



KHUTZHEMATEEN: VALLEY OF THE GRIZZLY BEAR

Sample Itinerary

Vessel: SV Island Roamer

Start & Finish: Prince Rupert, BC

7 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.

This voyage will explore the northernmost reaches of the Great Bear Rainforest region: the Khutzeymateen Valley, with the anticipation of seeing some amazing wildlife while enjoying the peace and tranquility of the northern BC Coast. This amazing expedition off the beaten path combines several of the top wilderness experiences: bear viewing in one of the most remote and well-kept secret locations for grizzly bears in Canada, searching for orcas and humpback whales, and exploring beautiful outer islands and mountain fiords. We never know what wonderful wildlife sightings and experiences we will encounter each day.

Located on the northwest coast of BC, this is a beautiful land of dense Sitka spruce rainforest, winding fiords, and high rugged mountains. 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 (or K'tzim-a-deen) is a native Coast Tsimshian word meaning "Valley at the Head of the Inlet". We explore along the fjordic Inlet's winding shores and expect some breathtaking bear viewing in the new Khutzeymateen Conservancy as grizzly bears feed on lush sedge grasses. Bluewater Adventures is one of the few operators permitted to bring guests into the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary at the head of the inlet – a wonderful opportunity for all of our guests and crew!

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.

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 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 many shops, galleries, restaurants and cafes, and there is also the wonderfully informative Museum of Northern British Columbia that you can visit.

Day 1: Trip Start

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.

Day 2 - 3

We explore the islands of Chatham Sound: Porcher, Stephens and Dundas Islands are the largest in the area with remote beaches for us to explore. In the waters of Chatham Sound, we will be on the search for sea lions, orca, and humpback whales.

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.

Remote Green Island Lighthouse is now a National Historic Site. Located to the east of Dundas Island, it still has light keepers manning the lighthouse and living on the tiny island. If the timing and weather allows, we may go ashore for a visit.

Day 4 - 6

We now change course and sail inland to spend one day bear viewing in Kwinimass Conservancy and two days bear viewing in Khutzheymateen Inlet, which is a protected area and is jointly managed by BC Parks, Coast Tshimshian First Nations, and the Gitsi'is Tribe collaboratively. At its head is Khutzheymateen Provincial Park, also known as Khutzheymateen Grizzly Sanctuary, which adjoins the more recently declared Conservancy lands along the inlet's length. These adjacent inlets provide excellent spring feeding for a dense population of grizzly bears and these landscapes are collectively among the most beautiful and inspiring anywhere! Covering an area of 45,000 hectares, scientists estimate there is an important population of about 50 grizzlies protected by the restrictions of the Sanctuary.

In Khutzheymateen Inlet, our trip focuses on bear viewing in the Conservancy along the shores of the Inlet, and into the Sanctuary where only a few operators are permitted. After anchoring, we'll proceed by zodiac as we take care to spot the bears. The bear population here is not hunted and the bears display a general indifference to our presence. Still, in order to minimize our impact, we will maintain a respectful distance that allows them to engage in their natural behaviours.

The spring and early summer months of May and June are peak season for grizzly viewing in the Khutzheymateen (K'tzim-a-deen) and Kwinamaas (Ksi X'anmaas). Bears are attracted to the intertidal zone for its abundance of protein-rich Lyngby Sedge which is an important spring food source. As this is also mating season, large, more reticent male grizzlies may also be seen searching for females in the estuary.

From the mouth of fiord-like Portland Canal, we now return to the outer islands and lower topography of Chatham Sound. The Nine Tribes of the Tshimshian have lived in this area for over 10,000 years with a powerful and influential history. There are two remaining villages along our route; Lax Kw'alaams (meaning "place of the wild roses"), which was once used as a Hudson Bay Company trading post called Fort Simpson and Metlakatla, which became a Christian community under Reverend Duncan during the late 1800's.

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Day 7: Trip Finish

We return through narrow Venn Passage to Prince Rupert. Venn Passage has an incredible collection of petroglyphs (indigenous rock carvings); time and tides depending, we may have a chance to see some of these ancient carvings and learn of their history from a local Tsimshian Guide.

We return to Prince Rupert and will tie up at Cow Bay Marina by noon. You will have enough time for lunch and a wander through Prince Rupert before catching the **late afternoon** flight to Vancouver. The airport shuttle leaves from the Prince Rupert Prestige Hotel downtown about two hours prior to the flight. Please make sure to get food before heading out to the airport, as it does not have any food services.



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