

Whales around St Helena

- Humpback whale
(*Megaptera novaeangliae*)



Adult length: 11.5–15 metres

Adult weight: 25–30 tonnes

Reaching an age of up to 50 years

Usual dive time 3–5 minutes (although up to 35 minutes)

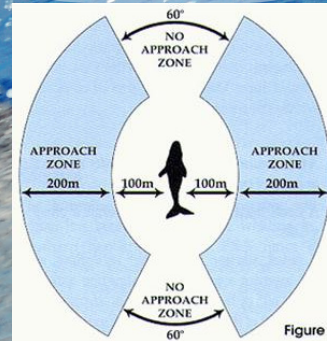
Humpback whales are annual visitors around St Helena in the winter months usually from June to December.

One of the most energetic of the large whales well known for spectacular breaching, lobtailing and flipper-slapping.
At close range its knobbly head and long flippers are unmistakable.

Humpbacks come to St Helena to give birth to their calves. Quite often the mother and calf can be seen passing James Bay close inshore. Each individual can be identified by the unique pattern on the underside of its tail.

How to approach a whale

A vessel must not cause a whale to change direction or the speed of its travel.
A vessel must not disperse a group of whales.
If a vessel comes closer than 100m to a whale, it must place its motor in neutral or move the vessel, at less than 5 knots away from the whale until the vessel is outside the contact zone.



Marine Sightings Scheme

Whenever you see a whale or dolphin, please report it to EMD giving the following: time, date, location, number, type/species, any other information.

Remember a good picture can help with species identification.

Tel: 24724 or 22270

EMD

"Our Island. Our Environment. Our Responsibility."



Whales & dolphins St Helena

Guidelines & Information

St Helena has resident populations of dolphins; experience their acrobatic displays and marvel at our seasonal visitors the humpback whales

Cetaceans

Whales, dolphins and porpoises are marine mammals collectively known as cetaceans. There are 80 species recognised worldwide. They range in size from tiny dolphins just over a metre in length to the blue whale which are typically 25m long.

Cetaceans feed in one of two ways. Toothed whales, dolphins and porpoises have teeth for catching fish and squid, swallowing prey whole or for tearing off chunks of larger prey. Baleen whales filter the water for small animals such as plankton, krill or small fish using specialised keratin plates. Both dolphins and whales are air breathers, coming to the surface to breathe through blowholes.

St Helena has resident populations of pantropical spotted, bottlenose and rough-toothed dolphins. Humpback whales are seen seasonally. These species are all IUCN red-listed and are protected under CITES.

Both dolphins and whales are seen from high vantage points along the coast of the island. Most frequently seen outside of James Bay and Lemon Valley.

In recent times there are also records of other cetaceans which include: dwarf or pygmy sperm whales, Blainville's beaked whales, sperm whales, Brydes and/or Sei whales.



Adult length: 1.7–2.4 metres
Adult weight: 90–120 kg

Pantropical spotted dolphin (*Stenella attenuata*)

A small dolphin with a white tipped beak. Its body is dark grey on top and lighter underneath. Locally this is called a “porpoise” and is the most commonly seen dolphin around the island. They are common in the Long Ledge area in the morning where a group of around 200-300 (including calves) can be observed. Pantropical spotted dolphins are very athletic cetaceans, doing spectacular aerial displays when observed from boat or land. Even though they are called spotted dolphins, St Helena's population are not as spotted as other places around the world.



Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)

Adult length:
1.9–3.9 metres
Adult weight:
150–650 kg

Locally this is called “angerline” or “cow porpoise”. These are large grey dolphins with a robust body and a short to medium length beak that resembles a bottle, hence the naming of the species. Bottlenose dolphins around St Helena are most often seen in small groups of 15-20 but can be encountered in larger pods of 30-40. They are often seen amongst the rough-toothed dolphins as a mixed pod. Throughout the winter months (July-September), the bottlenose dolphins are commonly seen in James Bay chasing flying fish into the Front Steps.



Rough-toothed dolphin (*Steno bredanensis*)

Adult length:
2.1–2.6 metres
Adult weight:
90-160 kg



First recorded around St Helena in June 2003. This dolphin has a very distinctive sloped head with white “lips” and yellowish white or pale pink blotches on its body. Usually found in small pods of 10-20, but can be encountered in larger pods of 30-40. They are sometimes encountered amongst the bottlenose dolphins.