep a watch out! Also look for bottlenose dolphins which can be seen in the bay all year round.

Punchbowl

Follow the George Bass Coastal Walk for spectacular coastal views. Watch for whales from the high cliffs overlooking the wild waters and pounding surf of Bass Strait.



Whistling kite

Cape Woolamai

Home to Phillip Island's largest colony of short-tailed shearwaters that fly here from waters around Alaska each year to breed. Look for albatross and sea eagles soaring above.

Kilcunda

Watch the waves for whales, dolphins and seabirds. To the east lies the environmentally and culturally significant Powlett River estuary, a sanctuary for birdlife including the threatened orange-bellied parrot.

Cape Paterson First Surf

Bunurong Marine Park protects broad rock platforms and underwater reefs that are home to over 300 species of animals and plants. This is a great spot for watching for whales. It's also perfect for putting on your snorkel and exploring the vast array of marine life below the surface.

Harmers Haven

In 1826 Captain William Hovell of Corinella discovered coal here and in 1901 the *Artisan* ran aground at nearby Wreck Beach. Today this is a haven for wildlife including whales and the threatened beach-nesting hooded plover. Please follow the signage designed to protect them during their summer breeding season.

Hooded plover



Hooded plover

Eagles Nest

The site of the discovery of Australia's first dinosaur bone, the Cape Paterson Claw. The find was made in 1903 at a nearby site in the sedimentary rocks below that are over 115 million years old.

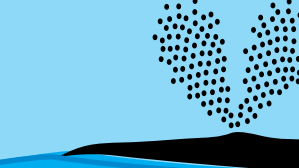
Have you been lucky enough to spot some whales today? What are they doing?
To report sightings and see all the latest recordings - visit our 'Whale Trail' page at visitbasscoast.com

Blow patterns

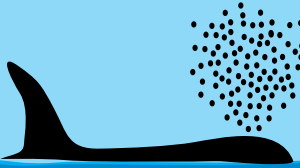
Humpback



Southern Right

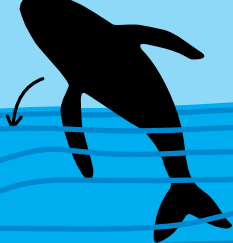


Killer Whale



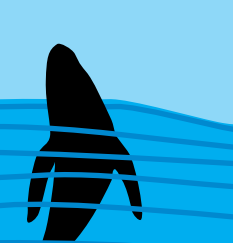
Breaching

The whale jumps clear out of the water. This may be to communicate or perhaps to dislodge parasites.



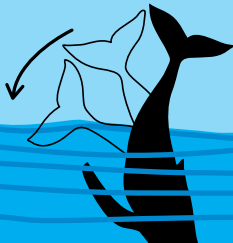
Spy hopping

The whale raises its head clear of the water to take a look at its surroundings. You will often see the upper and lower jaws as it performs this move.



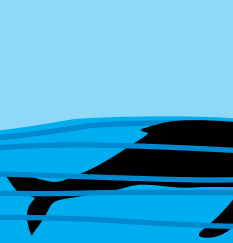
Tail slapping

The whale lifts its tail clear of the water and slaps it on the surface. This may be to communicate with other whales, scare prey, or as a defence.



Blow

Whales expel warm air through their blowhole with such force that it condenses in cool air and forms a distinctive spray.



Pec slapping

The whale raises one or both pectoral fins out of the water and slaps them on the surface. It may look like waving, but is more likely communication and/or play.

