

How To Find Dolphins



How Those Tour Boats Find The Dolphins ... And How You Can, Too!

A favorite attraction in Panama City Beach is a dolphin tour.

Spending a couple of hours on one of the local tour boats is fun and educational, and you'll almost always get the chance to see dolphins playing near the boat.

So how do the boat captains know how to find the dolphins?

While it's not an exact science, there are several factors – and a few theories – that practically guarantee a dolphin sighting.

Does The Tour Boat Find The Dolphins ... Or Do The Dolphins Find The Tour Boat?

Dolphins, by nature, are very curious. When they see a large, unfamiliar object near the water's surface, they want to investigate.

Some marine biologists believe that the dolphins may be looking for protection. It has been shown that whales and other large mammals usually protect smaller animals from predators.

And others believe that the dolphins like to swim near the boats because the disturbance the boat creates in the water makes it easier for the dolphin to swim without much resistance. You'll often see them jumping in the wake of the boat or playing alongside the boat.

Still others think the dolphins are just hanging around the boats for fun. It almost seems like they want to socialize with the humans onboard the boat.



The Science Of Finding Dolphins

Even though the dolphins love the boats, there are certain areas and times that a dolphin sighting is more likely. The boat captains know this, and you can use this information to spot the dolphins on your own.

- One telltale sign of nearby dolphins is excessive splashing in the water. Dolphins (and pelicans) are always on the lookout for schools of fish, and splashing is often a sign that the fish have been spotted. Watch closely to see if the splashes are caused by pelicans diving, or by hungry dolphins.
- Your early morning walk on the beach may yield a dolphin sighting, as they usually like to feed early, before the boat traffic gets heavy. They also seem to get hungry in mid-afternoon.
- And check out the areas that offer jet ski dolphin tours, and swimming with dolphins packages. They tend to stay in areas where dolphins like to stay year-round.

- You'll often find pods of dolphins near Shell Island, but you'll also see them in the Gulf, not too far from the shore.

Dolphin Safety Tips

If you're in the water, and dolphins come near you (or if you're on a swimming with dolphins tour), it's important to remember a few rules, for your safety and theirs:

- Don't go out too deep.
- Do not feed the dolphins.
- Never touch or grab the dolphins.
- Don't be afraid – dolphins are friendly, and very social. They may want to play, but they won't attack you.

If you get a chance, book one of the dolphin cruises offered in Panama City Beach. Or be on the lookout for dolphins any time you're near the Gulf or the Bay.

And always keep your camera handy. You just never know when you'll get a great dolphin pic!