Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve & Haida Heritage Site

7-days exploring the ecosystems, wildlife, & cultural heritage of Haida Gwaii – Galapagos of the north

Fromer's Top Places to Visit in 2017!

2017 Edition

Discover
Ecosystems, wildlife, and cultural heritage of Gwaii Haanas National Park

Encounter
Puffins, albatrosses, sunfish, jellyfish, orcas and humpback whales

Learn
About the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous Haida Nation
Haida Gwaii ("Islands of the People" in the Haida language) is a remote island archipelago located approximately 100 km off the northwest coast of British Columbia. The “Galapagos of the North” is a world where giant spruce and cedar trees tower over salmon-rich streams, and kelp forests connect the land to the sea. An ecological hotspot, the unparalleled diversity of marine life here includes everything from puffins to albatrosses, sunfish to jellyfish, and killer whales to humpback whales. Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area, and Haida Heritage Site (or simply “Gwaii Haanas”) protects the ecological and cultural treasures of this globally significant region from sea floor to mountain top.
Our 7-night expedition through Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area, and Haida Heritage Site is dedicated to exploring the ecosystems and wildlife of this remote island archipelago, and learning about the cultural heritage of the indigenous Haida people who have lived here for more than 13,000 years. Throughout this expedition we’ll explore ancient coastal rainforests, white-sand beaches, rocky shores, coastal estuaries, and encounter the stunning wildlife found here. Gwaii Haanas protects this globally unique area from seafloor to mountaintop, and preserves the cultural legacy and future of the Haida Nation.

7-days / 7-nights

2017 Departures: June 9, 16, 23, 30, July 7, 14,*21, 28, August 4
*Sailing-specific expedition. Inquire for further details

Price per person: $5695 CAD

Departs from: Sandspit
Returns to: Queen Charlotte City

What’s Included?
Land tour including the Haida Heritage Centre, floatplane flight over Gwaii Haanas, all meals, accommodation, transportation, user 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.
Our Gwaii Haanas adventure begins today when you arrive at the Sandpit Regional Airport. After settling into your overnight accommodation (included) you’ll have time to “stroll the spit” before we meet for the first time as a group over dinner. Our Expedition Specialist will start you on your journey of the pre-history of the Haida people.

**Day 1**

We’re underway early this morning via passenger van to catch the ferry across Skidegate Inlet, on route to the Haida Heritage Centre at Kay Llnagaay. Our tour of this award-winning institution is the perfect primer for our journey through Gwaii Haanas. We’ll also receive our Visitor Orientation here, mandatory for all visitors to this globally unique protected area. After lunch we’ll travel the short distance to Queen Charlotte City where our floatplane is waiting to fly us to our expedition vessel, the schooner Passing Cloud. After meeting the crew, settling into accommodations, and safety briefing, we set sail for the ancient village of K’uuna Llnagaay (Skedans), where we’ll have a guided tour of this ancient Haida village. Late this afternoon we travel towards picturesque Anna Inlet where we’ll anchor for the evening.

**Sample Itinerary:**

**Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve**

We structure our Gwaii Haanas expeditions as one-way voyages between the northern and southern portions of the park, rather than return trips. By doing so we substantially reduce our travel time, allowing us more time for wildlife viewing, cultural site visits, sailing, sea kayaking, and more. A distinct feature of all our expeditions is that we have no fixed itineraries. Instead, our days are structured by the weather, tides, and wildlife we encounter, and the interests and expertise of our guests and crewmembers. Please note that the following sample itinerary describes a southbound expedition.

“**It’s hard to put into a few words a short trip of seven days that have been so completely full of wonder, adventure, discovery, and on and on. Magic would be a good word. I can’t think that the journey could have been better, and the Passing Cloud is the perfect boat!”**

— Gordon Savage, Outer Shores Traveller
Today we’ll visit the ancient villages of Taanuu Llnagaay (Tanu), and Hlk’yah GaawGa (Windy Bay). At Windy Bay we’ll walk through an old-growth forest of massive cedar and spruce trees. Afterwards a Haida Watchman will share with us the story of the Gwaii Haanas as told by the Legacy Pole. We cap off our day by enjoying an evening sail before dinner. Make sure to keep a sharp lookout for killer whales that are frequent visitors to this area.

Today, weather-permitting, we hope to sail a few miles from shore to reach the pelagic zone. This area is the perfect place to search for marine wildlife, such as pelagic seabirds, sharks, giant ocean sunfish, Pacific white-sided dolphins, and humpback whales. In the afternoon we make our way on shore to explore a small river system. Here we examine the remnants of wooden-stake fish trips dating from more than a thousand years ago, and contemplate the interconnectedness of natural ecosystems and Haida subsistence technologies.

This morning we’re up early to catch low tide and explore the incredible marine biodiversity of world-famous Burnaby Narrows. Using our kayaks and inflatable skiff, we follow one of our expedition teams in snorkeling gear to check-out giant predatory sunflower stars, multi-coloured bat stars, massive moon snails, decorator crabs, and nudibranchs (sea slugs). Once the tide begins to rise we return to the Passing Cloud and continue our southward journey to Kunghit Island, traditional territory of the Kunghit Haida.

Today we plan to visit Cape St. James at the southernmost extremity of the Haida Gwaii Archipelago. With ocean currents meeting from the east and west, this area is alive with marine life, including tufted and horned puffins, sea lions, and orcas on the hunt for their next meal. This region is also home to one of our favorite white-sand beaches on the BC coast, the perfect place for an afternoon of exploring, relaxing, and strolling barefoot along the shore. Later, we’ll sail past a sea lion rookery and learn about these formidable creatures and their ecology and conservation.

This morning while sea kayaking, beach walking, or standing amongst ancient spruce and cedar trees, we’ll enjoy having time to reflect on all that we’ve experienced and learned over the past week. We’ll come together, guests and crew alike, to share our thoughts and say our thanks and farewells. After lunch, you’ll enjoy a breathtakingly beautiful 50-minute flight back to Queen Charlotte City, where our journey officially comes to an end.
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, Oriana Smy, Al Mackie, and Russell Markel.