



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

Islands of the Azores & Madeira Black Watch Sightings Record

_Robin Petch - www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk



Thank you for joining me on Deck 7&8 throughout the cruise and helping to spot and record whales, dolphins, porpoises and other marine life.

As the Chair of Trustees for the Sea Watch Foundation it is my great pleasure to share with you the sightings throughout this Black Watch cruise, from Liverpool to the Azores and Madeira and back, along with a few of the photographs Kris and I have taken.

Sea Watch Foundation is the leading UK cetacean research charity and has been collecting sightings data since the 1970s to create Europe's biggest whale, dolphin and porpoise sightings database. This is used to inform EU and national governments, scientific and environmental agencies and NGOs, as well as independent research scientists who have an interest in studying and protecting cetaceans and the marine environment.

I hope you enjoy this report on sightings during the voyage, as well as the photographs we took. If you would like to make a donation to Sea Watch Foundation to help us study and protect our UK whales, dolphins and porpoises you can do so on either of two websites:

www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk or www.seawatchfoundation.co.uk

4th May 2018 Leaving Liverpool

Lots of seabirds throughout the watch in beautifully still conditions including Guillemots, Razorbills, Kittiwakes, Terns, Gannets, Oystercatchers, Cormorants or Shags, Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

- 1842 Harbour Porpoise, 100yds to starboard, surfaced twice
- 1846 Harbour Porpoise, 75yds to port, surfaced 4 times
- 1858 2 Grey Seals, 50yds to starboard
- 1918 2 Harbour Porpoises, 75yds to port, moving away
- 1919 1 Harbour Porpoise, 100yds to port, moving away
- 1228 3-4 Harbour Porpoises, 200yds to port



Not a bad tally for the first evening and enjoyed by a few passengers who joined us!

5th May 2018 At Sea

- 0925 Whale, port side 200yds, unidentified species but noticeable fin. Possibly Minke Whale

- 1451 Large Whale, possibly Sei or Fin Whale, 1½ miles to port
 1734 10+ Bottlenose Dolphins crossing the wake, 250yds – 1 mile astern, heading north
 1810 5+ Dolphins, probably Bottlenose, 3 miles off port quarter
 Lots of birds again, particularly Gannets* but also Fulmar, Great Skua, Kittiwakes*, Greater Black-backed Gulls and a Manx Shearwater * Photographed by Kris



6th May 2018 At Sea

- 0925 3 Dolphins, identified as Common by J Davies, seen off the port bow from Deck 7
 1005 Sighting to port by various passengers, one gentleman identifying 3 Minke Whales, others 3-5, or even a small pod, of Dolphins! Clearly some cetaceans spotted, but exactly what?
 1020 Double breach by what was possibly a Beaked Whale, ½ mile off starboard bow
 1208 40+ mainly Striped Dolphins ahead, then to port but with a few Common Dolphins in this mixed pod. (right). The sighting was also announced by the Captain.
 1235 Whale surfaced twice, 300yds off port bow, probable Fin or Sei Whale
 1332 2 Minke Whales spotted and identified by passengers on Deck 7
 1359 20+ Dolphins, 1 mile to port, unidentified species
 1450 A “flash” ½ mile to starboard, probably sunlight reflecting off a surfacing whale, followed by a faint blow starboard aft. Possibly a Beaked or Minke Whale?
 1528 3 splashes 2-3 miles off the port bow, possibly a Beaked Whale breaching?
 Interestingly almost no seabirds seen today except a Gannet reported by Rory!



7th May 2018 At Sea

No sightings in the early part of the day but a raptor identified by some as a Merlin and others as possibly a Kestrel, was seen flying around the ship and perching on lifeboats. Photographs and careful study revealed it to be an immature Peregrine Falcon (right)!

- 1640 Dolphin seen close to port side aft and dived quickly, reported by passengers
 2 Common Dolphins reported by passengers on the starboard side
 1816 2 tall blows and a hint of back 1 mile to port. Probable Fin Whale
 1823 2 possible Dolphins, 300yds to port
 1832 Diving rings then a Dolphin surging 50yds to port
 A few Cory’s Shearwaters were also seen today



8th May 2018 Horta, Faial

Lots of Cory's Shearwaters and a few Yellow-legged Gulls during the sail in (0630 – 0930!) Our Peregrine Falcon caught a small bird, probably a Storm-petrel, and dismembered and devoured it on top of No.3 lifeboat (right) before flying direct to Faial



0817 15+ Common Dolphins feeding in association with Cory's Shearwaters, Yellow-legged Gulls and other birds, 1 mile to starboard and north of Faial

0923 Fin Whale surfacing and blowing in mid channel (right) as we entered the port of Horta

An excellent whale watching trip with Azores Experiences began with a Loggerhead Turtle sighting (below).



A very close extended encounter with a Blue Whale off Pico (below) followed and a



shorter period with a Humpback (left), 2 Fin Whales and a possible Sei Whale south of Faial

Passengers on the Pico ferry reported seeing both Dolphins and a Whale

9th May 2018 Horta, Faial

Passengers on the Pico excursion saw 15 -20 Dolphins from the ferry and photographs by Tim Mason (right) and others have confirmed these as Bottlenose. Lots of leaping!

5-6 Common Dolphins to starboard during sail away



10th May 2018 Ponta Delgada, São Miguel

5 or more Fin Whales (right) and



numerous groups of Common Dolphins, (above) as well as hundreds of Cory's Shearwaters (right), during the shore excursion with Futurismo, probably the best local whale and dolphin watching operator



- 1903 2-3 probable False Killer Whales passed quite close across the bow, port to starboard
- 1927 4-5 Common Dolphins (right) leaping to port side from 1 mile to as close as 100yds
- 1956 Whale blowing 3 miles to port, probable Fin Whale
- 2014 2 False Killer Whales, close along starboard side, near the Faukué Bank
- 2026 2 low blows 2 miles to port, seen twice

11th May 2018 At Sea

- c.0900 4 blows seen by a passenger in quick succession, 3 miles to starboard
- 1043 Mid-sized splash, 3 miles to port. Possibly a breaching Beaked Whale?
- 1137 5 areas of dolphin activity $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to starboard, possibly 10+ Striped or Common Dolphins
- c.1200 Possible Whale to starboard, reported by Brenda Collins
- 1325 3 blows, close together, 3 or 4 miles to port, seen by Liam and Alex
- 1443 Dolphins, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to port, travelling quietly on reciprocal course
- 1506 10+ probably Striped Dolphins, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to starboard and leaping away
- 1514 5+ Striped Dolphins, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to starboard, leaping high (right)



- 1518 3+ probably Striped Dolphins, swimming quickly
 - 1604 Probable Beaked Whale, leaping ahead then surfacing and splashing away to our port side quite quickly
 - 1631 20+ probably Common Dolphins, 2 miles to port, travelling fast and leaping on a reciprocal course
 - 1637 5+ Common Dolphins, 1 mile to port
 - 1647 3 Common Dolphins chasing in to port bow, alongside and away
 - 1759 Whale blow, and 2 glimpses of back, 1 mile away at 11 o'clock, port bow
 - 1833 25+ Common Dolphins, feeding 2 miles to starboard
 - 1908 5+ Striped Dolphins, 1 mile off port bow, with one approaching closer
 - 2005 2 probable Beaked Whales surfacing 1½ miles to port, 3 times
- A busy day with occasional Cory's Shearwaters throughout, a couple of Bulwer's Petrels and numerous Portuguese Man o'War jellyfish (right)



12th May 2018 Funchal, Madeira (Calm inshore but Force 6+, Gusting to 60knots offshore!)

- 1235 40+ Bottlenose Dolphins leaping along the coast, 1 mile from the harbour wall, well spread out in 10 or more groups. Viewed from Deck 7 aft for over 30 minutes!
- 1809 15+ Bottlenose Dolphins, including at least one juvenile, initially 1 mile off the port bow then much closer to the port side apparently feeding with 20-30 more in multiple groups further away



13th May 2018 At Sea (Force 6)

- 1059 Dolphins seen to starboard by a number of passengers. We have 2 Collared Doves (right) and a Turtle Dove (far right) hitching a ride and flying around



- 1131 Fin Whale surfaced close to port side, heading north (below). This whale may have passed beneath the ship as deck crew and passengers saw a whale dive to starboard



1719 1 Striped Dolphin leaping high and long in to starboard bow. There were almost certainly more around which we never saw!
A solitary Gannet was flying around, 2 miles to starboard, for a while this afternoon



14th May 2018 Lisbon, Portugal

Only the usual Yellow-legged Gulls spotted during the sail-away in really difficult conditions (Sea State 7 and big swells in the entrance and at sea)

15th May 2018 Leixões, Portugal

Lots of Yellow-legged Gulls around the port and on sail-in and sail-away. A couple of Sandwich Terns during sail-in but no other sightings in choppy seas (Sea State 6 and moderate swell)



16th May 2018 At Sea

- 0940 Whale(s) seen blowing 6 times by Peter
 - 1010 3 Dolphins spotted near the bow by passengers
 - 1057 3+ Common Dolphins close to the port side
 - 1130 Whale blowing, starboard side, seen by Peter from the Observatory
 - 1141 Fin Whale, ½ mile to port, heading north
 - 1212-1215 2 Fin Whales, first seen fine on the port bow at 1 mile, then to port
 - 1225 Big blow seen to starboard by Ian so possibly a Fin Whale
 - 1235 2 large grey Dolphins seen to starboard, identified by Ian as possibly Bottlenose
- Only very few birds today, a group of 5 or 6 apparently large brown birds seen to port at 1302, a small white Gull or Tern, a Gannet at 1537 and a probable Petrel at about 1350

17th May 2018 At Sea

1230 8+ Common Dolphins leaping to the port bow
Lots of Gannets around during the morning, also Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Manx Shearwaters and Cormorants or Shags.
In the afternoon, a couple of Grey Seals and more Gannets, Kittiwakes, Guillemots and a few Puffins and Razorbills. Large numbers of Manx Shearwaters at times with flocks of 50 or more! More unusually, a Swallow and Yellow Wagtail were also seen.



If you like the photographs, they can be purchased as prints and DVD slide shows are also available to support my work and that of the charity. Alternatively, please consider making a donation to www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk on their website or via mine at www.TheWhaleandDolphinMan.co.uk

I hope we meet again on a future cruise, Best Wishes, *Robin*