Discovering Our Planet Together



Great Bear Rainforest: In Search of Spirit Bears, Grizzlies & Whales

Explore British Columbia's Coastal Wilderness Aboard a Private Sailboat

Table of Contents

Trip Overview 3

Itinerary 4

Accommodations 7

What Makes Nat Hab Different? 9

Dates, Pricing & Info 11



Trip Details:

Days
9 Days / Aug–Sep

Price
From $11995 (+Air)

Great Bear Rainforest: In Search of Spirit Bears, Grizzlies & Whales

Explore British Columbia's Coastal Wilderness Aboard a Private Sailboat

In the remote valleys of the Coast Range on Canada's far western edge, some of the planet's oldest and tallest trees rise along salmon-studded rivers that rush to the Pacific. Pockets of centuries-old cedars and Sitka spruce soar 250 feet into the rain clouds, sheltering the pale spirit bear of Native legend. Just a few hundred of these rarely seen bears live in this isolated wilderness, and we go in search of them with local Gitga'at guides, First Nations people who have lived among them for millennia. The Great Bear Rainforest is also home to grizzlies and wolves and bald eagles that nest atop ancient hemlocks while deer and elk browse the undergrowth. Humpback whales, orcas and porpoises ply the jade-green fjords. We join them as we sail a maze of inlets in British Columbia's Inside Passage—a wilderness voyage into one of Earth's most magnificent, pristine and at-risk natural realms.

Trip Highlights

Gain Intimate Access to Remote Realms via Private Yacht

Aboard our privately chartered sailboat, explore isolated reaches of the world's largest remaining tract of virgin temperate rainforest, which blankets the Coast Range

See More Wildlife with Expert Guides

With our Expedition Leader, look for grizzlies, black bears and wolves, and search for the mystical spirit bear with a local Gitga'at First Nations guide

Watch for Humpback Whales, Porpoises & Orcas

See humpback whales and other marine life feed and breach as we weave through the sheltered waters of some of the most pristine coastal wilderness on Earth

Ready to Book? Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917



Great Bear Rainforest: In Search of Spirit Bears, Grizzlies & Whales Itinerary

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Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	Vancouver / Terrace / Kitimat
Days 2–3	Kitimat / Great Bear Rainforest
Days 4–6	Princess Royal Island
Days 7–8	Fiordland Conservancy
Day 9	Bella Bella / Vancouver



Day 1

Vancouver / Terrace / Kitimat

Fly north to the edge of the Great Bear Rainforest

- Travel from Vancouver to Terrace in the lush Skeena River Valley
- Continue to Kitimat on the northern British Columbia coast
- Join your Expedition Leader and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner

Our British Columbia wilderness adventure begins in Vancouver, where we board our group flight north to Terrace in the lush Skeena River Valley. On arrival, transfer to Kitimat on Minnette Bay where our hotel awaits in the heart of town. This evening, gather with our Expedition Leader for a welcome dinner and orientation.

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Days 2–3

Kitimat / Great Bear Rainforest

Sail among whales and bears in the Great Bear Rainforest

- Settle into your private cabin aboard a small expedition sailboat
- Watch from the deck for humpback whales breaching, spy-hopping and slapping their flippers
- Go ashore in a remote Coast Range valley to search for grizzlies and black bears

This morning, board the sailboat that will be our home for the next seven nights. Once we meet the crew and settle into our private cabins, lunch is served aboard as we depart Kitimat harbor. Signs of civilization are soon behind us as we enter the sheltered inlets and estuaries of the Great Bear Rainforest, stopping each night in a different secluded anchorage.

This ancient ecosystem is one of the largest tracts of temperate rainforest left on Earth, harboring thousand-year-old cedar trees and pockets of old-growth Sitka spruce that soar more than 250 feet into the clouds. Rich salmon streams weave through lush valley bottoms, providing food for eagles, orcas, wolves, grizzlies, black bears, and the mystical creamy-white Kermode bear, also known as the "spirit bear." Cruising south down Douglas Channel, we reach a remote valley deep within the Coast Range where we go ashore in hopes of catching our first look at a black bear or grizzly. Amid the towering mountains and waterfalls cascading from sheer rock walls, look for bald eagles gliding overhead. Continuing down the fjord, keep an eye out from the deck for humpback whales. These charismatic mammals, which can grow to 50 feet and weigh 40 tons, may entertain us with breaching, spy-hopping or slapping their flippers. They congregate to feed in these waters in late summer and fall before their winter migration to the warm Pacific waters of Hawaii. We may also spot porpoises and Steller sea lions, and possibly orcas.

Days 4–6

Princess Royal Island

Search for rare white spirit bears on Princess Royal Island

- Explore with a Gitga'at guide who knows the bears' coastal habitat and behavior
- Enter the protected Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy
- Watch for cream-colored spirit bears, along with black bears and grizzlies

Continuing southward, our boat follows the indented shoreline of Princess Royal Island. This is the best-known area for catching a glimpse of the rare spirit bear, whose name reflects its legendary status among the Tsimshian peoples as a creature to be revered. Spirit bears are actually a unique subspecies of North American black bear, in which about one in every 10 bears is cream-colored due to a recessive gene. Over the next two days we're joined by a local Gitga’at Indigenous guide within the protected bounds of the Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy. Our guide knows this terrain intimately and will help us search for the pale bears along the creeks and estuaries, against the evergreen backdrop.

Though research remains inconclusive, perhaps only a couple hundred spirit bears are thought to exist, living exclusively along this wild portion of the British Columbia coast. The campaign to save the Great Bear Rainforest has heightened efforts to conserve this habitat from further logging and oil pipeline development that threaten the bears' future. The Gitga’at people are passionate about protecting the bears and their habitat, and without their stewardship, we would not have access to this special place. Our Gitga’at guide spends hours in this forest looking for the bears every day and is familiar with their behavior, sharing his experiences and stories with us. He will lead us to the area where spirit bears have most recently been spotted. While sightings are highly unpredictable and are never guaranteed, with patience and perseverance we’ll hope to see these secretive creatures, as well as conventional black bears, which we spot frequently, along with grizzly bears.

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Days 7–8

Fiordland Conservancy

Look for grizzlies among Fiordland's fjords and salmon streams

- Search for bears drawn to spawning salmon beneath granite cliffs and waterfalls
- Paddle stable sea kayaks through quiet estuaries and protected coastal waters
- Explore the shoreline at low tide for sea stars, anemones and algae

Spend two full days exploring the Fiordland Conservancy, deep within the Coast Range, which offers some of the most dramatic examples of glacially forged landscapes on the BC coast. Sheer granite cliffs rise more than 3,000 feet, and waterfalls plummet from their faces into the sea. Navigating the jade-green fjords, we explore remote estuaries up close, hoping to see grizzly bears attracted by spawning salmon. The combination of lush vegetation and salmon-rich streams makes Fiordland ideal grizzly habitat. Black bears are also prolific in these ancient forests, and we keep an eye out for wolves, too, though they are elusive. Gain another vantage point on these protected waters as we explore via stable sea kayaks carried on board . On daily shore excursions, our Expedition Leader helps identify various trees and plants, and interested guests can keep a species list for the trip. At low tide, search the shoreline for colorful sea stars, anemones and algae.

Day 9

Bella Bella / Vancouver

Conclude the voyage in the Heiltsuk community of Bella Bella

- Disembark in Bella Bella, the traditional homeland of the Heiltsuk First Nation
- Fly to Vancouver to connect with onward flights

Our voyage ends in Bella Bella, an isolated village on the central coast of British Columbia that is the traditional home of the Heiltsuk First Nations people. Here, we disembark and transfer to the small airport for our group flight to Vancouver, to continue with onward travels.

Please Note: *Trips operating in the reverse direction, from Bella Bella to Terrace, will include the same destinations in reverse order and will conclude in Terrace. However, this itinerary is meant as a guideline. The exact nature, duration and order of activities will be determined by weather, tides, permits, the location of wildlife and our guides' discretion. The itinerary above details the typical route between Terrace and Bella Bella.*

Have questions about our spirit bear tour? ***Click here*** *to view a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the adventure.*

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Great Bear Rainforest: In Search of Spirit Bears, Grizzlies & Whales Accommodations

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S/V Island Solitude

The elegant 83-foot sailboat *Island Solitude*, with a host of environmentally conscious features, is designed for cruising BC's protected coastal waters, with spacious accommodations for just 12 guests.



S/V Island Roamer

This 68-foot ketch featuring classic lines is seasoned veteran of Inside Passage waters and provides an ideal base for nimble exploration of the Great Bear Rainforest.

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MStar Hotel

The stylish, contemporary boutique hotel overlooks the rainforest-blanketed mountains behind Kitimat while enjoying an optimal location in the heart of the city center.



Shearwater Lodge

This high-end ecolodge set along a protected saltwater channel features a dramatic river rock fireplace in the main lounge area, plus 26 spacious yet cozy rooms with extra-large beds.

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/canada-northern-nature-travel/spirit-bear-cruise/accommodations.

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The Best Way to Explore the Great Bear Rainforest

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Most visitors who travel the Inside Passage along the wild BC coast do so aboard large cruise ships, missing this secluded realm entirely. And those who come to search for spirit bears usually stay on shore in lodges, requiring vehicle travel to trailheads. In contrast, our exclusive bear cruise maximizes your solitude in the Canadian wilderness, with diverse wildlife encounters you won't get any other way.

1 **A Private Chartered Sailboat for Solitude & Flexibility**

Our sailboat stops each night at a different secluded anchorage, surrounded by untouched wilderness. Most visitors stay at lodges where more people, vehicles, light and noise are part of the experience. Depending on tides, weather and location of wildlife, each day offers a choice of hidden coves and rainforest trails to explore. And by chartering a boat, we have flexibility to pursue the best wildlife experiences.

2 **A Small Group Ensures Intimate Nature Exploration**

Enjoy the intimacy of our private sailing yacht, with a maximum of just 12 guests (though the boat holds 14). You'll get the full attention of our Expedition Leader and staff, and, most importantly, quieter and more personal nature experiences.

3 **Remote Private Kayaking Excursions**

Enjoy quiet paddling opportunities in secluded inlets with no other visitors in sight. The only thing breaking the silence is the drip of the water from your paddle.

4 **Expert Naturalists & Guides**

Our naturalist Expedition Leader provides in-depth interpretation of this region's rich natural history. The ship's captain and crew are deeply familiar with these fjords and forests and adept at spotting wildlife. We also spend a day with an indigenous Gitga'at guide in search of spirit bears. Though the bears are elusive and we can't guarantee you'll see one, our local guide will know where they have been spotted most recently, situating us for the best chance to see them. **See Expedition Leader bios** and traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

5 **A Focus on First Nations & Conservation**

The Tshimshian, Haisla, and Heiltsuk First Nations people have lived in the area for tens of thousands of years. We learn about their cultures and how important this remote and pristine wilderness is to them and their future generations. Conservationists and First Nations have been actively working together to protect this region that contains the largest remaining untouched temperate rainforest on the Pacific Coast.

6 **Our Quality–Value Guarantee Ensures Your Outstanding Nature Adventure**

Natural Habitat Adventures offers an exclusive guarantee, which clearly states that we will meet the lofty expectations we set forth in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company. **Read our important promise.**

7 **Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey**

We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

8 **Natural Habitat Adventures is WWF's Travel Partner**

Because of our commitment to environmentally friendly travel, as well as the exceptional quality of our adventures, World Wildlife Fund—the world's leading environmental conservation organization—has named Natural Habitat Adventures as its worldwide travel partner, a designation that makes us exceedingly proud!

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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Price
From $11995 (+Air)

Group Size
Limited to 12 Travelers

Great Bear Rainforest: In Search of Spirit Bears, Grizzlies & Whales Dates, Pricing & Info

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2027 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Aug 27 - Sep 4, 2027	**$11995** +internal air	Aboard S/V Island Roamer · Bella Bella to Terrace · Natural Habitat Explorers Pricing Available
Sep 4 - Sep 12, 2027	**$11995** +internal air	Aboard S/V Island Roamer · Terrace to Bella Bella
Sep 25 - Oct 3, 2027	**$14395** +internal air	Aboard S/V Island Solitude · Bella Bella to Terrace

See https://www.nathab.com/canada-northern-nature-travel/spirit-bear-cruise/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s), local guides and boat crew, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, some alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, airport transfers in Bella Bella or Terrace on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

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Not Included

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, some alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees (if any), optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

Please note that the cost of internal flights is not included in your trip fee and will be billed separately.

Important Information About This Trip

While a highlight of this adventure is our search for spirit bears, as well as more commonly seen black bears and grizzlies, our ship-based wilderness expedition grants access to one of the most magnificent natural landscapes on Earth, which we will also experience on foot when we go ashore for hikes and further exploration. Guests should be aware that spirit bears are very rare, the coastal rainforest is very dense, and sightings can never be guaranteed. We spend three days in the spirit bear area and two full days at the spirit bear viewing platforms, offering multiple opportunities to spot them. The areas we visit provide the best chance for seeing elusive spirit bears, and our naturalist guide and crew are adept at finding them if they are present. But only about 50% of visitors to the Kitsoo Spirit Bear Conservancy will actually spot a spirit bear. However, whether or not we see a spirit bear, you will no doubt go home with an extraordinary experience of one of the planet's most beautiful and moving wild places. This remote coast, edged by glacier-iced peaks and blanketed in lush temperate rainforest, home to abundant wildlife ashore and at sea, offers one of the most powerful wilderness encounters on Earth. And knowing its future is fragile makes its conservation an even higher commitment for us all, once we have been immersed in its wonders.

A note to photographers: Please be aware that flash photography of wildlife is strictly forbidden while in the spirit bear viewing areas.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least $250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Getting There & Getting Home

This trip begins and ends in Vancouver, British Columbia. On Day 1, you will transfer to Terrace, British Columbia. On the final day, you will transfer from Bella Bella, British Columbia, back to Vancouver.

We have pre-booked seats for travelers on the required group flights between Vancouver and Terrace and between Bella Bella and Vancouver (or the reverse, depending on your itinerary direction). **You must arrive in Vancouver on Day 1 in time to check in for the group flight.** Exact departure times for these internal flights are confirmed in late spring; once finalized, we will notify you so you can schedule your arrival and departure flights accordingly.

You may depart Vancouver at any time on the final day after the group flight from Bella Bella returns.

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Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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