



GREAT BEAR SEA

Sample Itinerary

Vessel: SV Island Odyssey

Start: Prince Rupert, BC

Finish: Terrace, BC

8 Days

Note: *This is intended as a Sample Itinerary. Please do not book flights based on information listed in this document as changes are possible. You will be provided with an Arrivals and Departures Itinerary once all details have been confirmed. Please contact us with any questions.*

INTRODUCTION

After the protection of large areas of the Great Bear Rainforest in 2006, subsequent conservation efforts have focused on the inter-connected, surrounding ocean – the Great Bear Sea. These rich waters are the source of the herring and wild salmon, which in turn provide food for the amazing humpback whales, orca and grizzly bears. The annual return of spawning salmon into the rivers and creeks, transfer nutrients into the forest and contributes to the creation of the amazing old-growth trees.

Over several years, First Nations working first with British Columbia, and now Canada, have created a series of proposed marine protected areas. With the recent 2024 announcement of funding from all levels of government and philanthropists – a concept modelled on the original 2006 Great Bear Agreement – many of these areas will now be receiving protection from mining, oil drilling and overfishing, while preserving First Nations food gathering and promoting sustainable tourism.

This voyage will celebrate and explore the north and central coast of British Columbia – the 'Great Bear Sea' - with the anticipation of seeing some amazing wildlife while enjoying the peace and tranquility of the BC Coast. This amazing expedition off the beaten path combines several of the top wilderness experiences, including bear viewing in one of the most remote and well-kept secret locations for grizzly bears in Canada – the Khutzeymateen Valley, searching for orcas and humpback whales, and exploring beautiful outer islands and mountain fjords.

Located on the north coast of BC, this is a beautiful land of dense rainforest, winding fjords, and high rugged mountains. The awe-inspiring geography of this region ranges from the towering Coast Mountains with waterfalls cascading thousands of feet, to large coastal islands, and right out to the low-lying islands bordering Hecate Strait. Within this landscape, glaciers tower above beautiful old growth rain forests and fabulous beaches entice us to explore the outer islands. River estuaries provide important spawning grounds for many species of salmon, upon which the area's many grizzlies depend.

The Khutzeymateen Valley holds Canada's first grizzly bear sanctuary and is the habitat of one of British Columbia's most important coastal bear populations. Khutzeymateen Provincial Park, also known as Khutzeymateen/K'tzim-a-deen Grizzly Sanctuary, is located in the traditional territories of the Gits'iis Nation and Metlakatla Nation. The park was created in 1994 specifically to protect grizzly bears and their habitat and covers 44,300 hectares. We explore along the fjordic Inlet's winding shores and expect to see grizzly bears feed on spawning salmon. Bluewater Adventures is one of the few operators permitted to bring guests into the Khutzeymateen/K'tzim-a-deen Grizzly Sanctuary at the head of the inlet – a wonderful opportunity for all our guests and crew!

Making our way south into the protected waters at the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest, we steer through remote channels shrouded by old-growth forests of Sitka spruce, western red cedar, and western hemlock. Trees can tower up to 300 feet and grow for more than 1,500 years in this nitrogen-rich environment – with some areas referred to as a “salmon forest”. The Tsimshian and Haisla First Nations people have lived in the area for tens of thousands of years. We will learn about their culture and how important this remote and pristine wilderness is to them and their future generations. Conservationists and First Nations have been actively working to protect this area as it contains the largest remaining untouched temperate rainforest on the Pacific Coast. In 2006, following the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement between the British Columbia government, Coastal First Nations, the forestry industry, and environmental groups, 10% of the Great Bear Rainforest was set aside for protection as conservancies.

Today, Coastal Guardian Watchmen play a critical role in all aspects of stewardship for Coastal First Nations. They uphold and enforce traditional and contemporary Indigenous laws and continue the work of their ancestors in protecting and managing coastal territories by ensuring resources are sustainably managed, that rules and regulations are followed, and that land and marine use agreements are implemented effectively. Within the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), reconciliation and efforts in collaborative governance, the Coastal Guardian Watchmen are at the leading edge of a global movement toward Indigenous led stewardship.

SAMPLE ITINERARY

For all our voyages we intentionally keep our itineraries flexible enabling us to take advantage of wildlife sightings, weather and tides, and the interests of the group.

Arrival into Prince Rupert

We highly recommend arriving in Prince Rupert the day prior to the trip start and staying overnight. This ensures the group departs on time as there can be unforeseen weather delays when travelling in coastal regions. Prince Rupert’s historic downtown and Cow Bay shopping districts both offer shops, galleries, restaurants and cafes, and there is also the well curated Museum of Northern British Columbia housed in a large cedar longhouse, depicting a legacy of oral history, archaeological discoveries and unique artifacts that depict ten thousand years of ancient history.

Trip Start – Day 1

Meet the Bluewater Adventures crew at the top of the dock at the Cow Bay Marina in the late morning. Upon boarding the vessel, cabins will be assigned and following introductions and safety orientation we will depart Prince Rupert harbour for the beauty of Portland Inlet and Chatham Sound with its myriad of islands.

During our daily shore or small boat excursions our onboard naturalist will help identify different coastal plants, marine mammals, terrestrial animals, birds, and intertidal life. Interested participants can help keep a species list for the trip.

Days 2 – 4

We will sail inland to spend a day bear viewing in Khutzeymateen Inlet, which is a protected area and is jointly managed by BC Parks, Coast Tsimshian First Nations, and the Gitsi’is Tribe. At its head is Khutzeymateen/K’tzim-a-deen Grizzly Sanctuary, adjoining the more recently declared Khutzeymateen Inlet Conservancy lands along the inlet’s length. The inlet provides excellent feeding from spring through fall for an important population of grizzly bears and a host of other wildlife, amongst beautiful and inspiring landscapes! Covering an area of 45,000 hectares, scientists estimate that there are about 50 grizzlies protected by the restrictions of the Sanctuary. The fall months see grizzly bears attracted to the rivers by spawning salmon. This is an important food source in preparation for winter hibernation. After anchoring, we’ll proceed by zodiac as we take care to spot the bears from the water. The bear population here is not hunted and the bears display a general indifference to our presence. Still, to minimize our impact, we will maintain a respectful distance that allows them to engage in their natural behaviours.

We return to the outer islands and lower topography of Chatham Sound; Porcher, Stephens and Dundas Islands are the largest in the area with remote beaches for us to explore. As these waters surrounding these outer islands is more exposed, we also hope for a good wind to allow for the opportunity set the sails and enjoy the silence and serenity of nature.

Humpback whales congregate along the mainland coast later in the summer and we expect to find them feeding in these rich waters. We also keep watch for other marine mammals like orca, porpoise, and Steller sea lions – an inquisitive species that are expert, deep-water predators who dine a variety of fish, octopus, and halibut. This is high season for fish-eating “resident” orcas, as salmon returning to spawn are congregated in waterways leading to their natal streams and rivers.

There will be time to explore the protected waters using our stable sea kayaks. Evenings after we anchor, or mornings before we set off will be the best times to enjoy the calm waters and solitude of the fantastic landscapes.

Days 5 – 7

Heading south from Chatham Sound we will enter Grenville Channel, part of the famous “Inside Passage” route to Alaska where we can expect to see fishing boats, tugs towing large barges, and the occasional ferry passing by.

Exiting Grenville Channel leads us into southern Douglas Channel (Wright Sound, Squally Channel, and Whale Channel). Exploring these waters – and at various other places along our journey – we expect to see humpback whales. We keep an eye out for large spouts and hope to witness very interesting behaviours like breaches, pectoral slaps, spy-hopping and possibly bubble-net feeding. We will take the time to observe these amazing, 15-metre-long creatures whenever the opportunity arises.

Fin whales have also been spotted in Caamano Sound - one of the proposed new marine protected areas - and we hope to have luck spotting these massive and speedy cetaceans – the second largest creature on the planet. If time permits, we will make a stop to visit local whale researchers to learn about their fascinating work.

As we travel along Princess Royal Island, we keep a close watch on the shoreline, since this is the best-known area for seeing the rare all-white Spirit (also known as Kermode) bear. There is a chance we may spot one foraging along the shore. These white bears are actually black bears expressing a genetic variation resulting in about ten percent of the area’s population being all white.

Trip Finish – Day 8

We will arrive in Kitimat around noon. Travel time to the airport is approximately 1 hour. Bluewater Adventures will provide transportation for you and your luggage to the Terrace Airport for a **mid/late-afternoon flight**. Alternatively, you can decide to spend an extra day in Terrace and either depart on the evening flight or the next day.

Terrace has many remnants of its industrious past, such as the Heritage Park Museum, the “Old Bridge” (National Historic Site of Canada), and the George Little House - the original founder of Terrace. You can view local art at the Terrace Art Gallery and purchase indigenous art and gifts at the House of Sim-oi-Ghets.

Shuttle fees from the Kitimat Marina to the Terrace Airport on DAY 8 are included in your trip fees. Any transportation beyond this service is the responsibility of the guest.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Prices include: All meals onboard ship from lunch on the first day to breakfast on the last; Captain, Chef, Crew, Naturalist; applicable permits, Park user fees, and First Nations protocol fees; shuttle from the marina in Kitimat to the Terrace Airport on Day 8; and full use of all facilities aboard the vessel.

Prices do not include: Transportation to Prince Rupert or from Terrace, travel or cancellation insurance, accommodation and meals prior to embarkation, or crew gratuities.

IS THIS TRIP RIGHT FOR YOU?

This is a 'soft adventure' trip. If you have any concerns about your full participation in the trip, please discuss your situation with the office staff. We have experience leading a variety of guests and want to ensure that the trip meets your expectations so that you have the best experience possible on this adventure. We respect the confidential nature of any personal information shared and can guarantee all information provided to us is only used to help our crew prepare for your trip.

- Participants need to be amenable to live in the relatively close quarters of a motor-sailor yacht and able to follow Crew's safety directions. We find the best trips we operate are those where the dynamics of the group work well – at little patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's experience.
- On our day within the Khutzeymateen Sanctuary, we are limited to zodiac-based viewing due to Parks restrictions. This day will be less active. Good clothing will go a long way in making the experience memorable and your enjoyment of this incredible landscape.
- We do not travel far during our shore excursions – a few kilometres at most – and guests should expect a variety of trail conditions, anywhere from slippery shoreline; to flat, maintained, forest paths; to undulating, unkept rainforest exploration.
- While we mostly travel in protected waters, there can be days during your trip that may include some rolling seas during transit. Our sailing vessels are equipped to stabilize to these conditions if encountered. This could also be an opportunity to take a turn at the wheel!
- Guests should be capable of getting in and out of the zodiacs – this includes getting in/out from the boat as well as in/out on shore. Assistance will always be provided.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Scheduled air service is the fastest, most convenience way to reach Prince Rupert and Terrace. Prince Rupert is serviced by Air Canada, while Terrace is serviced by both Air Canada and WestJet.

Do you require assistance with flights or Travel Insurance?

Our designated travel agent is [Hagen's Travel](#). Located in North Vancouver, they can assist you with booking flight arrangements, travel/medical insurance, pre-post hotel stays, and more.

You can reach the Hagen's Travel office at 604-980-8004 or our agent, Bonnie, directly at 604-926-4305 or by email at bonnie@hagenstravel.com.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Due to the nature of travel with Bluewater Adventures, passengers should have in place, prior to departure, comprehensive insurance coverage including medical and emergency evacuation, trip cancellation and interruption, and baggage insurance. It is the responsibility of the guest to secure insurance to the level that they prefer. Bluewater Adventures terms apply to all passengers. Additional expenses are the full responsibility of the passenger. Any losses experienced because of incorrect travel planning or not securing adequate insurance will also be the full responsibility of the passenger.

TOURIST INFORMATION

For information on Prince Rupert visit Tourism Prince Rupert's website www.visitprincerupert.com or call 250-624-5637, or Toll Free: 1-800 667-1994.

For information on activities in Terrace, visit www.visitterrace.com or call 250-635-4944. For information on activities in Kitimat, visit kitimatbound.ca or call 250-632-6294.

To learn more about the Great Bear Rainforest and general information on British Columbia's attractions, travel, restaurants, shopping, transportation, and accommodation contact Destination British Columbia: 1 800-435-5622 or visit the Destination BC website at www.hellobc.com



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