

Whale of a festival in Tofino, Ucluelet

Pacific Rim Whale Festival, now in its 21st year, educates young and old about these marvellous sea creatures as well as coastal life

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On Canada's Pacific Rim, the month of March means a farewell to winter storms and a welcome back to the Pacific Rim Whale Festival -- the official kickoff to the whale watching season. The shores of coastal Tofino and Ucluelet witness the annual migration of more than 20,000 grey whales on their 13,000-km journey from the waters of Mexico's Baja Peninsula to the Bering Sea -- the longest migration of any mammal.

The Pacific Rim Whale Festival, now in its 21st year, educates the young and young at heart about these marvellous creatures and coastal life with a chock-full week.

From March 17-25, the festival will offer more than 90 activities and attractions in various locations throughout Tofino, Ucluelet, and the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. Many of the events are free of charge -- with the purchase of an PRWF Events Button. The featured events range from children's fairs to culinary competitions, First Nations culture to hands-on coastal wildlife education.

Popular events back this March include:

- Whale watching from the Wickaninnish Interpretive Centre with B.C. naturalists and spotting scopes
- Storytelling with Roy Henry Vickers at the Eagle Aerie Gallery in Tofino
- The Oyster Show, a double feature, with oyster biologist Josie Osborne and cooking demonstration presented by Chef Lisa Ahier of Sobo Restaurant at the Clayoquot Community Theatre.
- The Annual Chowder Chowdown -- a delicious competition for the Pacific Rim's top recipe
- Thornton Creek Hatchery's annual rubber whale race and hatchery tours -- come see the chinook and coho fry.
- First Nations Inlet Paddle with Tla-ook Cultural Adventures.
- Second annual Martini Migration -- a "dress to impress" event, shaken and stirred.
- The Barnacle Bash, with a performance from folk star Valdy.

Thursday, March 15 marks the Wickaninnish Inn's annual winemakers' dinner and silent auction -- a festival fundraiser presenting the finest in multiple course cuisine.

More information about the Pacific Rim Whale Festival and recommended accommodations can be found at www.pacificrimwhalefestival.org, and questions may be directed to info@pacificrimwhalefestival.com.

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