

NOM 131 SEMARNAT ECOL 1998

Mexican Regulations for Humpback Whale Watching

Humpback whales are an endangered species protected by **NOM 131 ECOL 1998** Mexican law. Infractions are punishable by law.

The following regulations apply to whale watching in the Bahia de las Banderas. When whale watching:

- Do so only in authorized boats with experienced personnel.
- Boats without permits can stay looking at the same whale or groups of whales for a maximum of 10 minutes at a distance of 80 meters or 240 feet.
- Maintain maximum speed permitted in whale watch area of 4 knots or 8 kilometers per hour at all times.
- Boats should move at a speed slower than the slowest whale.
- If whales avoid the boat or change their direction, blow rate or behaviors do not approach them. Move slowly away.
- Do not disturb mothers with calves as they are extremely sensitive.
- Do not split a group of whales.
- Do not harass or hurt whales.
- Do not obstruct the path of whale(s).
- Do not separate mothers and calves or approach birthing whales.
- There is a ban on sport fishing or commercial fishing during the whale watch activities.
- No scuba diving or swimming/diving with whales.
- Water skis, parasails, gliders and helicopters are not permitted for whale watching.
- Jet skis, kayaks, canoes and inflatable rafts with oars are not permitted for whale watching.
- Do not throw trash, solid residue, oil, gas or other water contaminants overboard.
- Approach whales diagonally from the lateral posterior.
- Boats should move parallel to the course of a whale or group of whales.
- Avoid unexpected changes in velocity and direction within 300 meters or 900 feet of the nearest whale.

Authorized & Restricted Zones: The authorized zone for whale watching includes the entire Bahia de las Banderas. The restricted refuge area is located between Punta Montoga and Punta Pontoque approximately 1 kilometer from the coastline, bordered by the line drawn between the coastline and the 20-meter isobar, as well as the waters surrounding the Marietas Islands approximately 1.5 kilometers from the coast of each island.