

GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST ITINERARY

September 2010 & September 2011

This adventure is designed in the true expedition manner. We have a very open itinerary so we can take full advantage of weather, wildlife and water conditions. Please find below a description of what we may see and how we explore this beautiful -mysterious land.

OUR EXPLORATION A voyage to the wild archipelagos of coastal British Columbia allows us an unparalleled window into an ancient, more magical world—one in which all life is inextricably linked to the sea. Join the MV Sea Wolf at Ketchikan, Alaska, as we leave the standard cruise routes behind as we embark on a voyage along a coast so convoluted with glacier carved fjords, channels, inlets and islands that a distance measurement of the actual coastline is virtually impossible. Life here is governed by the sea's rhythms and we turn our attention to navigating a watery maze of channels, passes and reaches. Strange, reversing tidal rapids -like sea bound rivers- impress us with their power and purpose. The rock bound intertidal zone is home to an amazing diversity of marine animals: crab, sea urchins, starfish, anemones and sea cucumbers to name a few. The shorebirds and seabirds we see, among the thousands beginning their long migration to southern waters live at the mercy of winds and wave. Their survival as we will learn, is undeniably tied to the impacts of global warming, marine pollution, diminished food resources, and a myriad of other factors that also bring changes to the rich plankton soup that forms the basis for the entire marine chain. Along the central coast, we enter a mist shrouded wilderness set amidst a backdrop of sheer cliffs, and steep-walled fjords, plunging waterfalls, old growth rainforests, and glacial covered mountains. We'll enjoy many opportunities to explore—a magical world that can only be reached by boat or sea kayak. The rainforests are home to some of the world's most majestic tree's-Douglas Fir, Sitka Spruce, Red Cedar, and Western Hemlock- with some tree's towering over 300' in height and measuring 19 feet in diameter, and some at least a 1,000 years old. The shaded streams and rivers that wind through these forests offer the perfect clear, cold spawning grounds for six species of salmon that return here each year: Coho, sockeye, pink, chum and steelhead. Where the salmon spawning rivers enter into the inlets and estuaries, the jade- green waters carry the haunting scent of ghost salmon returning to the sea. These salmon runs: the literal and metaphorical heart of this ancient forest ecosystem-provide an almost continuous supply of food spring, summer and fall, particularly for the bears, preparing for hibernation, but also for gray wolves, bald eagles, gulls, dippers, pine marten, river otters, mink and many others. Many researchers have shown that salmon actually sustain the entire Great Bear Rainforest ecosystem. The bears-one of the highest concentrations of

Grizzly bears found in North America, black bears and the legendary "Spirit Bear", a rare white-blond subspecies of the black bear-are crucial to the transfer of marine derived nutrients (decomposing salmon) into both freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems ashore. The Great Bear rainforest is the traditional home of the indigenous Heiltsuk, one of several first nations cultural groups whose history, identity, and spirituality are inextricably intertwined with that of the sea and the coastal forests. With our Gitga 'at guide Marven Robison, we'll spend the day on a viewing platform positioned above a stream heavily used by bears during the salmon spawning period. Opportunities for observing and photographing "fishing bears, including the "spirit bear", are excellent as are our chances of seeing other species that specialize on salmon "leftovers". A Gitga 'at community sponsored dinner of traditional foods and dances performed in their communal long house will highlight our day spent with the bears. Our spirits nourished by wonderful memories and shared experiences, the conclusion of our voyage, at Bella Bella, comes all too soon.

