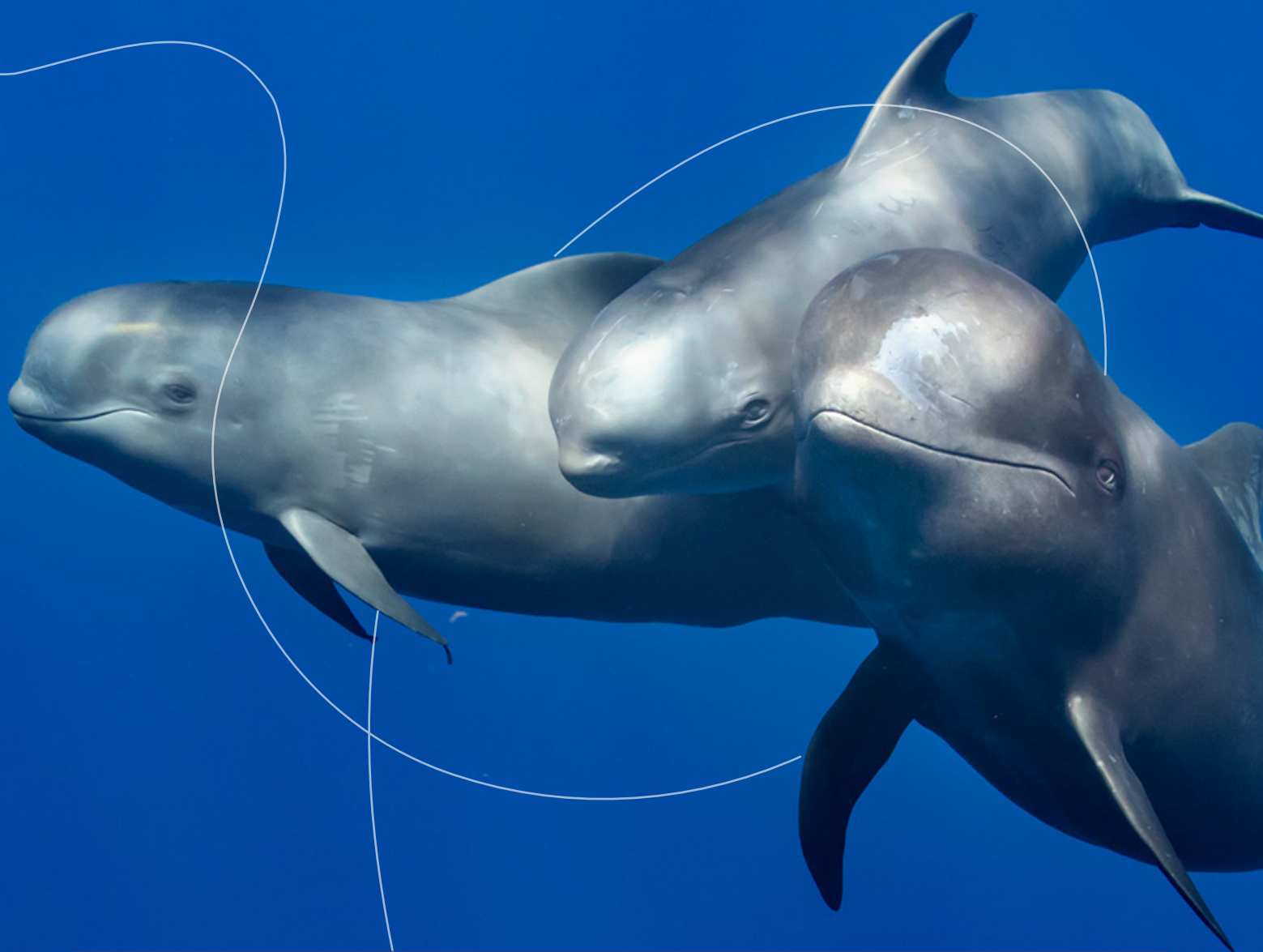




**tenerife!**  
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# Sustainability Charter for Whale Watching



Financiado por  
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NextGenerationEU



Plan de  
Recuperación,  
Transformación  
y Resiliencia



Gobierno de Canarias  
Consejería de Turismo y Empleo



# Charter for Sustainability in Whale Watching

**1.**

**Purpose, Vision 2030 and  
connection with the SDGs.**

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**2.**

**Commitments of  
signatory companies.**

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**3.**

**System for evaluating  
signatory companies.**

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**4.**

**Roles of the parties.**

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# **1. Purpose, Vision 2030, guiding principles and connection with the SDGs**



# Purpose

The waters of Tenerife are home to a unique array of biodiversity, with nearly thirty species of whales and dolphins reminding us daily of the natural wealth that surrounds us. In light of the rise in marine tourism, it is imperative to ensure that whale and dolphin watching is conducted responsibly while respecting the environment.

The Charter for Sustainability in Whale Watching represents a collective commitment: protect iconic species such as the short-finned pilot whale and the bottlenose dolphin, and ensure that every encounter at sea fosters conservation, not impact.

With this update to the Charter, we are reinforcing a model of responsible tourism, with clear rules, effective standards, and a firm commitment to environmental education. Tenerife aims not just to showcase its marine wildlife, but also to care for it and thus become a global example of how to coexist with marine life in an ethical and sustainable manner.

## Vision 2030

On Tenerife, we have set 2030 as our deadline to become a global leader in the responsible watching of whales and dolphins, combining high-quality tourism with effective protection of the marine ecosystem.

### Where are we headed?

**Education and Awareness:** A strong focus on educating both residents and tourists about the importance of whale and dolphin conservation, promoting respectful and enriching observation practices that enhance appreciation and understanding of marine biodiversity.

**Promote Global Commitment:** Tenerife shall not only serve as an exemplary destination for watching whales and dolphins, but also take on a leading role in advocating for marine conservation on an international scale, disseminating knowledge, and sharing experiences and best practices.

**Annual Monitoring and Compliance:** The annual review of compliance with the Charter is essential to ensuring that signatory companies are following its provisions. This process not only confirms adherence to the sustainability standards but also establishes a model to follow, encouraging other companies to join this initiative.

With this vision, Tenerife commits to tourism that safeguards what it showcases, leaving an impression on consciousness rather than on the ocean.



# Guiding Principles

**1.**

**We strive to convey experiences that are both meaningful and transformative.**

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**2.**

**Our tourism product must meet the exceptional standards of this unique environment.**

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**3.**

**We shall take care of the environment, the sea and the local community.**

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**4.**

**We shall adhere to all regulations in force.**

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**5.**

**We shall be transparent and dedicated and work collectively to foster the continuous improvement of the industry.**

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# Connection to the Sustainable Development Goals

To achieve the objective of establishing Tenerife as a global leader in responsible whale watching, it is essential to make this Charter align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals not only provide a framework to address the environmental, economic and social challenges of the 21st century, but also offer clear guidance for promoting marine tourism that is inclusive, responsible and regenerative.

The Sustainable Development Goals are critical to ensuring that the initiatives outlined in this Charter yield a positive and quantifiable impact, both in safeguarding marine biodiversity and in enhancing the well-being of local communities reliant on these ecosystems. Furthermore, they define specific objectives to educate, raise awareness, and transform individuals' interactions with the oceans, thereby fostering enduring changes in our engagement with marine life.

Aligning each commitment of this Charter with the Sustainable Development Goals aims not only to diminish the adverse effects of tourism, but also to establish a sustainable model that inspires other regions to follow a similar path.







## **2. Commitments of signatory companies**



# COMMITMENT 1:

## TRANSMIT MEANINGFUL AND TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES









Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
<p><b>V.1.1:</b> Guides provide information tailored to each client’s profile, while showing clear enthusiasm and passion for the activity. Guides also seek to engage directly with each visitor to offer additional information that aligns with their expectations.</p>	<p><b>Mystery Shopper</b></p>	<div> <div> 4           QUALITY EDUCATION            </div> <div> 11           SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES            </div> </div>
<p><b>V.1.2:</b> The company’s activities are defined by the fundamental characteristics of an eco-tourism product: Their primary appeal lies in the unique natural and cultural resources of the destination while conveying their intrinsic value and significance – whether ecological, cultural or historical. Each visitor shall also be encouraged to help preserve these resources for future generations.</p>	<p><b>Mystery Shopper</b></p>	<div> <div> 4           QUALITY EDUCATION            </div> <div> 11           SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES            </div> </div>

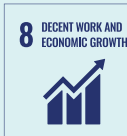





















# COMMITMENT 2:

## OFFER A TOURISM PRODUCT COMMENSURATE WITH THIS UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

Standards	Evaluation method	SDGs
<b>V.2.1:</b> Marine Environment Interpreter. For each activity, the company employs a Marine Environment Interpreter accredited by Tenerife Tourism or personnel with specific training in marine environments, such a guide from the whale watching sector, a marine biologist, marine scientist or similarly qualified person.	<b>Audit</b>	<div> <div>4 QUALITY EDUCATION </div> <div>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES </div> </div>
<b>V.2.2:</b> Training in best practices for all staff, including in the customer service and sales areas.	<b>Audit</b>	<div> <div>4 QUALITY EDUCATION </div> <div>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES </div> <div>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION </div> </div>
<b>V.2.3:</b> Proper cleaning of the vessel before each excursion.	<b>Audit and / or Mystery Shopper</b>	<div> <div>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING </div> <div>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION </div> <div>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION </div> </div>









Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
V.2.4: Neat, uniformed and identifiable crew.	Audit and / or Mystery Shopper	 
V.2.5: The company provides comprehensive information on its website regarding its tourism products, the natural resources and its commitment to the Charter.	Audit	  
V.2.6: Communications about the environment on social media. The company makes posts at least once per month on its social media accounts about the environment while promoting protection and conservation of the marine and coastal environment.	Audit	  
V2.7: Comprehensive information for each service: welcome, organisation, safety, natural resources, environmental awareness and public affirmation of the Charter.	Mystery Shopper	    

Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
<b>V.2.8:</b> Inclusive service. The company offers information in accessible formats and staff have received training in assisting people with various disabilities.	<b>Audit and / or Mystery Shopper</b>	  
<b>V.2.9:</b> Participation in activities organised by Tenerife Tourism for companies that have signed the Charter.	<b>Audit</b>	 






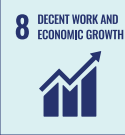











# COMMITMENT 3:



## TAKE CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE SEA AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
V.3.1: Animal approach manoeuvrers that respect the wildlife and comply with legislation in force.	Audit and / or Mystery Shopper	  
V.3.2: Measures to reduce sound impact on wildlife in visitation areas, refraining from using loudspeakers within 500 metres of animals and not playing music at high volumes during the excursion.	Audit and / or Mystery Shopper	  
V.3.3: Prohibition on feeding any marine fauna, ensuring that no rubbish is discarded into the sea.	Audit and / or Mystery Shopper	 



Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
V.3.4: Source-separated rubbish collection on board.	Audit and / or Mystery Shopper	 
V.3.5: Source-separated rubbish collection in offices.	Audit	
V.3.6: No single-use plastics or non-biodegradable materials used during excursions.	Audit and / or Mystery Shopper	 
V.3.7: Use of products drawn from local cuisine in food and beverages served on board.	Audit and / or Mystery Shopper	 



Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
<b>V.3.8:</b> Utilisation of cleaning products bearing the EU Ecolabel or equivalent.	<b>Audit</b>	
<b>V.3.9:</b> Annual outreach initiatives to promote environmental awareness among the local populace.	<b>Audit</b>	  
<b>V.3.10:</b> Participate in research and conservation projects by contributing resources or data.	<b>Audit</b>	 
<b>V.3.11:</b> Collecting waste from the sea during excursions, as allowed by navigational conditions, and informing clients of the collection action.	<b>Audit and / or Mystery Shopper</b>	 

Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
<b>V.3.12:</b> Impact of carbon footprint. Company shall measure its carbon footprint and put measures in place to reduce it.	<b>Audit</b>	<div><div>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION </div><div>13 CLIMATE ACTION </div></div>



# COMMITTMENT 4:

## FOLLOW ALL LEGISLATION IN FORCE





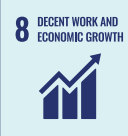

Standards	Method of evaluation	SDGs
<p><b>V.4.1:</b> Compliance in all legal matters: Blue flag, authorisation for whale watching, captain is registered and insured, crew have official training, employees have legal contract, vessels are insured, and company is current with all tax and social security obligations.</p>	<p><b>Audit</b></p>	<div><div><p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p></div><div><p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p></div></div>





# COMMITTMENT 5:

BE TRANSPARENT AND DEDICATED, WHILE  
AIMING FOR CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT

Standards	Evaluation method	SDGs
V.5.1: Compliance with the Charter on all vessels.	Audit	 
V.5.2: Timely submission of annual Charter accountability questionnaire.	Audit	 
V.5.3: Internal evaluation of the team to make sure Charter thresholds are reached.	Audit	 

# **3. System for evaluating signatory companies**



# Evaluation system

## Components



### **QUESTIONNAIRE.**

Every year, each signatory company must complete a standardised accountability questionnaire about the commitments and provide information for the annual audit.

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### **MYSTERY SHOPPER.**

Specially trained personnel will conduct an evaluation of adherence to the commitments in the Charter by going on at least one whale watching excursion with each signatory company. They will act like any other passenger, and will not identify themselves or provide prior notice of the evaluation.

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### **AUDITS.**

Drawing on the information gathered by the questionnaire, the mystery shopper and the improvement protocol, the final step of the evaluation will be an audit conducted by Tenerife Tourism.

# Evaluation system

## Principles

The practical implementation of the evaluation system shall be effectuated on the basis of the principles described below. They shall apply to Tenerife Tourism as the evaluator, as well as to the companies being evaluated:

**Ethical conduct:** trust, integrity, confidentiality and discretion as essential elements in conducting an evaluation.

**Impartiality and objectivity:** the findings, conclusions and reports in the audit shall accurately and precisely reflect the activities carried out during the evaluation. An objective reporting shall be made of the obstacles encountered and of any unresolved diverging opinions between the evaluator and the company being evaluated.

**Professionalism and thoroughness:** the evaluator shall have the necessary abilities and shall proceed with appropriate thoroughness, in keeping with the importance of the task and the trust placed in them by the company being evaluated.

**Independence:** the evaluator shall have no other relationship with the evaluated activity and shall be free of biases and conflicts of interest. The evaluator shall also maintain an objective attitude to ensure that the findings and conclusions of the audit are based exclusively on the evidence found during the evaluation.

**Evidence-based focus:** the evidence in the evaluation shall be verifiable. It shall be based on available information obtained in the course of the evaluation.





## 4. Roles of the parties





# Roles of the parties

## TENERIFE TOURISM

- a) See to the proper functioning of the Charter.
- b) Conduct the sign-up, oversight and, where applicable, withdrawal processes of signatory companies and allies to the Charter.
- c) Arbitrate or mediate in the management of incidents and conflicts.
- d) Bolster recognition of the Charter among tourists, the local populace and public and private institutions.
- e) In collaboration with industry companies and other stakeholders, establish the contents and commitments of the Charter and update them as needed so that the Charter functions effectively.
- f) Organise Marine Environment Interpreter training, including updated, high-quality content and facilitating free access for employees of signatory companies.

## SIGNATORY COMPANIES TO THE CHARTER

- a) Comply with the established commitments, openly and transparently submitting to accountability procedures.
- b) Collaborate in developing shared objectives.
- c) Constructively participate in the internal operations of the Charter, especially in addressing incidents and resolving conflicts, making significant contributions to fulfilling the established objectives.

## ALLIES

Companies or entities that do not provide whale watching services but are still part of the tourism value chain – such as travel agencies, accommodation providers and others – may participate in the Charter as Allies. These firms commit to:

- a) Making a public declaration of adherence to the Charter, identifying aspects where they can contribute to the objectives and principles of the Charter.
- b) Participating in concrete actions organised by Tenerife Tourism related to the Charter.
- c) Actively spreading awareness of the Charter, its values and the companies who have committed to following it.







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