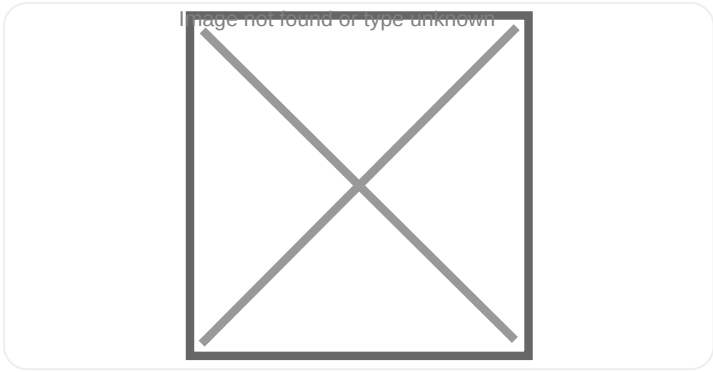


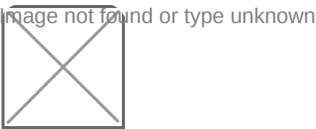


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Orcas & Grizzlies of Canada's Pacific Northwest

Prix: **6800€**

Dates: **du 10 Août 2023 au 18 Août 2023**

Guide:

Descriptif

This exciting holiday explores the rainforest-lined waterways of Canada's Pacific Northwest and focuses in particular on Johnstone Strait, perhaps the most reliable place in the world to view Orcas (Killer Whales). During our 6-night cruise aboard the 16-berth sailing ketch, 'Island Odyssey', we will have plenty of opportunities to get to know this iconic mammal, both from our own sightings and through the experience of our naturalist guides. And that's not all. Sharing the glut of returning salmon is the top predator of the land, the impressive Grizzly Bear, which we will view along the edge of Knight Inlet's Glendale Cove. Humpback Whales, Dall's Porpoise and Black Bear are also likely along with birds including Varied Thrush, Harlequin Duck, Rhinoceros Auklet and Bald Eagle.

At the northern end of British Columbia's Vancouver Island lies an intricate patchwork of fjords, waterways and mountain landscapes laden with the moss-draped forests of Canada's Pacific Northwest. These are home to some of the continent's most spectacular wildlife and, each August and September, millions of Pacific salmon return here, following the invisible chemical trail from ocean to coast that will ultimately lead them back to their natal rivers to spawn. With the salmon come the region's two apex predators, the Orca (or Killer Whale) and the Grizzly Bear, each intent on taking a share of this annual feast. While the monthly movements of the Grizzlies — from estuary to forest to salmon river — are relatively predictable, Orcas are nomadic free spirits that roam over vast areas of ocean. Encounters are typically by chance and difficult to predict. Unusually, however, the pods that summer off Vancouver Island tend to favour a relatively small area and hunt for salmon in the narrow channels where the fish are concentrated. The most famous of these is Johnstone Strait, the focus of this new and exciting Naturetrek cruise, and time here offers unrivalled opportunities for close and prolonged views of these magnificent mammals, along with Grizzly Bears and a wealth of other wildlife.

We will begin our holiday with a flight to Vancouver and, the following morning, take a short internal flight to Port Hardy on the northern tip of Vancouver Island. From here we will drive south to Port McNeill where we will board the Island Odyssey, the 16-berth sailing ketch that will become our home for the next six nights. Port McNeill is only a short distance north of Johnstone Strait and so it is unlikely to be long before we see that first black dorsal fin break the surface! The Orcas that live here are the most intensively studied in the world. The population that plies these waters throughout the summer and autumn is known as the 'Northern Residents' and it has been studied for decades by researchers working out of Vancouver and further afield; indeed, every individual has been photographed and most have had their family trees mapped! Orca ecology is fascinating, and during the course of our cruise we will learn the difference between pods, clans and matrines, as well as 'residents', 'transients' and 'offshores', and much more.

The exact route of our cruise will be determined by the prevailing weather conditions, the advice of our captain and guides, and reports of recent wildlife sightings. We will likely spend the first three days, however, exploring the maze of waterways around Johnstone Strait, watching the Orcas and the other wildlife that shares their watery realm. Humpback Whales are becoming an increasingly common sight here and we are sure to see their characteristic tall bush-shaped blow from time to time and marvel at their huge tail fluke lifting into the air and slipping silently back into the water. Speedy pods of Dall's Porpoise will likely join the Island Odyssey to bow-ride, whilst, if fortunate, we may find a pod of acrobatic Pacific White-sided Dolphins. Other mammals to look out for include Minke Whale, Harbour Porpoise, Steller's Sea Lion and Common (Harbour) Seal. The marine birdlife of the Pacific Northwest is also fascinating. Rhinoceros Auklets are common and we should see Marbled Murrelets, a diminutive alcid that only nests in old growth temperate rainforest, sometimes as far as 100 kilometres inland! Black Oystercatcher, Harlequin Duck, Surf Scoter, Belted Kingfisher and Great Northern Diver (Common Loon) should also be seen. In addition, we will take a short break from the wildlife to visit the modern Kwakwaka'wakw community of Alert Bay where the U'mista Cultural Centre displays a fascinating collection of potlatch masks.

For the next two days we will cruise deep into the Coast Range Mountains as we explore the spectacular fjord known as Knight Inlet. Extending nearly 100 kilometres inland, Knight Inlet is surrounded by snowy peaks and lined by hills of temperate rainforest and rocky cliffs down which myriad waterfalls tumble. Although the scenery is breathtaking, our main focus here will be the Grizzly Bears that venture down from the mountains to fish for salmon along the Glendale River. In August the salmon will be gathering near the mouths of their spawning rivers, and we will spend time in Glendale Cove looking for bears fishing in the shallows or walking along the shoreline. We may also see River Otter here, and perhaps American Mink, along with such birds as Varied Thrush, Steller's Jay, American Dipper and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

We will complete our tour with another day in the company of the Orcas and other marine-life of Johnstone Strait, before we return to Port McNeill, disembark from the Island Odyssey and begin our journey home.

Responsible Destination

Contacteur Carine

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Présente du lundi au vendredi de 09h à 18h et le samedi de 09h à 17h.

Dates & Prix

Prix : **6800** euros par personne
Supplément single: **1885** euros

du 10 Août 2023 au 18 Août 2023
Durée: **9 jours / 8 nuits**

Journalier

Itinerary

N.B. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1
Fly Vancouver & overnight

We will depart from London Heathrow on board a scheduled British Airways, or Air Canada, flight to Vancouver on the west coast of Canada, arriving late afternoon. On arrival, we will transfer to a comfortable hotel for the night. Whilst some members of the group might prefer to relax after the long flight, those still feeling energetic might like to venture out for an evening birdwatching stroll.

Day 2
Embark 'Island Odyssey'

After breakfast we will make our way back to Vancouver Airport to take the short flight north to Port Hardy on the north coast of Vancouver Island. On arrival, we transfer for 30 minutes to the town of Port McNeil, the closest port to the core Orca area. Here we will board the small sailing ketch, Island Odyssey, our home for the next 6 nights and head south towards Johnstone Strait in search of our first Killer Whales, birds and other wildlife.

Days 3 - 4
Johnstone & Queen Charlotte Straits

We will spend the next two days exploring the sheltered waters of Johnstone and Queen Charlotte Straits. Port McNeil is only a short distance north of Johnstone Strait and so it is unlikely to take long before we see that first black dorsal fin break the surface! The Orcas that live here are the most intensively researched in the world – each individual having been studied and photographed, and even had its family tree documented! Killer Whale ecology is fascinating, and during the course of our cruise we will learn the difference between pods, clans and matrilineal, 'Residents', 'Transients' and 'Offshores' and much much more. We will also lower an underwater microphone enabling us to hear the whale's complex vocalisations, some of which can also be used to identify individual pods. The most frequently recorded Orcas here belong to the so-called 'Resident' community. These whales follow the movements of the salmon and feed exclusively on the fish. The rarer 'Transient' community are the mammal-eaters, but these are more elusive and secretive and as such are less frequently observed.

We should keep our eyes open for groups of Humpback Whales which are often recorded between northern Vancouver Island and the mainland. Humpbacks are one of the most enjoyable of cetaceans to watch, for not only do they lift their huge tail fluke out of the water when they dive, but are frequently seen 'playing' near the surface, slapping their long pectoral fins on the surface or even launching fully out of the water for the fortunate few! It has been shown that a population of Humpbacks spend the whole year in the coastal seas off British Columbia and Alaska; only the breeding adults migrate down to the warm waters off Hawaii, and further south, to mate and give birth.

On a smaller scale, we should also start to see our first Dall's Porpoise, a small black and white cetacean that frequently bow-rides in front of boats and casts a characteristic 'roostertail' spray of water when it surfaces. The occasional Minke Whale, Harbour Porpoise, Harbour Seal, Steller's Sea

Lion and pod of speedy Pacific White-sided Dolphins are also possible. Birds to look out for include Bald Eagle, Rhinoceros Auklet, Marbled Murrelet, Surf and White-winged Scoter, Great Northern Diver (Common Loon), Black Oystercatcher and non-breeding groups of Harlequin Duck. We will also visit the modern Kwakwaka'wakw community of Alert Bay, learn about the history and culture of the local First Nations Communities and explore the U'Mista Cultural Centre to see the fascinating collection of potlatch masks on display. If the wind is blowing sufficiently then the captain may decide to raise the sails, a wonderfully tranquil and quiet way to travel. Each night we will drop anchor in a peaceful cove and there will also be the opportunity to explore the protected waters using the Island Odyssey's sea kayaks that are carried onboard.

Days 5 - 6 Knight Inlet

For the next two days we will cruise deep into the Coast Ranges, along a beautiful tree-lined fjord called Knight Inlet. Extending inland for nearly 60 miles, Knight Inlet is surrounded by snow-capped peaks and remote wilderness and is home to some of North America's most spectacular wildlife. We will focus in particular on the region's other apex predator, the Grizzly Bear, which venture down to the rivers that drain the mountains in search of salmon. Although we will not be viewing the bears fishing on their salmon streams, we will look for them – from the safety of our zodiacs – foraging along the edge of Knight Inlet's Glendale Cove and at the mouth of the river. The photographers in the group must ensure they are well stocked with memory cards!

The Grizzly is North America's second largest land predator after the Polar Bear. This impressive animal can weigh up to 500 kilograms and although it has the stomach of a carnivore, its diet is primarily vegetarian. Grizzlies spends many hours each day browsing on vegetation, roots and berries supplementing their menu with insects and grubs (and of course salmon when the time is right!) and the range of a male Grizzly can exceed a massive 200,000 hectares in the more mountainous areas. The characteristic large hump over its shoulders is a muscle mass used to power the front legs as it digs for roots and grubs. The Canadian government estimates that up to 13,000 Grizzlies still roam British Columbia, but environmentalists state that the number is closer to 6,000 or even as low as 4,000. The only other region in Canada that holds significant numbers is the Yukon.

The Black Bear is still flourishing in British Columbia, with estimated numbers ranging from 65,000 to over 150,000. They are smaller than a Grizzly, with the largest weighing up to 300 kilograms, they eat less and are better able to adapt to a variety of habitats. The main way to tell the two apart is the shape of their face, with that of the Black Bear being more angular whilst the Grizzly has a distinctive "dish shaped" face. Colour is not a reliable way to tell the two apart with Black Bears also having brown, grey, blonde or cinnamon coats as well as black. We should keep a careful eye out for Black Bears throughout the holiday whenever we are cruising close to the shoreline and especially at low tide when they venture down in the intertidal zone to look for mussels and other marine life.

In addition to the bears, we should keep a look out for River Otter, Raccoon, Mule Deer and perhaps even Mountain Goat, plus a variety of birds including Bald Eagles, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Varied and Hermit Thrushes, American Robin, Belted Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpiper, Rufous Hummingbird, Townsend's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Pacific Slope Flycatcher.

This is a peaceful landscape of breathtaking beauty. On clear days the calm waters of the fjords act as a mirror, reflecting the forested mountains perfectly, whilst the bright sunshine illuminates precipitous rock-faces and the spray from the waterfalls that tumble down their sides. If the cloud lowers then our surroundings will take on a more ethereal beauty, with lines of mist curling around the hillsides; the silence only broken by the eerie call of a Great Northern Diver (Common Loon) or the shrill cry of a passing Bald Eagle.

Day 7 Johnstone Strait

We will spend our final day on the water back in Johnstone Strait and, hopefully, back in the company of the Orcas, Humpback Whales and other marine life.

Day 8 Depart Port Hardy

We will return to Port McNeill late morning and after disembarking the Island Odyssey we will drive the 30 minutes north to Port Hardy. Here we will pick up our return flight back to Vancouver and from there transfer to our British Airways or Air Canada overnight flight back to London's Heathrow Airport.

Day 9 Arrive London

We are due to arrive back into Heathrow early in the afternoon.

NB - Please also note that Pacific Coastal Airlines' current Port Hardy to Vancouver schedule permits a direct connection back to London on Day 8 of the tour (arriving Day 9). In the event of a future schedule change preventing this connection we may have to overnight our group in Vancouver on Day 8 and fly back to London the following evening. This would add an additional day to the holiday and incur the additional expense of a hotel night in Vancouver which can be booked through Naturetrek or independently.

Infos pratiques

Quelques photos...

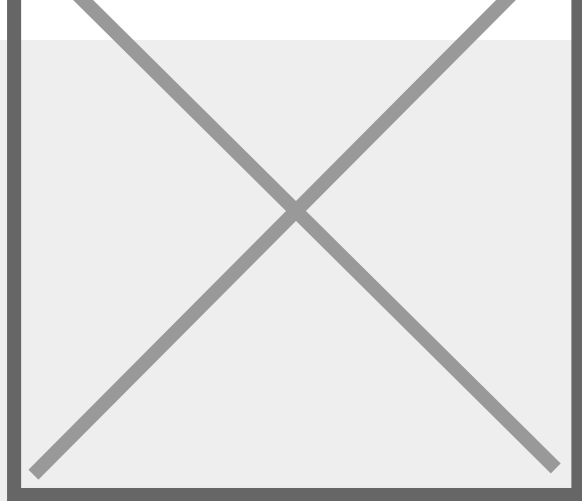
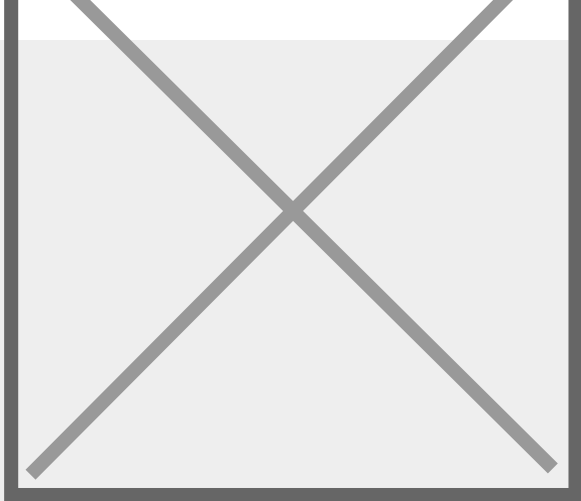


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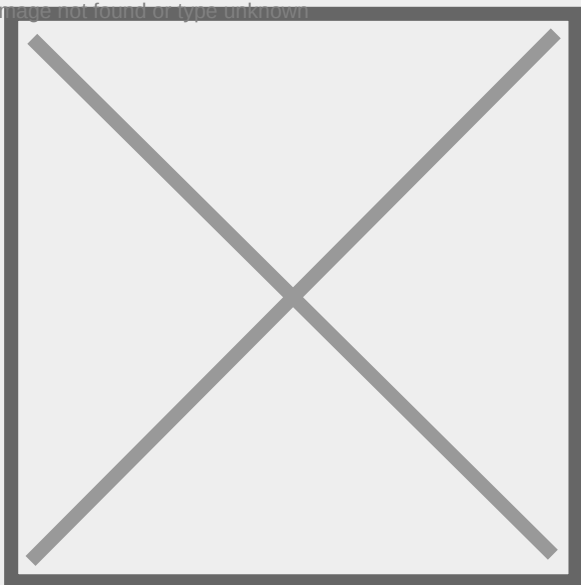


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