

# HAIDA GWAI

## QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS - SAILING IN CANADA'S GALAPAGOS

Apr 18/25

Search for orca and humpback whales on your sailing adventure.



This natural history sailing trip explores the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, in the southern islands of Haida Gwaii. These islands form a unique archipelago situated (50 miles/80 kilometers) west of Prince Rupert on British Columbia's northwest coast. Often referred to as Canada's own 'Galapagos', the islands of Haida Gwaii have a unique vegetation, wildlife and cultural history that has evolved in relative isolation over the last several thousand years.

Evidence suggests that parts of the islands remained unglaciated during the last 10,000 years, offering refuge for animals and plants. The area is geologically active and has seen massive fluctuations in sea level. The islands are the epicenter of Haida culture and SGang Gwaay has been honored with a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During this spectacular adventure you will have the opportunity to visit sacred sites, feel the solitude of the wilderness, and experience the wildlife and Haida culture.

### FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 or 10 days (7 or 8 cruising days) • Maximum 12 travelers • Start & finish in Sandspit • All meals on board included • Visit SGang Gwaay - world's best standing collection of original totem poles • Visit Hotspring Island- relax in the warm pools • Discover Haida culture and history • Go whale watching and wildlife viewing

### DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

† Jun 25	-	Jul 03, 2025
† Jul 02	-	Jul 10, 2025
† Jul 09	-	Jul 17, 2025
† Jul 16	-	Jul 24, 2025
† Jul 24	-	Aug 01, 2025
† Jul 31	-	Aug 08, 2025
† Aug 07	-	Aug 15, 2025
† Aug 14	-	Aug 22, 2025
* May 14	-	May 23, 2025
* May 23	-	Jun 01, 2025
* May 31	-	Jun 09, 2025
* Jun 08	-	Jun 17, 2025
* Jun 16	-	Jun 25, 2025

† 9 day itinerary -  
**\$9840 CAD**

\* 10 day itinerary  
**\$10985 CAD**

Plus 5% GST (Goods and Services Tax). Price includes the park entry fee.

Based on twin share accommodation.

Additional \$100 Sustainability Fee not included.

Dates are not exclusive to ElderTreks. On the boat, you may be joined by other international passengers.

**Activity Level: 2**

**Comfort Level:** Sea can be rough. Zodiac landings required.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Aboard the SV Island Solitude Cabins are small but comfortable, with ensuite bathroom facilities. The first night is spent in Sandspit.

**ELDERTREKS**



SMALL GROUP  
**EXOTIC ADVENTURES**  
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

This is not an ElderTreks operated tour. As such, participants on this tour are not exclusive ElderTreks clients and it may not adhere to ElderTreks' maximum size restrictions of our tours.

## **DAY 1 ARRIVE IN SANDSPIT**

Upon arrival in Sandspit, you will proceed to your hotel in Sandspit. The rest of the day is at leisure, and the hotel has a restaurant where you can purchase dinner.

Overnight in Sandspit.

## **DAY 2 HAIDA HERITAGE CENTER, BOARD THE YACHT**

The tour starts after guests have had breakfast and have checked out of their room. Participants will be met by their tour guide for a tour of Skidegate. We will enjoy a guided tour of The Haida Heritage Center.

The center is a wonderful introduction to local natural history and the Haida culture. In 2001, six new totem poles were raised outside, and a major expansion was completed in 2007. We visit the canoe shed to see examples of a 50-foot Haida canoe carved from a single cedar tree.

We will then visit a local Skidegate family for a traditional Haida lunch.

After our sightseeing the group will catch the ferry back to Moresby Island, and will be transferred down to Moresby Camp where our sailing vessel 'SV Island Solitude' is awaiting our arrival. Upon boarding, guests are assigned cabins and receive an introduction and safety orientation.

After guests are settled, dinner will be served. An evening talk and orientation to the Gwaii Haanas Park will be given in preparation for our journey into the park the following day.



Cathedrals of ancient trees.





### **DAY 3 DEPART MORESBY CAMP**

After breakfast, we depart Moresby Camp aboard SV Island Solitude and head west, out Cumshewa Inlet. If the winds are favorable we will sail, but among the islands we often need to motor until we reach more open waters.

We commonly see Queen Charlotte Island black bears feeding along the shores, bald eagles atop shoreline trees, and will take the yacht close to land for a better look. At the mouth of the inlet, we expect to see large concentrations of seabirds, and the naturalist will help participants identify different species.

Overnight at anchor - Thurston Harbour.

### **DAY 4 SAILING IN THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS — TANU, LYELL ISLAND**

Before breakfast, we have a kayak safety orientation and the first opportunity to try out the five sea kayaks on board, in the protected waters of the bay. Mid-morning we arrive at the old Haida village of Tanu. This will be our first introduction to Haida culture as we walk among the remains of some 25 longhouses

and fallen totem poles. Famous carver Bill Reid has his headstone in Tanu, as his mother was from this village.

If the tide is low we will also do an intertidal walk along the beach and rocks in front of the old village, finding various species of starfish, anemone, and urchins. Lunch will be back onboard.

Our afternoon stop is planned for Windy Bay - the site of the final stand-off on Lyell Island that finally stopped the logging and ultimately led to the creation of the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site in 1987. The Haida built a traditional longhouse here where Haida Watchmen spend the summer, but our main activity is focused on hiking beside a sparkling creek into the amazing old-growth forest which holds some truly gigantic trees. Later in the summer salmon will be visible in the creek.

Overnight at mooring - Murchison Island.

## **DAY 5 SAILING IN THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS - JUAN PEREZ SOUND**

Heading out early from our anchorage we enter Juan Perez Sound, one of the best areas in Gwaii Haanas for whale watching. When we see whales, we will stop the yacht to watch their behavior and often have some excellent chances for photographs.

Humpback whales are the most common species, and like to feed using their enormous pectoral fins and tails to corral the fish. Killer whales, or orcas, are also seen throughout the islands. The most common ones are called 'transient' whales, and feed on other marine mammals. We may see them near seal or sea lion haulouts (similar to running into a pride of lions on the hunt). We occasionally see elusive minke whales as we leave Juan Perez Sound and round Burnaby Island heading south. Entering Skincuttle Inlet we will stop at an island in the Copper Island group.

Ashore we will find burrows that seabirds use to nest under the ground, and some interesting shore-side flowers.

Overnight at anchor - Bag Harbour.

## **DAY 6 SAILING IN THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS - BURNABY NARROWS**

After an early breakfast we head out to explore the best known intertidal area in Gwaii Haanas, Burnaby Narrows. With up to a 23-foot (7 m) tidal range, these islands have some spectacular low tide exploring.

Using the two Zodiac inflatable boats and all the sea kayaks, we will float above a garden of colorful sea-stars, anemones and urchins mere inches below the water. We then take a walk into a grove of old-growth trees and see cedar trees that were used by the Haida for making baskets and canoes. Lunch is back on board as we move through Skincuttle Inlet.

As we sail past Garcin Rocks we will watch for Steller sea lions. Large males can weigh up to 2000 lbs (900 kg). Upon entering protected Houston Stewart Channel, we reach the southern end of Moresby Island, and the site of one of Canada's last whaling stations in Rose Harbour. We will go ashore to learn about the last days of whaling and how these islands, situated on the edge of the continental shelf, provided a base for whaling for over 40 years.

Overnight at mooring - Rose Harbour.

Orca whales.





## **DAY 7 SAILING IN THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS - NINSTINTS, A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

Today will be the highlight of the voyage for many, as we visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of SGang Gwaay. This old Haida village holds the largest number of original, standing totem poles anywhere on the coast - and the experience is magical.

We will spend much of the day on the island, so there will be plenty of time to photograph, talk with the Haida Watchmen, and explore the island. Later in the day, if the weather allows, we will sail off the west coast searching for whales and offshore seabirds, such as colorful puffins and the majestic albatross. At this point we are only one hour's travel away from the edge of the continental shelf and waters over 5,000 feet deep.

Overnight mooring - Louscoone Inlet.

## **DAY 8 SAILING IN THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS - IKEDA COVE, HOTSPRING ISLAND**

We take a morning walk ashore exploring a wonderful sand beach looking out on the open Pacific Ocean. We occasionally find Japanese glass fishing floats - a true beachcomber's treasure! We then return to the protected eastern side of the islands, and Ikeda Cove. This lovely cove is named after a Japanese fisherman who discovered copper here in the early 1900s. There are still remains to be seen from their hand-mining operation, as well as some lovely big trees and song-birds singing in the canopy.

As we round Scudder Point returning to Juan Perez Sound, all hands scan the horizon for whales. The next stop is the lovely Hotspring Island. With a view looking out over the ocean to the San Cristoval

Mountains beyond, these are probably the finest natural hot springs on the coast. There is a bathhouse and four natural pools, all at different temperatures.

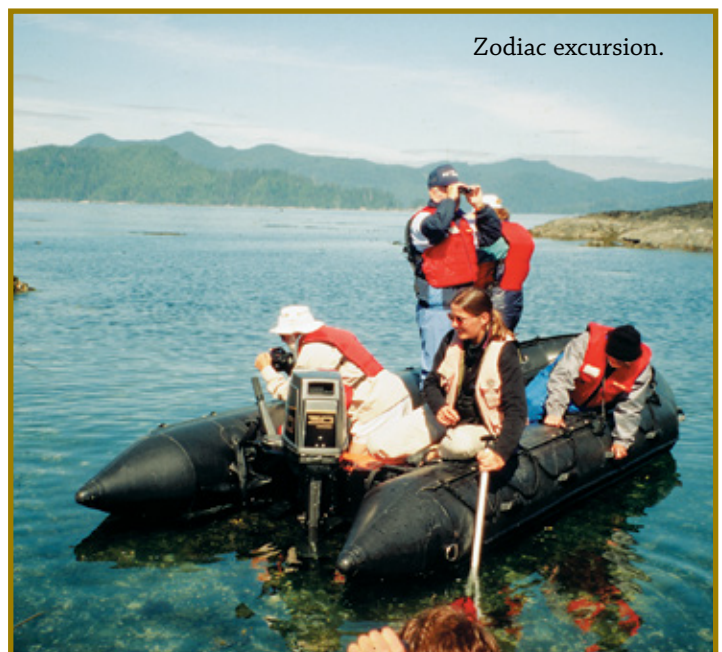
Overnight at anchor beneath the San Cristoval Mountains in De La Beche Inlet.

## **DAY 9 SAILING IN THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS - BISCHOFF ISLANDS, DARWIN SOUND**

Today we will explore a new ecosystem - the alpine. However, we don't need to climb thousands of feet to reach it. In many places in the islands the tundra-like alpine environment can be reached within a few hundred feet of the ocean. We will search for some of the endemic bog flowers, such as Newcombe's butterweed, as well as carnivorous plants, like butterwort and sundew.

The next stop is a lovely area to explore by kayak or motorized skiff: the Bischoff Islands. We then head up scenic Darwin Sound into the heart of the mountains whose highest peaks remain snow-covered year round.

Overnight at anchor - Anna Inlet.



## DAY 10 RETURN TO SANDSPIT

We have a mid-morning departure at Moresby Camp. The charter bus will meet participants and return them to the Sandspit Airport late morning for your departure flight.

Please use this itinerary as a guide only. The sailing itinerary may be done in a different order.



The Island Solitude



## THE ISLAND SOLITUDE

The Island Solitude is a brand new, custom 82-foot ketch, launched in 2017.

The boat's design, safety and comfort make it particularly well-suited for providing wildlife and wilderness trips for 12 guests. It features 6 private cabins (double occupancy), each containing two beds (not bunk beds), each with their own ensuite bathroom - a large comfortable lounge with an extensive library, and a well-equipped galley.

On deck, the large covered seating area provides protection in all types of weather. The boat is large enough for comfort and privacy, and small enough to create a good rapport among the passengers and crew.

The Island Solitude is a certified Canadian Ministry of Transport passenger vessel with all of the safety equipment, electronic navigation aids.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 12 participants. Please note that each departure date is non-exclusive to ElderTreks and you may be joined by other international passengers.

### 2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; meals starting with breakfast on day 2 and finishing with breakfast on departure day; all internal transportation; all day trips as outlined in the itinerary; and the services of experienced guides and a trip naturalist.

### 3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, alcoholic drinks, on board purchases, tips and travel insurance.

### 4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit many natural and cultural sites, and have talks and discussions on many aspects of natural history and native culture. Each evening, the trip naturalist holds informal talks on the flora and fauna of the area.

### 5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All local transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We travel aboard a yacht, by minivan, and on foot (walks onshore during our sailing trip). We also use Zodiacs and kayaks for shore landings and coastal exploration.

### 6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

The Island Solitude is a custom 82-foot ketch. It features 6 private cabins (double occupancy) with two beds in each (not bunk beds), each with their own ensuite bathroom - a large comfortable lounge with an extensive library, and a well-equipped galley.

On deck, the large covered seating area provides protection in all types of weather.

Our accommodation in Queen Charlotte City on Day 1 is at a local motel.

### 7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Our trips to the Queen Charlotte Islands take place during the summer months, when the weather is generally warm, however cooler temperatures may occur. As with all travel

to British Columbia and the west coast, in general, one must be fully prepared for both sun and rain.

### 8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$1500 CAD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at the time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full tour cost is due 150 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the “Terms and Conditions” section of our brochure.

### 9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

*\*Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

### 10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

### 11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

Meals are included, starting with breakfast on day 2 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. Most meals are on the boat. Picnic lunches are also planned at scenic lookouts and Haida villages.

### 12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

### 13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the trip, please do not hesitate to contact our office for additional information.

A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.





Haida totem poles.