



Whales & Totems of Johnstone Strait

Sample Itinerary

Start & Finish: Port McNeill, BC

5 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.

At the northern end of Vancouver Island lies a protected maze of islands and waterways, full of wildlife, beautiful scenery, and the history and traditions of the Kwakwaka'wakw people (Kwakiutl). The Pacific Ocean funnels into the protected waters of Johnstone Strait creating strong tidal currents, and incredibly nutrient-rich waters. Millions of salmon, returning to spawn in the mainland rivers, must converge to pass through the Strait. Johnstone Strait is considered by researchers as the best place in the world to see Orca (killer whales), as they come to hunt the salmon – their preferred food. In addition, we expect to see humpback whales, porpoise, and a variety of bird and plant species as we will explore the art and culture of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations who have lived here for thousands of years.

SAMPLE ITINERARY

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

Arrival Day into Port McNeill

From the Port Hardy airport, it is about a 35-minute taxi ride to Port McNeill. Please note that there can sometimes be unforeseen weather delays when travelling in coastal regions; most commonly fog. To ensure that the group can set sail on time, we advise you to arrive the day prior to the trip and spend the night at an accommodation of your choice.

Day 1 – Trip Start

This trip starts and finishes in Port McNeill, BC. Guests will be met by crew late morning at the top of North Island Marina. The dock is located on the Port McNeill waterfront, west of the Visitor Centre (turn left when facing the water at the intersection of Beach Drive / McNeill Road). Upon boarding the vessel, 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 hope to discover our first pod or group of whales the first afternoon. You will agree that orcas are one of the most exciting marine mammals to watch as we see them foraging for salmon, spyhopping, and breaching (leaping clear of the water). Guests will learn about the behaviour of these fascinating creatures, listen to them calling on the ship's underwater microphone, and learn how to identify individual animals. Keep watch for the larger spout of a humpback whale – they are known to feed well into fall on the BC coast before their migration south. Each night we anchor in a secluded anchorage.

Day 2 - 4

Our focus these days will be on the waters of Johnstone Strait and nearby Queen Charlotte Strait. We will spend time in Johnstone Strait, the core orca watching area. Not only is the area famous for orcas, but humpback whales are also commonly in the area and Dall's porpoise may come over to the boat to play on the bow wave. We expect to have multiple encounters with whales. Each experience is different!

BLUEWATER ADVENTURES SAMPLE ITINERARY – NORTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND

We will spend time among the islands of the Broughton Archipelago Marine Provincial exploring for different species of marine mammals, exploring remote beaches, and observing a variety of sea birds. Nearby Pine Island has one of the largest seabird nesting colonies on the coast.

Walks in the coastal forest provide opportunities to see big trees and learn about the forest plants. With a good low tide, we may explore the shore for different species of colourful sea stars, anemone, and algae. If we have a good wind, we expect to raise the sails and enjoy the silence and beauty of sailing.

We will visit the modern Kwakwaka'wakw community of Alert Bay to visit the *U'Mista Cultural Centre* and see a fascinating collection of potlatch masks. At the entrance to Knight Inlet is the abandoned Kwakwaka'wakw village of *Mimquimlees*. Time permitting, we may explore this village site to discover evidence of an ancient and rich heritage.

During our daily shore or small boat excursions our onboard naturalist will help identify different coastal plants, animals, birds and marine life. Interested participants can help keep a species list for the trip. There will be plenty of time to explore the protected waters using our stable sea-kayaks.

Day 5 – Trip Finish

We return to Port McNeill to complete our voyage late morning. Participants can catch **afternoon flights** back to Vancouver from Port Hardy.