

**ALVARO'S ADVENTURES**  
birding & nature tours



# **BODEGA BAY PELAGICS ON THE NEW SEA ANGLER - 2023**



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### WHERE AND WHEN

Meet at **6:30 am** at the Porto Bodega, which is north of the Tides' Wharf in Bodega Bay. On highway 1 head north until past the fire station and the Boat House Restaurant, turning left and heading downhill at the whale sign. Park in the large free lot and there you will check in before heading to the boat. We will leave approximately at 7:00 but be here at 6:30! Our return will be approximately around 5:00 pm, but weather or sea conditions may slow us down, don't book a flight too close to return times due to this uncertainty!

Our boat is the New Sea Angler. If you arrive late and no one is in the parking area, please head to the boat. Do not board the boat unless a crew member or one of the guides is there to help.

*Please e-mail me with an address and telephone – this is to provide to the harbor and coast guard; it is federal law that we have this information for you. Thanks! If you paid via PayPal I only need your phone number.*

***My cell phone is 650-504-7779 just in case.***

By the way, you will be asked to sign a Liability Waiver before going on the trip, you need sign this only ONCE a season. I am including a copy, if you can sign and have at the dock (or e-mail me a scan) and that will make things speedier to get going that morning, I will have a few blank ones as well. Thanks!

### DIRECTIONS TO HARBOR

Again, the Porto Bodega, which is north of the Tides' Wharf in Bodega Bay. On highway 1 head north until past the fire station and the Boat House Restaurant, turning left and heading downhill at the whale sign, to the port.

Or another way to look at it is, from the town of Bodega Bay head north on Hwy 1, it curves to the right along the north end of town, then makes a left and continues north, within a few hundred feet you will turn left on Eastshore Road and you follow this down the hill to the port.

Google Map Here – note that on the map the spot you want to park at is the green marker called “Porto Bodega” not the “Porto Bodega Marina.”

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<http://tinyurl.com/kq98rjr>

## **PARKING**

There is free parking at the port, we park in the last big free parking lot in the port area. This is south of the slips, at the end of Eastshore Rd. In the above Google Map, where the green "Porto Bodega" is noted.

## **COFFEE OPTIONS**

I am not fully aware of all the early breakfast options and coffee in the area, but the Roadhouse Coffee is open by 5:30 am. Here are the yelp details, with a map, it is right near the harbor.

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/roadhouse-coffee-at-bodega-bay-bodega-bay>

## **OUR BOAT**

The boat we will be on today is the New Sea Angler, a 65 foot coast guard certified vessel. A classic West Coast fishing charter boat – and a fantastic birding boat too! This is a heavy boat that cuts through the water even in choppy situations. All required safety equipment is present on the boat. Captain Rick Powers is a very experienced fishing captain in the central California. The boat has a "head" or restroom, but no galley or cooking facilities. Before the trip, Captain Rick Powers will give us a summary of safety features and aspects of the boat.



This is the New Sea Angler.

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## **OUR GUIDES – SPOTTERS**

Our guides are volunteers, some may be professional biologists, teachers, tour guides, or just great seabirders but they do this for the experience of getting many hours out on the ocean, and their interest in both seabirds, and showing people seabirds. But to be clear they are not employees, they do this because they find it interesting and fun. As such, keep in mind that they will do all they can to get you on the birds, inform you about the birds, and share the excitement of offshore seabirding but they are not working, they are sharing! I hope very soon to have short write ups on everyone who leads with me, so you can have a better idea of who you are chatting with when on the boat! Do understand that for me I put a great deal of importance in expertise and experience, but I value highly the ability to communicate, and inform about the local birds. Some guides are born educators, others are born rare bird finders, and some are a bit, or a lot, of both. I also try to involve young people as guides, to foster their interest in birding, the ocean, and particularly so young birders who have an interest in making the natural world their career.

## **FIELD GUIDE – Birds and Wildlife**

Local California birders Steve Howell and Brian Sullivan have written a small and very practical guide to the species we see offshore on our trips. For more information: <https://www.amazon.com/Offshore-Sea-Life-Guide-Princeton/dp/0691166137>  
<http://press.princeton.edu/titles/10465.html>

Steve Howell and Kirk Zufelt have just (Aug 2019) published an amazing book for the identification of seabirds throughout the world. Highly recommended: <https://press.princeton.edu/titles/14015.html>

Note that Steve Howell and Brian Sullivan are sometimes spotting for our trips, so perhaps you can get your book signed!

## **CHUMMING**

If you have been on pelagics in other parts of the continent or the world, you will know that part of the process of bringing birds close to the boat is to provide fish or squid to “chum in” the birds. Here in Central California, all of the ports (Half Moon Bay, Monterey Bay, Bodega Bay) take you to waters that are part of marine sanctuaries. As such chumming for birds is not permitted in these waters. However we do have a research permit (MULTI-2022-004) which allows us to do some limited bird attraction in the course of research on storm petrels. We are the only pelagic operator in the state that can chum within the sanctuaries.

## **FISHING**

Our trips are birding trips, but if pelagic fish such as Albacore Tuna are available, or the right temperature waters are present, we may put out trolling lines to catch a fish. In the

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past, we have found that going to tuna waters has provided us with great birding, the speed of trolling is good for birding, and the process of bringing in the fish can attract birds. Hawaiian Petrels have come in to the slick created from the capture of Albacore on our trips. Capture of tuna on a trip will be rare, but we may be trying here and there.

### **TIPPING**

Our birding guides do not expect a tip, although if you are a tipper, please go ahead – it is appreciated. However, to conduct our operations we are required by law to employ a deck hand. The deck hand helps the captain to pilot the vessel, as well as in cleaning, maintenance, keeping the restrooms clean etc. They are an invaluable part of our trip. In fishing trips deck hands make their earnings largely on tips and filleting fish, on birding trips this does not happen (unless we catch a fish!). To keep birding boats happening, we would love to keep deck hands happy. If you wish to do so, a tip for our deckhand would be greatly appreciated. Little by little we are turning these folks into birders, sometimes they have spotted some good stuff for us too!

### **OUR PLAN**

Our aim is to get offshore towards the Bodega Canyon and then south across the Cordell Bank, a huge undersea mountain that is known for its ability to attract great birds and whales. Weather dictates where we can get to exactly, and we realize that the albatross, storm petrels and other goodies tend to be at or beyond the continental shelf so we do our best to get there and look for these birds. However, weather could preclude us from getting exactly to where we want to be. Knock on wood, it will not happen!

### **LUNCH**

Lunch will not be provided onboard. Please pack your own lunch to bring on the boat. Take plenty of water or liquids. Essentially, be prepared to be out all day so have an appropriate amount of food and drink. Keeping your stomach active and working on something is often a good way to avoid seasickness; some folks munch on dry crackers, saltines or ginger snaps throughout the day! I am of the opinion that this helps substantially in keeping you feeling comfortable on a boat.

### **COMFORT AND SEASICKNESS**

Part of what makes this such a rich part of the ocean is the cold water currents and upwelling of cold water offshore. This cold water makes for a generally cool to cold air temperature on a pelagic boat trip. The key is to have layers, that way you can take layers off or put some on depending on the cold or warmth you will experience. Even on a still and relatively warm day, the movement of the boat itself creates enough breeze to drop the effective temperature by a noticeable margin. What can be assured is that it is not going to be hot, and rarely does it ever feel warm. So avoid shorts, short sleeves and make sure you are prepared for it to be cool to cold. Extra layers you do not need can be

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left in your pack in the cabin, but you may be happy to have the extra layers if it is a cold day! Better safe than sorry.

If there is a breeze and we have some spray be prepared to guard your binoculars and or camera against the salt water. Have plastic bags and or dry paper towel to keep your gear from getting wet, and drying it off if need be. You can store gear in the cabin and have it safe from the elements if you need to.

Comfortable footwear is good! You will be standing for a great part of the day, and often balancing as the boat moves, comfortable shoes that are also not slippery are great to have on a boat. Avoid any slippery shoe, even if it is not all that wet, the deck of the boat can get moist and you want to make sure you have a firm grip on the deck at all times. Avoid open toed sandals; first of all because you will get cold, but second of all because in trying to maintain balance you may get stepped on by a fellow birder! It happens, and it can be really painful if you are wearing sandals.

Do not bring a scope, or tripod. These are essentially useless and a bother on a boat. They will channel the boat vibrations right to your scope or camera and the boat movement will make it impossible to use your scope or camera on a tripod. If you will be doing photography, hand holding the camera is the way to go!

### *Seasickness*

If prone to seasickness, look into over the counter medications, and choose the non drowsy varieties. There is non-drowsy Dramamine, although some folks prefer Bonine. You can also call your doctor to get a prescription Scopace patch, people swear by “the patch” although many complain that they get a dry mouth feeling, so do bring along plenty of fluids. The main thing is to get lots of rest the night before! The times I have felt seasick coming on have been when I have had too short a night before a boat trip. Also avoid alcohol and spicy food prior to trip. Eat something bland (i.e. toast and milk) so your stomach is not totally empty; keeping something in your stomach goes a long way to minimizing the effects of seasickness. Consider Ginger products: Ginger Snaps, Ginger Ale, Ginger candy, and also soda crackers.

Once on the boat, concentrate on the bird, whales, wildlife and keeping yourself in a “good frame of mind.” If you are prone to seasickness, stay outside in the fresh air; do not head into the cabin more than is necessary. Also look at the horizon as much as you can! Hopefully the sea will provide enough distraction that discomfort will be the last thing on your mind, but if you are prone to it – call your doctor for the patch or get something over the counter. If you would like a digital brochure on avoiding seasickness, I can send that to you.

### **WEATHER ISSUES**

One thing we cannot control is the weather and sea conditions. There are three factors that can affect our trip. One is fog, the other is wind, and the third is swells. Sea level fog reduces visibility, although it often occurs when the wind is still and sea conditions are good. Fog will allow us to get to our destination, and often it does not last all day, but it

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does decrease chance of observations although sometimes less than you would think. Wind can churn up waves and create a wet situation on the boat from sea spray rising off the bow. In days of low wind, it will be drier on the boat. If the wind is high, then this could create wind waves that could keep us from reaching our destination; this depends on the strength of the wind and the direction it is coming from. Swells are the large rounded waves coming off the ocean, often created by distant storms. One can have large swells that are well spaced, and this will be fine. Even a moderate swell that is closely spaced will create a difficult ride, so we hope for either small swells or distantly spaced swells. We cannot do anything about the weather – but be aware that the sea conditions will dictate whether we can reach our goal or whether we even get off the dock. The ultimate decision on what we can do and where we can go will be up to Captain Rick Powers. But just think good thoughts, and hope the weather will not be an issue at all – most of the times this is the case.

Weather information is available here:

<http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/data/Forecasts/FZUS56.KMTR.html>

The Coastside Fishing Club has various resources:

<http://coastsidefishingclub.com/>

### **BIRDS AND MAMMALS**

Another file will be sent to you with a checklist of the most likely species we could encounter in a summer or fall trip. Some species are rarer and are bolded to note their higher level of rarity. This is an all-inclusive list for pelagic and Farallon Islands trips, and does include some species which are not as likely on a July trip as on an October trip – so keep that in mind. We will try to see as much as possible, but nature always dictates what is out there for us to find. There are no guarantees that any species will be found, but we will try!!

eBird is a wonderful resource for status and distribution. Below is the bar chart of occurrence for birds in Sonoma and Marin counties. If you scroll down to the tubenoses, alcids, jaegers, phalaropes, you will get a good idea of what to expect on the trip.

<http://tinyurl.com/pdbb6go>

### **CANCELLATION POLICIES**

*Alvaro's Adventures is a registered California Seller of Travel, CST: 2105497-40, Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.*

Cancellation due to weather or any other reason is entirely at the discretion of the Captains of each boat. If the weather looks very bad, cancellation may occur the day before and we will make an attempt (phone or e-mail) to contact you and pass on the



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information. Remember, it is possible that the trip could be cancelled at the dock. There are no guarantees that we will sail until the captain says it is OK. Barring no communication from us, you should show up at the meeting spot and be prepared to sail.

Trips to the Cordell Bank have the aim of getting to the bank and offshore areas. If sea conditions do not allow us to arrive at the destination, no refund will be given. However, at all times we will make the best, safe effort to achieve the stated goals of each boat trip.

### **REFUNDS AND CREDITS**

The following are our policies concerning refunds:

- \* If for any reason the trip is cancelled, you will receive a full refund.
- \* If you cancel 10 days or more before the trip, you will receive a full refund.
- \* If you cancel less than 10 days before the trip, you will only receive a refund if we are able to fill the trip.
- \* There is no penalty if you provide your own replacement, provided they are not already signed up for the trip.
- \* If a trip departs but must return early, and the Captain charges a pro-rated refund to Alvaro's Adventures, you will receive a partial refund based on the pro-rated amount.

If a trip is cancelled, you may choose to receive a refund or credit for another trip.

Refund checks are normally mailed out within a week of the trip date.

### **COMPANY LIABILITY**

We aim to provide a safe a trip as possible. However, it is important to remember that these trips take place on a moving boat on the ocean, with a number of other participants on board. **THIS CAN POTENTIALLY BE DANGEROUS!**

Alvaro's Adventures is not responsible for any injuries, broken, lost, or stolen property, seasickness, or any other misfortunes that occur during these trips.

Alvaro's Adventures makes no guarantees concerning trip destination or species we are attempting to see.

### **DISCLAIMERS**

Alvaro's Adventures is not responsible for events or situations that are beyond its direct and effective control. Without limitation, the following are some factors that are beyond our direct control; bad weather, traffic, traffic accidents, labor disputes and strikes, participant lateness, road construction, mechanical breakdown of boats, cars etc., civil disorder or failure of third party providers.

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Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to refuse to provide tour services to any individual or private group without limitation or any civil or financial liability, whatsoever.

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