

lingua weekly

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Creatures of the Sea

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At 7:30 a.m. we were at the marina, waiting to embark on the Quick Cat II.

I sighed in relief. A week before, on another vessel, the sea had been very, very rough. I threw up twice and, although I did get to see the creatures, I didn't enjoy the experience at all.

But today was going to be different. One of the crew assured us that it was going to be a beautiful day, the sea as flat as a mirror. The Quick Cat II left the harbor and soon we were in the deep blue sea.

The sea was indeed eerily calm. As the sun had barely risen, the water had a beautiful warm tone. It felt like drifting on a cloud.

The crew gave us the mandatory safety instructions, showed us where the toilets were, and treated us to some hot beverages and muffins (which I did not need to vomit). And, then, suddenly, we noticed how the vessel started to glide more slowly.

Looking up from my delicious cappuccino, I saw the creatures. It was a small pod, only three whales, but that was more than enough.

They were about ten meters away from starboard. We were instructed to wave our arms and greet them with loud, happy voices. So all the passengers - we must have been about twenty - started waving our arms and shouting like mad.

The humpbacks reacted to our stimuli. They approached the vessel. The water was crystal clear, so we could see everything: their amazing length (fifteen meters), their blackish-bluish backs, their white, glowing bellies, the barnacles growing on their bodies as they do on Bootstrap Bill Turner in *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

They played London Bridge with us, swimming under the boat, from starboard to port and from port to starboard. They performed some synchronized swimming for us, as graceful as Esther Williams. They descended towards the bottom of the sea and then rose vertically from the water, exposing at least two meters of their heads to the air. They snorted through their blowholes and created underwater halos.

We saw two more pods of whales up close, and many more pods from a distance. Then, unfortunately, it was time for us to return to the marina. We said farewell to the whales and wished them a safe trip back to Antarctica. None of us could understand why the Japanese continue hunting them so adamantly. Such enormous wild beasts, yet so peaceful and serene in their manners.

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