

Whale-watching trip

by Jack Madison, 15

A while ago, my friend Olivia was telling me about a whale-watching trip she'd been on, in Canada. I wanted to tell her I was about to do the same thing, off the north coast of the UK, where my grandparents live. Whales had recently appeared there again, and my grandparents were convinced we'd see some – so I was sure my trip would be as good as Olivia's! But then I saw some review of the trip my dad had booked for us, when no-one had seen any whales at all. So, in the end, I decided not to tell Olivia anything about my trip, in case it wasn't successful!

Anyway, Dad and I set off on our trip – which was Dad's idea – and it was fantastic! Travelling out to sea on the tour boat with our guide, we soon reached the spot where whales often appeared. Then we waited – and nothing happened. I was sure this wouldn't last, though. People kept calling out they'd seen one, which was exciting – but then it turned out they were wrong. Then finally I saw something move under the water – a minke whale! So I felt like a hero for the rest of the trip!

The whale was a wonderful sight, with its huge back not far from the boat. Our guide said it was around five tonnes in weight and around 10 metres long. Yet, despite its size, it swam alongside us at speed, and with little effort. We waited to see if more appeared, and some time later, we saw three more some distance away, that kept diving under the water and coming up again. Then just after I'd filmed them, they disappeared.

Although the water's less deep around the coast, larger whale species appear in the area with minke whales, feeding on fish. But minkes are curious creatures, so they're more likely to approach tourist boats – which was why we were successful! Then later, up on the cliffs, we looked out to sea, searching for signs of whales.

Sometimes seabirds diving into the water means whales are around, as they're stealing the whales' meal. We were unlucky, sadly – but we'll be back!

1 Jack wasn't keen to mention his whale-watching trip to Olivia because

- A he thought her trip sounded a lot more exciting.
- B he'd read some negative reports about where he was going.
- C he wasn't sure if his dad had definitely arranged it.
- D he didn't know whether she was very interested in whales.

2 On board the whale-watching boat, Jack

- A was proud to be the first person to see a whale.
- B began to worry that they might all be disappointed.
- C tried not to get excited when anyone saw something.
- D was glad he'd persuaded his dad to come with him.

3 When Jack saw the minke whale, he was

- A surprised at how close it came to the boat.
- B amazed that it was so much bigger than he'd imagined.
- C impressed that it moved through the water so easily.
- D delighted to see it had arrived with several others.

4 Jack suggests minke whales appeared in the same area as the boat because

- A they knew there were plenty of fish there.
- B they were attracted by the arrival of the visitors.
- C they didn't have to compete for food with seabirds.
- D they preferred how deep the water was there.

5 What would Jack text to his grandparents about the whales?

A I'll send you my video of the group of whales – they only appeared briefly, so they weren't as interesting as the first one we saw.

B Dad said he'd really wanted to go to Canada to watch whales, like my friend Olivia – but now we're really happy we came here.

C I must take you up to the cliffs to look for whales – we've seen them every time we've been there, so far.

D You were so sure our whale-watching trip would be a success, while I still had doubts – but you were right.