

WHALE WONDER

NEW ZEALAND'S MARINE MARVELS

鯨鄉奇觀

探索新西蘭海洋生態的奧妙

Text and photos by Dr Ingrid Visser

It is hard to say what it is about whales and dolphins that attracts humans, but they certainly have that 'X' factor. And if you have ever wanted to meet them in their own environment, here is your chance!

New Zealand is considered one of the cetacean (whales, dolphins and porpoises) watching hot-spots in the world. Given that at least 35 of the 80-odd different species can be found here, it is no wonder it has earned such a reputation. Sometimes whale watches get lucky and catch a glimpse of the world's largest animal – the blue whale. This whale is so large, its heart is the size of a Volkswagen 'beetle' car, and its tongue weighs the same as an elephant!

New Zealand also boasts the world's largest dolphin – the orca, or killer whale, and one of the smallest – the Hector's dolphin, found only around New Zealand. The orcas living around New Zealand have been found to be unique – they specialise in hunting for sharks and rays – and even speak their own recognisable dialect. The Hector's dolphin is typically found in very close to shore and is considered one of the world's rarest marine dolphins. It is so tiny you could hold one in your arms.

But there are other, more well-known species you can see, such as the humpback whale, (which migrates past New Zealand, on its way to and from Antarctica), the common dolphin (this is the dolphin which is depicted on Greek coins with a boy riding on its back), and the bottlenose dolphin (this is the same sort of dolphin as "Flipper"). The common dolphin is a beautiful dolphin, with a mustard coloured patch on its sides, and it often can be found in large groups. The bottlenose dolphin is usually found in close to the shore and tucked away in sheltered bays. New Zealand has some of the Southern most bottlenose dolphins in the world, where they live in the fabled Fiords, such as Milford Sound. There is so much fresh water coming from the surrounding mountains that these dolphins spend a considerable amount of their lives swimming in fresh water, and in the winter have to break through ice surface to breathe.

Even Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, boasts its own populations of cetaceans. Within sight of the houses dotting the coastline you can expect to see bottlenose or common dolphins and sometimes Bryde's whales – a subtropical whale which has only recently been studied in the area. It appears that these whales make this area of New Zealand their home, as they can be found there all year. They can often be seen feeding in association with common dolphins and gannets – a beautiful, sleek-looking bird which dives from a great height to catch its fish. The dolphins round the fish up from below, creating a smorgasbord for the gannets and Bryde's whales.

PACK ALL YOUR SENSES

COME AND MEET WHALES AND DOLPHINS IN *THEIR* WORLD

Off Kaikoura, a small village on the East coast of New Zealand you can see the dusky dolphin – considered one of the real acrobats of the sea. These dolphins often make leaps and jumps to boggle the mind and love to ride on the bow of the dolphin-watching boat. They hunt for squid at night, so during the day they come together in large groups and spend the day in close to the coast, where they sleep, socialise and play. You might also get lucky and see the Lissodelphis – a strange looking dolphin without a dorsal fin. These long, sleek dolphins are usually found well-offshore, but occasionally come to feed on the squid with the dusky dolphins. The abundance of food, swept to the surface by the cold ocean currents, brings a wide variety of marine-life to Kaikoura. This includes the mighty sperm whale – the largest of the toothed whales. Sperm whales also feed on squid, but at all hours of the day, and usually go on dives for over an hour. When they return to the surface for air, it takes them a while to catch their breath. It is this time that we have a chance to see them, resting and blowing at the surface. Then it is a quick flick of their tail and off they go, down to the depths again, often to over 2 km deep! In the winter, the stunning backdrop of snowy Southern Alps, with a sperm whale tail, or a bunch of dolphins swimming past is an amazing sight and a photographic opportunity of a life-time.

Kaikoura is also known as the sea-bird capital of the world, and a whale or dolphin watching trip also boasts views of giant albatross and tiny Pintado petrels, as well as New Zealand fur-seals. You can take helicopter trips to watch the birds, cetaceans and seals from the air, or if you wanted to meet dolphins in their own environment you could take a boat trip.

If you really wanted to meet dolphins up close and personal, you could get wet and swim with them. New Zealand leads the world in swim-with-the-dolphin programs, taking you meet wild, free dolphins, out in the open ocean. By doing it this way, the dolphins can make the choice to interact, and are not forced to



swim with you, as happens in captivity situations. There is something very special about swimming with a group of dolphins who bring over a piece of seaweed to play with you, who whistle and squeak right at you, or who cavort and spin around you in effortless grace.

So, pack all your senses and come and meet the cetaceans of New Zealand. Come taste the salt water, hear the calls of the dolphins, see the perfect whale tail, smell the clean, fresh air, and feel the excitement!

This Article was written on behalf of First Light Travel by Dr Ingrid Visser, New Zealand's foremost authority on whales and orca and also tour leader of the whale trail. The proceeds from the tour go to the Orca Research Trust for further research and conservation.

To come on the ultimate whale and dolphin watching tour see www.firstlighttravel.com

想和鯨魚、海豚近距離接觸，探索牠們的感觀世界？

還不趕快收拾行李及心情，齊來參與這個令你畢生難忘之旅！

究竟海豚和鯨魚有什麼地方吸引人類，至今仍是個謎。但牠們確實有某些「未知」的因素，叫人們著迷。如果你一直希望在地們的自然生活環境，近距離欣賞牠們，現在機會來了！

新西蘭是全世界觀察鯨類（鯨魚、海豚和小鯨）的熱點之一。全球有80多種不同的鯨類，這裡至少佔35種；難怪擁有巨鯨之鄉的稱號。幸運的話，還可一睹世上體積最大的動物——藍鯨。藍鯨體形非常巨大，牠的心臟體積相當於一輛甲蟲車，舌頭有一隻大象那般重！

新西蘭引以為傲的可說是全世界最大的海豚「逆戟鯨」，又名「虎鯨」，還有世上其中一種最小的海豚——「賀氏矮海豚」，這品種是新西蘭獨有的。在新西蘭周圍生活的逆戟鯨更是世上獨一無二，牠們專門捕食鯊魚和魷魚，甚至有自己的方言。賀氏矮海豚一般出沒在靠近海岸的地方，這種海豚是世上最稀有的海豚之一。牠體積非常細小，單手就可把牠舉起來。

這裡還有其他大家比較熟悉的海豚，例如俗名為座頭鯨的「大翅鯨」（遷徙往返南極時途經新西蘭）、真海豚（希臘硬幣上，小男孩騎在背上的就是真海豚）以及瓶鼻海豚（屬於「鱧」類海豚）。真海豚外表漂亮，經常成群出沒，身體兩側有許多深黃色的斑點。瓶鼻海豚常在近海岸活動，藏身於隱蔽的海灣（Milford Sound）。新西蘭有一些生活在地球最南端的瓶鼻海豚，牠們生活在如仙境般美麗的海灣，如米爾福德峽灣。由於米爾福德峽灣四周山脈有大量清水流進大海，因此這些瓶鼻海豚一生中大多數時間都生活在清淨的水中，冬天時破開冰層浮出水面呼吸。

新西蘭最大城市奧克蘭的海岸也有當地的鯨類生物。在房屋星羅棋佈的海岸，你也許會看到瓶鼻海豚、真海豚，甚至貝氏鯨的蹤影。貝氏鯨是一種亞熱帶鯨魚，近年才在此處出現，貝氏鯨似乎已把新西蘭當成牠們的家，所以全年都可在這裡見到牠們。貝氏鯨與真海豚和海鳥一起獵食。海鳥是一種羽毛光滑滑漂亮的鳥類，從高空俯衝潛入水中捕魚；海豚則在水下圍攏鮮魚，就像給海鳥和貝氏鯨準備小食。

新西蘭東岸的凱庫拉村（Kaikoura）海岸，有暗色斑紋海豚出沒。暗色斑紋海豚是海中的雜技員，經常叫人意想不到地騰空跳躍，還喜歡追逐海豚觀察船，向遊人哈腰打招呼。牠們晚間捕食鳥賊，白天成群結隊地在海岸附近睡覺、生活和玩耍。另外，幸好的話，你可看到鯨豚（Lissodelphis），一種沒有背鰭的海豚。這種身體修長圓滑的海豚通常可以在近岸處看到，有時牠們也會和暗色斑紋海豚一起覓食鳥賊。豐富的食物，冰冷洋流，為凱庫拉帶來大量海洋生物。這裡還有世上最大的有齒鯨魚——抹香鯨。抹香鯨也捕食鳥賊，全日捕食，通常一次潛水會超過一小時。





所以再次回到水面換氣時，會花點時間呼吸一下。這時就有機會一睹牠們的風采，看見牠們在水上休息或噴氣，然後迅速擺動尾巴離開，再次潛入超過兩公里的深海。冬季，白雪皚皚的南阿爾卑斯山下的抹香鯨尾巴，或一群戲水的海豚，是多麼羨煞旁人，多麼迷人的景象！也將是你一生中難得拍攝到的珍貴照片。

另外，凱庫拉有海鳥的天堂之美名。在欣賞鯨魚或海豚之旅時，還可一睹體形龐大的信天翁和小巧的大西洋馬鮫海燕，另外還有新西蘭海狗。你可選擇乘直升機在空中觀察鳥、鯨魚和海豹，也可乘船與觀察海豚。

若你真的想近距離欣賞海豚，還可到海裡和牠們暢泳。新西蘭有世界知名的的海豚伴遊團，讓遊客在大海裡接近野生海豚。這樣，海豚可能會接近你，自由地在你四周游泳。跟海豚戲水感覺奇妙，牠們或會帶來一些海藻和你嬉戲，有時會對你發出哨聲、向你尖叫，有些會優雅地在你四周騰躍旋轉。

還不收拾行裝及心情，到新西蘭親身體會！來感受海水的味道，傾聽海豚的聲音，欣賞鯨魚漂亮的尾巴，呼吸清新的空氣，盡享精彩刺激的旅程！

本文由 Ingrid Visser 博士為 First Light Travel 撰寫。作者為新西蘭鯨類動物研究之權威，亦是觀鯨團的領隊。觀鯨團所得收入，盡撥作鯨類研究及保育用途。

鯨魚與海豚觀察之旅的有關詳情，歡迎瀏覽 www.firstlighttravel.com。



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