

Your guide to  
Whale

**SEALINK**

Watching

A large humpback whale is captured in the middle of a breach, its massive body arched out of the deep blue ocean. The whale's back and tail are visible, with water splashing around the point of exit. The sky is a clear, pale blue, and the overall scene conveys a sense of power and natural beauty.

[sealink.com.au](https://sealink.com.au)



# Whale of a time!

*Each year our coastline comes alive with the stunning energetic displays of the Humpback Whale.*

These amazing mammals love playing in the warm waters of the Great Barrier Reef and migrate every year to feed, mate and give birth before returning south with their calves. Whales are complex, often highly social and intelligent creatures, they are mammals like us. They breathe air, have hair on their bodies (though only very little), give birth to live young and suckle their calves through mammary glands. But unlike us, whales are perfectly adapted to the marine environment with strong, muscular and streamlined bodies insulated by thick layers of blubber to keep them warm.



These gentle giants have graced the planet for over 50 million years and are found in oceans all over the world. They meet their need for food and suitable calving areas by travelling long distances from cold feeding areas to warm, shallower waters (such as the Great Barrier Reef) for calving and mating. Humpback sightings have continued to increase every year along the Queensland Coastline. They just love to show off with breaches, tail slapping and even a close-up wink when they are feeling extra curious



## Whole Watcher's Guide

### The Blow

This is usually the first sign of whales in the distance or at close range and it appears above the surface of the water like a blast of steam. This occurs when a whale expels its breath through the blowholes on the top of its head. They release the air up to a speed of 450 kilometres an hour, that can also reach up to five metres in height making it visible from a distance of around two kilometres.

### Footprints

Whales leave a greasy film on the surface of the water – this slick area is known as a footprint. This mark is left from the flukes on the whale's tail, from the downward stroke in their swimming motion.

### Breaching

This is the most spectacular manoeuvre. With two or three beats of its tail, the whale pushes itself into the air throwing itself backwards creating a tremendous slap and splash as its body hits the water.

### Pectoral Fin Extension

This move will create waves! The whale will wave their fins whilst lying on their back, slapping their fins onto the surface of the water.

### Tail Slap

This move involves slapping the tail fluke down flat on the water – this can be heard for many kilometres and is a way of communicating position to other whales.

### Peduncle Slap

The peduncle is the muscular part of the body nearest to the tail flukes. In this movement the tail is slapped in a sideways motion like a karate chop. It is believed to be a sure sign of aggression.

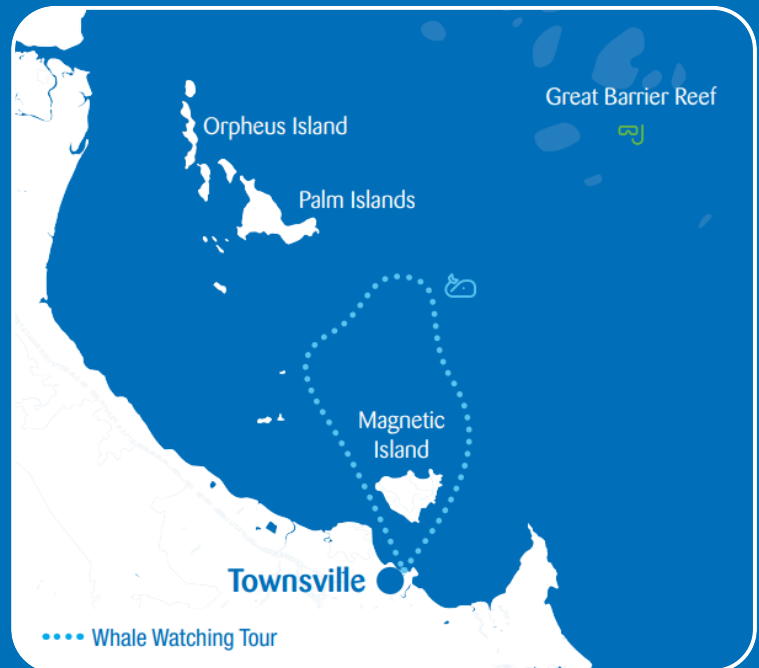


# Cruising with Whales

The Whale Watching season here in Townsville operates between mid-July to early September. Whales are occasionally seen outside of these times but are limited in number and are often difficult to spot. Other species and marine life commonly found in the area include pilot whales, snub-nosed dolphins, green turtles, dugongs and more!

On your cruise today we will cover the waters surrounding Townsville, Magnetic Island with possibility of travelling as far as Palm Island Group. Whilst we are eager observers it is ultimately up to the whales how much they interact with us and where we find them along the way.

Whales can dive from 2 to 20 minutes, in any direction, and can out manoeuvre a spectator vessel if they choose. Mostly the whales are as curious of us as we are of them.



There are strict guidelines on how close vessels of all kinds can approach whales. It also depends if there are calves and the number of vessels in the area.

As a guideline the approach distance can range from 100m to 300m. This however does not stop whales from taking matters into their own hands for a close look of us! At all times, SeaLink operates within the safety and enjoyment of both our passengers and the whales.

Thank you for joining us on-board today, we hope you have a 'Whaley' good time!

