Discovering Our Planet Together



Exploring British Columbia & the San Juan Islands

Cruise the Sheltered Waters of the Salish Sea, Home to Abundant Marine Life

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Trip Details:

Days
8 Days / Oct

Price
From $6150

Physical Requirements
Easy to Moderate

Exploring British Columbia & the San Juan Islands

Cruise the Sheltered Waters of the Salish Sea, Home to Abundant Marine Life

In the inland channels of the Salish Sea, marine life flourishes. In late summer through early fall, pods of sleek orcas cruise in search of salmon. Seals break the surface to watch us with bright eyes as we paddle kayaks alongside. Humpback whales breach into the air, landing with a mighty splash. Along this maze of protected sounds and fjords, thick forests blanket coastal mountains in deep evergreen. Bald eagles perch atop firs and cedars to survey the scattered islands, strewn like emeralds in the sapphire sea. Though an international boundary crosses it, the Salish Sea is a single ecosystem that includes Washington's San Juan Islands as well as Canada's Gulf Islands and the Strait of Georgia. Aboard our small expedition ship, journey into this wild realm that is the ancient home of the Coast Salish people who have lived in harmony with its natural bounty for millennia.

Trip Highlights

Explore a Maritime Wonderland on Active Adventures

Via kayak, hikes and expedition landing craft, discover rocky coastlines, secluded coves and sealife in the San Juans, Gulf Islands and Desolation Sound

Watch for Orcas & Other Marine Wildlife

Look for orcas in season in Johnstone Strait off Vancouver Island, and scout for humpback whales, seals, sea lions, porpoises, bald eagles and more

Experience Indigenous Culture & British Heritage

Complement your nature immersion with the art, stories and dance performances of First Nations peoples in Alert Bay, and enjoy the British flavor of delightful Victoria

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



Exploring British Columbia & the San Juan Islands Itinerary

Cruise the Sheltered Waters of the Salish Sea, Home to Abundant Marine Life

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	Seattle
Day 2	Victoria
Day 3	Desolation Sound
Day 4	Johnstone Strait / Alert Bay
Day 5	Gulf Islands
Day 6	Friday Harbor
Day 7	San Juan Islands
Day 8	Seattle



Day 1

Seattle

Set sail from Seattle through Puget Sound

- Board your expedition ship on Seattle's waterfront
- Cruise past the city skyline and Space Needle as Mount Rainier rises to the south
- Sail north through Puget Sound toward British Columbia

Arrive in Seattle and transfer to the pier to board the *National Geographic Venture.* Once we cast off, enjoy a cocktail cruise along the city's waterfront, admiring the ever-growing skyline with its famous icon, the Space Needle, while Mt. Rainier rises like a giant glacier-capped sentinel in the south. Making our way north through Puget Sound, we skirt the Kitsap Peninsula and Whidbey Island on our way to Canada.

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Day 2

Victoria

Explore Victoria’s gardens, galleries and British heritage

- Tour private gardens and meet the gardeners who tend them
- Walk through Old Town past the landmark Fairmont Empress hotel
- Attend a private evening reception at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Clear Canadian customs this morning as we arrive in the charming city of Victoria on the southern end of Vancouver Island. Surrounding the lively Inner Harbor, the city's historic core is replete with British character, which it still exudes with enthusiasm. It was initially established in 1843 as a Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading post on a site chosen by James Douglas, then British colonial governor of Vancouver Island. The post was eventually renamed Fort Victoria, in honor of Queen Victoria. In the early 1850s, Douglas negotiated treaties with the Coast Salish peoples on Vancouver Island, and the new settlers gained a foothold. The city later boomed during the Fraser River gold rush, and in 1871, when British Columbia became Canada's sixth province, Victoria was proclaimed its capital.

Today, in addition to being the seat of government, Victoria thrives on tourism, with plenty to delight the visitor. Choose from varied tailor-made activities, based on your interests. Flowers flourish in the mild, sunny climate, and a guided tour of some the city's lavish private gardens offers a chance to meet and hear from the gardeners. Or bike along the waterfront, sample the city's art galleries, and stroll through Old Town. If time permits, have a look inside the famous Empress Hotel, an Edwardian landmark built in 1908 that is still the grande dame of the city. This evening, enjoy a private reception at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria as we take in its wide-ranging collection.

Day 3

Desolation Sound

Explore a marine wilderness framed by rainforest and mountains

- Kayak through sheltered coves beneath old-growth forest and ice-crowned peaks
- Watch for seals, sea lions, river otters and Dall’s porpoises
- Step ashore to hike or examine colorful intertidal life at low tide

Desolation Sound on BC's Sunshine Coast is a legendary destination for yachting, and it's easy to see why. Framed by the ice-crowned peaks of the Coast Range and fringed by old-growth temperate rainforest, the fjords and bays of this deepwater sound offer myriad opportunities for exploring this renowned marine wilderness. We spend the day cruising, paddling and hiking, surrounded by nature on a scale rarely encountered. With virtually no development or signs of permanent human presence, we're immersed in a powerful sense of the wild. When Captain George Vancouver first sailed these waters in 1792, the raw, remote nature of the region inspired him to name it Desolation Sound.

Kayaking is an especially appealing pursuit in these warm, sheltered waters, and there are many snug coves to poke into. Rocky islets studded with arbutus trees beckon us to step ashore, and hikes through meadows and deep green forest sanctuaries illumined with filtered sunlight lend a sense of peace and awe. Look for bald eagles that survey the sea from treetops, and watch for seals, sea lions, river otters and Dall's porpoise in the water. When the tide is out, colorful intertidal life invites close-up investigation, with large, bright sea stars a highlight.

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Day 4

Johnstone Strait / Alert Bay

Search for orcas and experience Kwakwaka'wakw culture

- Watch for orcas, dolphins, porpoises and other marine life in Johnstone Strait
- View carved ceremonial masks at the U'Mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay
- Watch traditional dances by the T'sasala Cultural Group inside the Big House

We sail through Johnstone Strait today, one of the world's best places to look for orcas when they are resident in the area from July until early fall. This narrow, glacier-carved channel runs 68 miles along the northeast flank of Vancouver Island, and its waters are the summer home of more than 200 orcas, also called killer whales, most of which linger into October. Orcas are actually the largest member of the dolphin family, though dolphins and whales are closely related, and together with porpoises, they comprise the order Cetacea. Orcas were given the name "killer whale" when early mariners observed groups of them hunting and preying on larger whale species. Johnstone Strait is known for its mirror-calm waters, and conditions are often perfect for sea kayaking. From the kayaks we have a chance to observe orcas at eye-level, as well as other marine life such as Pacific white-sided dolphins, Dall's porpoise, seals, sea lions and the occasional humpback, minke or gray whale.

Today we visit one of the oldest First Nations village sites in British Columbia. Alert Bay on Cormorant Island is home to the Kwakwaka'wakw people and a center for the living culture found throughout the Northwest Coast On a visit to the U'Mista Cultural Center, view the outstanding Potlatch Collection with its stunning array of carved wooden masks. Learn about the stories of the creatures they represent, as well as the significance of the Potlach itself in and the role it played in the culture and ceremonies of Northwest Coast indigenous peoples. Continuing to the Big House, which is the social center and cultural cornerstone of the First Nations community here, watch traditional dances by the T'sasala Cultural Group and listen to performers explain the story behind the movements that connect them with land, sky and sea.

Day 5

Gulf Islands

Explore the quiet coves and rural landscapes of the Gulf Islands

- Kayak protected waters among small islands and uninhabited islets
- Look for wildlife along isolated shorelines between Vancouver Island and the mainland
- Hike through islands known for artisan farms and a thriving arts community

Wake this morning in the Gulf Islands, which lie in the Strait of Georgia, wedged between Vancouver Island and the B.C. mainland. The islands are part of the same archipelago that comprises the San Juan Islands of Washington State, though its name is different in Canada. The larger islands feature rural landscapes and a serene pace of life, with a strong artist community and devotion to local food produced by artisan farmers. Other islands are barely populated, while numerous tiny islets are uninhabited but for the wildlife that thrives on these isolated outposts. Protected from fierce Pacific storms by the ridge of mountains down the center of Vancouver Island to the west, the Gulf Islands enjoy less than 30 inches of rain per year, with long, dry summers reminiscent more of the Mediterranean than these northerly latitudes. As our ship meanders through the islands, we'll take our pick of perfect spots to kayak, hike and look for wildlife.

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Day 6

Friday Harbor

Learn about the endangered orcas of the Salish Sea

- Visit the Whale Museum to see whale skeletons, artifacts and exhibits on regional conservation
- Explore Friday Harbor's waterfront galleries, cafes and shops
- Watch for Southern Resident orcas in Haro Strait with local expert Victoria Souza

Today we reach the Northwest's most famous archipelago, the scenic, mellow San Juan Islands. We are introduced to the livelier side of the this morning with a port of call at Friday Harbor. This compact waterfront town that hugs the hillside above the ferry landing is the largest community in these rural islands, bustling with shops, art galleries, cafes, restaurants and small inns. Visit the Whale Museum to see its fascinating collection of artifacts, artwork and whale skeletons. The museum was inspired by the presence of the Southern Resident community of orcas, which today is critically endangered and a bellwether of the Salish Sea ecosystem. The museum's mission is to promote stewardship of whales and the marine environments they depend on, through education and research.

Back on board, we set off for an afternoon of whale watching in Haro Strait, where we frequently see members of the Southern Resident group. Local orca expert Victoria Souza joins us, and she knows the local orca pods intimately, literally identifying each whale by name. These orcas evolved alongside salmon in the Pacific Ocean and learned over time to select the richest and most fat-laden species, the Chinook, or king, salmon, which remains their sole diet today. Orcas have historically found a great annual bounty in the Salish Sea, but Northwest Chinook runs have plummeted in recent decades, and the whales are struggling to survive. By spending time in their territory, we come away buoyed to support their conservation.

Day 7

San Juan Islands

Reach remote islands accessible only by private boat

- Hike ashore on Vendovi Island, a private reserve reached through special access
- Cruise by Zodiac near a sea lion haul-out off Matia Island
- Kayak the protected coves of Sucia Island before a farewell dinner aboard

Located in the upper-left corner of Washington in the heart of the Salish Sea, the San Juans comprise 172 named islands and reefs. With pebbled beaches, forested mountains, golden meadows, and red-barked madronas hugging rocky shorelines, the archipelago epitomizes the picturesque. A mild climate year-round creates an idyllic playground for sailors, kayakers, cyclists, hikers and wildlife lovers.

Our exact itinerary is unscripted, allowing the captain and expedition staff to make the most of the weather, tides and other considerations in determining our route. We focus on remote spots, including several islands that are Washington State Marine Parks accessible only by private boats. Sucia's protected coves are perfect for kayaking and paddleboarding; adjacent Matia offers plenty to discover by Zodiac, including a nearby sea lion haul-out; and we have special access to hike ashore on Vendovi Island, a private reserve. Throughout the day, look for seals, sea lions, river otters, bald eagles and the San Juans' famous orcas, easily identifiable by their prominent black dorsal fins. Back on board, we enjoy the captain's Farewell Dinner as we begin our return journey toward Puget Sound and Seattle.

Day 8

Seattle

Return to Seattle after exploring the Salish Sea

- Disembark your expedition vessel after breakfast
- Transfer to the airport for homeward flights

Our Pacific Northwest nature expedition comes to a close as we return to Seattle, where we disembark *National Geographic Venture* after breakfast and transfer to the airport for flights home.

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Exploring British Columbia & the San Juan Islands Accommodations

Cruise the Sheltered Waters of the Salish Sea, Home to Abundant Marine Life



National Geographic Venture

Built in 2017, this sister ship to *Quest* incorporates state-of-the-art features and technology including a panoramic windows and an open bow for wildlife watching, and ample expedition tools.

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/adventure-cruises/exploring-british-columbia-and-the-san-juan-islands/ships.

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

Sail with the World Leader in Small-Ship Conservation-Focused Cruising

Exploring British Columbia & the San Juan Islands

We're proud to offer a worldwide slate of Expedition Cruises through our partner National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions. Nat Hab joined forces with National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions in 2016 to expand our mutual collection of nature adventures. Founded in 1958 by Lars-Eric Lindblad, the company pioneered eco-conscious expeditions for "citizen explorers" and today is the world leader in conservation-focused small-ship cruises.

1

Small Ships for Closer Nature Encounters

National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' ships offer an intimate, up-close experience of the convoluted coastline and myriad islands of northwest Washington and southwest B.C. The smaller size of our National Geographic ships grants us access to narrow fjords and secluded bays that big cruise ships can't reach, while full stabilization and state-of-the-art technology provide supremely safe passage. Guests also enjoy personal encounters with naturalists, guides and crew.

2

Tap More than a Half-Century of Maritime Expertise

This expedition cruise offers an expedition-style experience with a crew and staff who are veterans of these waters. As pioneers in commercial expedition cruising, National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions draws upon more than 50 years of experience, assuring safety and a thorough immersion in the world's wildest natural places. Aboard National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' state-of-the-art ship, you'll sail with a seasoned Expedition Leader, assistant Expedition Leader and a team of naturalists with relevant specialties. A photo instructor certified by National Geographic is also on board to help you get outstanding photos of the matchless scenery and wildlife.

3

Varied Off-Ship Activities Offer New Adventures Every Day

A slate of adventure options led by naturalist guides reveals the magnificent scenery and abundant wildlife of the Salish Sea region. Motorized Zodiacs provide access for shore landings, while a fleet of double kayaks provides an eye-level look at marine life including seals, otters and orcas. These sea kayaks are chosen for their quality and stability, and even beginners will find that maneuvering them is not difficult—and instruction is provided. *Quest* also offers stand-up paddleboards for a quiet experience of the calm coves and channels we poke in and out of. And, we go ashore on hikes and nature walks for inland investigations, too.

4

Travel with Experts Who are Northwest Nature Specialists

Your voyage features a knowledgeable team of expert interpreters who will vastly enhance your appreciation for the natural and cultural history of this region that's so rich in both. Each voyage includes a senior Expedition Leader, a team of veteran naturalists, a National Geographic photographer, an undersea specialist, expert guest speakers, a video chronicler and a wellness specialist. You'll hear from a diverse slate of speakers including wildlife biologists, ornithologists, marine scientists and historians.

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5 **We're Committed to the Planet**

Natural Habitat Adventures is a standard-setter in eco-conscious travel. We were the world's first 100-percent carbon-neutral travel company. And we continue to break ground in adopting practices that help protect our global environment. Because of our concern for the environment, we are pleased to partner with National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions for our Expedition Cruises, a company that shares our values and commitment to the planet.

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

Because of our environmental commitment and the outstanding quality of our adventures, World Wildlife Fund has chosen Natural Habitat Adventures as its worldwide travel partner, a designation we're very proud of! When you book your National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions cruise with us, a portion of your trip fee supports WWF.



Dates & Pricing Summary:

Price
From $6150

Group Size
Limited to 100 Travelers

Physical Requirements
Easy to Moderate

Exploring British Columbia & the San Juan Islands Dates, Pricing & Info

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2027 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Oct 15 - Oct 22, 2027	**From $6250**	Aboard National Geographic Quest
Oct 22 - Oct 29, 2027	**From $6150**	Aboard National Geographic Quest

2028 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Oct 6 - Oct 13, 2028	**From $6500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest
Oct 8 - Oct 16, 2028	**From $7090**	Aboard National Geographic Quest
Oct 13 - Oct 20, 2028	**From $6500**	Aboard National Geographic Quest
Oct 16 - Oct 24, 2028	**From $7090**	Aboard National Geographic Quest

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Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Oct 20 - Oct 27, 2028	**From $6200**	Aboard National Geographic Quest

See https://www.nathab.com/adventure-cruises/exploring-british-columbia-and-the-san-juan-islands/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

Accommodations aboard ship; meals from breakfast on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 8; excursions; services of National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' leader, naturalist staff and expert guides; use of kayaks; entrance fees; all port charges and service taxes; airport transfers to and from the ship.

Not Included

Air transportation; voyage DVD; personal items such as alcoholic beverages, emails, etc.; discretionary tips for ship's crew, optional travel and/or medical evacuation insurance.

Recommended Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we strongly recommend that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. While this is not required, we make this strong suggestion in the interest of our guests' safety. We recommend 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.

Physical Requirements

Easy to Moderate

This adventure does not require a high degree of physical fitness; however, should you choose to participate in every activity, you will be required to climb into and out of expedition landing crafts and kayaks from the yacht. Please be prepared for water landings and a series of short walks over potentially wet, muddy, uneven terrain. Kayaking will be an option available to guests. It is easy to learn, and we expect that most of our guests have little or no experience. It does, however, take an adventurous spirit.

Getting There & Getting Home

Seattle to Vancouver

You will need to arrive in Seattle on Day 1 of the itinerary no later than 3 pm for a 5 pm embarkation. You are free to depart on Day 8 from Vancouver after 11:30 am in order to make the group transfer.

Vancouver to Seattle

You will need to arrive in Vancouver on Day 1 of the itinerary no later than 12:30 pm in order to make the group transfer and 5 pm embarkation. You are free to depart on Day 8 from Seattle after 11 am.

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We can best serve you by having National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' air department book your flights, since National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions is most familiar with the special requirements of each trip. Please call National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions directly at 800-397-3348. Note that while National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' air department will offer you its best available rates on airfare, you may find better fares online.

Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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