

Dolphin Watching and Swimming

Many different species of dolphin can be seen off the coasts of the Ogasawara Islands, especially Mukojima, Chichijima, and Hahajima. Two of the most common are the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin and the spinner dolphin. Around 2.5 meters in length, Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins have long beaks and mottled abdomens. Spinner dolphins are slightly shorter, at about 2 meters, and have darker pectoral and dorsal fins. Spinner dolphins can be easily identified by their somersaults and spinning jumps. The spinner dolphins tend to relax in bays or near the shore during the middle of the day, but they are more active in the morning and evening, when they perform their spectacular acrobatics.

There have been dolphin-watching tours in Ogasawara for more than 25 years. Visitors may be able swim with the dolphins, depending on their moods, the condition of the ocean, and the number of other boats and people nearby. Younger dolphins tend to be more playful and open to human interaction. Although the dolphins have become accustomed to interacting with humans, they are wild animals in their natural habitat. Different species have varying degrees of affinity for humans, and like any animal, each individual dolphin has its own unique personality.

Tour operators in Ogasawara are respectful of the dolphins and abide by the rules set by the Ogasawara Tourist Association under the guidance of the Ogasawara Whale Watching Association. The rules limit the number of boats that may approach a group of dolphins and how many times they can do so.

Summer is the best season for swimming with and watching the dolphins. Tours lasting from a few hours to an entire day are available; full-day tours often include a leisurely lunch on a local beach with time for snorkeling.