

▶ Humpbacks & Whale Watching

Named for its arching back as it dives, the humpback whale is a favourite of whale watchers because of its amazing acrobatic displays and its curious nature. Humpbacks are also famous for their hauntingly beautiful songs -- individual ballads that they use to communicate and attract mates.

▶ BATTLING FOR THEIR LIVES

Humpbacks have long, white flippers and different individuals can be identified by the unique pattern on the underside of their tail flukes. These magnificent whales are found in both the northern and southern hemisphere, and generally migrate between cool summer feeding grounds and warm winter breeding grounds, clocking up to 10,000 miles (16,093 km) per year round trip in some cases.

Commercial whaling of humpbacks was officially stopped in 1966 but by then, scientists thought that almost 95% of all humpbacks had been killed.

Now, for the first time in over forty years, they are being hunted again by Japan.



A breaching humpback whale, Silver Bank, Dominican Republic
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DID YOU KNOW ?

New research shows that humpback brains contain specialized cells which up until now were only seen in primates, including humans. Scientists think these cells process emotions, memories, and insight... just like they do for us.

A humpback mother and calf underwater, Silver Bank, Dominican Republic
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WHALES ARE WORTH MORE ALIVE THAN DEAD !

A live whale can provide more value than a dead one. A live one can be seen over and over again whereas a dead whale... once it's gone, it's gone.

▶ A humpback whale in Tonga's waters is worth more than a million dollars to the local economy during its lifetime. (Tonga is a cluster of islands between New Zealand and Hawaii. They are also called the Friendly Islands because of the friendly reception Captain Cook received when he arrived).

▶ In Dominica, a small island in the Eastern Caribbean, the whale watching industry depends on a group of seven sperm whales that live in the area. People come from all over to watch them.

▶ Salt is a humpback whale that has been spotted by whale watchers for 30 years in a row in the U.S. and in the Caribbean. She has even been photographed and identified 1,500 times since 1975. Believe it or not, Salt has had 10 calves and has five known grandcalves. Salt even has some great-grandcalves! The value of Salt - with her offspring and their offspring and their offspring (!) - along with the other humpbacks she swims with is priceless.

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