Whale watching can be an amazing experience; however, if done irresponsibly, it can put the whales, you, and your passengers at risk of collision. Whales are also protected under federal law, and interrupting their natural behaviors is illegal.

Follow the See a Spout guidelines to keep everyone safe, while still enjoying some of the ocean’s greatest wonders.

www.seeaspout.org

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See a Spout, Watch Out!

See a spout, a tail or a breaching whale? Slow down and post a lookout. Some whales dive 20 minutes or more searching for food. Seeing one whale means more could be close - maybe too close to your boat and its propellers. Proceed cautiously!

Head On is Wrong!
Don’t alter a whale’s path by cutting it off or risk striking a whale by approaching too closely. Parallel the whale's course and direction while staying at least 100 feet away (500 yards if a right whale).

Lots of Boats, Talk to Folks!
If there are other boats watching or traveling near whales, hail them on your VHF radio (channels 9 or 16) and coordinate your viewing efforts. Remember, large vessels can likely spot whales before you do. If larger whale watch boats are idle, proceed with caution and idle your boat as well.

Avoid Troubles, Steer Clear of Bubbles!
Humpback whales create “bubble clouds” and “bubble nets” to corral schools of small fish. Never approach or drive through a bubble cloud. A feeding whale is likely to be just below the surface.

Don’t Chase, Give the Whales Space!
Closely approaching whales may cause them to move away from food sources. Respect the whales’ behavior and keep your distance. If a whale moves away, don’t chase it. A cautious boater may get to see exciting natural behaviors. Enjoy the whales; don’t endanger them or yourselves.

Drop Your Sails When Watching Whales!
Under sail it can be difficult to reduce speed or quickly stop a safe distance from a surfacing whale. When in the vicinity of whales, use your auxiliary motor and proceed cautiously.

Reporting Saves Lives!
Report stranded, injured, entangled or dead marine mammals or sea turtles and live right whale sightings call NOAA Fisheries at 866-755-6622 or contact the U.S. Coast Guard via VH16. Stand-by entangled whales until rescuers arrive, if possible.

Did You Know?
Endangered North Atlantic right whales are protected by federal and state regulations. It is illegal to approach right whales closer than 500 yards and vessels greater than 65 feet in length must slow to 10 knots in seasonal management areas. Visit our website for more information: www.seeaspout.org

Right whales have low profiles, no dorsal fin, white patches on their heads, all black tails, and V-shaped spouts.