Gwaii Haanas
National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, & Haida Heritage Site

2018 Lonely Planet’s #1 place to visit in Canada!

2019 Edition

9-days exploring the remote island archipelago often described as the "Canadian Galapagos."

Discover
Ecosystems, wildlife, and the ancient Haida village sites of Gwaii Haanas

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

Learn
About the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous Haida Nation
Haida Gwaii Archipelago

Islands at the Edge

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 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 Reserve, and Haida Heritage Site (or simply “Gwaii Haanas”) protects the ecological and cultural treasures of this globally significant region from seafloor to mountain-top.
At a Glance

Our 8-night expedition through Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, 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 14,000 years. Throughout this expedition we’ll explore ancient rainforests, white-sand beaches, rocky shores, coastal estuaries, and encounter stunning terrestrial and marine wildlife. Gwaii Haanas protects this globally unique ecosystem and preserves the cultural legacy of the Haida Nation.

9-days / 8-nights

2019 Departures: May 25, June 2, 10, 18, 26, July 4, 12, 20, 28, August 5

Price per person: $6,495 CAD
+ $300 floatplane surcharge

Departs from: Sandspit
Returns to: Queen Charlotte

What’s Included?

First night accommodation in Skidegate, Traditional Haida Feast, Haida Gwaii Museum private tour, 2 scenic floatplane flights, all meals, accommodation, transportation, National Parks fees, guiding and interpretive services, and use of all onboard gear and resources.

What’s not included?

5% GST, $300/person floatplane surcharge, travel and accommodation before and after the expedition getting to/from Haida Gwaii, crew gratuities, any personal expenses incurred due to weather, logistical delays, delayed departures of chartered aircraft, taxis, ferries.
Day 1

Our Gwaii Haanas expedition officially begins this morning when you arrive at the Sandspit Regional Airport. You'll be transported from Sandspit via shuttle and ferry to Skidegate, where you'll check into your overnight accommodation. We'll meet for the first time as a group for lunch at the Haida Heritage Centre. After lunch we'll enjoy a private tour of the Haida Gwaii Museum and immersive introduction to the cultural history of Haida Gwaii. Tonight, we'll be treated to a traditional Haida feast at Keenawai’s Kitchen in Skidegate.

Day 2

After breakfast this morning we’ll travel the short distance to Queen Charlotte where our De Havilland Beaver floatplane is waiting to fly us to the schooner, Passing Cloud. After meeting the crew, settling into accommodations, and our safety briefing, we set sail for the ancient village of K’uuna Llnagaay (Skedans). Haida Watchmen will guide us through the cultural history of this ancient Haida village and introduce us to mortuary and memorial poles. After lunch, we’ll continue our voyage south to the village of Taanuu Llnagaay (Tanu) and tour the remaining house depressions from this once-bustling community that was a gathering place for many villages. We’ll enjoy a late afternoon sail before anchoring in a secluded wilderness inlet with time to reflect on our day and enjoy our first dinner aboard.

“Visiting Gwaii Haanas with the Passing Cloud crew added significantly to our appreciation for not only the beauty and wildlife of this remote spot, but also for Haida culture. The Captain is more than a captain, and the same can be said for the first mate, chef and naturalist who were aboard. Not only did we come away from this experience with a sense of awe, but with very satisfied bellies that were fed with healthy, sustainable, locally sourced and wonderfully-prepared foods. We couldn’t have asked for a better experience.”

– Ellen, Outer Shores’ Traveller

Sample Itinerary:

Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve

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, the interests of our guests, and expertise of our crew. Our 2019 Gwaii Haanas expeditions will begin and end with floatplane flights between Queen Charlotte and Cumshewa Inlet.
Today, weather permitting we hope to sail a few miles from shore as we travel southward towards Kunghit Island, traditional territory of the Kunghit Haida. This offshore area known as the pelagic zone is the perfect place to search for marine wildlife such as pelagic seabirds, sharks, ocean sunfish, Pacific white-sided dolphins, and humpback and fin whales. We’ll seek out our favourite spots on deck with a book or a camera and enjoy the passing breeze. This afternoon we’ll explore the beaches, tide pools, and specular vistas of the Gordon Islands and learn about kelp forest ecosystems and the vast food web that depends on them. This is also a wonderful place to explore by sea kayak or zodiac. 

Today we visit the ancient village of SGang Gwaay. This village was inhabited until approximately 1880, and in 1981 was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in recognition of its globally significant cultural heritage. Here we’ll see the remains of massive long houses, and a stunning grove of standing mortuary and memorial poles. We’ll enjoy a guided tour of the village by Haida Watchman and immerse ourselves in traditional Haida way of life. This afternoon we’ll have time to reflect on our SGang Gwaay visit as we enjoy some quiet time beach walking, sea kayaking, or sitting among ancient spruce or cedar trees.

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 crew members in snorkeling gear to check-out giant predatory sunflower stars, multi-coloured bat stars, massive moon snails, decorator crabs, nudibranchs (sea slugs), and more. After spending the afternoon sailing in Juan Perez Sound we’ll enjoy a soak in the hot springs and visit with the Haida Watchman on Hot Spring Island.

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We’ll set our compass towards 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, and other sea birds. 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 the ecology and conservation of these formidable creatures. This afternoon we begin the northward leg of our journey.

We’ll begin our final full day onboard by exploring the shoreline at low tide in search of ancient stone fish traps and intertidal creatures. After lunch, we’ll continue on to Hlk’yah GaawGa (Windy Bay), where we’ll walk through the old-growth forest of massive cedar and spruce trees that ultimately led to the creation of Gwaii Haanas. The Haida Watchman here will share with us the story of Gwaii Haanas as told by the Legacy Pole. We cap off our day by enjoying a late afternoon sail before dinner. Make sure to keep a sharp lookout for the mammal-eating killer whales that frequent this area. This evening, our last night aboard Passing Cloud, we’ll share our highlights and reflect on all that we’ve experienced and learned over the past week.

After breakfast this morning, we’ll say farewell to the Passing Cloud and crew before enjoying another breathtakingly beautiful floatplane flight back to Queen Charlotte, where our expedition 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.

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