Eagle-Eye Tours

Haida Gwaii Sailing Itinerary

Link: Haida Gwaii Sailing

Tour Overview

The Islands of Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands) are one of the richest biological and cultural areas in North America. The majestic coast, wilderness, people and wildlife of coastal British Columbia are stunning; this coast has some of the most magnificent tracts of temperate rainforest remaining on the planet.

Aboard our 82’ sailing vessel, we will cruise the waters of this remote archipelago seeing ancient Haida villages, an incredible abundance of wildlife and outstanding wilderness scenery. We should encounter Killer Whales, seals and sea-lions, maybe Humpback and Gray Whales, Black Bears, as well as dozens of Bald Eagles, puffins, murres, guillemots, and murrelets. Sabine’s Gulls, shearwaters, petrels and even Black-footed Albatross are possible, as are other surprises!

Our crew are experienced sailors and naturalists with extensive knowledge of Haida Gwaii. They will help you learn about the diverse natural history and about issues that made preservation of Gwaii Haanas a vital environmental battle for more than a decade. We hope you join us for what promises to be an engaging and exciting voyage of discovery!

On all our voyages we intentionally keep our itineraries flexible to take advantage of wildlife sightings, weather and tides, and the interests of the group. This sample itinerary describes a typical 9-day trip, however, activities may occur in a different order or be substituted by suitable alternatives. Itinerary

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Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Sandspit, BC

Arrive in Sandspit, BC (K'il Kun) today. Most of our guests fly with Air Canada direct from Vancouver. Dinner this evening is on your own. We will send out more details with the tour confirmation. Overnight: Northern Shores Lodge or similar (included).

Day 2: Begin Your Haida Culture Learning



The group will meet in the morning following breakfast. Please be sure to check out of your hotel room with luggage in hand, prior to this time. You will be greeted by our shuttle bus driver/guide for your Haida Gwaii land tour. You will be transported to the ferry landing at Alliford Bay to take the ferry across to Skidegate Landing on Graham Island. The ferry crossing takes approximately 25 minutes. Our first stop will be the renowned Haida Heritage Centre at Kay ‘Llnagaay on Graham Island followed by a traditional Haida lunch at Keenawaii’s Kitchen, hosted by a local Haida family from Skidegate (HlGaagilda). Following lunch, we will have time for a short walk at Spirit Lake before catching the ferry back to Moresby Island. The shuttle will transport the group along the only road to where the vessel will be waiting. It is an active logging road which can sometimes be a bumpy ride – be sure to keep your eyes out for black bears and Sitka deer at the side of the road. In about an hour’s time, we arrive at Moresby Camp to board the vessel. Upon boarding the ship, you will meet the crew, cabins will be assigned, and everyone will participate in an introductory & safety orientation with dinner to follow. We will spend our first evening anchored nearby and will depart early the next morning into the waters of Southern Moresby Island to explore the Gwaii Haanas.

Days 3 - 8: Gwaii Haanas & Historic Village Sites



Haida have lived on these islands since time immemorial, and this rugged landscape offers a rare glimpse into over 12,000 years of human habitation. We will journey through history as Haida Watchmen welcome us to historic Haida villages lining the shoreline of Gwaii Haanas. Haida Watchmen are on-site guardians for the traditional village sites of T'aanuu Llnagaay (Tanu), K'uuna Llnagaay (Skedans), and SGang Gwaay (briefly known as Anthony Island/Ninstints) – a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. They share their knowledge of traditional culture and bring their ancestors' villages to life under weathered monumental poles and amid the remains of multi-tiered longhouses dug into the earth. If weather permits, we will also visit Hlk'yah GawGa (Windy Bay) on Lyell Island, which is the site of the first pole raised in 130 years. This 42-foot monumental cedar Legacy Pole was carved by Jaalen Edenshaw and raised in 2013 honouring the 20th anniversary of the Gwaii Haanas Agreement between the Canadian government and the Haida Nation to protect the natural and marine resources. There may also be a chance to visit Gandll K'in Gwaay.yaay (Hotspring Island). This unique location offers the chance for a relaxing dip in natural hot pools with panoramic views. We will spend most of our time exploring the remote eastern and southern shores of Moresby Island, with much of the tour taking place in Gwaii Haanas. The islands offer an ethereal landscape of beautiful sandy beaches; sheltered inlet shorelines teeming with sea stars; a boggy plateau; and lowland rainforest. Lying at the edge of the continental shelf, Haida Gwaii's nutrient rich waters are tempered by warm offshore currents. Be sure to keep an eye out as we will encounter a wealth of wildlife at sea, on land, and in the air throughout our journey. We aim to spot marine life such as whales, porpoise, and Steller sea lions. In addition, K'iid Xyangs K'iidaay (briefly known as Burnaby Narrows) is one of the richest intertidal locations in the world. Floating through these waters at lower tides gives us the opportunity to see and learn about a vast array of different intertidal species. With around 1.5 million seabirds that breed on its islands, Haida Gwaii is a birder's paradise. Eagles and a wide array of seabirds, attracted by concentrations of forage fish and plankton, will keep birders glued to their binoculars. Long distance pelagic species can often be spotted, and on land many year-round resident birds are unique subspecies. Perhaps there's even the chance to see a tufted or horned puffin! During our daily shore or small boat excursions, our naturalist will help identify coastal plants, animals, birds, and marine life. Those who are interested can participate in keeping a species list for the tour. We hope for a steady wind to raise the sails and enjoy the silence and serenity of nature. The tranquility of the wind and waves against the backdrop of the ancient forests of Haida Gwaii makes for a powerful experience. There will also be plenty of time to explore the protected waters using our stable sea-kayaks – the perfect way to start or finish the day. Each night we anchor in a different, secluded anchorage.

Day 9: Sandspit



The tour will finish late morning and you will disembark the vessel before noon at Moresby Camp. From there the group will be shuttled back to K'il Kun Xidgwangs Daanaay Airport. The journey by bus takes about an hour. You can expect to arrive in Sandspit (K'il Kun) by midday. You can book an afternoon flight back to Vancouver.

What to Expect

Regardless, in all of our destinations our itineraries remain flexible. This allows the crew to take time to enjoy wildlife sightings, spend more time at an ancient village site, or simply cater to the interests of the group.

This is a general natural history and cultural expedition rather than a dedicated birding tour. Travellers can look forward to a mix of wildlife viewing, cultural experiences, and time to appreciate the region's incredible scenery — with opportunities for birding included along the way.

Usually on the Pacific Coast we have a good variety of constantly changing weather. Expect a mixture of sunshine, rain and wind on most trips. You will require waterproof rain gear and rubber boots as most of our landings will be wet, where you will be stepping into the water and onto the beach. Boots can be provided for guests who require them; sizing must be supplied well in advance of the trip. Large rain ponchos are also available, however guests should plan to bring their own waterproof jacket and pants, which also serve as excellent wind protection while on deck wildlife viewing.

We travel in protected areas most of the time. On many days of the summer this coast is like sailing on a lake – flat and calm. Sometimes we cross into open water for short periods of time where we may experience greater motion. If you are prone to motion sickness it is a good idea to bring sea sickness medication. Check with your doctor.

All of our meals are served buffet style. We can usually accommodate most special dietary concerns if we are given sufficient advance notice. Alcoholic beverages are available for purchase onboard. A modest amount of wine is served at dinner and beer is usually available. Coffee and a wide selection of herbal teas are available throughout the day. Guests are also welcome to bring their own preferred drinks, including soft drinks, which can be refrigerated as space allows.

Typical Day
In the morning, you might expect to have breakfast served around 8am. If you are an early riser there is always the opportunity for a morning kayak around the secluded bay we are anchored in. After the meal, a shore excursion will take place – Either to search for wildlife, look at intertidal zones, or go for a culture/nature hike. We will load into the zodiacs and take off to see what nature has in store for us. Bring your backpack, water bottle and camera! You never know what you will see on these outings.

We come back to the boat for a gourmet lunch served by one of our amazing chefs. At this time, the skipper might take us to our next destination, while we look for more wildlife along the shores, or try

to find pods of whales. The crew will be explaining all the places we are passing and all the species that you might see flying, swimming, or walking near the vessel. If something is of interest we will stop or slow down to enjoy. We are never in any hurry. We travel to all of our destinations only when the weather and wildlife is consistently good – And our skippers are experts and finding exciting things to show you. A stop at an ancient village site is always a unique experience for our guests.

After lunch, we might spend some time relaxing, while the crew puts up the sails and takes you through a passage or strait. This would be a good time to reflect in a journal or take a book from our extensive reading library. If we are lucky, you may see some Humpbacks frolicking in the waters around the boat. If this happens we turn off the engines and float silently among them – quite spectacular. Before dinner we might do a light hike to bear stands to view some grizzly or black bears feeding on the salmon, or enjoy an afternoon kayak. We serve dinner and then might go for a dip in some remote hotsprings along the coast, and then come back to the boat and enjoy some BC wine.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

• Accommodation in Sandspit (K'il Kun) on the first night.
• All meals from breakfast on Day 2 to breakfast on the last day.
• Expert expedition team: Captain, Chef, Crew,
• Naturalist or Culturalist
• Full use of all onboard facilities, including kayaks.
• Visit to the Haida Heritage Centre at Kay 'Llnagaay, and
• traditional Haida lunch
• Transportation to Skidegate by charter van
• Applicable permit and Park user fees
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Tour Price Does Not Include

• Transportation to the start point and from the finish point of the trip
• Accommodation or meals prior to the start of the trip or after the completion
• Travel or cancellation insurance
• $200 CAD Sustainability fee
• Taxes (5% GST)
• Airport transfers
• The only money participants require during the trip is for optional purchases and gratuities for the crew.
