

How to watch Irrawaddy River dolphins



Dolphin watching should be strictly eyes-on, hand-off activity. Without due care and attention, propellers can cause serious injury, and the noise and movement of boats can cause the animal unnecessary stress.

A simple code of conduct helps reduce the level of disturbance, namely:

1. Never attempt a head-on approach
2. Move slowly and do not get closer than 30 metres (100 feet)
3. Do not separate or scatter a group of dolphins
4. Avoid sudden changes in speed or direction
5. Do not stay longer than 15 minutes
6. Avoid loud noise
7. When leaving, move off at a 'no wake' speed until the boat is at least 300 metres (1000 feet) away.

If a dolphin approaches the boat, keep the engine in neutral and allow it to idle for approximately one minute before switching it off.

(Based on Brian D. Smith, Handbook of the Irrawaddy Dolphin, 2002).