



encounter...
Kaikoura

Your guide to the
Encounter Kaikōura
experience.

encounter... Kaikoura

Encounter Kaikoura is the trading name for the multi-faceted business comprising the following:

- **Dolphin Encounter** – swimming with and watching dusky dolphins.
- **Albatross Encounter** – watching spectacular albatross and other seabird species by boat on the Kaikōura Coast.
- **Café Encounter** – the onsite café open daily for breakfast, lunch and all coffee, and snacks.
- **Gift Shop** with quality products including a focus on New Zealand made options.





Our Values

Every customer is important to us and our commitment is to offer the highest level of service, care and attention when they are participating anywhere within our business, be it on our tours, dining in the café or shopping in the gift shop.

Each fare that we collect from our tour customers contributes to the **Encounter Foundation**, a charitable trust which we established in 2009. The trust invests in the wellbeing of the natural environment by supporting research, education and conservation programmes.

Since its inception we are proud to have gifted **over \$400,000** to vital and worthy projects. This support has made a tangible difference on a number of levels and truly demonstrates that tourism can and does contribute in a positive way to our community and beyond. We value our people and our planet and recognise that we can influence change, for the better of both.



For more information on the projects that the Encounter Foundation has supported recently [CLICK HERE](#).



Dolphin Encounter

Is a tour operating all year round comprising two options – **swimming or snorkelling** with the dolphins or **viewing** the dolphins.

The concept of swimming with dolphins was created by us in 1989 and has grown to become an iconic and world class experience over that time. The business is a private enterprise and the owners Lynette and Dennis Buurman, and Ian Bradshaw continue to be fully involved in the day to day running of the operation, along with a capable management team and our experienced and dedicated staff.

The coastal waters are home to an amazing number of species and the dusky dolphins in particular, are the super stars of the Dolphin Encounter. The reason our dolphin tours are so successful is due to their playful and interactive nature. The duskies are socially curious beings and are particularly interested in movement and also sound so interacting with snorkellers is an appealing pastime for these gregarious marine mammals.

The energised acrobatic jumps and leaps are awe inspiring and along with the abundance of dolphins typically found along the Kaikōura Coast; the combination of all of these elements has enabled us to almost guarantee, the success of the tours.

Swimmers and viewers travel on the same boat so if some clients wish to swim and some prefer to watch, this is perfectly workable.

The Dolphin Encounter tour holds a Qualmark GOLD rating.



Licence to operate

To operate a commercial tour with marine mammals a Department of Conservation permit is required. We have three permits which enable three vessels to operate tours to the dolphins.

The permits manage the level of effort or interaction that occurs with the dolphins by limiting the number of trips that can be operated per day and also the number of swimmers that can be in the water with the dolphins at any time.

The purpose of the permits is to ensure that the wellbeing of the marine mammals is the HIGHEST priority and while at certain times of the year these limitations create frustrations for customers who have not booked well ahead for swimming, it is an extremely effective management tool ensuring that the dolphins and their welfare are the top priority.

The operating capacity is:

- **16 swimmers per vessel per tour** with the balance of seating available for watching.

As an overview, we can take up to **48 swimmers and 44 watchers** at each tour time, by using three separate vessels. A breakdown of each vessel capacity is:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| “Moana Nui” | 16 swimmers plus 20 spectators |
| “Lissodelphis” | 16 swimmers plus 14 spectators |
| “Delphindae” | 16 swimmers plus 10 spectators |

For more information on our [vessels](#) [CLICK HERE >](#)

All year round

The Dolphin Encounter tours operate all-year-round with the exception of Christmas Day.

Tour times:

High Season: September to May Inclusive

- 5.30am (Sunrise tour), 8.30am and 12.30pm daily

Low Season: June, July, August

- 10.00am daily

dolphin
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Kaikoura, NZ





Abilities required to gain the most from swimming with dolphins

The Kaikōura coastline is an expansive area of deep water open to the Pacific Ocean, and in order to maximize the experience of swimming with the dolphins, we would recommend that previous snorkelling experience is an advantage, along with a good level of water confidence. Being an experienced swimmer is also helpful.

We do have flotation devices such as kickboards and buoyancy aids if a little extra assistance is needed. Please note that our crew do not enter the water on our tours.

Risk disclosure form

All swimmers must complete a RISK DISCLOSURE FORM before checking in for the tour. The information is intended to enable us to take the best care of your clients.. There may be occasions when we advise that the swimming option may not be suitable for them if they lack water confidence or if they are inexperienced snorkellers. On these occasions we would be willing to have them join the tour as a viewer and their fare would be adjusted accordingly.

The *disclaimer form* is available [here](#) as an editable PDF form. It can be downloaded, completed and emailed to us at info@dolphin.co.nz Alternatively please advise your clients to bring the completed form to us at check in.

Please also note if your clients have asthma or a respiratory condition and are prescribed with an inhaler, it is essential they bring their inhaler with them on the tour.

Wetsuits & snorkelling equipment

Before departure, all swimmers will be supplied with a well-fitted wetsuit and given a mask, snorkel and fins. The wetsuits comprise a full 5mm body one piece overall and a 5mm jacket providing 10mm of insulation around the core of the body.

In the colder months of winter we also provide gloves and booties.

Swimmers will wear the wetsuit from the departure point, during the short transfer to the harbour and for the duration of the tour until the swim part of the tour has been completed.

We advise all swimmers to take their warm clothing on board with them because at the end of the swim they will change back into their dry clothing. This assists them to warm up again while the tour concludes and while we travel back to the harbour.

A small bag which can accommodate their clothing along with the mask, snorkel and fins and taken on board with them is a good idea. If they have not bought a bag with them, we sell reusable bags at the check-in counter for a very small fee.





Glasses and prescription masks

Contact lenses can be worn with masks, but glasses cannot. We have a range of prescription masks (corrective lenses) available for those who are near sighted. The prescriptions range from -2.00 to -8.00. Sorting prescription masks for your clients takes place at suit up time just prior to the tour.

Water temperature and weather

The water temperature rarely rises above 18 degrees Celsius in the summer months and drops to around 9 degrees Celsius in the winter months.

All boats have deck showers available to help your clients to warm up when they have finished swimming.

The Kaikōura Coast is an exposed coastal area, and the weather can be changeable. It is advisable to check the weather forecast before travelling to Kaikōura especially if clients are travelling to Kaikōura for the day to specifically participate on the tour. They can do this by calling us on **0800 733 365** and we will be happy to assist them with the latest weather and sea conditions expected. expecting.

The Dolphin Watching option

The opportunity to join the tour as a watcher provides spectacular viewing of these acrobatic and energised dolphins. The acrobatic leaps and somersaults provide the most incredible dolphin show on earth!

Watchers and swimmers travel on the same boat, so if some of your clients choose to watch and some of your clients choose to swim this is not a problem as they will all still be together. It's fascinating to witness the interaction between swimmers and wild dolphins from the boat and this adds to the value of the viewing opportunity.

The boats are specifically built for optimum viewing with upstairs decks as well as walk around bows to enable perfect vantage points for the best photography possible.

What to bring

Swimmers should bring:

Swimsuit, towel, warm clothing including jackets and hats, and a small bag to accommodate their warm clothing on board the boat. Sunblock and a sunhat in the warmer months is advisable.

Towels can be hired for a small fee plus a bond from the check-in counter.

If clients have forgotten to bring a swimsuit, we have a limited number of swimsuits available for hire. Enquiries can be made a reception.

Watchers should also bring:

Warm clothing.

Everyone should bring phones and cameras to capture the most brilliant pictures imaginable.

We do have GoPro cameras available for hire and it is advisable to reserve these in advance.



Children on board

Children are classed as those aged 3 to 14 years (inclusive).

The minimum age limit for children wishing to swim on the tour is 8 years of age and all children aged 8 to 14 years must be accompanied by an adult both in the water and on board the boat at all times.

All children aged 3 to 14 years watching the dolphins from the safety of the boat, must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Children under the age of 3 years are not permitted on the tour.

Management and skippers reserve the right to increase minimum age limits of children participating on the tour should sea conditions not be suitable on the day. Conditions will be assessed immediately prior to tour time, and if they are deemed unsuitable for children, a full refund is available to those not able to take the tour.

Please see our [Child Policy CLICK HERE >](#)

Accessibility

We will try our best to accommodate all potential customers wishing to participate on our tours, including those with limited mobility. However there are a few restrictions due to the nature of what we do and the limited space on the vessels that we use.

We are unable to take wheelchairs on board, but we can accommodate passengers who are able to sit without additional assistance.

Contact our Customer Experience Manager at info@dolphin.co.nz about what we can do to help facilitate the best possible tour experience for your clients requiring special assistance.

Seasickness

Sea sickness is often experienced, and even in slight seas some customers find themselves dealing with motion sickness. We recommend taking medication to combat this prior to the tour. We do sell Sea Legs and ginger tablets at reception if you have arrived unprepared.

Tour duration

Dolphin Encounter tours are approximately three and a half hours in duration from check in time to the return time at the operating base.





How close are the dolphins in the water

Quite close, usually about an arm's length away. The dolphins are very smart, and they are extremely good at judging distance in the water and will come very close to the swimmers without touching them.

Best time of day

Generally we would recommend the morning departures as sea conditions can typically be calmer and the dolphins can be more interactive at this time. The number of dolphins does not usually vary from tour time to tour time.

How many dolphins

Due to the beauty of interacting with wild dolphins, we can never predict what might happen on each of our tours and as such, can never guarantee the number of dolphins we swim with. The pods we encounter vary in size and we regularly enjoy swimming with both small and large pods of dusky dolphins.

Is there a guarantee to see dolphins?

Because we swim with and watch wild dusky dolphins, we are never able to guarantee their presence. However, Kaikōura is renowned for its abundance and consistency of wildlife and once on the water we do have a very high success rate of locating dusky dolphins. If for some reason we are not successful in locating dolphins due to situations such as deteriorating weather conditions, your clients will receive a partial refund. All our tours are subject to a minimum operational cost.

Private Charter

Private charter of any of our vessels is an option for groups with prior arrangement and depending on vessel availability. Requests should be made well in advance and sent to the Customer Experience Manager on info@dolphin.co.nz to be actioned.

Is there a dolphin season?

Dusky dolphins can be seen all year round in Kaikōura which have earned it the accolade of being a top location in New Zealand for successful dolphin tours. There is a variation between summer and winter locations for the duskies in that the summer sees them spending more time inshore and the winter months, it is more usual to find them a little more offshore.

Cancellations & refunds:

If your clients wish to make changes or cancel their reservation, we must be advised no later than 24 hours prior to the tour time of the booking. If changes or cancellations are not made within 24 hours of the tour departing, cancellation charges equating to the full fare per person will apply.

In working with wildlife there are never any guarantees of encounters, but:

On the rare occasion when we are unable to locate dolphins or any other marine mammals, we will provide a partial refund back to a minimum operational charge.

If we are unable to swim with the dolphins due to their behaviour (or any other factor) but are able to successfully view dolphins or any other wildlife, we will refund back to a viewing rate per person.

We will always advise you by email if there is a partial refund to be applied to any booking that you have made with us, and our customer service team are only too happy to assist with clarifying any situation that arises.

Dolphin Encounter has a proven track record established over more than 30 years of operating for being a well-respected and environmentally responsible eco-tourism operator.



Albatross Encounter

An opportunity to meet nature's most extraordinary seabirds close up on New Zealand's wild Kaikōura Coastline.





albatross
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Kaikoura, NZ

Welcome to where majestic birds soar and dive over stunning waters beneath endless sky. Discover many species of albatross and pelagic birds on the Albatross Encounter tour, an unforgettable experience in one of New Zealand's most breath-taking destinations

A short boat ride and your clients will be in an entirely new world where they will discover a large variety of pelagic birds including albatross, shearwaters, petrels, penguins, gannets, skuas, terns and more!

The boat is designed especially for this experience giving your clients the best perspectives to view the birds and to take brilliant photos. With a maximum of only 11 people on board, it is an intimate and special experience that brings the birdlife in as close as possible for superb viewing.

We carry frozen 'chum' (fishy bits) on the boat, sourced from local commercial fishers, and this offal is the typical food source of these foraging seabirds bringing the birds in to very close for exceptional viewing.

For photographers it's a dream come true. Our team are experts in identifying the different species and explaining interesting factual information about their breeding grounds, their life span and their specific habits.

Kaikōura is renowned worldwide as a birding hotspot; and within a compact and easily accessible area, the greatest variety of seabirds and pelagic species awaits.

The Albatross Encounter tour holds a Qualmark GOLD rating.



Duration

Tours are about 2.5 hours in duration. Tour operation is subject to suitable sea conditions on the day and minimum passenger numbers.

What clients will see

The standard tour provides outstanding viewing opportunities of the pelagic birds. Several albatross species are seen on the tour unlike other locations in New Zealand where it is usual to see only one or possibly two different varieties of albatross.

We encounter a wide variety of albatross species: the great albatross, the wanderings and royals, the smaller albatross (commonly referred to as mollymawks in New Zealand), the Salvin's, white-capped, black-browed and Buller's.

There is plenty of other amazing birdlife, too. We can see up to 15 species of petrel, including two species of giant petrel. There are about eight species of shearwater including the endemic Hutton's shearwater, which nests in burrows high in the Kaikōura Mountains. Of course there can be those very special times when we are surprised by a visit from a rarely seen species to the waters off Kaikōura.

In addition we can also see skua, blue penguin and, of course, the gulls (three species). Three species of tern, several species of shag and the Australasian gannet can also be seen at various times of the year.

Extended tours are also available on request subject to availability and minimum numbers; please contact our Customer Service Team for more information on options for special requests.

All year round

Albatross Encounter tours operate all-year-round with the exception of Christmas Day.

Tour times:

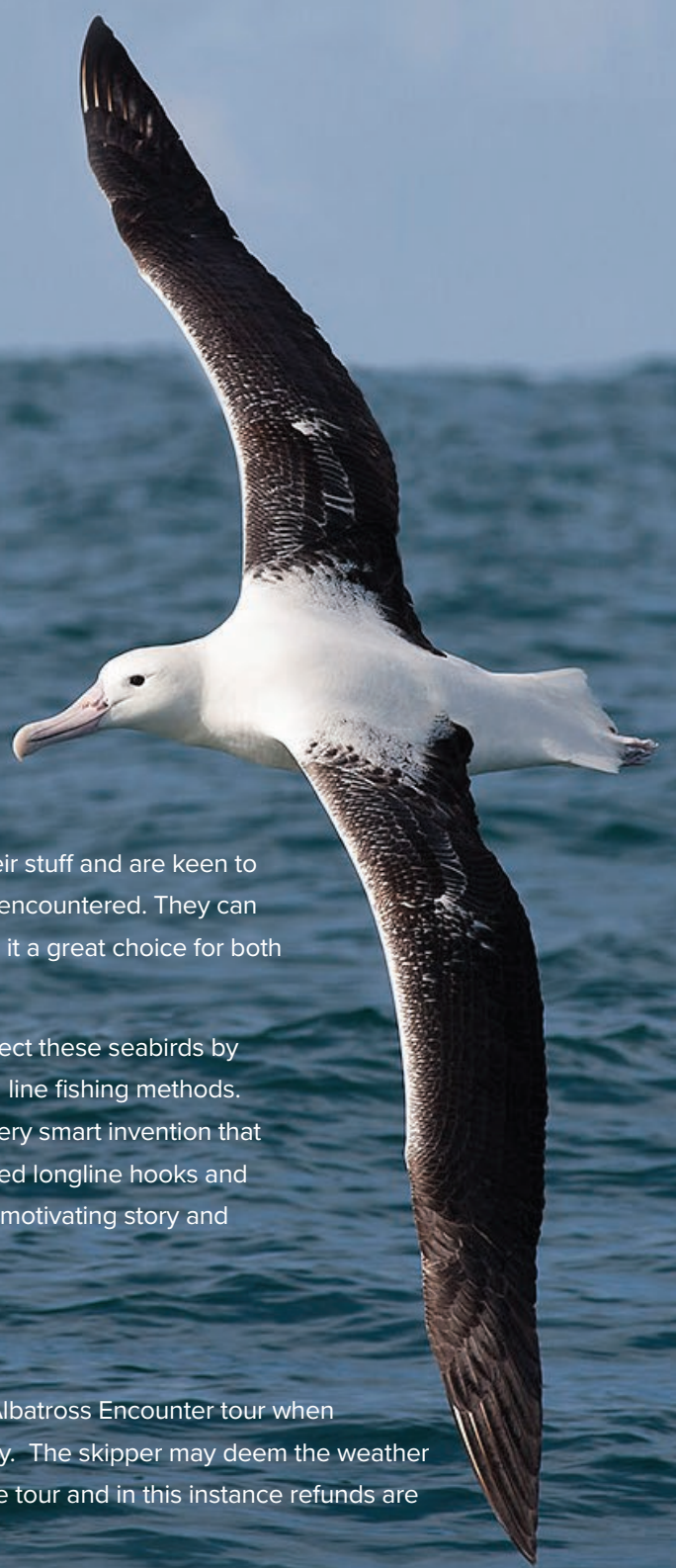
High Season: October to April inclusive

- Tours operate at 6.00am, 9.00am and 1.00pm daily

Low Season: May to September inclusive

- Tours operate at 10.00am - daily





What your clients will learn

Your clients are in fantastic hands. Our skippers know their stuff and are keen to share their knowledge about all the seabirds that will be encountered. They can also cater the tour to what your clients may want, making it a great choice for both the general wildlife enthusiast and the avid birder.

There is a focus on education and the great need to protect these seabirds by minimising the risk of incidental by-catch caused by long line fishing methods. We demonstrate and talk about the HookPod device, a very smart invention that has been developed to stop the albatross taking the baited longline hooks and then drowning due to being caught. It's an inspiring and motivating story and rounds off an exceptional time with Kaikōura's seabirds.

Children on board

Children aged 3 and over are able to participate on the Albatross Encounter tour when accompanied by an adult subject to conditions on the day. The skipper may deem the weather and sea condition unsuitable for children to partake in the tour and in this instance refunds are available.

Children under 3 years are not permitted on board.

Extended tours are also available on request subject to availability and minimum numbers; please contact our Customer Service Team for more information on options for special requests.

Seasickness

Sea sickness is often experienced in Kaikōura waters and even in slight seas, some customers find themselves dealing with motion sickness. We recommend taking medication to combat this prior to the tour.

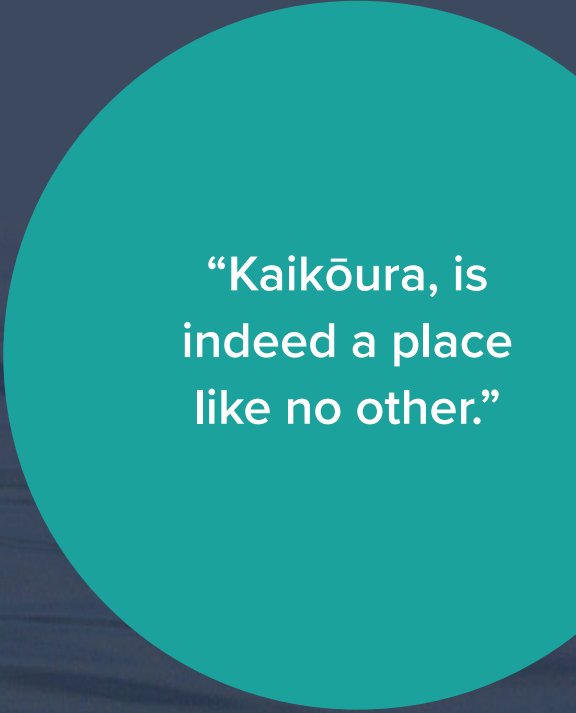
We sell Sea Legs, ginger tablets at reception if required.

Unique points of difference

Kaikōura has one of the greatest numbers of different species of seabirds within a small area than anywhere along the New Zealand Coastline.

One of the reasons for such a large number of different types of seabirds in Kaikōura is the presence of the deepwater Kaikōura Canyon which approaches within a kilometre of the shoreline in Goose Bay, south of the Kaikōura Peninsula.

Upwellings of cold nutrient rich water over the shallower coastal waters produce and sustain a vibrant food chain supporting a large variety of fish species, marine mammals and seabirds.



“Kaikōura, is indeed a place like no other.”



On site café with great coffee, great food & great views!

To complete the tour experience your clients can relax and unwind at our onsite café, Café Encounter.

With spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and the magnificent Seaward Kaikōura Mountain range, it is the perfect place to savour a breakfast, lunch or enjoy a coffee and a snack.

We have a spacious courtyard, a covered heated annex suitable for all weathers and ample indoor seating.

Check out [Cafe Encounter CLICK HERE >](#)



We can also provide breakfast or lunch packs with advance notice and our talented café kitchen team can also create a menu for any private charters by prior arrangement.





General info about Kaikōura

Kaikōura is a coastal town situated 180 kms north of Christchurch (2 hours and 18 minutes travel time) and 128 kms south of Blenheim (1 hours and 35 minutes travel time).

The coastal highway was reconstructed after the 2016 earthquake and is now a much-improved easier drive with improved “pull off” spaces incorporating cultural artworks along with interpretation describing the Maori history of the area.

Viewing areas to see New Zealand fur seals and their playful pups just 15 minutes north of Kaikōura are a popular highlight.

Destination Kaikōura

Destination Kaikōura is the local Regional Tourism Organisation and is a valuable touch point for in-depth information on what is on offer in Kaikōura.

Click through for regional information on the destination and to learn more. www.kaikoura.co.nz

Contact:

For any further marketing information or supporting images please contact Lynette Buurman at lynette@dolphin.co.nz