

Press Pack

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Planet Whale mission statement and project outline

‘Facebook meets Trip Advisor meets ‘Save-the-Whales’

Mission Statement

At Planet Whale we believe that if everyone got to see a whale or dolphin in the wild, the world really would be a better place.

More people than ever: searching and rating trips; blown away by amazing encounters; inspired to help these awesome animals. Job done!

Project Outline

Planet Whale is a website that plans to have the most positive impact on whales and dolphins since the ‘Save the Whale’ campaign of the 1980s. Every year millions of us set out to see these amazing animals, but how do we find the trips that will give us the best experiences, while respecting the well-being of these gentle giants at the same time?

Planet Whale encourages everyone to see whales and dolphins in the wild, and in a responsible way; to discover the world's whale watching operators . . . and rate them! A fun, accessible site for the biggest possible audience: Will Smith, Kylie Minogue, Jackie Chan, Myley Cyrus, Deepak Chopra, Penelope Cruz, me, you, your gym instructor - everyone. Together we will raise the standard for global whale watching and inspire millions of people to connect with nature.

With our free search facility you can track down the worlds’ most awesome whale and dolphin trips. Then, when you’ve been splashed by dolphins or rocked by singing whales, go tell all your friends at Planet Whale; deliciously alive with your reviews, news, gossip, pics and vids - plus check out what's going to float your boat next.

And it’s here for everyone to use: whale watchers, operators, businesses and charities. Together we can all be ambassadors for whales and dolphins . . . and we’re gonna have a lot of fun doing it!

Brief history of Planet Whale

The early years . . . Ian gets taken as a kid to London's Natural History Museum, where the life-size Blue Whale model blows him away. Some years later, the whale partly forgotten, he trains as a journalist, then has an epiphany and starts work in wildlife conservation.

Meanwhile in a parallel universe, Dylan grows up, watches wildlife and goes to university (but never forgets the frogs he played with in his garden).

1991: Ian founds Scottish wildlife tour company *Speyside Wildlife*

1993: Whilst guiding with Ian, Dylan sees his first Minke Whale off Scotland's west coast – it has a big impact.

1996: Dylan founds England's first whale watching business, *The Company of Whales*, marrying research, conservation and watching onboard P&O Ferries' Biscay route.

2000: Dylan co-founds whale and dolphin charity *Organisation Cetacea (ORCA)* championing conservation research on whales and dolphins offshore.

2003: Having tour-lead across, Arctic, Antarctic, Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa, North & South America, Ian steps down from *Speyside Wildlife*.

2004-2005: Dylan completes his M.Sc. Marine Mammal Science (Distinction), at the University of Wales, Bangor. Ian writes and lectures on life-changing wilderness, well-being and whalewatching experiences.

2007-2008: Dylan co-authors acclaimed books on whales & dolphins, including: *Whales and Dolphins of the North American Pacific, 2007*, *Whales and Dolphins of Great Britain: Where to Go and What to See, 2007* and *Whales & Dolphins of the European Atlantic, 2008*.

2008-2009: Ian and Dylan reunite to run a few tours, raise some revenue, and begin to dream . . . “if everyone got to see a whale or dolphin in the wild, wouldn't the world really be a better place?”.

2010: The dream comes true - our small, enthusiastic team launch the Planet Whale website and community project to an eager world.

Frequently Asked Questions

So how does this help whales exactly?

At Planet Whale we believe that if everyone got to see a whale or dolphin in the wild, the world really would be a better place. More people than ever: searching and rating trips; blown away by amazing encounters; inspired to help these awesome animals. Job done!

Check out our Principles:

(www.planetwhale.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=228&Itemid=484)

How do you make money from this?

Yes, Planet Whale is free! We're building the planet's biggest whale watching website, with free listings for boats and free information for whale watchers. However we receive direct support from like-minded sponsors (why not donate?), plus businesses, non-profits and users can pay for optional extra features (promotions, add-ons etc).

Do boat operators pay you to get listed?

Nope. It's absolutely free for any whale watch operator to list their boat, and we don't influence how they get rated. In the future there may be opportunities for boat operators to pay for added features etc.

Do you support conservation?

We sure do, but Planet Whale is all about people power. Planet Whale wants everyone to have a special encounter with whales and dolphins, and then be able to discover the next steps they could take to protect these awesome creatures. Together with our community we present a range of organisations and activities that an inspired whale watcher could support or take part in.

Do you campaign?

No, but we're passionate. Planet Whale is the collective thoughts, discussions and opinions of the global community of whale watchers – all gathered together in one place. Some people will campaign, some won't, some of our listed non-profits will, some won't.

Doesn't whale watching harm whales?

In a few cases it probably does. Our mission is to help every whale watching boat to be as responsible as possible, so that everyone can get a great experience with these incredible creatures and be inspired to protect them.

Why do you list unethical boat operators?

If we can list pretty much every boat running then a prospective whale watcher can make an informed choice – seeing both the good and the not-so-good. Of course we hope everyone chooses the most ethical, but also any boat operator that performs badly gets some vital feedback and we can help them to improve the way they work.

You watch for dolphins too?

Whales, dolphins, porpoises . . . they're all part of the same family - see our section What

Where When

(www.planetwhale.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=215&Itemid=475). The term 'whale watching' is commonly-used to describe watching any of them.

What's your view on captive whales & dolphins?

Planet Whale encourages everyone to go and see whales and dolphins – in the wild. Whales and dolphins are relatives of ours who can be admired and protected in the wild where they belong. We are all about rediscovering an understanding of nature and our place in the natural world.

What's your view on swimming with wild whales & dolphins?

Planet Whale encourages people to interact with whales and dolphins in the most responsible way that they can. We are a platform for our community to reflect on their experiences with trip operators who offer swim-with programmes.

What's the best place to go whale watching?

Planet Earth - as far as we're aware, so far, it's the only place to see whales and dolphins in the Universe. All across the globe, near to you and far, there are great places to watch them. As ever, the Planet Whale community are the best people to ask for advice.

How much is whale watching worth to the economy?

The whale watching industry has developed rapidly over the past 20 years, expanding to its current status as an integral part of mainstream tourism with more than 13 million people taking whale watching tours in 2008 in 119 countries worldwide, generating US\$2.1 billion in total expenditures*.

**Whale Watching Worldwide - a special report for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2009*

What's your attitude to the hunting of whales?

Planet Whale encourages everyone to experience whales and dolphins in the wild. Whaling is the antithesis.

Why do you encourage visitors to take trips in whaling nations such as Japan and Norway?

Some people feel it's incompatible to whale watch where whaling takes place, whilst some believe it helps to promote alternatives to whaling. Planet Whale is a platform for the world's whale watchers to discover, review and share their experiences of whale watching all around the world.

What are the threats to whales and dolphins?

There are many. Planet Whale focuses first on the world's whale and dolphin watching opportunities, but then we also present the organisations and events that an inspired whale watcher could support or take part in: organisations that work on protection; fishing by-catch; chemical pollution; ship-strikes; naval sonar; acoustic disturbance; whaling etc.