



HAIDA GWAI

Sample Itinerary

Vessel: SV Island Odyssey or SV Island Solitude

Start and Finish: Sandspit, 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.*

Haida Gwaii (“Islands of the Haida People”) is a remarkable area with over 200 islands; offering beautiful, forested creek walks; rugged exposed headlands; and protected passageways between towering mountains. The archipelago of Haida Gwaii consists of two main islands: Graham Island in the north and Moresby Island in the south.

Theories suggest that parts of Haida Gwaii escaped the last ice age, forming a glacial refuge for certain forms of plant and animal life. This helps to explain the presence of plant species found nowhere else in the world, and noticeably different sub-species of birds, fish, and mammals. Haida Gwaii provides a remarkable evolutionary showcase - hence its description as the “Canadian Galapagos”. Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site holds centuries of cultural history in store and is protected from the ocean floor to the mountain tops.

Haida Gwaii was briefly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands – named as such by Captain George Dixon in 1787 after Queen Charlotte of the United Kingdom. In 2009 the name was formally returned to Canada and the name Haida Gwaii was officially restored. Since then, the Council of the Haida Nation (CHN) has continued work to restore Haida place names throughout Haida Gwaii. This effort has resulted in the [restoration of 12 place names](#), as well as restoring the ancestral Haida name of the Village of Daajing Giids (briefly known as the Village of Queen Charlotte). This municipal name restoration is the first in the province and this is just the beginning of work which will continue until Haida citizens, communities, and leaders feel their job is done. To learn more about the importance of restoring place names, to view these locations on a map, and to listen to audio files to learn how to pronounce these place names please visit www.haidanation.ca/haida-place-names.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work closely with local partners that assist us in providing a unique and memorable travel experience in a very remote area. Small ship travel through this unforgettable landscape allows us to voyage to places not accessible by land.

The Council of the Haida Nation invites you to sign the [Haida Gwaii Pledge](#) prior to your visit. You will also receive an orientation onboard prior to going ashore in Gwaii Haanas National Park and Haida Heritage Site. Your trip price includes all Parks visitor fees which go towards the Watchmen Program.

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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 Sandspit

Plan to arrive in Sandspit, BC (K'il Kun) the day prior to your trip start. Most of our guests fly with Air Canada direct from Vancouver. Bluewater Adventures will reserve local accommodation for the night before your trip start.

Your evening's accommodation and breakfast/gratuities the following morning are included in your trip fees. Dinner for this evening is on your own.

Trip Start – Day 1

The group will meet in the morning. Please be sure to check out of your hotel room with luggage in hand, prior to this time. You will be greeted by our shuttle bus driver/guide for your Haida Gwaii land tour. You will be transported to the ferry landing at Alliford Bay to take the ferry across to Skidegate Landing on Graham Island. The ferry crossing takes approximately 25 minutes.

Our first stop will be the renowned *Haida Heritage Centre at Kay Llnagaay* on Graham Island for a guided tour followed by a traditional Haida lunch at *Keenawaii's Kitchen*, hosted by a local Haida family from Skidegate. Following lunch, we will have time for a short walk at Spirit Lake before catching the ferry back to Moresby Island. The shuttle will transport the group along the only road to where the vessel will be waiting. It is an active logging road and it can sometimes be a bumpy ride – be sure to keep your eyes out for black bears and Sitka deer at the side of the road.

In about an hour's time, we arrive at Moresby Camp to board the vessel. Upon boarding the ship, you will meet the crew, cabins will be assigned, and everyone will participate in an introductory & safety orientation with dinner to follow. We will spend our first evening anchored nearby and will depart early the next morning into the waters of Southern Moresby Island to explore the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site.

Days 2 – 7

Haida have lived on these islands since time immemorial, and this rugged landscape offers a rare glimpse into over 12,000 years of human habitation. We will journey through history as Haida Watchmen welcome us to ancient Haida villages lining the shoreline of Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site. Haida Watchmen are on-site guardians for the ancient village sites of T'aanuu Llnagaay (Tanu), K'uuna Llnagaay (Skedans), and SGang Gwaay (briefly known as Anthony Island/Ninstints) – a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site with fabulous poles. They share their knowledge of traditional culture and bring their ancestors' villages to life under weathered monumental poles and amid the remains of multi-tiered longhouses dug into the earth.

If weather permits, we will also visit Hlk'yah GawGa (Windy Bay) on Lyell Island, which is the site of the first pole raised in 130 years. This 42-foot monumental cedar Legacy Pole was carved by Jaalen Edenshaw and raised in 2013 honouring the 20th anniversary of the Gwaii Haanas Agreement between the Canadian government and the Haida Nation to protect the natural and marine resources. There may also be a chance to visit Gandll K'in Gwaay.yaay (Hotsprings Island), whose pools have slowly returned since draining after an earthquake struck Haida Gwaii in 2012.

We will spend most of our time exploring the remote eastern and southern shores of Moresby Island, with much of the trip taking place in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site. Gwaay Haanas means "Islands of Beauty" which is an apt description as the islands offer an ethereal landscape of beautiful sandy beaches; sheltered inlet shorelines teeming with sea stars; boggy plateau; and lowland rainforest. Lying at the edge of the continental shelf, Haida Gwaii's nutrient rich waters are tempered by warm offshore currents. Be sure to keep an eye out as we will encounter a wealth of wildlife at sea, on land, and in the air during our journey.

We aim to spot marine life such as whales, porpoise, and Steller sea lions. In addition, K'iid Xyangs K'iidaay (briefly known as Burnaby Narrows) is one of the richest intertidal locations in the world. Floating through these waters at lower tides gives us the opportunity to see and learn about a vast array of different intertidal species.

With around 1.5 million seabirds that breed on its islands, Haida Gwaii is a birder's paradise. Eagles and a wide array of seabirds – attracted by concentrations of forage fish and plankton – will keep birders glued to their binoculars. Long-distance pelagic species can often be spotted, and on land many year-round resident birds are unique subspecies.

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Perhaps there's even the chance to see a tufted or horned puffin! While the wildlife in itself is magnificent, to have the backdrop of the ancient forests of Haida Gwaii make it all the more powerful.

During our daily shore or small boat excursions, our naturalist will help identify coastal plants, animals, birds, and marine life. Those who are interested can participate in keeping a species list for the trip. There will be time to explore the protected waters and shoreline using our stable sea-kayaks. We will spend each evening in a different secluded anchorage.

Trip Finish – Day 8

The trip will finish late morning and you will disembark the vessel before noon at Moresby Camp. From there the group will be shuttled back to Sandspit airport. The trip by bus takes about an hour. You can expect to arrive in Sandspit by midday. This will give you time to have lunch at Shingle Bay Bistro at the Sandspit Airport and do any last-minute shopping at the airport gift shop, prior to your **afternoon flight** to Vancouver.



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