



Wild Globe Travel Consultancy

Tailored Wildlife, Wilderness and Adventure Travel Across the Globe.

14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne,
East Sussex BN21 1JJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 731865
Mob: +44 (0)7821 640118

Email: jason.woolgar@btinternet.com
Website: www.wildglobetours.com



Wild Canada - 50 Days

Major Destinations

Vancouver - Stanley Park - Vancouver Island - Victoria - Tofino - Ucluelet - Clayoquot Sound - Mount Washington - Strathcona Provincial Park - Campbell River - Quadra Island - Main Lake Provincial Park - Campbell River - Bute Inlet - Knight Inlet - Port Hardy - Bella Bella - Shearwater - Klemtu - Great Bear Rainforest - Bella Coola - Tweedsmuir Provincial Park - Winnipeg - Churchill - Hudson Bay

Tour Highlights and Activities

Although this itinerary was originally designed to coincide with the annual salmon run in order to see four distinctive species of bear on one special trip, it has actually become one of the great wilderness adventures and includes some of the most diverse habitats and landscapes imaginable. The magnificent bears of course remain the focus of attention in several areas and this is the only place on earth where you can watch grizzly bear, black bear, polar bear and kermode bear, a white subspecies of the black bear, in close proximity. On most tours these animals would be the absolute highlight, but on this one we will also encounter pods of killer whales silently hunting along the coast, humpback whales breaching against a backdrop of forest pines and literally hundreds of dolphins leaping gracefully beside our boat. We will spend time in prime wolf, puma and lynx territory and can realistically expect to see dozens of terrestrial and marine mammals, including huge elk, moose and caribou. When the animals are not commanding our attention, the landscapes certainly will, as there is hardly an average view in the entire country and we will have many opportunities to savour the stupendous scenery on a series of thrilling seaplane, light aircraft and helicopter flights. In many cases the epic panoramas are just as impressive from the water and we will enjoy numerous first-class boat trips, as well as sea and river kayaking and white water rafting. Gentle horse rides will enable us to observe the abundant wildlife from yet another perspective and meandering hiking trails will produce intimate sightings of many of the less commonly encountered creatures. Whilst there are several magical wildlife destinations across North America, this tour incorporates some of the very best wilderness areas and it is difficult to imagine a single trip which can offer this level of diversity at such close quarters. In wild Canada we will not only see towering polar bears and sleek killer whales, we will see them the right way, from just a few metres and in a completely natural setting.



Day 1 - Vancouver

Arrive in Vancouver, the largest city in British Columbia, and collect the spacious vehicle that we will use for the first leg of our memorable journey. Transfer the short distance to our modern boutique hotel on Granville Island, a highly distinctive location situated in the picturesque False Creek, with superb views of the city and the North Shore Mountains. As an introduction to the city we will this afternoon take a relaxing boat cruise on Vancouver Harbour and Burrard Inlet, Canada's 'Gateway to the Pacific', followed by a visit to the top of the Vancouver Lookout, a 130m tower with a spectacular 360-degree panorama. Finally we will head back towards our hotel for a gentle stroll along the False Creek section of the Seawall, a 22km walking and cycling path around Vancouver's pretty waterfront.

Days 2 to 4 - Vancouver

We have three full days to discover Vancouver and one of these will be reserved for the famous Stanley Park, a huge green oasis, recognised as one of the world's great urban parks. We can either take a short drive to the park, or hire bikes at our hotel and cycle there along the pretty Seawall path. Although our tour is flexible, our first stop will probably be the Vancouver Aquarium, the largest aquarium in Canada and a non-profit association dedicated to the conservation of aquatic life. Whilst this is not a wild experience, the centre is home to 70,000 animals and is responsible for important educational programmes and the rescue and rehabilitation of a large number of injured or trapped marine mammals every year, including dolphins, sea otters, seals and sea lions. After lunch we will enjoy a narrated tour of the park in a horse-drawn tram before we take a walking trail through part of the towering red cedar forest and

around Beaver Lake, home to a small population of American beaver. Other resident wild animals include striped skunk, Virginia opossum, the only marsupial in North America, coyote, raccoon, and three species of squirrel, douglas's, eastern grey and the northern or Carolina flying squirrel. We have a reasonable chance of seeing some of these mammals and will certainly observe blue heron, as

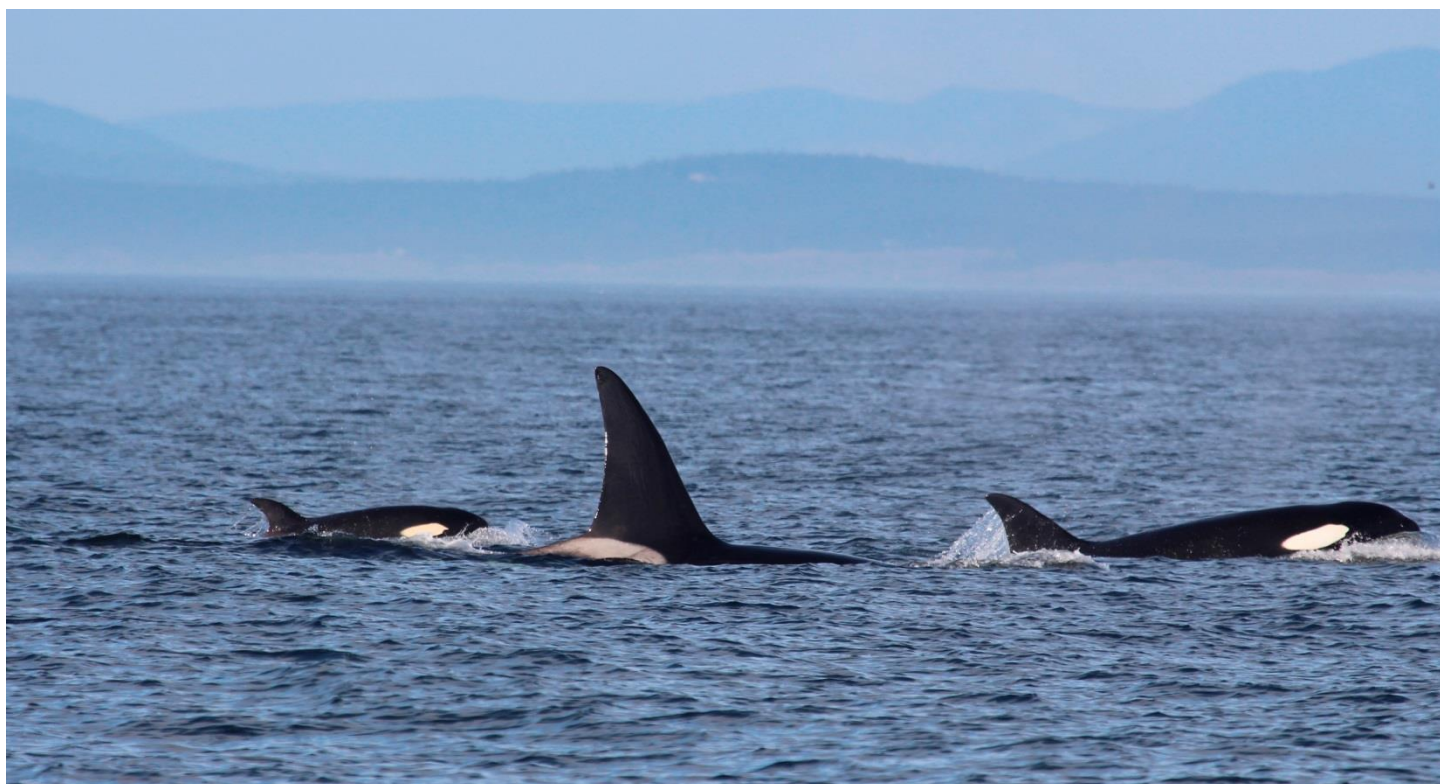


our final stop will be at the large heronry near Lost Lagoon in the southern section of the park. Another day can be reserved for a trip to the Capilano Suspension Bridge and Grouse Mountain, both of which are located on the North Shore and can be accessed via the colossal Lions Gate Bridge from Stanley Park. After walking across the 70m-high suspension bridge above Capilano Canyon, we will move on to Grouse Mountain and stunning views of the Pacific Ocean and Vancouver. The summit can be reached by an easy hike or an even easier aerial cable car ride and is the location for the first adventure activity of our trip, a thrilling tandem paragliding flight lasting up to twenty minutes and dropping over 1000m amid some of the most attractive scenery imaginable. If the paragliding is not sufficient in terms of excitement for the day, there are a number of high-speed ziplines between Grouse and Dam Mountain and we will also visit the wildlife refuge, where two orphan grizzly bears and a number of grey wolves have been homed in two separate natural environments. Numerous additional activities can also be arranged in or

around this remarkable city, most notably exhilarating tandem skydives in the beautiful Fraser Valley, sea kayaking, white water rafting through class three and four rapids on the Elaho River, scuba diving at a number of popular dive sites, various scenic helicopter flips and seaplane flights, which are highly recommended and visit some of the most spectacular landscapes in the region, including Chatterbox Falls at Princess Louisa Inlet and Lake Lovely Water in the Tantalus Mountains.

Day 5 - Vancouver to Victoria

We have a short drive south this morning to the Tsawwassen ferry terminal for the picturesque hour and a half crossing to Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island, a 460km long and at points 50km wide temperate island stretching along the coast of British Columbia. From Swartz Bay we drive to Victoria, the provincial capital of British Columbia, for an early lunch and an afternoon boat trip to observe the magnificent resident killer whale pods of the Haro and Juan De Fuca Straits. It is not unusual to see up to eighty of these majestic creatures in one stretch of these renowned waters and we will also search for grey, minke and humpback whale, Pacific white-sided dolphin, dall's porpoise, harbour porpoise, harbour seal and steller and California sea lion. Following our exciting first authentic wildlife encounter of the tour, we will transfer to our accommodation for the next two nights, a classic Edwardian hotel overlooking the Inner Harbour.



Day 6 - Victoria

Although the success rate for killer whale sightings is incredibly high, we will take a second boat trip today to give ourselves the best possible chance and to also observe some of the many other marine mammals, including those previously described and North American otters, freshwater otters that are commonly seen around various stretches of the Vancouver Island coastline. The rest of the day is free and options include kayaking, an elegant horse drawn carriage tour incorporating all of the highlights of what is a very scenic city or a visit to the gorgeous Butchart Gardens, a magical array of exquisitely themed gardens, sculptures and fountains, many of which are illuminated during the late opening hours of the summer months.

Day 7 - Victoria to Tofino

We have a fairly long drive northwest today and will leave after breakfast to enable us to make several stops at points of interest along the way, including lunch in the Parksville area overlooking the Strait of Georgia, which separates Vancouver Island from mainland Canada. After cutting west from the main coastal highway, we will also stop at Cathedral Grove in MacMillan Provincial Park, home to one of the last remaining primary forests in British Columbia, where huge douglas firs dominate the landscape, some of which are more than 800 years old. In the afternoon we will take the Pacific Rim Highway through the beautiful Sutton Pass to Tofino, a friendly town adjacent to the Long Beach section of the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. Our home for the next four nights will be a charming, secluded inn, idyllically situated on the Pacific coast between an ancient cedar, spruce and hemlock forest and the rugged Chesterman Beach.



Days 8 to 10 - Tofino and Ucluelet

Over the next three days our wildlife adventures will continue with whale watching trips to observe grey whales as they migrate north to Alaska and our first guaranteed sightings of black bear, which are also observed by boat as they forage for rock crabs and other delicacies along the remote shoreline of Clayoquot Sound. Black bear are abundant along the west coast of Vancouver Island and are easily seen at low tides, while a number of grey whales do not migrate any further north than Clayoquot Sound each year and are also routinely encountered. Humpback whales are common during the summer and early fall months and transient pods of killer whales are also seen on a fairly regular basis. Our boat trips will depart from both Tofino and Ucluelet, a small, friendly town just a few miles along the coast, and will include visits to the seasonal steller and California sea lion colonies on Wouwer Island, in the Broken Group Islands of spectacular Barkley Sound, another section of the Pacific Rim Reserve. The sea kayaking is exceptional here and provides a different and totally enthralling perspective of the breathtaking scenery, as we glide through the pristine coastal waters and island channels, taking time to appreciate the dramatic eye-level forest views and to look for bald eagles, black bears and even whales. We have the option of a number of different guided kayaking trails, several of which are notable for sea otter encounters, which were hunted to extinction by fur traders in the coastal waters of British Columbia by the late 1920s, but are thriving again after a handful were reintroduced from Alaska during the 1960s. Sea otter numbers now appear to be approaching 5000 and they can be seen all along the western coast and on the longer kayaking trips as far south as Barkley Sound, where inquisitive sea lions regularly swim around the boats. Given the spectacular landscapes, seaplane flights are another highlight of Tofino and these can be combined with boat trips to the thermal springs at Hot Springs Cove in Maquinna Provincial Park. Although both legs of the journey are traditionally



made by boat, a nice alternative is to enjoy a whale watching trip to the springs and to fly back along the magnificent coastline. Another option, and one of my personal favourites, is a floatplane flight through snowcapped mountain peaks for an exhilarating landing over a sea of fir trees onto a dazzling turquoise alpine lake. The return journey, above some of the best coastal scenery in British Columbia, is similarly memorable and even the hiking trails offer extraordinary panoramas in addition to the myriad wildlife opportunities.

Day 11 - Tofino to Strathcona Provincial Park

We depart Tofino this morning after a leisurely breakfast and drive east to Mount Washington, where we will meet the participants of a truly remarkable conservation initiative that has gone a long way to securing the future of the Vancouver Island marmot, a large ground squirrel endemic to the island after which it is named and the most critically endangered species in Canada. In 2001 there were believed to be only 25 remaining in the wild, but due to the intensive captive breeding and release programme undertaken by the Marmot Recovery Foundation, the numbers have gradually increased and there are now more than 350 marmots living in various colonies across the island. We will hopefully meet some of the people actively involved in the rehabilitation of this endearing animal and look for a colony of wild marmots at one of the Mount Washington release sites. After what is certain to be a very special afternoon, we will transfer a short distance north to our lodge on the outskirts of Strathcona Provincial Park, the largest provincial park on Vancouver Island and the oldest in British Columbia. As will be the case at most of the destinations on this trip, we can significantly increase our chances of seeing certain animals by spotlighting within the local area after dark, both on foot and in our own vehicle.





Day 12 - Strathcona Provincial Park

After an early breakfast at our accommodation on the shore of the Upper Campbell Lake, we will meet the first of the local guides that we will use in different areas during our trip and begin exploring the verdant forests, crystal lakes and rolling alpine meadows of Strathcona Park. In addition to a significant black bear population, the park is home to elk, mule deer, American marten, wolverine, grey wolf, puma and a small number of Vancouver Island marmots, the first marmots actually born in Strathcona for at least a decade. Given that much of the park is only accessible on multi-day hikes, we are unlikely to encounter wolf or puma in this vast mountain wilderness, but we will search for one of the colonies of marmots and have a good chance of seeing both black bear and elk. Our exact route will depend on the advice of our guide and whether we are looking for a specific animal, but all of the hiking trails are rewarding, with pretty creeks, rivers and waterfalls against a rich backdrop of imposing mountains, including Golden Hinde, the tallest mountain on Vancouver Island at almost 2200m.

Day 13 - Strathcona Provincial Park to Quadra Island

We leave Strathcona this morning, but only very briefly, as we have a short drive to Campbell River Airport for a memorable single-engine Cessna flight over the many wonders that were beyond our reach during our brief stay at the park. Our aerial tour will include superb views of Strathcona's commanding mountain peaks, as well as the impressive forbidden plateau, Della Falls and the striking Comox Glacier. The return flight will take us over the Pacific Ocean and Quadra Island, our base for the next three nights. After a fleeting ferry crossing from Campbell River and an opportunity to buy a fresh picnic lunch, we will drive to our comfortable lodge, ideally situated on the shore of the island, just beyond Main Lake Provincial Park. On the way, we will choose one of several gorgeous wilderness trails, stopping for a late lunch at one of the beautiful lakes and looking for the resident wolf, puma, mule deer, American mink, North American otter and raccoon.

Days 14 to 15 - Quadra Island

We have two full-days to enjoy the trails and lakes of Quadra Island, although one of these will probably be reserved for a kayaking adventure through the meandering channels of the Discovery Islands, as the owners of our lodge have been operating sea kayaking trips for more than two decades and their tours are unrivalled in terms of experiencing the natural beauty and rhythm of this outstanding area. Paddling gently past dense, green forests and a background of soaring mountains, we will share the calm ocean channels with seals and porpoises, as well as a host of seabirds and possibly even a pod of killer whales. We will pause for a tasty lunch at any one of a dozen or so delightful locations and will spend the afternoon savouring the harmony of our tranquil surroundings and marvelling at huge colourful starfish and possibly otters gambolling charmingly along the rocky shore. The location of our remote lodge could not be more ideal, as it is over 20km from the nearest town and the access road, which is very rarely used, is perfect for spotlighting on foot, or slowly in our vehicle when we search for nocturnal animals. Main Lake Provincial Park is within an easy walk of the property and, after a long and rewarding hike through the forest, we can take a refreshing swim in one of the six inviting lakes within the park.



Day 16 - Quadra Island to Campbell River

Today we have the option of continuing to explore Quadra Island until the early afternoon or returning to Campbell River after breakfast to settle into our seashore accommodation and visit Elk Falls Provincial Park, which, in addition to the 25m falls after which

the park is named, has a network of quiet roads that we can spotlight along each evening. We have several activities planned during our stay at Campbell River, one of which will provide another major highlight of our trip, a first sighting of the magnificent grizzly bears that dominate the area and attract visitors from all over the world.



Days 17 to 19 - Campbell River

Although black bear, wolf and puma all occur on Vancouver Island, there are no grizzly bears and our first tour will take us back to the mainland and the rugged wilderness of the Orford River Valley and Bute Inlet. Our day will begin with a boat trip through the pristine waters of the Discovery Islands that can often resemble an actual marine tour, as we have the possibility of observing dall's porpoise, harbour seal, steller sea lion, Pacific white-sided dolphin, humpback whale and transient killer whales, before we transfer to the first of several grizzly bear viewing platforms along the river. As our adventure has been planned to coincide with the salmon spawning season, we are guaranteed great views of the grizzlies hunting the early season salmon in a totally natural setting. It is common to see mothers with cubs, as well as large solitary males and the photographic opportunities are almost endless as the bears splash through the water in search of the calories required to sustain them through hibernation. Bald eagles also abound and during the cruise back to Campbell River we can look for black bears foraging along the coast as the sun sets on another unforgettable day. Most of our activities here will take place on the water, as this is another superb whale watching area and we will take full advantage to search the local waters for resident orca pods and humpback whales, before travelling further north along the Johnstone Strait for more thrilling encounters with orcas and the possibility of seeing minke whales and even northern elephant seals. Harbour and dall's





porpoise are also abundant, but one of the main attractions here are the Pacific white-sided dolphins, which regularly congregate in huge numbers and in a frenzy of spellbinding, almost breathless activity. It is not unusual to spend up to an hour watching several hundred of these striking creatures cavorting acrobatically around the boat, in a succession of graceful jumps and extravagant, almost choreographed spins. It is quite a show and whilst our final activity here may lack the same intensity, a gentle cruise along the shoreline should provide us with extremely close views of black bear, river otter, mink and raccoon.



Day 20 - Campbell River to Knight Inlet

Although we will have already seen grizzly bears in one superb setting, the day trip to Bute Inlet is relatively brief in terms of the actual time spent observing the bears and we will rectify this over the next four days, as we transfer this morning to Knight Inlet, one of the premier grizzly bear viewing sites in all of Canada. Our seaplane flight will depart after breakfast and the journey itself is a magical experience, as we fly across a vast expanse of lush coastal rainforest and one of the most intact environments remaining on the planet. The scenery here and across much of the region has to be seen to be fully appreciated and our exciting passage will come to a fitting conclusion when we touch down on the secluded inlet within Glendale Cove and taxi to our enchanting floating lodge. Our first grizzly activity will take place later this afternoon and, at the time of year of our tour, the majority of our bear viewing will centre around various raised stands along the river. As this is a wild, remote location, grizzly sightings are not guaranteed on every excursion, but the record here is exceptionally good and when these fabulous animals are spotted, we have the privilege of spending



more or less as long as we want observing a full range of natural behaviour in a glorious setting. Our visit is also important in terms of the conservation of the area and of the grizzlies themselves, as the hunting mentality remains as strong as ever across the majority of North America and grizzly bears are just one of the major carnivores that are still legally killed every year in the name of sport. At least in most other countries these atrocities are caused illegally by poachers, but in North America the senseless slaughter of these beautiful creatures is state sponsored. Fortunately this backward approach is being opposed in some quarters, as Knight Inlet purchase the hunting licences for the area in order to protect the local bears and Wild Globe fully supports the 'Stop the hunt' campaign that the owners of Knight Inlet have instigated. Every visit here will help the cause to some degree and every tourist who pays to see a grizzly, as opposed to paying to shoot one, will further strengthen the financial argument, as the moral one has been ignored for far too long, that these amazing animals are worth far more alive than dead.



Days 21 to 23 - Knight Inlet

In addition to the two daily bear expeditions, which generally last three to four hours and are scheduled for the early morning and mid afternoon, we can also participate in boat trips on the main estuary, where seals are common and wolves are occasionally observed crossing the tidal flats. All wildlife activities are conducted with qualified guides and interpretive rainforest walks are another recommended option during our stay, as the knowledgeable guides explain the ecology of the area and how these huge animals survive on a diet of berries and sedge, a protein-rich grass that the ravenous bears feast upon when they first emerge from hibernation. Whilst grizzly bears are undoubtedly the main focus of our stay, this is a highly diverse ecosystem and we have a chance, albeit an outside one in some cases, of encountering grey wolf, black bear, puma, North American otter, American marten, American mink, porcupine, mule deer and Carolina flying squirrel. Many smaller mammals also occur, as well as a large variety of birds and a number



of interesting reptiles and amphibians, including the northwestern salamander. Whale watching trips to the Johnstone Strait are also available, but, as we will have already taken several similar tours, we will probably concentrate our efforts around the inlet and opt for

kayaking trips, to watch the grizzlies feeding on sedge grass after their main course of salmon, and the peaceful inlet cruise, on which seal, mink and black bear are commonly seen and it is even possible to observe mountain goats, as they start to move to the lower slopes as autumn approaches. The estuary drift is particularly rewarding in terms of the scenery and photographic opportunities, as our small vessel cuts through a kaleidoscope of snowcapped mountains, rugged granite cliffs and sparkling waterfalls, amid a carpet of dense, green forest. For all of the natural wonders, including otters that often clamber up on the floating dock, grizzly bears very much remain the main attraction and there is nothing quite like



watching these imposing animals emerge silently from the forest and begin gorging themselves on the helpless salmon. To spend an afternoon watching an experienced female grizzly bear skilfully catching and eating salmon, as her two fluffy cubs splash and fight in the water nearby, is a wonderful privilege and is just one of many such highlights on the trip. When we are not out in the field looking for wildlife, we can cruise tranquilly along the inlet or simply enjoy the perfect solitude of our isolated surroundings, where the only noise of interest is the haunting melody of a wolf howling in the distance and the only entertainment much beyond dark, is a night full of sparkling stars.

Day 24 - Knight Inlet to Campbell River

All too soon our stay at this captivating destination is over and, after one final morning looking for bears, it is time to take the return seaplane flight back to Campbell River. Fortunately, as always appears to be the case in this beguiling region, our next destination is just as impressive and, over a final evening meal on Vancouver Island, our thoughts will quickly turn to the many adventures ahead.

Day 25 - Campbell River to Port Hardy to the Great Bear Rainforest (Spirit Bear Tour)

We will leave Campbell River fairly early this morning, as the drive to Port Hardy is another enchanting one and we have a good chance to stop and observe roosevelt elk and other animals along the way. After dropping off our trusty hire vehicle, we say farewell to Vancouver Island and take a scenic flight north to Bella Bella to begin one of the most remote phases of our expedition. Depending



on the flight schedule at the time, it may be necessary for us to overnight in the coastal fishing village of Shearwater, as the final leg of our journey, a boat transfer further north, needs to be completed in daylight. If we are able to conclude our transfer today, this evening will be spent at the welcoming lodge from which we will explore the more isolated regions of the Great Bear Rainforest in search of the mystical spirit or kermode bear, a subspecies of the black bear, about one in ten of which have entirely cream-coloured coats. Although spirit bears are notoriously difficult to locate, we have an extremely good chance with five full days and the best possible assistance in the form of a First Nations guide, one of the indigenous Kitasoo people, who have lived in this region for thousands of years.

Days 26 to 30 - Great Bear Rainforest (Spirit Bear Tour)

Using our lodge as a base, we will set out early each morning to explore the broad estuaries and labyrinth inlets by motorboat before walking in suitable areas specifically selected by our knowledgeable guide. This is a true wilderness experience, as few artificial viewing stands are used and we will instead search for these spellbinding ghosts of the forest on foot, without the assistance of trails or the guarantee of success. Few human beings ever tread these rich, moss-covered forest floors and the thrill of seeing these



extraordinarily beautiful creatures in such a pristine natural habitat is something that no visitor could ever forget. We also have the possibility of watching the bears from the water and, for some of the smaller river channels, will switch from our large boat to a small skiff to allow us to glide silently and unobtrusively to some of the best viewing areas. The Great Bear Rainforest, which stretches as far north as Alaska and also includes much of the area that we will explore around Bella Coola, is a haven for a huge variety of wildlife and we have a good chance to see wolves here, as they are known to swim the channels between islands and are often spotted catching salmon in the shallows. If wolves are another main priority, and these intelligent and highly social creatures generally are, we can ask our guide to concentrate on the most likely areas and we will almost certainly encounter grizzly and black bears as we sail down the many passages connected to the mainland. Sitka deer, a subspecies of the mule deer, mountain goat, moose, marten, wolverine and puma are just a few of the other species that occur here and on our boat trips we will have another opportunity to observe humpback and grey whale, steller and California sea lion, dall's porpoise, harbour seal and sea otter. In the evening there will be an opportunity to learn more about the fascinating culture of the local Kitasoo and Xai'xais people and also to discover the conservation initiatives established in an attempt to preserve one of the largest tracts of temperate rainforest in the world, as much of this precious region remains under threat from the timber industry and the resident animals still receive no actual protection. This is the case for much of North America and, although it appears totally incongruous in an age of endangered species and shrinking habitats, Canadian and US governments continue to endorse the hunting of such magnificent animals as grizzly and polar bears, pumas, wolves, bobcats and bison. Wolves, grizzlies and black bears are all routinely hunted within the Great Bear Rainforest and it can only be hoped that future generations in North America will finally begin to realise, as has been the case across much of the globe, that these apex predators are inextricably linked to the delicate ecosystems within which they survive and that as soon as you disturb or eradicate one component, you jeopardise the entire environment. Thankfully, as per the initiative at Knight Inlet, local people are taking action and nine First Nations communities have banned trophy hunting from their territories along the coast. The mere fact that we are visiting and spending money to see wild grizzlies will support their 'Bears Forever' campaign and further details of this important programme, and many other equally significant initiatives, can be found on the conservation page of my website.

Day 31 - Great Bear Rainforest to Bella Coola to Tweedsmuir Provincial Park

We have an early departure this morning, as, instead of simply retracing our previous journey and flying to our next destination, we will take a private boat charter directly to Bella Coola, a wilderness oasis of almost unparalleled beauty. As with our seaplane flights, this is one of the trip's many great journeys and it is often difficult for first-time passengers to drag themselves away from the extraordinary scenery viewed from the deck of our comfortable boat. As the misty evergreen forests, imposing granite cliffs and deep



glacial-carved fjords of Queen Charlotte Sound all glide by. Breeching whales and dolphins often add to the amazing spectacle and the morning passage passes extremely quickly against one of nature's wonders. We will arrive in Bella Coola to collect our car around lunchtime, before driving directly to our harmonious lodge and luxurious log cabin within Tweedsmuir Provincial Park. We have several options this afternoon, as our lodge is supremely located on the banks of the Atnarko River and boasts a superb elevated viewing stand from which we can sit and watch grizzly bears contentedly devouring the spawning salmon. Wolves have even been photographed here and there is another stand a few minutes drive away, which is equally productive in terms of very natural grizzly bear sightings, as well as otter, mink, marten and occasionally beaver. Another option is to drive the 'Freedom Highway' up to the Chilcotin Plateau, as we will be doing this famous drive on a few occasions and many guests like to see what they have read so much about. The 'hill', as the road is known locally, ascends 5000 more or less vertical feet in about 15 kilometres from the Bella Coola Valley and was remarkably built by the local residents in the 1950s, when the government decided that it was not practical to build a road through such extreme terrain. When we are not spotlighting in the evening we can enjoy the wonderful atmosphere of our lodge, complete with an inviting log fire, and each morning we will wake to our own personal mountain view, the very aptly named Mount Stupendous.



Days 32 to 36 - Tweedsmuir Provincial Park

Over the next five days we will explore the exquisite wilderness of the Bella Coola Valley, Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and the surrounding areas as far east as Tatla Lake. We will continue to devote plenty of time to grizzly bears gorging themselves on spawning salmon, including during at least two extended drifts down the Atnarko and Bella Coola rivers in traditional McKenzie river boats. We will also turn our attention to the rest of the wildlife that this diverse region is home to, as Tweedsmuir and its environs support healthy populations of highly secretive puma, wolf, Canadian lynx and wolverine. Whilst we will require a reasonable amount



of good fortune to encounter one or more of these species, we will spend time looking in the most suitable areas with the assistance of highly experienced local guides. In doing so, we can reasonably expect to see black bear, coyote, American beaver, river otter, red fox, mountain goat, mule deer and the woodland caribou subspecies, with good possibilities for moose, North American porcupine, American badger, marten and mink, bighorn sheep, least and long-tailed weasel, ermine, fisher, striped skunk and a host of marmots, pikas, squirrels, chipmunks and other rodents. Although the exact arrangements will ultimately depend on the interests of the group, we are likely to divide our time between the Bella Coola Valley and the Chilcotin Plateau, as this will enable us to visit several of the most productive wildlife areas and a few of the animals can be found in one environment but not the other. In addition to the boat drifts, our wildlife viewing will be conducted on foot and in our vehicle, including at night when we will slowly search with spotlights, and also on horseback, as we have the opportunity to experience a glorious full-day ride along the most breathtaking of



wilderness trails. The hiking trails are just as overwhelming and the scenery in general around Bella Coola, Tweedsmuir and Chilcotin could not be much better in terms of both landscape and wildlife photography. Fertile ancient forests, vivid turquoise lakes and sumptuous rolling meadows are all framed against dramatic mountain peaks and the handsome tree-lined riverbanks are an ideal setting for intimate pictures of eager grizzlies foraging in the shallows and other animals drinking cautiously at the water's edge. Additional diverting options include a restorative soak in one of the local hot springs, a boat cruise through the myriad fjords leading

back to the Pacific and helicopter or fixed wing flights over the majestic Hunlen Falls, the vibrant and appropriately named Rainbow Range and Monarch Mountain, a vast colossus rising imperiously from the equally outstanding Monarch Icefield. This is a flight not to be missed and can also be extended to take in moose, caribou and mountain goat habitats for surprisingly good views of all of these animals.



Day 37 - Tweedsmuir Provincial Park to Bella Coola to Vancouver to Winnipeg

We can enjoy a final vigil at the bear stand this morning before we transfer to the tiny Bella Coola airport and fly directly to Vancouver for a connecting flight to Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba Province. We will arrive in Winnipeg fairly late and transfer directly to our airport hotel to overnight.



Day 38 - Winnipeg to Churchill

We have an early flight to Churchill this morning and should have collected our four-wheel drive vehicle and met our local guide by no later than about 8.30am, giving us more or less five full-days to explore one of my favourite destinations in Canada. As this tour has been organised specifically around the salmon run, there is unlikely to be much snow in Churchill when we visit, or the large numbers of polar bears that congregate later in the season waiting impatiently for the waters of the Hudson Bay to begin to freeze.



Indeed, some groups who want to see both grizzlies and polar bears on the same trip, visit the Rockies for a couple of weeks to delay their arrival until the main season begins and they are guaranteed to see several polar bears on any given day. Although this can be arranged, and the Rocky Mountains are certainly beautiful in the autumn, I actually prefer to visit Churchill before the polar bear tours begin, when there are almost no other visitors and it is possible to discover the seemingly desolate tundra and atmospheric shores of Lake Hudson almost totally undisturbed. Of course we will not have the opportunity to photograph polar bears against a traditional white background, but there are several destinations where this is possible and I personally believe that these amazing animals look even more majestic amid the burning autumnal scarlets, burgundies and golds which adorn the landscape at this time of year. Churchill itself is not a pretty town, but it sits in a unique transitional zone, or ecotone, between three ecoregions, the Arctic tundra,



the boreal forest and the Hudson Bay. With this combination of diverse environments, and the rather special group of animals that inhabit them, it is not surprising that Churchill has become one of the premier wildlife destinations in North America. Given that a few polar bears always arrive early and are not difficult to see, we will enjoy the best of both worlds, fantastic close-quarter sightings of the largest land predator on earth and the opportunity to savour the compelling scenery without the huge crowds that will descend on the small town within a matter of days.

Days 39 to 42 - Churchill

In addition to the diverse wildlife and dramatic scenery, the real beauty of Churchill is the freedom with which it can be explored, as, the obvious safety procedures aside, there are no real restrictions in terms of where we can go and when we can go there. Unlike a lot of the wildlife areas in North America, which can be incredibly over managed, the vast expanses around Churchill remain truly wild and there are a number of good roads and trails for us to explore by day or night, with or without our guide. Of course we will take full advantage of our guide's local knowledge for much of the time, as he has lived in the region for over thirty years and knows all of the best places to look for different animals. However, we will also take time to search on our own, as visibility across the sprawling tundra is excellent and it is relatively easy to see a wide variety of animals. Polar bears are our main objective and I would expect to see several, but we should also encounter Arctic fox, Arctic hare, snowshoe hare, red fox, collared lemming, Arctic shrew, beaver, muskrat and hopefully caribou, although the latter are understandably skittish, given that they are routinely hunted. In the order of probability, moose, wolf, black bear, wolverine and lynx are all realistic possibilities, as are the mustelid species mink, marten, fisher, stoat and least weasel. Despite the fact that we will be visiting well past the whale season, with



a little patience we can still expect to see large pods of the extraordinary looking beluga whale from the shores of the Hudson Bay, as well as bearded and harbour seal, and the grain terminal is a great and fairly obvious location for various rodents and large numbers of snow and Canada geese. The area immediately around the Churchill Northern Studies Centre is excellent for arctic hare, you can often see a dozen or more here at night, and the road beyond, leading to Twin Lakes and the boreal forest, is a good spot for the snowshoe variety. Twin Lakes is actually the best area to look for caribou and magnificent snowy owls are also seen reasonably regularly, particularly during bountiful lemming years. Considering its lack of aesthetic appeal, the town of Churchill is a surprisingly quirky and entertaining destination, as two of its most notable attractions are human calamities and the third is a prison, albeit a polar bear prison where bears that have wandered too close to town are kept for up to several weeks before being sedated and flown back into the wilderness hanging in a net from a helicopter. You really have seen just about everything, when you see a polar bear fly! The two human mishaps are represented by 'Miss Piggy' a freight plane that never quite made the nearby runway attempting to land in the 1970s and MV Ithaca, a Greek cargo vessel that ran aground during a storm in 1960. There were no fatalities in either event and both landmarks are well worth a visit, as Miss Piggy remains in remarkably good condition and the Ithaca sits in prime polar bear territory and can be walked to at low tide. Although the tundra buggies for which the town is famed will probably not be in operation at the time of our visit, we do have the opportunity to take a memorable helicopter flight to Wapusk National Park, which is about 30km east of Churchill, but is not accessible by road. I would have to apply for a permit well in advance if we wanted to actually land in the park, but the flight itself is an incredible way to experience the almost infinite landscapes and watching a polar bear or a pack of wolves from the air is equally mesmerising. Cape Churchill, which sits within the northern border of the national park, is recognised as one of the best places to view polar bears and, if we are not disturbing any bears that we encounter, we can hover at around 100m for a totally unique perspective of these immense predators.





Day 43 Churchill to Hudson Bay Lodge

As hard as it always is to leave Churchill, our departure this morning is actually an exciting one, as we fly further north to the final major destination of our trip, a remote wilderness lodge on the western shore of Hudson Bay. In many respects, we are saving the best for last, as this is one of the very few places in the northern hemisphere where all three bear species coexist and it is possible to see polar bear, grizzly bear and black bear on the same amazing day. The thirty-minute light-aircraft transfer will provide our first opportunity, as polar bear, wolf, caribou and moose have all been seen on this flight and we have an excellent chance of encountering these and many other animals during our six-night stay at one of the finest lodges in North America. Its location can really only be described as idyllic, as this is the way you dream of watching wildlife, on foot, at eye-level, against a spectacular backdrop of pristine wilderness. Polar bear sightings are more or less guaranteed and I would expect us to see our first bears this afternoon, either strolling around the fence that surrounds the lodge or beyond the compound when we take an initial guided walk. Although we lose the freedom to explore on our own here, all of the activities are conducted by outstanding guides, we will more than make up for this in terms of being able to observe these massive carnivores at very close quarters, without fences, vehicles or viewing platforms to dilute the experience. Whatever wildlife you have seen previously, there is nothing quite like standing 10m from a 1000lbs of apex predator, even if it then destroys the tension somewhat by rolling around on its back with its legs in the air.



Days 44 to 48 - Hudson Bay Lodge

Whilst much of our time here will be spent with polar bears, we also have the opportunity to observe two contrasting annual migrations, which move in completely opposite directions. The southerly caribou migration from the calving grounds of the northern tundra to the protection of the boreal forest, involves around half a million animals and is one of the largest migrations on earth. In some years this migration will pass right by our lodge but, if that is not the case when we visit, we will take a short flight further north and spend a night in a remote camp in order to ensure that we are able to witness one of nature's great spectacles. The caribou are moving south to escape the harsh winter conditions of the unforgiving tundra and, as they head to the shelter of the treeline and their winter feeding grounds, beluga whales are making the reverse journey and heading north to the deeper waters of Hudson Strait before



Hudson Bay begins to freeze. Given that they will be a long way offshore, the only way to follow the beluga migration is by plane, which may not sound like an ideal wildlife encounter, but which actually works remarkably well. We fly low enough for really good views of these distinctive whales and the aerial shots provide a sense of the numbers involved and the scale of the journey, that a view from a boat never could. Both of these events are impressive and the caribou migration will become even more so if we are fortunate enough to encounter one of the wolf packs that follow the caribou south, picking off the young, the old and the weak. There is something primeval about watching wolves in the wild and there are few as evocative sights as an entire pack stalking this haunting landscape, as if the wilderness belongs to them and always has. We have a good chance of seeing wolves, even if we are not lucky enough to see a pack in full flight, as well as both arctic and red fox, wolverine, marten, stoat, least weasel, beaver, arctic ground squirrel, lemming, arctic hare and moose. Of the other bear species, we are more likely to encounter black bear than grizzly, although both are certainly possible, and we also have an outside chance of seeing Canadian lynx, which is about as good as you get anywhere in terms of spotting these highly elusive cats. Many of the smaller animals can be seen in or around the lodge compound and the observation tower is a great place to spend time scanning the horizon with binoculars or a spotting scope. The tower is also the perfect location to observe another of nature's great wonders, the Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights. Although I am aware of what causes this phenomenon, the principles involved are lost on me as soon as I start watching the heavens dance and you can easily understand why earlier cultures believed that these shimmering green and yellow lights were spirits or the souls of their ancestors. Hopefully our last night will be a clear one and we will be able to say a fitting farewell to this extraordinary region, with the greatest light show on earth



Day 49 - Hudson Bay Lodge to Churchill to Winnipeg

Today sadly is our last day of the trip in terms of wildlife and we will fly back to Churchill after a relaxing breakfast and a last look for polar bears around camp. Depending on the time of our return flight to Winnipeg, and it may be in the evening, I will ensure that we have a vehicle available to enable us to spend our last few hours searching for animals or revisiting some of our favourite areas for any final photographs. Upon arrival at Winnipeg we will transfer to our airport hotel to overnight.

Day 50 - Winnipeg to Vancouver

Our tour concludes today with a short flight back to Vancouver and no doubt a thousand wonderful memories to cherish from the trip of a lifetime. Depending on the timing of international flights, accommodation can be arranged in Vancouver, as well as travel on to further destinations in Canada or beyond.

Additional Options

Canada is so vast and has so much to offer in terms of wildlife, that it is impossible to include even the majority of natural highlights in one single trip. In all Canada has over 40 national parks and hundreds of conservation areas and even these pale into insignificance when you consider the immense areas of wilderness that receive little protection. A large number of the national parks are well worth a visit and two of my favourite locations, Yukon and the Rocky Mountains, can be easily combined with this trip. Riding Mountain and Grasslands national parks are both ideal as an introduction to the wide expanses of the Canadian Prairies, which are recovering in some areas after decades of almost unrestricted development for agricultural use. Riding Mountain supports healthy populations of wolf, black bear and bison, while Grasslands, in the extreme south of the country on the border with the US, is home to bison, swift fox, pronghorn antelope and bobcat and is the only reserve in the country where black-footed ferret and black-tailed prairie dog live in their native habitat. The High Arctic is one of the best destinations on earth in terms of both marine wildlife and spectacular scenery and certainly merits a dedicated trip of some length. Land visits and specialist cruises are both available, with itineraries including Baffin, Bylot, Prince Leopold and Devon islands, as well as Lancaster Sound, Bellot Strait and Cunningham Bay. Although a cruise probably makes more sense if time is limited, both options can offer intimate encounters with a host of enigmatic animals, including walrus, four whale species, bowhead, narwhal, orca and beluga, three seal types, ringed, hooded and bearded, polar bear, muskox, arctic fox, arctic hare, caribou and tens of thousands of seabirds. Given the size of the country and its spellbinding beauty, it is no real surprise that Canadians spend a great deal of time outdoors and that backcountry hikes and day trails are so popular. The eight-day West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island and La Cloche Silhouette Trail within the gorgeous Killarney Provincial Park in Ontario are two of the most famous, but there are thousands of others to choose from in similarly idyllic locations. There are just as many canoeing and kayaking possibilities, including a variety of wilderness trips lasting several days, and of course Canada is famed for its world class skiing, heli-skiing, snowboarding and many other winter sports. When you think that I have not even mentioned the iconic Niagara Falls or dozens of other remarkable destinations, it is easy to understand why even a seven-week trip barely scratches the surface of what this compelling country has to offer and that once you have visited it for a first time, you will definitely return.







14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne,
East Sussex BN21 1JJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 731865
Mob: +44 (0)7821 640118

Email: jason.woolgar@btinternet.com
Website: www.wildglobetours.com

