



Bluewater Adventures

Orcas, Totems & Grizzlies Sample Itinerary

Day 1 – The trip starts and finishes in Port McNeill, BC. Participants will meet at 11:30 am on October 2 at the top of the Municipal Dock on the Port McNeill waterfront. This allows guests to catch the Pacific Coastal morning departure from Vancouver arriving in Port Hardy at 10:10 am. Shuttle transfer time from the airport in Port Hardy to the Port McNeill municipal dock takes approx. 40 minutes which will allow plenty of time to transfer for the trip start time of 11:30 am. Upon boarding “Island Roamer”, cabins will be assigned and an introductory safety briefing will be completed.

We have chosen Port McNeill as the starting point for this voyage because it is the closest port to the core killer whale area. We expect to discover our first pod or group of whales the first afternoon. Orcas are one of the most exciting marine mammals. We will watch them foraging for salmon, spyhopping, and breaching (leaping clear of the water). Participants will learn about the behaviour of these fascinating creatures, listen to them calling on the ship’s underwater microphone, and learn to identify individual animals. Each night we anchor in a different, secluded anchorage.

Days 2-3 – Our focus these days will be on the waters of Johnstone Strait or nearby Queen Charlotte Strait. Part of each day, will be exploring for various species of marine mammals. Not only is the area famous for orcas, but humpback and minke whales are common, and Dall’s porpoise often come over to the boat to play on the bow wave. After a few hours floating with whales, we may visit the modern Kwakwaka’wakw community of Alert Bay to visit the U’Mista Cultural Centre to see the fascinating collection of potlatch masks on display. If we have a good wind, we expect to raise the sails and enjoy the silence and beauty of sailing. There will be time to explore the protected waters using our stable, sea kayaks that we carry onboard.

Day 4-5 – The trip now shifts as we travel deep into the Coast Mountains up a beautiful fiord called Knight Inlet. Extending nearly 60 miles, Knight Inlet is surrounded by snow-capped peaks and some of the most remote wilderness on the coast. Grizzly bears require wilderness to survive. Starting in August, salmon return to spawn up the rivers and creeks. This wonderful source of food concentrates the bears along the river in the best places to fish. A local lodge has built raised viewing stands to watch the grizzly bears feed. We have the privilege of using the stands and learning from the local bear guides. We expect to have two opportunities to visit different viewing stands along the river, and we often see bears walking the shore. There should be some spectacular opportunities for photography.

Day 6 – At the entrance to Knight Inlet is the abandoned Kwakwaka’wakw village of Mimquimlees. With permission from the local native band we may explore the old village to discover fallen totem poles and a rich heritage. Returning to Johnstone Strait, we will have further encounters with the whales. Each experience is different. With a good low tide, we may explore the shore for different species of colourful sea stars, anemone, and algae. With an active group, we can hike into the coastal forest to see big trees and learn about the forest plants.

Day 7 –Trip Finish: We return to Port McNeill late morning on October 8th to complete our voyage. Participants can catch the afternoon flight departing Port Hardy back to Vancouver.