

# TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

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## Ucluelet a whale of a vacation destination

**I**t is a spectacle unlike any other in the animal kingdom. Each spring the entire population of Pacific Gray Whales migrate along the West Coast of Vancouver Island. An estimated 22,000 Gray Whales make the 16,000 km round-trip journey between the Mexican Baja Peninsula and the Bering Sea near the Arctic.

This annual migration is the largest known migration of any mammal. To celebrate the arrival of these 36,000 kilogram (72,000 pound) denizens of the deep, the coastal villages of Ucluelet and Tofino along with Pacific Rim National Park Reserve are staging one of the largest whale festivals in North America, March 13-21, 2004.

Over 70 events are being offered for the 18th Annual Festival. A few highlights include: the Parade of Whales in Tofino, the

Chowder Chow Down in Ucluelet - a seafood chowder cook-off competition, the Whale Festival Raft Race, Artists in Action, featuring local West Coast artists, First Nations traditional whaling stories,

Film Festival, and totem raising sand-castle building contest and the tug-o-whale competition at Wickaninnish Beach.

"This is a unique combination of three groups working together to highlight and educate both tourists and locals alike," says Abby Fortune, organizer of the gala. "And above all, it's fun!"

### Whales ahoy!

The Gray Whales, some measuring 45-46 feet (13.7-14 m) travel close to shore in the spring, pausing to feed in shallow waters, providing excellent viewing opportunities from strategic shore locations.

Both Ucluelet and Tofino provide exceptional viewing areas, including a site

set up with high quality spotting scopes for optimum viewing at Amphitrite Point Lighthouse.

Hiking along the new Wild Pacific Trail offers unparalleled views of the whales as they go by.

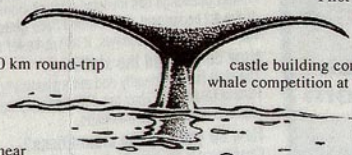
The Wild Pacific Trail skirts the jagged, black volcanic coastline, opening up a once-impenetrable marine forest to people of all ages, and only minutes from the roadside.

### Close encounters

For an even more exhilarating, close-up view of these gentle animals, one can venture out onto the open Pacific aboard local charter boats or float planes offering scheduled whale watching excursions from either Tofino or Ucluelet.

### Home away from home

If one can not take in the March festival, visitors to the Ucluelet-Tofino area are afforded the opportunity to view the numerous resident Gray Whales that reside on western Vancouver Island through the months of February to October.



### If you go:

**Location:** Ucluelet and Tofino are approximately a four and a half hour drive from Victoria, BC and a 45-minute flight from either Vancouver or Seattle to the Long Beach Airport, which serves both Ucluelet and Tofino.

[www.island.net/whalefest](http://www.island.net/whalefest)  
Ucluelet Chamber of Commerce:  
[www.uclueletinfo.com](http://www.uclueletinfo.com)  
(250) 726-4641

Tofino Chamber of Commerce:  
[www.tofinobc.org](http://www.tofinobc.org)  
(250) 725-3414