

# Case Study: Eagle Wing Tours

Becoming a sustainability leader in the whale watching industry

**Location:** Victoria, British Columbia

**Website:** eaglewingtours.com



Eagle Wing is an award-winning family-run ecotourism and conservation company based on Vancouver Island. Garnering the No. 1 position for whale watching in Victoria on Trip Advisor since 2007, the ecotourism operator's mission is to protect marine wildlife and the ocean environment through direct support of conservation, research and education activities.

Eagle Wing achieves its many conservation objectives through a blend of guest experience, educational programming, and community outreach. *See how Eagle Wing Tours is paving the way with an award-winning sustainability program.*



GreenStep has been an instrumental partner on our path of regenerative tourism. We have come to clearly understand who we are and what we can do to leave a positive impact on our community and the marine ecosystem - the Salish Sea.

— Eagle Wing Tours

## Challenge:

### Measuring the environmental footprint of a robust marine operation

Having embarked upon a sustainability journey back in 2008, environmental stewardship has long been at the core of Eagle Wing's business. However, their greatest challenge has been understanding and measuring the true impact of their overall footprint.



## The Solution:

### Establishing a scorecard and remaining transparent

Through GreenStep's sustainability certification process, the team at Eagle Wing was able to compile and aggregate relevant footprint data so they could better understand their challenges and opportunities in the sustainability space. **Their sustainability approach includes:**

- 1 Achieving Platinum grading and certification designation with GreenStep Sustainable Tourism and becoming a signatory of the **Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge**
- 2 Becoming a supporter of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and gradually integrating the goals throughout their business operations
- 3 Elevating and improving corporate transparency around sustainability initiatives, programs and GHG ASR reporting, therefore setting a new example in the competitive ecotourism industry and inspiring others in the whale watching sector to take action
- 4 Furthering a friendship and partnership with Indigenous communities

## Timelines:

View Eagle Wing's journey to becoming a sustainability leader in the whale watching sector:

- 2008** — Embraced the sustainability path
- 2009** — Became Canada's first third-party certified 100% carbon neutral whale watching company
- 2011** — Became a member of 1% for the Planet
- 2013** — The first Victoria ecotourism operator to charge a wildlife conservation fee.
- 2014** — Achieved Gold grading and Certification designation with GreenStep
- 2017** — Surfrider Ocean Friendly Business Certified
- 2018** — Launched *Exploring the Salish Sea* program, which combines classroom and experiential learning to ignite a passion for the ocean among local schoolchildren
- 2020** — Achieved Platinum grading and Certification designation with GreenStep Sustainable Tourism
  - Became a certified member of the World Cetacean Alliance which recognizes that Eagle Wing operates to the highest international standards of care for local wildlife, sustainability and customer experience
- 2021** — Recipient of numerous awards, including Top Sustainable Tourism Business in Canada (2014, 2016 and 2022), Top Tourism Business (Vancouver Island) and Ecostar Awards for Environmental Leadership
- 2022** — Recognized as a Green Leader by the Vancouver Island Green Business Collective
  - Received The National Marine Educators Association Marine Education Award for Outstanding Organization
  - Received Sustainable Tourism Award at Canadian Tourism Awards
  - Became a Biosphere Committed Company and soon to be Biosphere Certified in 2023
  - Awarded a BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association Partnership Award, which recognizes groups who "have made a substantial difference in the lives of students in BC public schools"

Read more about Eagle Wing's sustainability journey.

[Click Here](#)

## Results:

Employees seek out Eagle Wing as an employer of choice, due to aligned values and focus on conservation and sustainability. This has also resulted in minimal team turnover.

**\$0**  
spent on recruiting

**8,000**  
local school children

Thousands of children have participated in the company's *Exploring the Salish Sea* experiential learning program, with the goal of reaching 8,000 kids by the spring of 2023.

Through its 1% for the Planet and wildlife fee, Eagle Wing is able to support 29 non-profits this year alone.

**29**  
non-profits supported

**39%**  
drop in carbon footprint per passenger

Reducing the operating carbon footprint has led to savings in fuel, staff, and mechanical maintenance.

As of 2022, Eagle Wing has exceeded \$1M in donations since 2011.

**\$1M**  
in donations

Since we embraced the sustainability path back in 2008, our business has had its "best year" every year (minus the two COVID years). We experienced our best ever year in 2022, in large part due to our sustainability and conservation initiatives. You can see this in all the TripAdvisor reviews since 2007—every year a pattern of customers recognizing our efforts, and what it means to them to support businesses who walk their talk.

— *Eagle Wing Tours*

