

Regulatory Framework for Whale Watching

Whale watching in Sri Lanka is officially regulated through the [Sea Mammals \(Observation, Regulation and Control\) Regulations, No. 1 of 2012](#). These regulations stipulate the conditions under which an operator can become licensed to take tourists out to view marine mammals in Sri Lankan waters, with an emphasis on safety measures and vessel registration. The regulation also stipulates that all marine mammal viewing vessels should have a licensed guide on board and are supposed to adhere to the following:

- Once sea-mammals are observed, the speed of the vehicle should be gradually reduced until the vessel is at a distance of 400 meters; with regard to whales the engine of the vessel shall be switched off from a distance of 100 meters from whales and at no stage should the vessel be closer than 100 meters from the whale; in respect of other mammals, the vessel shall not move closer than 50 meters from such mammals.
- The vessel shall not change its speed or direction abruptly. When mammals are observed, the vessel should not ply in front of or behind the mammals and should also take care that the vessel at no time blocks the migratory routes of such mammals.
- No artificial food items, light and sound waves and any other method of attracting sea mammals should be utilized to attract and lure them closer to the vessel.
- Persons engaged in observing sea mammals should not be allowed to get into the sea or do anything which is harmful to the sea mammals.