

# WHALES & BEARS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA – 10 DAYS

## Day 1: Vancouver

Day one is a joining day and you are free to arrive at any time today and spend time exploring the city at your own pace. Vancouver is often hailed as Canada's most beautiful city and this cosmopolitan and diverse metropolis is a real contrast to the wild open spaces of British Columbia, but always proves to be a highlight. Please keep an eye out for the welcome notice in the hotel reception indicating the time of the evening meeting where you will meet your tour leader and travelling companions.

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

## Day 2: Vancouver - Nanaimo, Vancouver Island

This morning you have a guided city tour of Vancouver, with time to take in the sights of Gastown and Granville Island, which has some great viewpoints overlooking the city. In the afternoon, you transfer to the port to board a ferry to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, a 90-minute journey across the Strait of Georgia. You'll spend some time visiting this gateway city before settling into your hotel for the night.

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

## Day 3: Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park - Cathedral Grove Provincial Park - Ucluelet

Explore ancient fossils and crystal formations on an optional visit to Horn Lake Caves Provincial Park, home to more than 1,000 caves. Discover the unique geology and history of the caves whilst exploring this magical underground world. If you prefer to stay above the surface you could take the Phil Whitfield Interpretive Trail, where you can still explore the interesting geology features of the area. Next you'll make your way to Ucluelet, for a three night stay on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Stop en route at Cathedral Grove Provincial Park to see the last remains of the temperate rainforest that covered the island over 1,000 years ago. Walk the trails lined with beautiful giant Douglas Fir trees and fascinating rock formations.

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

## Day 4: Pacific Rim National Park

Nestled between the mountains of the Vancouver Island Range and the Pacific coastline, Pacific Rim National Park boasts magnificent rocky islands and miles of rugged beaches. You'll be amazed at the amount of wildlife that lives here, such as Black Tail Deer, Black Bear, Bald Eagles and the endangered Leatherback Turtle. In the afternoon it's time to head out on a three hour whale observation cruise on a Zodiac boat with a specialist guide. Small Zodiac boats are an ideal nonintrusive way to approach wildlife. Humpback and Gray Whales are often seen in the area, but don't be surprised if you see Orcas, seals and sea lions as well.

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

## Day 5: Tofino

Tofino has an easy-going, laid-back atmosphere and is Vancouver Island's most popular outdoor retreat. It's the perfect place for city dwellers to escape to for a spot of hiking or fishing, and is said to be the 'jewel of Canada's West Coast'. Spot songbirds and hummingbirds at the beautiful Tofino Botanical Gardens and keep your eyes peeled for Bald Eagles which can sometimes be seen soaring above. Board your Zodiac again, this time heading into the sheltered bays of Clayoquot Sound in search of Black Bear, which we will stop to observe from the boat.

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

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## Day 6: Elk Falls Provincial Park - Campbell River

Take a short walk in Elk Falls Provincial Park, which boasts some impressive waterfalls and stunning hiking trails, en route to Campbell River where you will stay for three nights at Painters Lodge or April Point, both stunning properties in a secluded setting. Campbell River is known as the 'Salmon Capital of the World'. With a river full of five different species of salmon, it's no surprise that bear as well as kingfishers and eagles frequent this area. Fishing takes precedence here, but there are also some great boutique shops, art galleries and Farmers Markets for you to enjoy.

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

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## Day 7: Orford River

Orford Bay is the original village of the Homalco First Nations People and today is a popular stop to see some of British Columbia's finest wildlife in its natural habitat. You'll take a boat excursion to the Orford River, one of the last pristine watersheds in the Bute Inlet where you'll find the largest concentration of Grizzly Bears in BC. You will visit a viewing platform from which to spot Grizzlies, and on the journey to and from here you may see Black Bear, whales and other marine life too. From August to October it's not uncommon to spot many bears within a small area, sometimes with cubs in tow, due to the abundance of spawning salmon. Even though the bears are the main attraction here, the surrounding scenery is spectacular so make sure you have your camera ready at all times!

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

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## Day 8: Quadra Island

Board the ferry for a quick 10 minute ride to Quadra Island to spend the day exploring the island trails and beaches on foot. Alternatively, you can choose to hit the water for an optional kayaking trip with marine life observation guides. Quadra Island is part of a group of small islands, named the Discovery Islands, which are located along the Inside Passage between Vancouver Island and mainland British Columbia. With stunning beaches and incredible wildlife, there will never be a dull moment however you choose to spend the day.

Accommodation: Hotel included | Meals: Paid locally

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## Day 9/10: Victoria - Vancouver

With some sadness it's now time to leave this beautiful place behind and head to Victoria to board the ferry back to Vancouver. As you cross the Strait of Georgia you'll be rewarded with some superb views of the city skyline. Once you are back on dry land you may want to visit Stanley Park, Vancouver's first and most beloved urban park. Here you'll find miles of walking trails and the famous totem poles just waiting to be discovered. It's great place for you to end this incredible tour.

Accommodation: Hotel included (x1 night) | Meals: Paid locally