



NORTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND

Orcas, Totems & Grizzlies

Aboard S/V Island Odyssey

Start and Finish in Port McNeill, BC

This natural history voyage explores the protected waters of Northern Vancouver Island. Whale researchers consider this area the best place in the world to observe orcas or killer whales. In addition, we expect to see humpback whales, black bears, bald eagles and sea otters. The Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations people have lived here for thousands of years and we will explore their culture and art. Combine these incredible wildlife and cultural experiences into one week... and you have an amazing trip!

SAMPLE ITINERARY

Arrival Day

We recommend arriving in Port McNeill the day prior to the trip start (July 31) and staying overnight. This is to ensure the group can set sail on time. When travelling in coastal regions unforeseen weather delays are common, most commonly fog.

Trip Start – Day 1

This trip starts and finishes in Port McNeill, BC. Guests will meet at **10:30 am** at Cab's Fuel Dock on the Port McNeill waterfront. Upon boarding "Island Odyssey", 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 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. Each night we anchor in a 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 play in the boats bow wave. After a few hours floating with whales, we will 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 vast areas of wilderness to survive. Starting in August, salmon return to spawn up the rivers and creeks and this essential source of food concentrates the bears along the river in the best places to fish. We hope to see bears at the mouth of the river, and often see bears walking the shore. There should be some spectacular photo opportunities so have your cameras ready.

Day 6:

At the entrance to Knight Inlet is the abandoned Kwakwaka'wakw village of Mimquimlees. With permission from the local Native Band, we will 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 so all "spotters" spotters are required on deck! With a good low tide, we may explore the shore for different species of colourful sea stars, anemone, and algae. There may be an opportunity to hike into the coastal forest to see big trees and learn about the forest plants.

BLUEWATER ADVENTURES – OTG SAMPLE ITINERARY

Day 7: Trip Finish

We return to Port McNeill late morning to complete our voyage. Guests can plan to catch afternoon flights departing from Port Hardy back to Vancouver.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Booking Your Flights

Any reputable travel agent can assist with your travel arrangements. Bluewater Adventures uses **Uniglobe Travelex** services. As a travel agency, they can provide competitive fares and can also assist with travel and cancellation insurance.

At Uniglobe Travelex we work with:

Elaine Ross

elaine@uniglobetravelex.com

(604) 538-2111 ext 6614

toll free: 1(888) 805-3093

From overseas, call collect on the weekdays during office hours.

Please mention that you are a Bluewater Adventures passenger in order to receive our preferred rates.

PACIFIC COASTAL AIRLINES provides daily service between Port Hardy and Vancouver International Airport **South Terminal**. Pacific Coastal Airlines operates a free shuttle bus between Vancouver's main air terminal and the South Terminal. Frequency is every 30 minutes. Contact Pacific Coastal Airlines for more information **Toll Free: 1-800-663-2872 or 604-273-8666** <http://www.pacificcoastal.com>

Please Note: *It's possible to take the early flight from Vancouver to Port Hardy and arrive at the boat on time. Historically Port Hardy experiences fog in the morning during this time of year which can delay flights. It's recommended to arrive the day prior to the trip start and stay the night in Port McNeill*

RAINBOW EXPRESS TAXI operates a shuttle/taxi service between Port Hardy airport and Port McNeill. Travel between Port Hardy airport and Port McNeill takes about 40 minutes and costs approximately \$15 CAD per passenger. If you are the only passenger coming off the flight that requires transportation to Port McNeill the cost will be approx. \$40.00 CAD. You should reserve 24 hours in advance by calling Rainbow Express Taxi. **(250-956-8294)** and they will meet your incoming flight. *Prices are subject to change.*

SIDE TRIPS

You may wish to extend your visit to Northern Vancouver Island and explore the local area. Port McNeill is ideally situated with ferry access to Sointula and Alert Bay. Sointula was established at the turn of the century by Finnish pioneers with a utopian dream. In Finnish, Sointula means "harmony". It is a 25 minute ferry ride from Port McNeill. Alert Bay is a 40 minute ferry ride from Port McNeill. During our voyage we will be visiting Alert Bay and the U'Mista Cultural Centre, however, for those particularly interested in native culture it is worth the extra visit. There is a lovely boardwalk trail around a bog where you can enjoy interesting vegetation, bird watching and photography. Locals refer to it as 'Gator Gardens' – however, the name doesn't do it justice. It's well worth the walk.