

British Columbia Coast & Pelagic Itinerary

[Link: British Columbia Coast & Pelagic](#)

Tour Overview

On this adventure we offer a short but exciting opportunity to explore Canada's wild West Coast. We begin in Vancouver and make our way by ferry to Tofino for a pelagic birding adventure out to the continental shelf. From here we'll look back to the forested mountains and wild beaches of Clayoquot Sound and Vancouver Island.

Out in the deep blue there is a seemingly unlimited potential for interesting seabirds and mammals such as albatross, shearwaters, puffins, phalaropes, jaegers, whales, sea otters and more. Pacific Rim National Park is a delight at this time of year, when dripping rainforests offer a respite from the summer heat elsewhere in Canada. Wild beaches are the home of wolves and a large assortment of shorebirds. Early September is a great time of year for shorebird viewing in British Columbia.

To round out the experience we'll sample the excellent cuisine that British Columbia has to offer, and soak up some laid-back west coast atmosphere. The tour begins and ends in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Vancouver



Upon arrival at Vancouver International Airport, you can transfer to our hotel near the airport where we'll meet for a welcome dinner. Your guide will introduce the trip including the itinerary and our target birds and wildlife.

Day 2: Boundary Bay and Cathedral Grove



In the morning we will visit Boundary Bay where we can view some migrant birds at one of the world's great shorebird viewing sites. Boundary Bay offers exceptional viewing of common migrants freshly arriving from the breeding grounds such as Black-bellied Plover, Western Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Baird's and Semipalmated Sandpiper. Rarities show up often and this is a great time to find exciting waders such as Red Knot, Marbled Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit and Red-necked Stint. The Tsawwassen to Duke Point ferry is a two-hour mini-pelagic trip that takes us across the Strait of Georgia. This is a great place to see resident Orcas. Birds include Pacific Loon, Brand's and Pelagic Cormorant and Marbled Murrelet. Once we arrive in Nanaimo we'll head north then west over to Ucluelet. We will visit Cathedral Grove, one of Vancouver Island's most impressive stands of old-growth cedar and fir forests. Impressive stands will leave us breathless, and we have a chance to see birds such as Hammond's Flycatcher, Steller's Jay, Brown Creeper, Hairy Woodpecker and Pacific Wren. Night in Ucluelet.

Day 3: West Coast Pelagic tour



A pelagic off the west coast of Vancouver Island is a journey of discovery. We never know what we'll find out there, some 60 km off the coast. The boat trip starts in Tofino, about half an hour north of Ucluelet. First, we ply the inshore waters where we'll hope for both Humpback and Gray Whale, Sea Otter, and birds such as Bald Eagle, Harlequin Duck, Surf Scoter, Rhinoceros Auklet and Common Murre. At the famed Cleland Islands, we have a chance to view a small colony of Tufted Puffins. Also in the area could be Heermann's Gull. Once we point the bow to the west, we'll make a one-hour journey to the edge of the continental shelf. As soon as we make it, all of a sudden the ocean becomes alive with seabirds. Specialties at this time of year include Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwater. We've been lucky to see the very rare Short-tailed Albatross here several times. Otherwise, the long list of more common pelagic birds include: Red-necked Phalarope, Sabine's Gull, Black-footed Albatross, Pink-footed Shearwater, Cassin's Auklet, Long-tailed Jaeger and more. Other animals abound including Risso's Dolphin, Humpback Whale, Northern Fur Seal, Blue Shark and other marine surprises. We'll return to our hotel in the afternoon to rest and may return for some more birding in the evening, at a local hotspot. Night in Ucluelet. Note: The pelagic requires good weather and sea conditions. Please see What to Expect section to learn more. If sea conditions are not cooperative, we will continue with a nearshore boat excursion.

Day 4: Pacific Rim National Park



Today will be a back-up day for the pelagic tour, otherwise we'll be exploring some west coast beaches and rainforest. At Florencia Bay, we can find Wilson's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Red-breasted Sapsucker and Varied Thrush. We'll scan for ducks and loons out in the bay and we might even see surfers in the water here. One of the elusive but often-seen denizens of Pacific Rim is Gray Wolf, and we have the potential to see them if they visit the beaches in search of marine fare. Black Bears are common here. We'll feel small among the giant Sitka Spruce along the Rainforest Trail, and we'll get our scopes out when checking out Long Beach and Sharp Road for interesting shorebirds. The area truly has a west coast feel and we'll make the most of it. Night in Ucluelet.

Day 5: Transfer to Vancouver



We'll do some more birding around Ucluelet this morning and search for any species we haven't yet sighted. Then we'll return to the eastern side of Vancouver Island where, if we have time, we can explore some hotspots for more shorebirds and forest birds such as Hutton's Vireo and Black-throated Gray Warbler. We'll then catch another ferry that will bring us back to the Lower Mainland, this time closer to Whistler. We will have a scenic drive with nice views of Vancouver before returning to the airport hotel via Stanley Park.

Day 6: Departure

The tour ends after breakfast at our hotel near Vancouver International Airport.

What to Expect

Overview

Our British Columbia Pelagic and Coast tour is primarily a birding tour, with a strong focus on finding a variety of seabirds, but we will also look for other wildlife and enjoy the natural beauty of British Columbia.

The daily travel schedule varies to account for weather, bird species and habitat, but it is a fairly fast-paced tour due to the short duration of the tour. Most mornings we go out for pre-breakfast birding. We return to the hotel for breakfast and then go out to spend the remainder of our morning birding, before a leisurely lunch around noon. In the evenings we will relax after dinner, but there are some night excursions scheduled to search for owls and other nightlife. These are always optional.

Food

Breakfast is usually at the hotel after a morning in the field. Lunch is often at a restaurant, apart from a few picnics. Dinner is always at a good restaurant not far from our accommodation. During dinner we usually discuss the day's activities and review the list of birds seen and heard.

Accommodation

Generally we stay in comfortable hotel rooms in locations close to where we want to go birding.

Walking

For the most part, the walking on this tour is suitable for everyone. However, we will occasionally encounter slippery trail sections or uneven terrain, and we may have a short climb or two.

Driving

The drive from Vancouver to Ucluelet takes about 5 hours including a ferry ride. We will make several stops along the way, including a stop at the spectacular Cathedral Grove. Once we are based in Ucluelet, we will have short drives each day to get to each birding location. Please note that the roads on the Island are curvy in places.

Pelagic/Boat trip

Our tour includes a full day pelagic boat trip. The pelagic requires optimal weather and sea conditions and is at the discretion of the boat captain. Our safety is paramount and will be the primary deciding factor in how far and long we can stay out at sea. If sea conditions are not cooperative during the allotted time, we will continue with a nearshore boat excursion.

You'll embark on a 6-hour pelagic (Open Ocean) adventure aboard WASCO, a purpose-built coastal cruiser designed for stability, comfort, and excellent wildlife viewing. WASCO comfortably carries up to 12 guests and features a heated indoor cabin with seating, a restroom on board, and outdoor viewing areas that allow guests to move freely between indoor and outdoor spaces throughout the trip. Rainjackets and life vests will be available. Please note that this boat tour may not be suitable for those with serious neck/back issues or those extremely prone to seasickness. We suggest you take precautions if you are prone to motion sickness.

If sea conditions are not cooperative during the allotted time, we will continue with a nearshore boat excursion on the Nanuq (37 passenger catamaran). It is an all-weather vessel, with 3 viewing decks, seating and restroom.

Climate

The tour will take place during BC's autumn. Daytime temperatures can still be warm at this time of year, but can also be highly variable. Rain is also possible.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All accommodation (Good quality)
- All meals and soft drink
- One pelagic trip
- Ground transportation
- 1 guide with 4 - 8 participants, 2 guides and vehicles with 9 - 12 participants
- All park, conservation and entrance fees

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from Vancouver
 - Travel Insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
 - Possible additional excursion costs if you opt out of the pelagic boat trip
 - Taxes (5% GST)
 - Alcoholic Beverages
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