



SWIMMING WITH DOLPHINS:

What you need to know

Swimming with dolphins and other activities such as touching and feeding them are increasing in popularity.

A growing number of people want to get close to dolphins, often because they love these beautiful and special animals.

You may be asking yourself how you too can live the dream.

If so, read on to find out more.

VISITING A MARINE PARK OR AQUARIUM



Swimming with captive dolphins may seem like fun. But the harsh reality is kept hidden. Many people don't realise that these animals are suffering an impoverished and often dramatically shortened existence in captivity and that many have been captured from the wild.



BAD FOR DOLPHINE

These intelligent, social and wide-ranging animals are forced to live in artificial, confined conditions, away from their natural family groups. Many die very young, during capture, transport or in their tanks or enclosures.

Capture

Dolphins continue to be captured from the wild to supply the growing demand for swimming with dolphins.

- ❖ Methods used to capture and transport dolphins can be shockingly cruel and many animals die during capture operations or in transit.
- ❖ Very often, dolphins are captured from populations that are already under threat from other human activities.

Life in captivity

- ❖ In captivity, dolphins have a lower survival rate than in the wild.
- ❖ They are unable to communicate, hunt, roam, mate and play as they would in the wild.
- ❖ The stress of their confinement often results in behavioural abnormalities, illness, lowered resistance to disease and death.

No Escape

- ❖ In captivity, dolphins cannot escape from human swimmers when they do not want to interact with them.
- ❖ Some have been observed demonstrating signs of alarm when they were in close proximity to swimmers.
- ❖ Nails and jewellery can damage dolphins' delicate skin.

Exposure and pollution

Many facilities keep dolphins in enclosures on the coast. Recent hurricanes have had serious consequences for dolphins in these sea pens. Some have been battered by falling debris, washed out to sea and even killed. Water quality can also be a problem. Sea pens close to shore may contain only very shallow water, which can get too hot in the sun. Those close to towns or resorts may also contain high pollution levels, bringing the risk of illness and even death.

BAD FOR HUMAN SWIMMERS

Injury and disease

- ❖ Dolphins are wild animals and unpredictable, even when well trained. Swimmers have been known to incur bites, bruises, scratches, abrasions and broken bones.
- ❖ Disease transmission is a serious concern, as dolphins carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

Fear and disappointment

- ❖ Dolphins are large, strong animals and entering the water with them can be frightening for swimmers.
- ❖ Many people report a feeling of disappointment as the experience is far from the natural wildlife encounter they were looking for.

WILD SWIM – THE ALTERNATIVE?

Swimming with wild dolphins can be an exhilarating and unforgettable experience. Sadly, it is very difficult to ensure that it is not an intrusive or stressful experience for the animals. In some locations, dolphins are repeatedly disturbed by boats dropping swimmers in the water next to them. Dolphins have been recorded leaving their usual homes in favour of quieter areas. Disruption to feeding, resting, nursing and other behaviour may have a long-term impact on the health and wellbeing of individual dolphins and populations.

Other concerns include:

- ❖ safety of dolphins and swimmers.
- ❖ injury to dolphins by boat propellers.
- ❖ risk of dolphins becoming dependent on humans for food, as some boat operators entice them towards the swimmers using food.



Photo © Jim Frahoff



Whale and dolphin watching

A REAL ALTERNATIVE



Whale and dolphin watching

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Responsible whale and dolphin watching is an exciting alternative, providing excellent opportunities to see these wonderful animals in their natural environment. This can benefit the animals by inspiring people with enthusiasm to help protect them, offering a platform for research and providing a source of income for coastal communities.

For more information about wild whale and dolphin watching, please go to www.wdcs.org/whalewatching or call +44 (0)1249 449 500.

WDCS's **out of the blue** is the UK's only non-profit travel company specialising in whale and dolphin watching. Our trips are fun, educational and responsible and all the proceeds help fund whale and dolphin conservation. For further information, call +44 (0)1249 449533/506, email: outoftheblue@wdcs.org or visit: www.wdcs.org/outoftheblue



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Whale and dolphin watching

A REAL ALTERNATIVE





HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ❖ **Do not visit marine parks, aquariums and zoos holding dolphins in captivity.**
- ❖ **Write to your tour operator** asking if they promote swimming with dolphins and expressing your concerns.
- ❖ **Write to magazines and TV stations** promoting swimming with dolphins to express your concerns.
- ❖ **Tell us** of any plans you hear about to capture dolphins or develop a captive dolphin facility.
- ❖ **Adopt a Dolphin in the wild** by visiting www.wdcs.org/adoptadolphin or calling 0870 870 5001 – it makes a great gift!
- ❖ Go and see whales and dolphins with a responsible tour operator in the wild and **support this growing area of ecotourism.**
- ❖ **Call WDCS** on +44 (0)1249 449 500 to order more leaflets.



- ❖ **For more information** about our work, please visit www.wdcs.org or call +44 (0)1249 449 500

WDCS
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

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