

Bear Viewing Guidelines

for Concierges, Village Hosts and Visitor Information Agents

Seeing bears in their natural habitat is an exciting and memorable experience for visitors to Whistler. It is however important to ensure the experience does not disturb bears while they are eating, mating or rearing their young. Done right, encountering bears during a visitor's vacation can provide teaching moments to engender an ethic of respect and appreciation for bears, other wildlife and the natural environment.



Brochures for guests are available through the Get Bear Smart Society.

Email us at info@bearsmart.com for copies. The Bear Viewing Guides are just that- guidelines. There are nuances and grey areas that are best conveyed in conversation with your guests. Here are some points to mention and ways of behaving that embody the ethic of respect that will keep people and bears safe.

Best Practices

Guests should always be encouraged to use a professional bear viewing guide or participate in a group tour. Please do not send guests out on their own to the hot spots known to locals. Some of these locations are now becoming unmanageable.

Ask guests to bring along and use binoculars or spotting scopes and long telephoto lenses for taking photos. Flash photography should be avoided as it can disturb bears.

If guests come upon roadside bears, especially on highway 99, they should be encouraged not to stop and to stay inside their vehicle.

Other Tips for Visitors:

Maintain a generous distance between you (or your vehicle) and the bear. The standard distance is **100 metres / yards (about the length of 7 school buses)**; but this distance should be adjusted based on the cues provided by bears themselves. If the bear is disturbed by the person's presence, they should be encouraged to increase that distance. If a bear approaches the vehicle closer than 100 m, then it may be alright to stay and enjoy the viewing session. If the bear is feeding beside the vehicle, it's time to move on.

If people do stop on a roadside, it is important that they remain in their vehicle and view bears through the window. This keeps guests safe and will minimize disturbance to bears.

Ask visitors not to call out or whistle to attract the bear's attention for a photo. In fact, all noises or actions that might stress bears should be avoided (loud talking and laughing, children crying, diesel engines).

If guests encounter bears on foot, ask that they follow these tips to keep themselves safe and avoid disturbing bears.

- No one should approach, feed or call out to bears.
- Groups should stay together and not crowd or surround bears.
- People should keep movements and sounds to an absolute minimum. This is imperative for keeping bears wild.
- Viewing moments should be kept short and then people should leave the area and bears in peace.

If others are viewing bears in the same area simultaneously, visitors should understand the combined impact of the groups on the bears being viewed and to modify their behaviour accordingly. This might mean leaving the area and even asking others to do the same.

Questions? Please contact Sylvia Dolson, Executive Director of the Get Bear Smart Society, sdolson@bearsmart.com.