

TRADE ACTIVITY FACT SHEET

CLOSE ENCOUNTER WHALE WATCHING



VESSEL TYPE	Butt Cat 9 meter
VESSEL NAME	Odysseus
MAXIMUM PAX	25 pax
MINIMUM PAX	4 pax
SEASONALITY	1 st June – 30 th November
DURATION	1.5-2 hours
DEPARTURE TIMES	09h30, 12h00 & 15h00

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Ocean Odyssey is the **only permitted whale and dolphin watching operator in the greater Knysna area**, authorised by the Department of Environmental Affairs to approach marine mammals to within 50 metres. This **exclusive licence** makes it a **must-have experience for discerning travellers** seeking up-close encounters with whales and dolphins.

Guests **embark from Thesen Harbour Town** on a scenic cruise across the **Knysna Estuary**, through the **iconic Knysna Heads**, and along the **stunning Indian Ocean coastline**. Between **June and November**, the waters come alive with **Humpback whales**, frequent sightings of **Southern Right whales**, and playful **dolphins**. A dedicated **hilltop spotter** works alongside our expert skippers to **maximise the chance of unforgettable marine encounters**.

Beyond whales and dolphins, guests may also enjoy the **dramatic coastline and a variety of other marine life**, ensuring a **rich and memorable wildlife experience**. All excursions are led by **highly experienced skippers**, operating under **strict conservation and safety guidelines**, with departures **three times daily during peak season**.

This **premium wildlife experience** is ideal for travel partners looking to offer **exclusive, high-impact marine encounters** in the Knysna region.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Only licensed operator for close whale encounters in Knysna.
- Small group sizes for a personalised, intimate experience.
- Cruise the stunning Knysna estuary and iconic Heads.
- Dramatic coastline of cliffs, beaches, and fynbos.
- Prime humpback migration zone on South Africa's coastline.
- Southern Right whales regularly sighted along the coastline.
- Dedicated hilltop spotter increases chances of whale sightings.
- Expert skippers ensure safety and memorable encounters.
- Frequent sightings of dolphins, seals, and seabirds.
- An unforgettable, up-close wildlife adventure.



WHAT CAN BE SEEN

On this tour, guests can experience up-close encounters with **Humpback whales and Southern Right whales**, along with the chance to see **Humpback dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, common dolphins, Cape fur seals, African penguins (occasionally), cormorants, gannets, and other seabirds**. The journey also showcases the stunning **Knysna estuary, iconic Heads, dramatic cliffs, sandy beaches, and coastal fynbos**, offering a truly immersive wildlife and nature experience.

Last updated : January 2026

Managing Director: Evelyn Pepler

Company Registration: 200610476723 | VAT Number: 4400234318

INCLUDES

- Expert-guided whale watching
- Scenic Knysna estuary, Heads & coastline
- Hilltop spotter during whale season
- Humpback & Southern Right whales, dolphins, seals, seabirds
- Purpose-built 25-seater vessel with safety equipment
- Conservation-focused commentary
- Bottled water
- loan jackets, heavy-duty ponchos and blankets available, subject to weather conditions.

WHAT TO BRING

- Layers & weather-appropriate clothing
- Waterproof jacket or windbreaker
- Hat & sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Comfortable, non-slip shoes
- Camera or smartphone
- Binoculars (optional)
- Seasickness medication (if needed)

SAFETY & COMPLIANCE

- All guests complete indemnity forms and are fitted with life jackets; pre-departure and on-board briefings are conducted.
- Skippers are fully trained, certified, and all trips are covered by marine liability insurance.
- Ocean trips are subject to tide, wind, swell, and skipper discretion; passage through the Knysna Heads is not guaranteed.
- Operates under a DEA permit with strict whale-approach and conservation guidelines.
- Not suitable for guests with recent back, neck, or shoulder injuries or related medical conditions.
- Vessels and jetties are not wheelchair accessible; guests with limited mobility should contact the operator prior to booking.

EXCLUDES

- Transport to/from Thesen Harbour Town
- Meals beyond bottled water
- Personal items (cameras, binoculars)
- Gratuities/tips for crew
- Travel insurance/medical coverage



ITINERARY SNAPSHOT

Arrival & Check-In

- Arrive at Ocean Odyssey Shop on Thesen Island – friendly welcome and easy check-in.
- Complete indemnity forms and get ready for the adventure.
- Put on jackets and life jackets (automatic inflatable, super comfortable).
- Pre-departure briefing ensures safety and confidence before leaving the shore.
- Bathroom stop available – no toilets on board.

Boarding & Departure

- Short 100m walk to the vessel – step aboard the purpose-built 25-seater.
- On-board skipper briefing introduces the journey and safety guidelines.
- Smooth no-wake departure through Thesen Harbour Marina for a gentle start.
- Pick up speed once in the estuary as you head toward the Knysna Heads.

Knysna Heads & Passage

- Pause at the Knysna Heads – skipper assesses conditions before entering the ocean.
- Brief introduction to the Heads – learn about their history, geology, and marine significance.
- Skilled passage into the Indian Ocean for the open water adventure.

Open Ocean Whale Watching

- Spot Humpback whales, Southern Right whales, and other marine life.
- Frequent sightings of dolphins, seals, and seabirds.
- Dedicated hilltop spotter increases chances of whale sightings.
- Conservation-focused commentary enhances the experience.
- Photography opportunities for your own memories (no professional photos provided).

Return & Post-Trip

- Scenic cruise back via Knysna Heads and estuary
- Disembark and walk to the main office; crew assist with life jackets and provide warm towels to refresh after the tour
- Friendly chat with crew about the tour experience
- Access to retail shop and coffee shop

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