



Whale Watching and Swimming – Kingdom of Tonga

Presents at the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan, 3rd of
August 2021

Ministry of Tourism – Teisa Fifita-Tupou, Principal Tourist Officer



History of WWS in the Kingdom

- **Royal Proclamation in 1978**
- **Number of Licences issued in Tonga**
- **Direct Revenue from tourists expenditure on whale watching and swimming tours**

Year	Operators	Whale Watchers	Direct Revenue	Gov't Revenue	Total Revenue
2006	14	9,804	\$ 1,515,069	\$ 25,606	\$ 1,540,675
2015	30	NA	NA	NA	
2018	39	16,022	\$ 7,291,670	\$ 79,533	\$ 7,371,203
2019	40	20,018	\$ 9,107,643	\$ 263,115	\$ 9,370,758
2020	34	NA	NA	\$ 103,000	\$ 103,000
2021	19				

Conservation

Why are conservation efforts needed here in Tonga?

1. Protecting , management and long term sustainability of the whales is priority
2. Too much competition between boats
3. Ensuring the safety of the whales and tourists
4. Minimize/ avoid the collide of bots with whales if skippers behave badly
5. Lorenzo Fiori research project in Vava'u, 2018

Conservation – Actions Taken

1. Limiting number of license issued
2. A maximum of 7 hours of watching and swimming activities per day
3. No whales activities between the hours of 4pm – 5am Minimize/ avoid
4. Activities shall only be between the 1st of July to 30th November of each year.
5. All operators to submit of full report at the end of the season including the any data collected for scientific and conservation purposes.

Enforcement Initiatives

1. First ever enforcement of whale activities commenced in 2017 in Vava'u and Tongatapu
2. 2018 enforcements were extended to cover all the islands
3. We have staff @ 6am in all ports to check the following;
 - Vessels
 - Skipper & Guides
 - Number of passengers
4. Sea Patrol once a week with Tonga Police
4. All operators to submit weekly reports to the Ministry
5. Vava'u and Tongatapu office have V-F Radio installed in the office
6. Purchase of new equipment's for enforcement – drone & camera



Enforcement Results

VAVA'U

SUMMARY TABLES			
Number of infringements			% decrease from 2018
2017	2018	2019	75%
8	4	1	
Frequency of infringements			% decrease from 2018
22	6	1	83.40%

SUMMARY TABLES			
Number of infringements			% decrease from 2018
2017	2018	2019	67%
7	3	1	
Frequency of infringements			% decrease from 2018
57	5	1	80.00%

TONGATAPU

'EUA

SUMMARY TABLES			
Number of infringements			% decrease from 2018
2017	2018	2019	0%
0	1	1	
Frequency of infringements			% decrease from 2018
0	1	1	0.00%

SUMMARY TABLES			
Number of infringements			% decrease from 2018
2017	2018	2019	100%
0	1	0	
Frequency of infringements			% decrease from 2018

HA'APAI

Capacity Building for WWS employees

1. The Ministry for the first time initiated and hosted the Skipper and Whale Guide Training in 2019.
2. Lower the fees to increase level of involvements from locals
3. To facilitate and lower the cost to operators and participants, training were carried out not only in the main island of Tongatapu but also in Ha'apai and Vava'u.
4. The Ministry this year capitalize on this COVID-19 Situation with little to no interest on trainings to develop and upgrade our training materials.



Way Forward

1. Finalized and submit new regulations to Cabinet before end of this year.
2. To submit a gazette to limit number of whale licence holders
3. Launched new skipper and whale guide materials by September
4. Look to introduce GIS/ Vessel Monitoring System to all Whale Watch vessel
5. Plan a Welcoming of the Whale event OR an Annual Whale event to increase locals awareness of the whales and its importance.
6. To work closely with the Ministry of Fisheries and Environment Department to secure a no go zone in the Vava'u water
7. Once border is open we will go ahead with out plan to attach to Kaikoura and to meet with NZ Department of Conservation.
8. Build a closer working relations with operators through meetings and partner on events and promotions.



Malo 'Aupito

Ministry of Tourism, Kingdom of Tonga
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