

Bluewater Adventures | Orcas, Totems & Grizzly Bears, British Columbia

Holiday Duration: 6 Nights



Overview

At the northern end of Vancouver Island lies a 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. Groups of orcas (or killer whales) hunt the salmon in the passages. Grizzly bears roam the shores and estuaries waiting for the fish to swim upstream and spawn. The Johnstone Strait area once supported tens of thousands of Kwakwaka'wakw people, shown by the many remaining village midden sites in the area. Now, only a few villages remain inhabited. However, the culture and traditions remain intact. In the old villages, proud totem poles can still be found. The modern Kwakwaka'wakw in Alert Bay, preserve their heritage in wonderful

carvings, canoes and masks. This area forms the southern end of what conservationists call the "Great Bear Rainforest".

This itinerary is flexible and can be tailor-made to suit you; if you want to add extra days in one area, extend the holiday or maybe change the direction of travel. Talk to one of our experts about how to make this holiday the perfect one for you.

Here's a day-by-day guide to your itinerary. Feel free to ask us to add other days or ideas and excursions by contacting us directly, so we can give you the best price.

Day 1



This trip starts and finishes in Port McNeill, BC. (An overnight stay will be necessary). 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. They have chosen Port McNeill as the starting point for this voyage because it is the closest port to the core killer whale area. Expect to discover your first pod or group of whales the first afternoon. Orcas are one of the most exciting marine mammals. You 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 you will anchor in a different, secluded anchorage.

Days 2-5



The focus for 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, you 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 there is a good wind, expect to raise the sails and enjoy the silence and beauty of sailing. There will be time to explore the protected waters using the stable, sea kayaks that are carried onboard.

Day 6



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

Day 7



Return to Port McNeill late morning, so that you can continue your onward or homebound journey.

If you are interested in a holiday to Canada please contact us on 020 8776 8709 to discuss your plans with a Canada expert, or send an email to canada@frontier-travel.co.uk with your requirements and we will put together your ideal itinerary and quotation. Let us take you there.

