



## Dolphins



One of the most exciting water activities you can do in during your holiday is to see the dolphins. The best months are November to April but dolphins are in the Sri Lanka waters all year round.



Tour operators adhere to the International Code of Conduct for Whales and Dolphin Watching and conduct their tours in a responsible manner without trying to disturb these marine animals.

As part of Sri Lanka's commitment to eco-tourism, the Sri Lanka Coast Guards have increased their vigilance in monitoring the implementation of Sea Mammals Observation, Regulation and Control Regulations.

To ensure that the Regulations are adhered to by boat operators and tourists engaged in whale watching, the Coast Guard have been observing whale and dolphin watching activities. The coast guard also makes sure that the boat operators, crew and tourists abide by the safety precautions and regulations before and during their tour of observation.



Most tours are guided by experienced naturalists.

The crews follow the following rules:

- don't go too close to the dolphins (although they often come close to you)
- don't cross a dolphin's course (although they'll cross yours)
- reduce the speed to minimize the noise when approaching dolphins
- stop the engine if dolphins are coming close to the boat
- don't swim, snorkel or dive with the dolphins
- don't throw out any garbage into the ocean



Many dolphin species live in pods. For some types, only ten or twelve individuals may live together, but Fraser's and striped dolphins may swim in groups of several hundred.

Dolphin families tend to be matrilineal, consisting of a female and her close relatives. In only a few species do male dolphins remain with their birth pods.

Their sexual encounters are not limited to efforts made during reproduction and they may include activities with members of the same-sex or with other species.

Young are born tail first after a gestation period that lasts anywhere from 11 to 17 month, depending on the species.



Larger dolphins favour squid as a main part of their diet while smaller dolphins prefer fish.

The spotted dolphins swim with yellow fin tuna but do not feed off the tuna. Instead, they eat smaller fish.

Some species such as the striped dolphin and the finless porpoise will eat almost anything including shrimp, krill, octopus, squid, cuttlefish and good-sized fish.

Over a dozen species of dolphins live in the waters of Sri Lanka.

#### Spinner Dolphin



A small dolphin found along off-shore tropical waters around the world, the spinner dolphin is well known for its acrobatic displays where it spins while leaping through mid-air. It is also known as the long snouted dolphin.

#### Rough Toothed Dolphin



The rough-toothed dolphin is a large species with males larger than females. Its most visible characteristic feature is its conical head and slender nose. Other dolphins either have a shorter snout or a more visibly bulging melon on the forehead. The teeth are also distinctive, having a roughened surface formed by numerous narrow irregular ridges. The flippers are set back further along the body than other similar dolphins. The dorsal fin is pronounced. The animal's flanks are a light grey while the back and dorsal fin are a much darker grey. Older individuals often have distinctive pinkish, yellow or white markings around the mouth and along the underside.

#### Bottlenose Dolphin



The Bottlenose Dolphin is the most common and well known member in the dolphin family. The bottlenose dolphin usually travel and live in groups of 10 –

30 called pods while the group size can vary from a single dolphin to more than a 1000. Their diets mainly consist of forage fish while they either work as a team or hunt individually. These sea creatures use sound to communicate and locate nearby shapes which can also be potential prey.

#### Spotted Dolphin



Found in all temperate and tropical oceans, the spotted dolphin has come under threat due to the killing of millions of individual dolphins in tuna dragnet fishing. The total world population of the spotted dolphin exceeds 2 million which is considered as the 2nd most abundant whale, porpoise or dolphin after the bottlenose dolphin.

#### Striped Dolphin



The striped dolphin is found in temperate and tropical waters of all the world's oceans. This species is smaller in size compared to other dolphins while their body colour is different than others making it easier to spot them at sea. The striped dolphin feeds on small fish and squid that are neither close to the bottom nor near the shore

#### Fraser's Dolphin



Also known as the Sarawak dolphin, this dolphin can grow up to 2.75 meters and weigh about 200kg's during its growing years. They are quick swimmers and are found in tightly packed groups of 100 – 1000 in number. They chop water tremendously making a dramatic display when swimming in large numbers.

#### Risso's Dolphin



The Risso's Dolphin has a relatively large body and dorsal fin near the front. The usual length of this kind is 10 feet but there are some that can grow up to 14 feet. The Risso's dolphin can weigh from 300 – 500 kg's making it one of the largest dolphin species. They are found closer to land in worldwide temperate and tropical waters, especially the Indian Ocean.

In addition to dolphins, the finless porpoise also inhabits the area.



The finless porpoise is the only porpoise to lack a true dorsal fin. Instead there is a low ridge covered in thick skin bearing several lines of tiny small rounded projections or protuberances. In addition, the forehead is unusually steep. The flippers are moderately large, reaching up to 20% of the total body length. Adults are typically a uniform, light grey colour, although some may have

lighter patches of skin around the mouth or darker patches in front of the flippers.