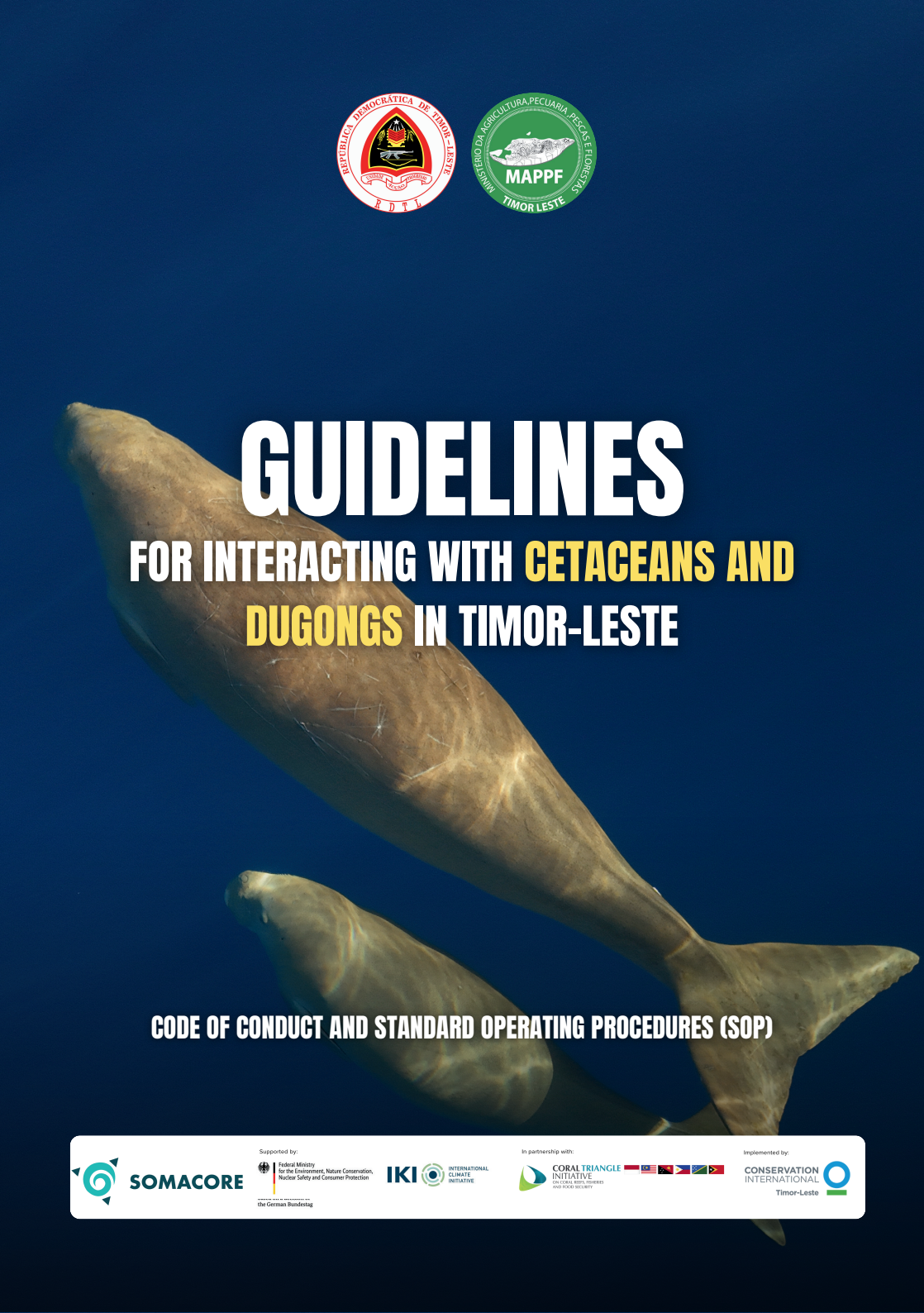


GUIDELINES

FOR INTERACTING WITH CETACEANS AND DUGONGS IN TIMOR-LESTE

CODE OF CONDUCT AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

SOMACORE

Supported by:
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
the German Bundestag

IKI INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE

In partnership with:
CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE ON CORAL REEFS, FISHERIES AND FOOD SECURITY

Implemented by:
CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL Timor-Leste

Introduction and Preamble

Timor-Leste is located within the Coral Triangle and is recognised as an important migratory corridor and habitat for whales, dolphins and dugongs. Its waters support a wide diversity of cetacean species and provide significant opportunities for sustainable marine ecotourism. When conducted responsibly, cetacean and dugong watching activities can contribute to biodiversity conservation, environmental education, community wellbeing and a sustainable blue economy, while minimising disturbance to marine wildlife.

The Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cetacean and dugong watching in Timor-Leste were developed from the **2020 Guidelines for Interacting with Cetaceans and Dugongs in Timor-Leste**. Their purpose is to translate the principles and recommendations in those guidelines into practical standards of behaviour and operational procedures for commercial operators, recreational vessel users, tourism guides, government agencies, researchers and visitors.

The Code of Conduct establishes common standards of responsible behaviour for everyone participating in cetacean and dugong watching activities. The Standard Operating Procedures provide step-by-step operational guidance to ensure that whale, dolphin and dugong watching is conducted safely, ethically and in a manner that minimises impacts on the animals and their habitats.

These provisions aim to support marine mammal conservation, strengthen sustainable tourism, improve visitor safety, promote compliance with national legislation and contribute to the long-term sustainable management of Timor-Leste's marine resources.

The Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures for interactions with cetaceans were supported by **Conservation International Timor-Leste** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry**, through the **General Directorate of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Resources Management (DG-PAGRA)**, with the support from the **Solutions for Marine and Coastal Resilience in the Coral Triangle Program (SOMACORE)**

Dili, 30 September 2026

Akásio dos Santos
General Director Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Resource Management



WELCOME TO TIMOR-LESTE'S MARINE RESOURCES

- An unforgettable experience **watching whales, dolphins, and dugongs in Timor-Leste**, where responsible tourism protects marine life and supports local communities.

Photo Credits: Potenzo / CI Timor-Leste

The Importance of Marine Mammals

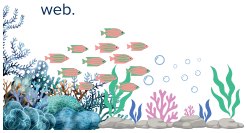
Ecological and Social Importance



Whales, dolphins and dugongs are important indicators of a healthy marine environment. They help us understand the condition of the ocean while supporting biodiversity, sustainable tourism and coastal ecosystems. Protecting marine mammals helps protect the ocean on which people and wildlife depend.

1 Healthy Oceans

Whales, dolphins and dugongs recycle nutrients through their faeces, supporting tiny plankton that form the foundation of the marine food web.





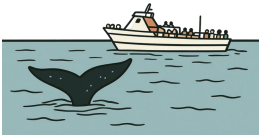
2 Sustainable Fisheries

Whales, dolphins and dugongs support marine ecosystems and help maintain fish populations needed by coastal communities.



3 Sustainable Tourism

Responsible marine mammal watching creates business opportunities and supports communities.



4 Rich Biodiversity

Protecting marine mammals also protects other marine species that share the same habitats



5 A Healthy Planet

Healthy oceans play a vital role in maintaining a stable climate and a healthy planet for all living things.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Many marine mammals travel **thousands of kilometres** each year during migration.
- Healthy oceans support millions of people through food, tourism and everyday livelihoods.

When whales, dolphins and dugongs thrive, the ocean is healthier too

MEGAFAUNA that exists in Timor

Large Mammal Species Discovered

Photo Credits: Potenzo / CI Timor-Leste

25+ SPECIES Whales, Dolphins & Dugongs

VU Sperm Whale *(Physeter macrocephalus)*



The Sperm Whale is the largest toothed whale. Adult males reach about 15 metres in length, similar to a large bus. Its enormous head makes up approximately one-third of its body. Sperm Whales feed mainly on squid and fish found in deep water

Blue Whale *(Balaenoptera musculus)* EN



. The blue whales in Timor Leste waters are pygnmy blue whales, a smaller sub-tropical sub species. They can reach lengths of 24 m and have a range that extends from waters just south of Australia to waters off Indonesia and Timor Leste.

LC Humpback Whale *(Megaptera novaeangliae)*



Humpback Whales grow to approximately 14-17 metres. They are known for spectacular breaching and their underwater songs. They feed mainly on fish and small animals such as krill.



Photo Credits: Potenzo / CI Timor-Leste

Spinner Dolphin *(Stenella longirostris)* LC

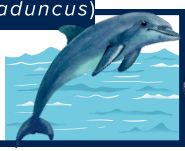


Spinner Dolphins are small dolphins measuring about 1.2-2.4 metres. They are famous for spinning rapidly when they leap out of the water.



Photo Credits: Potenzo / CI Timor-Leste

NT Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *(Tursiops aduncus)*



The Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin is larger than the Spinner Dolphin, reaching 2-4 metres. It is well known for its intelligence, curiosity and interactions with people, and often leaps high above the water with a large splash.



Dugong *(Dugong dugon)* VU



The Dugong, often called a "sea cow", is a distinctive marine mammal measuring about 2.2-3.4 metres. Dugongs swim slowly, feed only on seagrass and spend much of their lives quietly grazing along the seabed.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assesses the extinction risk faced by animal species.

- **LC (Least Concern)** Healthy population; low risk
- **NT (Near Threatened)** Close to qualifying as threatened
- **VU (Vulnerable):** Faces a high risk of extinction.
- **EN (Endangered)** Faces a very high risk of extinction

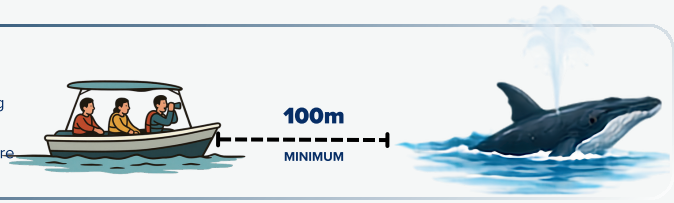
Purpose *and Five Rules*

Responsible Cetacean and Dugong Watching

Simple actions that protect whales, dolphins, dugongs and people.

1 Maintain Your Distance

Respect the recommended viewing distances. Give marine mammals space to feed, rest, breathe and care for their young.



2 Approach Slowly

Reduce vessel speed before reaching marine mammals (no wake speed **4** knots). Never approach from in front or behind an animal.



3 Observe Quietly

Keep noise to a minimum. Do not shout, play loud music or make sudden movements that may disturb the animals.



4 Do Not Chase

Allow the animals to decide whether to interact. Do not chase, surround or block their direction of travel.



5 Leave Slowly

End the observation calmly by moving away slowly (**4** knots)and allowing the animals to continue their natural behaviour.



DID YOU KNOW?

Marine mammals may stop feeding, resting or caring for their young if they are disturbed by vessels. Following these simple guidelines helps protect their natural behaviour.

REMEMBER

A good cetacean- and dugong-watching experience is one in which the animals continue to display natural behaviour because people have acted respectfully.

IMPORTANT !!!!

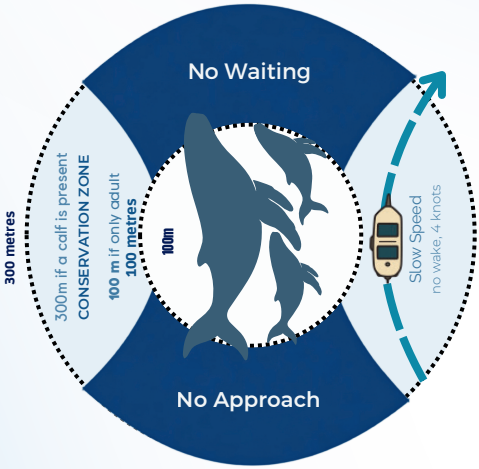
Watch the animals' behaviour: Repeated or sudden changes of direction, suddenly stopping feeding, tail slapping, sudden diving or other unusual behaviour may indicate that your presence is disturbing them. Move away slowly and reduce vessel noise.

Observe Responsibly

Keeping a safe distance and positioning your boat correctly helps protect marine mammals and ensures a better experience for everyone.

WHALES

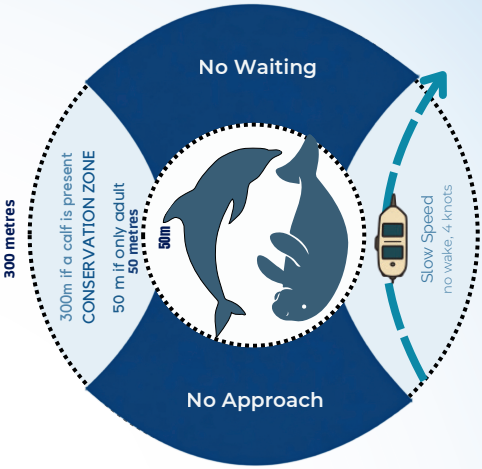
Minimum vessel approach distance



Minimum vessel approach distance: 100m (300m if a calf is present). Do not enter the No-Approach Zone. Give whales enough space to feed, rest and display natural behaviour. If large whale calf present suggest 300m approach

DOLPHIN & DUGONG

Minimum vessel approach distance



Minimum distances: dolphins and dugongs 50 m (300m if a calf is present). Dolphins and dugongs are particularly sensitive to disturbance. Maintain your distance and approach slowly.

POSITION YOUR VESSEL CORRECTLY

1 Approach Slowly

Reduce speed when approaching marine mammals.



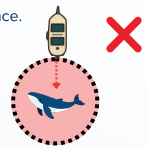
2 Position to One Side

Approach from behind and to the left or right; never wait directly ahead of the animals or approach directly from behind.



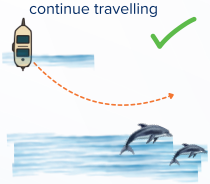
3 Do not enter the No-Approach Zone

Never move closer than the stated minimum distance.



4 Leave an Escape Route

Always provide a clear path for the animals to continue travelling



Remember

Maximum of **3** vessels in the caution zone at one time.

More Boats = More Disturbance.



Aircraft, Helicopter & Drone Guidelines

Keep your distance. Protect marine life.

HELICOPTERS

No hovering above animals.
Maintain at least **500m** horizontal or vertical separation from marine mammals at all times (even for research or under Special Permit)

500m



FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT

Maintain at least **300m** horizontal or vertical separation.

300m



DRONE

Maintain at least **60m** horizontal or vertical separation, except for authorised and permitted scientific research - and **100m** over sensitive animals.

60m





WHY MUST YOU KEEP YOUR DISTANCE?

1. **Disturbance** — Low-flying aircraft, helicopters or drones can disrupt resting, nursing and feeding behaviour.
2. **Panic** — They may cause animals to dive suddenly.
3. **Separation** — They may separate mothers and calves.
4. **Health Effects** — Increased stress may affect animal health and calf survival rates.

A LICENCE IS OFTEN REQUIRED

Research or commercial filming using drones or aircraft requires special authorisation from the competent authority.

By operating aircraft responsibly and maintaining appropriate distances, you contribute to protecting marine mammals and their habitats.

OBSERVE WITH RESPECT TO PROTECT THE FUTURE

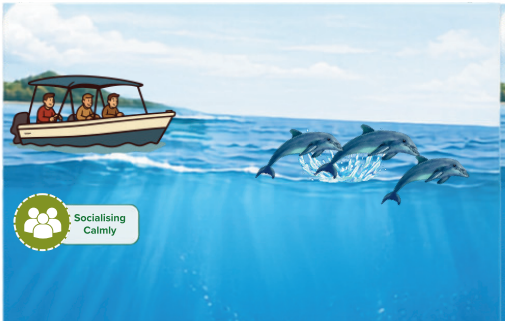
Observe Their *Behaviour*

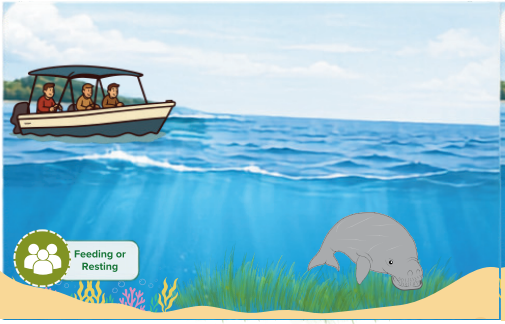
Marine Mammals Communicate Through Behaviour.
Learn these signs and give the animals space whenever necessary.

CALM BEHAVIOUR

The animals feel comfortable and behave naturally.

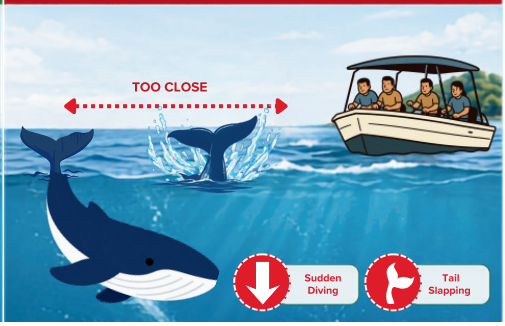


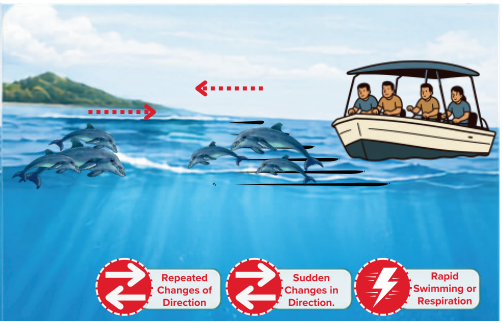


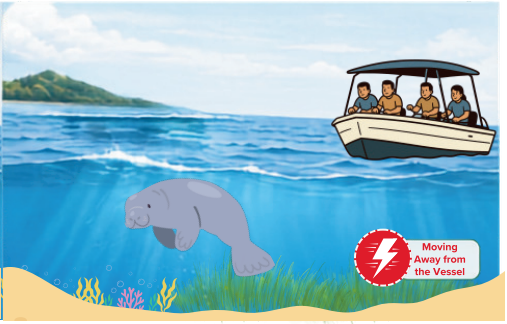


SIGNS OF DISTURBANCE

Animals may feel stressed or uncomfortable when we humans get too close to them.







REMEMBER

When animals feel calm, they continue their natural activities. Enjoy the moment and leave them free.

HANOIN KATAK

If you see signs of disturbance, reduce speed, increase your distance and give them more space. Their welfare is the priority.

DID YOU KNOW?

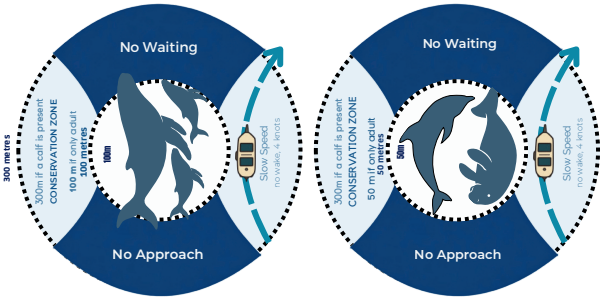
Marine mammals often show subtle behavioural changes before moving away. Quiet observation from a safe distance helps you appreciate natural interactions. Behavioural disturbance has the potential to significantly impact on an individual animal and may reduce survival rates for calves. Respectful interactions ensure the population remains protected for future generations.



Protect Mothers and Calves *& Take Great Photographs*

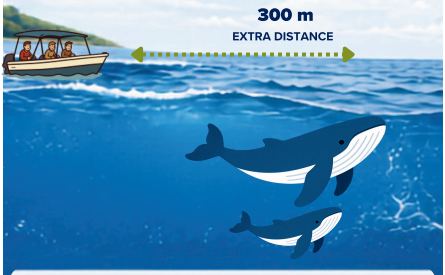
Mothers and calves need extra care. Take photos that capture natural behaviour without causing disturbance.

Young marine mammals depend on their mothers for food, protection and learning. Disturbance can affect their survival and well-being.



GIVE MOTHERS AND CALVES EXTRA SPACE - 300

Threatened species such as the Pygmy Blue Whale and Sperm Whale need extra protection – particularly mothers and calves.



- Provide substantially more space than usual
- Never position the vessel between a mother and calf
- Keep visits brief and quiet
- Observe from a distance and allow them to decide whether to interact

DO NOT DO THE FOLLOWING



Do not separate a mother from her calf



Do not chase or follow them



Do not surround or herd them



Do not remain too long or approach too closely



Never swim with cow-calf pairs or maternal or nursery pods (see SOP 9). This is a very important rule. No swimming when a calf is present.

TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS THAT TELL A CONSERVATION STORY

USE A ZOOM LENS
use zoom rather than moving closer to the animals (applies to drones)

SWITCH OFF THE FLASH
· flash or bright light can disturb marine mammals.

KEEP NOISE LOW
- avoid loud voices and sudden movements

RESPECT MARINE WILDLIFE
- the animal's welfare is more important than any photograph



Code of Conduct

Simple Rules for Everyone on Board

We all share responsibility for protecting marine mammals and their ocean home

A RESPECT WILDLIFE

- Animal welfare always comes first.
- Respect whales, dolphins and dugongs at all times.
- Never chase, harass or intentionally separate animals.
- Allow marine mammals to choose the interaction.

B VESSEL OPERATION

- Approach slowly and cautiously.
- Maintain the stated viewing distances.
- Do not enter the N**o-Approach Zone**, ie. directly behind or in front of an animal or pod
- Do **not block** the animals direction of travel.
- Do not separate **animals in a pod, or herd or surround** marine mammals
- No **leap-frogging, J-maneuvers**.
- Avoid sudden changes in speed or direction.
- No **whale watching** or **swim encounters** after **6 PM**.

C PASSENGER BEHAVIOUR

- Stay quiet while observing.
- Do not shout.
- Do not play loud music.
- Never feed wildlife.
- Never touch marine mammals.
- Follow the guide's instructions.
- Do not use selfie-sticks or go-pro poles at any time.

D SPECIAL PROTECTION

- Give additional space to mother and calves **(300 metres)**.
- Minimize viewing time.
- Do **not swim** with mothers and calves.
- Leave immediately if animals show sign on disturbance.

E ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Protect marine habitats.
- Never throw rubbish into the sea.
- Respect protected areas.
- Report injured or stranded marine mammals.





Together, we can ensure Timor-Leste remains a safe home for marine mammals and our communities.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Step-by-step Procedures for Safe and Responsible Marine Mamal Watching



1

SOP 1. BEFORE DEPARTURE

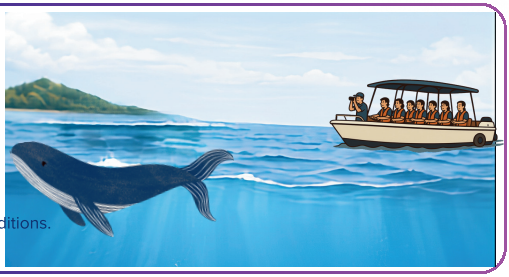
- Verify local vessel registration and trained, registered crew
- Check weather and sea conditions.
- Notify port authorities of your trip, vessel, number of passengers and itinerary via a daily manifest
- Conduct a vessel safety inspection.
- Brief passengers on safety, the Code of Conduct and emergency procedures. Set passenger expectations that wildlife encounters are not guaranteed.
- Prepare observation and communication equipment.
- Assign roles: Captain, Guide and Observer



2

SOP 2. LOCATE MARINE MAMMALS

- Scan the surrounding area.
- Confirm species if possible.
- Conduct vessel safety inspection.
- Estimate group size and presence of calves.
- Record GPS location, time and environmental conditions.
- Inform passengers before approaching.



3

SOP 3. VESSEL APPROACH

- Do not herd or surround animals; or separate animals in a pod; or separate mothers and calves.
- Reduce speed before entering the Caution Zone
- Approach from the side at a slow, constant speed **(4 knots)**.
- Do not enter or wait in the No-Approach Zone, ie. directly behind or in front of an animal or pod
- Do not block the animals' direction of travel at any time; no **leap-frogging or J-manoeuvres**.
- Maintain minimum distances:
  - Whales : **100 metres** (300 m with a calf)
  - Dolphin: **50 metres** (300 m with a calf)
  - Dugong: **50 metres** (300 m with a calf)
- Keep the engine in neutral or at idle when watching
- A maximum of **three vessels may be in the Caution Zone at the same time**. If there are vessels waiting then the maximum allowable time is reduced to 30 minutes

IMPORTANT

Move slowly and patiently, allowing cetaceans and dugongs to decide how they wish to interact.

Observe carefully

Respect the required distances

Protect Marine Wildlife

Ensure Safety

NOTE:

If signs of distress are observed, discontinue the interaction and move the vessel slowly away

During Observation and Travel



Observe Responsibly and Return Safely

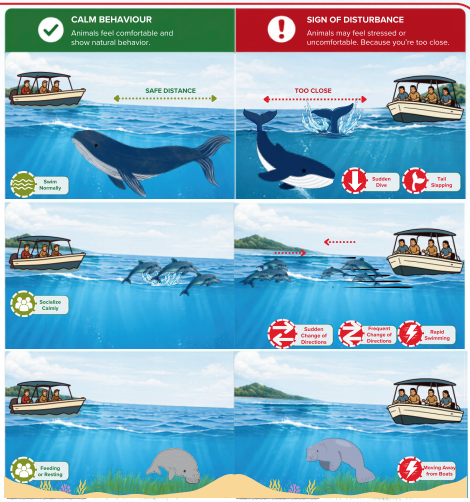
4

SOP 4. DURING OBSERVATION

- Continuously monitor animal behaviour.
- Watch for signs of disturbance.
- If disturbance occurs: stop approaching, increase distance and leave slowly.
- Keep passengers seated and calm.
- Guide provides educational interpretation.
- Take photos responsibly (no flash, no drones).

SIGNS OF DISTURBANCE

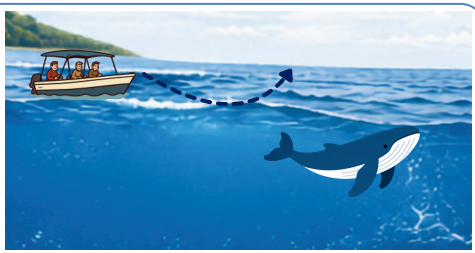




5

SOP 5. LEAVING THE OBSERVATION AREA

- Ensure animals are clear of the vessel.
- Leave the area slowly and without sudden movements.
- Increase speed only outside the caution zone.
- Record observation details as required.



REMEMBER

Our goal is for the animals to continue their natural behaviour undisturbed.

GOOD PRACTICES

- Keep your distance
- Respect Wildlife
- Keep noise low
- No flash photography
- Leave no trace

Your responsible actions today will protect marine mammals and help ensure wonderful encounters in the future

Step-by-Step Procedures for 'Swim-with-Whale'

Safe and Responsible 'Swim-with-Whales' Tourism

6

SOP 6. CHOOSE A LOCAL, REGISTERED OPERATOR

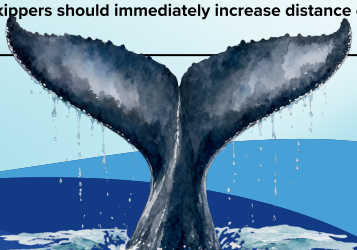
- Swim-with-whale activities in Timor-Leste waters should be conducted only through locally licensed and registered commercial whale tour operators
- Operators must display their registration details on websites, marketing materials, and on their vessels at all times
- All foreign visiting vessels, expedition ships, and international tour companies must partner with an authorized and registered Timor-Leste-based whale tour operator
- Vessels undertaking swim-with-whale activities must have a qualified and registered vessel operator (skipper) and trained crews, plus an Observer and qualified local Swim Guide
- All persons in the water with whales, dolphins or dugongs should be accompanied by an appropriately trained and registered local Swim Guide throughout the encounter
- All swim with whale encounters in Timor-Leste must include a pre-entry risk assessment and passenger briefing, ie. swimmer ability (swim test), target species, animal behaviour, sea safety, currents, visibility, sea state, Code of Conduct, other vessels, and emergency recovery.
- All swim-with-vessels must be tested and registered for seaworthiness and have the required safety equipment on board – including life jackets, radio equipment, first aid equipment.

7

SOP 7. VESSEL APPROACHES FOR SWIM TOURS

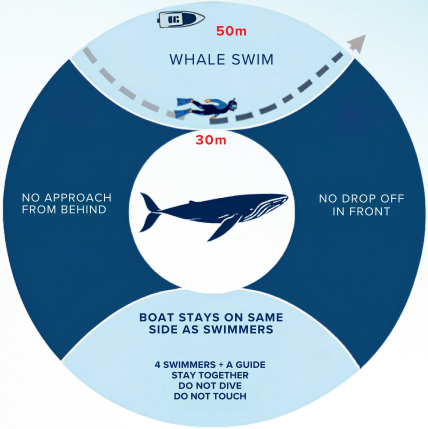
- Observe animals for at least 20 minutes before any interaction to confirm they are suitable for in-water encounters and that no calf is present
- Do not wait in the No Approach Zone, in the direct line of travel of an animal or a pod or undertake 'leap-frogging' or J-maneuvers
- •Do not herd or surround animals; or separate animals in a pod; or separate mothers and calves.
- •Within the Caution Zone, reduce vessel speed to low/no-wake (4 knots) and keep the engine in neutral or at idle when waiting.
- Only one swim vessel should interact with an animal or pod at a time, including dropping off swimmers within the Caution Zone.
- Swimmers must be dropped off at least 50 metres from any marine mammal; after drop-off, vessels should move quietly and slowly away
- Other vessels must maintain a distance of at least 100 metres from the swimmers' boat during a drop-off/interaction
- Maximum time for a vessel within the Caution Zone, for a whale swim interaction, is 20 minutes when two boats are present; 1 hour when one boat is present
- Vessel to remain at a distance greater than 50 metres from the animal, on the same side as the swimmers
- If an animal or animals display signs of disturbance or stress, skippers should immediately increase distance or terminate the encounter





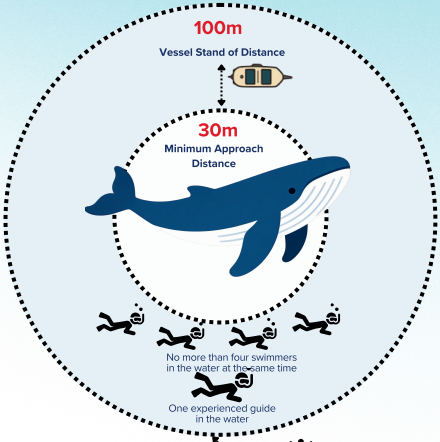
DISTANCE

Boat and swimmer distances for whale swim encounters;



RULES

Rules of interactions with when swimming with marine mammals



PRACTICE THAT MUST NOT BE DONE



No swimming with cow calf pairs or nursery pods

No diving under the animal

No touching or feeding

PROHIBITED ITEMS



SELFIE STICKS

NO UNDERWATER PROPULSION DEVICES

NO SCUBA DIVING GEAR



8

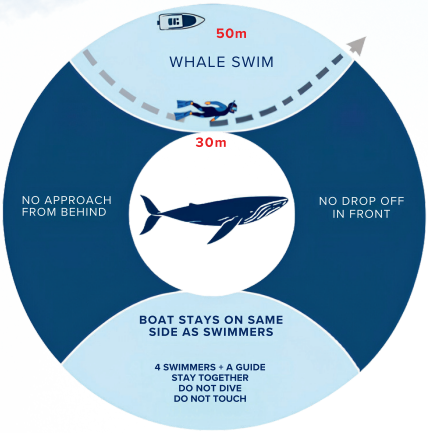


SOP 8. SWIMMING-WITH WHALES

- Vessel crew should maintain visual contact with in-water swimmers, at all times. In-water swimmers are to be under the supervision of a trained guide at all times
- Swimmers must enter water quietly and remain together; no splashing, chasing, diving under or toward, touching, feeding or attempting to intercept animals
- Swimmers must not approach any animal or pod closer than 30 metres.
- ·If a marine mammal approaches a swimmer, the swimmer must: remain motionless or move away slowly; not attempt to touch the animal; not free-dive; and not swim towards the animal.
- Maximum of no more than 4 swimmers and 1 trained Guide in the water, at any one time, with an animal or pod
- Swimming is limited to a maximum of 3 swim attempts per pod/animal within 1 hour, with any individual animal or pod; with individual swim encounters no longer than 20 minutes.
- Total maximum interaction time with a single individual or pod of whales should be no more than 2 hours per animal/pod per day, inclusive of attempts by multiple operators
- No SCUBA or free diving, underwater propulsion devices is permitted at any time.
- The use of artificial lighting, ‘go-pro’ poles or selfie sticks is prohibited during all whale swims
- ·Immediately terminate swim encounter if animals show signs of avoidance or disturbance.
- Emergency swimmer retrieval should over-ride minimum wildlife distance where human life is at risk

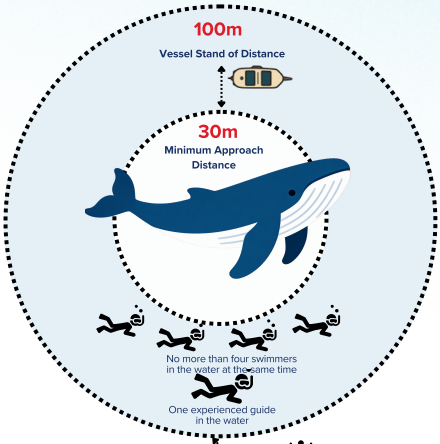
DISTANCE

Boat and swimmer distances for whale swim encounters;



RULES

Rules of interactions with when swimming with marine mammals



PRACTICE THAT MUST NOT BE DONE



No swimming with cow calf pairs or nursery pods

No diving under the animal

No touching or feeding

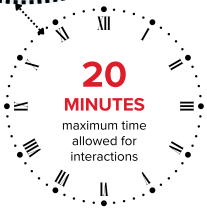
PROHIBITED ITEMS



SELFIE STICKS

NO UNDERWATER PROPULSION DEVICES

NO SCUBA DIVING GEAR



9

SOP 9. PROTECTION FOR MOTHERS AND CALVES AND SENSITIVE ANIMALS

- •Threatened species, sensitive life stages (mothers and calves, nursery or maternal pods) and critical habitat (feeding, calving, nursery areas) require additional protection.
- •Vessels must maintain a minimum distance of 300 metres from any whale, dolphin or dugong when a calf is present.
- Swimming with Pygmy Blue Whales, baleen whale or Dugongs is prohibited, when a calf is present, unless under Special Permit
- •Swimming with maternal pods and all cows and calves of Sperm Whales is prohibited, unless under Special Permit; swimming is only permitted with animals greater than 14 m in length (bulls).
- •Swimming is prohibited with an animal or pod that is feeding, nursing or resting, or in a known feeding and nursery areas.

10

SOP 10. CULTURAL PRACTICES, PROTECTED AREAS AND RESEARCH

- No whale watching or swimming is allowed within a 300 m Caution Zone of any traditional fishing practice (conducted on small canoes or outriggers)
- No whale watching or swimming is allowed within Marine Protected Areas or within a recognized scientific research or long-term cetacean monitoring site ie. Subaun.
- All operators should contribute to national marine mammal research and monitoring efforts, including animal sightings, behaviour and individual photo-identification efforts.
- All research conducted on marine mammals should adopt, best practice, low-harm, non-intrusive methods. No invasive tags (satellite, implantable), drone-based tagging or use of helicopters for cetacean research.
- Marine mammal researchers must obtain relevant research approvals and animal ethics permits and provide activity reports to relevant authorities. Foreign researchers should partner with local universities and researchers

UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES

1. No touch, no dive and no chase policy. Ensure that cetacans have right of way.



2. No swimming when there is a whale calf present.



3. No swimming with a nursery group of dolphins (a group made up of 50% calves or more).



4. No person shall use Self Contained Underwater Breathing Aparratus (SCUBA) for diving or swimming with cetacean.



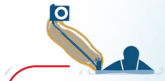
5. No person shall use artificial light sources around cetacans, including flash photography.



6. No towing of swimmers during a swim-with activity.



7. No foreign objects shall be taken into the water, with the intention of camaros and floatation devices.



8. No water entry in feeding or resting are evident.



BEST PRACTICES

1. Tourists should be well briefed in advance on the potential impact of the tour on cetacean

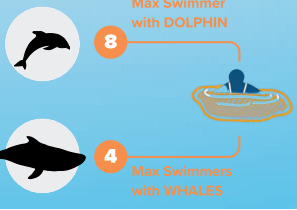


2. Operadór sira tenke asegura katak ró ida-idak iha matadalan ida ne'ebé iha koñesimentu iha ró laran.



3. Operators must ensure that each vessel has a knowledgeable guide on board.





4. The vessel should approach from a direction that is parallel and lightly to the rear of the catacean



5. Once within 500m of a catacean vespials should:



6. If approach zone is occupied, stay out of, seek other catacean



7. Only one vessel is permitted within the approach zone.

8. Tourists should be placed 50m from a catacean and away from their line of travel.

9. Surfers ropes must be used for swimming with wild catacean



10. The operator should not return to the same catacean during the same day.



Emergency Response and Reporting



Photo Credits: Potenzo / CI Timor-Leste

IF YOU SEE

- Distressed, injured/ dead marine mammal
- A stranded or disoriented animal.
- An oil spill
- A vessel collision with a marine mammal or another vessel.
- Extreme or dangerous weather conditions
- ·Illegal activity or disturbance.
- ·Vessels or swimmers in distress
- Irresponsible behaviour against the Guidelines.

REPORT IMMEDIATELY

- Directorate General of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
- Municipal / Local Authority
- Emergency Services (if life-threatening)

IMPORTANT!

PROVIDE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE, CLEARLY AND CALMLY. YOUR REPORT MAY HELP SAVE LIVES AND PROTECT THE OCEAN

OPERATORS MUST RECORD AND REPORT

Record & Report the following points for each trip:

- Date and time of animal sighting
- Lokalizasaun GPS
- Espésie ne'ebé hetan
- Number of animals, including presence of calves.
- Direction of animal travel
- Animal behaviour (eg. traveling, feeding, resting, socializing, nursing)
- Interaction duration, including swim attempts.
- Weather and sea conditions
- Actions taken
- Any maritime incident, harm, stress or disturbance to animals or persons.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE GUIDANCE

Remain calm. First ensure the safety of passengers and crew, then take the appropriate action

INJURED, DEAD OR STRANDED MARINE MAMMALS



Do not attempt to rescue the animal. Maintain a safe distance and report it immediately to the competent authorities.

VESSEL COLLISION



Check the condition of everyone on board. Put the engine in neutral, inspect the vessel for damage and report the incident immediately

OIL SPILL



Do not approach the affected area. Report the spill immediately to help prevent contamination from spreading.

EXTREME WEATHER



Check the condition of everyone on board. Report the situation promptly and follow instructions from the authorities

ILLEGAL ACTIVITY



Do not approach or confront offenders. Quietly record details from a safe distance and report them to the competent authorities.

Legal Requirements & Our Commitment

Together, we ensure responsible tourism and a healthy ocean for future generations.



BEFORE OPERATING WHALE WATCHING TOURS

- Hold the required licence and permits.
- Follow national whale watching regulations and this Code of Conduct.
- Maintain safe vessels and trained crew.
- Comply with applicable government requirements, taxes and user fees.
- Support marine conservation and sustainable tourism.

WHALE WATCHING PLEDGE

I WILL...

- Respect marine mammals and their environment.
- Keep a safe distance and never disturb.
- Protect the ocean and keep it clean.



- Support local communities and responsible tourism.
- Follow the rules and guide instructions at all times.
- Leave only memories and take only photographs.

ABOUT THE LAW

Whales, dolphins and dugongs are protected under the laws of Timor-Leste. It is illegal to harass, hunt, capture or disturb marine mammals. operators and visitors must follow all applicable laws and regulations.

OUR COMMITMENT

We are committed to protecting marine mammals and their habitats.

We promote responsible tourism, respect for wildlife and cooperation with local communities and authorities.

Together, We Make a Difference!

By following this Code of Conduct and SOPs, we help ensure that Timor-Leste remains a safe home for whales, dolphins, dugongs and the communities that depend on healthy oceans.

Thank you for doing your part!

Table 1. Cetacean species recorded in the waters of Timor-Leste and their global population and IUCN status (EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, DD = Data deficient, LC = Least Concern).

No.	Common name	Scientific name	IUCN status	Global Population
1	Dugong	*Dugong dugon*	VU	120,000
2	Blue Whale	*Balaenoptera musculus*)	EN	10,000 – 25,000
2	Pygmy blue whale	*Balaenoptera musculus brevicauda*)	DD	
3	Fin whale	*Balaenoptera physalus*)	EN	100,000
4	Sei whale	*Balaenoptera borealis)*	EN	57,000
5	Bryde's whale	*Balaenoptera edeni*	DD	90,000 – 100,000
6	Humpback whale	*Megaptera novaeangliae*	LC	
7	Sperm whale	*Physeter macrocephalus*	VU	200,000 – 2,000,000
8	Pygmy sperm whale	*Kogia breviceps*	DD	unknown
9	Dwarf sperm whale	*Kogia sima*	DD	unknown
10	Cuvier's beaked whale	*Ziphius cavirostris*	LC	unknown
11	Killer Whale	*Orcinus orca*	DD	100,000
12	Short-finned pilot whale	*Globicephala macrorhynchus*	DD	unknown

13	False killer whale	*Pseudorca crassidens*	DD	unknown
14	Pygmy killer whale	*Feresa attenuata*	DD	unknown
15	Melon-headed whale	*Peponocephala electra*	LC	unknown
16	Rough-toothed dolphin	*Steno bredanensis*	LC	150,000
17	Rissos's dolphin	*Grampus griseus*	LC	unknown
18	Pantropical spotted dolphin	*Stenella attenuata*	LC	3,000,000
19	Spinner dolphin	*Stenella longirostris*	DD	unknown
20	Dwarf Spinner dolphin	*Stenella longirostris roseiventris*	DD	unknown
21	Fraser's dolphin	*Lagenodelphis hosei*	LC	unknown
22	Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin	*Tursiops aduncus*	DD	unknown
23	Common bottlenose dolphin	*Tursiops truncatus*	LC	unknown
24	Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin	*Sousa chinensis*	DD	unknown
Total Espesies Identifikadu				

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a global environmental network that works to conserve nature and promote sustainable resource use.

LC **LC (Least Concern)**

Populasaun Saudavel, Risku Kiik

NT **NT (Near Threatened)**

Besik tama iha kategoria ameasadu

VU **VU (Vulnerable):**

EN **EN (Endangered)**

Tama iha risku aas liu



SOMACORE in the Coral Triangle

Photo Credits: Potenzo/ CI Timor-Leste

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