Spring in British Columbia’s Great Bear Rainforest

8-days exploring the outer islands, observing recovering sea otter populations, and spring bears as they emerge from hibernation

Explore
The islands, beaches, and ancient forests of the Great Bear

Encounter
Wildlife in its most natural marine and terrestrial habitats

Learn
How sea otters are transforming the BC Coast
The Great Bear Rainforest is one of the largest intact coastal temperate forests in the world. Extending from northern Vancouver Island to Alaska, and covering more than 64,000km² (24,000mi²), this area is home to spectacular wildlife including whales and dolphins, bears and wolves, sea lions and sea otters. This 8-day expedition aboard our classic schooner, the Passing Cloud, gives us the chance to explore this beautiful ecosystem and learn how it depends so critically on wild Pacific salmon.
At a Glance

Our Spring expeditions through the Great Bear Rainforest are dedicated to exploring, experiencing, and learning about the wildlife, ecosystems, and cultures of this incredibly special corner of the Planet. Spring is a wonderfully exciting time of year to be here, with coastal plants and colourful wildflowers in full bloom, bears grazing in estuaries, and whales returning to nearshore waters. For our first 8-day/7-night itinerary, we start in the Nuxalk First Nation community of Bella Coola and end in the Heiltsuk First Nation community of Bella Bella. The following departures start and end in Bella Bella. Our itinerary includes the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy, Hakai Institute Calvert Island Field Station, and a focus on sea otters, kelp forests, bears, wolves, and old-growth rainforests.

8-days / 7-nights

2020 departures: May 6, 14, 22

Price per person: $5,295 CAD

Departs from/Return to: Bella Coola, BC (May 6-13)
Departs from/Returns to: Bella Bella, B.C. (May 14-21, May 22-29)

What’s Included?
All meals, accommodation, transportation, First Nation Conservation and Stewardship fees, and use of onboard gear and resources including rubber boots.

What’s not included?
5% GST, travel and accommodation before and after the expedition, gratuities, any personal expenses incurred due to weather, logistical delays, delayed departures of chartered aircraft, taxis, ferries.
Day 1

Today we'll visit the Hakai Institute Calvert Island Field Station, situated in the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy, the largest marine conservancy on the BC Coast. After we learn about some of the incredible research being conducted here, we'll explore spectacular “West Beach”, and hike the boardwalk trail through coastal rainforest and bog up to the lookout for a stunning view of the area.

Day 2

We’ll continue our voyage through the glacier-carved fjords etched into the mainland coast, as we enjoy the dramatic snow-capped peaks surrounding us. We’ll go ashore and enjoy the brilliantly coloured wildflowers in bloom this time of year. We’re always on the lookout for the coastal grizzlies that come here to graze on grasses, sedges, rice root, and other plants. This afternoon we’ll explore a river system and learn about the ancient stone fish traps that can be found throughout this region. We’ll have time for kayaking and more shore exploring late this afternoon at our overnight anchorage.

Day 3

Today we’ll visit the Hakai Institute Calvert Island Field Station, situated in the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy, the largest marine conservancy on the BC Coast. After we learn about some of the incredible research being conducted here, we’ll explore spectacular “West Beach”, and hike the boardwalk trail through coastal rainforest and bog up to the lookout for a stunning view of the area.

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“Where to begin with an experience awash with so many remarkable memories...This trip connects me to myself and to a place that resonates deeply. Thank you, Russ and all!”

- Frances, Outer Shores’ Traveller

Sample Itinerary:

Spring in British Columbia’s Great Bear Rainforest

Our expedition begins in the heart of Canada’s Great Bear Rainforest, the prime habitat for grizzly bears, black bears, and wolves. As we explore a coastal estuary system, always on the lookout for these top predators, our Expedition Specialist will teach us about the biology, ecology, and conservation of the bears and wolves of this complex rainforest ecosystem. We’ll learn how bears, wolves, and other consumers supercharge ancient rainforests by moving salmon and herring into these coastal jungles. We spend most of today exploring forests, rivers, estuaries, and viewing the multitude of wildlife that we’ll inevitably encounter.
This morning we’ll visit the McNaughton Group, a small group of islets studded with white-sand beaches and surrounded by kelp forests, and home to sea otters! We’ll spend the morning exploring this beautiful place and learning about how sea otters are transforming the undersea ecosystems of this region. This afternoon we’ll go sailing and/or break out the kayaks for more exploring in this area. Our overnight anchorage is a short distance north in the McMullin Group Islands.

Weather permitting, we’ll sail across Queen’s Sound this morning to the Goose Group Islands and explore the gorgeous white-sand beaches of this magical place. We’ll be on the lookout for humpback whales and other marine mammals as we cross the sound. Remarkably, wolves are occasionally sighted on this small group of outer coast islands.

We start our day on dawn patrol before breakfast, for an inflatable boat excursion into a nearby estuary to watch and listen as the morning sun spreads across this ancient place. Later, we’ll see ancient pictographs, highlighting for us the fact that the indigenous Heiltsuk people have lived here for more than 13,000 years. We’ll discuss the Heiltsuk’s deep history and close connections with all the places and ecosystems we have visited over the past week. Tonight, we’ll reflect on all our experiences over the past week here in the Great Bear Rainforest, and give thanks to those who have worked so hard to protect it.

As we travel the short distance to Bella Bella this morning we hope for any last minute wildlife sightings. Upon arrival, we say farewell to our shipmates and new friends before disembarking and heading to the Bella Bella Airport for flights to Vancouver and beyond.

This morning we’re on the lookout for marine wildlife sightings - such as humpback whales, sea otters, elephant seals, and killer whales. We’re on route to Stryker Island where we’ll go on an inflatable boat excursion and look for the sea otters that are returning to this area. We’ll anchor in a scenic protected cove for the evening and enjoy a beautiful sunset on the outer islands.
If you have any questions about our expeditions, or a specific detail about the expedition you have booked, please let us know by phone or visit our website for more information.

Photo Credits: James Thompson, Chris Harold, Mark Lankton, and Russell Markel.