

Alexander Archipelago

A Greentours Itinerary

The traditional homeland of the Tlingit and Kaigani Haida peoples for millennia, the Alexander Archipelago is a three hundred mile long group of more than a thousand islands located off the southeast coast of Alaska. Densely cloaked with temperate rainforests the islands are formed by the submerged peaks of the coastal ranges and offer a truly stupendous arena for some of the World's most amazing wildlife spectacles – rafts of Sea Otters, pods of Orcas, cliffs dripping with Puffins, Murres and Murrelets, and Humpbacks. We'll hope to bear witness to these charismatic whales showing off the bubble-netting skills. An experience that will probably leave us more breathless than they.

Almost all of this mesmerising landscape is inaccessible to humans except by boat, so we'll visit the region's finest wildlife spots onboard the marvellous Catdaddy, a beautifully designed expedition vessel. But unlike on many cruises we won't stay aboard, each night we'll land and stay in locally-owned lodges where we'll also experience a little local culture, lots of comfort and some very fine food!

Day 1

To Seattle

Those flying from Europe will spend the night at a hotel close to the airport in Seattle.

Day 2

To Sitka

Late morning we'll take a flight to Sitka, passing flying over Vancouver Island and then Haida Gwaii before descending into Sitka where already we'll be realising just how spectacular the landscapes are! The three thousand foot perfectly-formed cone of Mount Edgecumbe, a dormant stratovolcano, dominates views across the Sitka Sound. We'll spend the afternoon exploring the rich wildlife of the sound and will no doubt have our first meetings with Bald Eagles and Sea Otters. Marbled and Ancient Murrelets as well as Rhinoceros Auklets and Tufted Puffins.

Days 3 – 12

Alexander Archipelago expedition cruise from Sitka to Petersburg.

Our journey begins in Sitka, where the scent of salt and spruce hangs in the air and bald eagles line the shoreline. From the very first afternoon on the water, humpbacks may announce themselves with distant blows while sea otters drift through kelp forests. The early days of our voyage are rich in coastal energy and seabird life. St. Lazaria's cliffs erupt with movement as Tufted Puffins flash past at eye level and murres crowd the ledges. As we move north through Peril Strait and into the vastness of Chatham Strait, the sense of scale grows. These are immense,

wild waters where Humpbacks gather in numbers, and the possibility of coordinated bubble-net feeding becomes very real.

Beautiful black and white Dall's Porpoises, perhaps as much of a 'symbol' of the northern Pacific coasts as Orcas, will enthral, for both their beauty and grace. Less vaunted Harbour Porpoises will show their little triangular fins from time to time. Bonaparte's and Glaucous-winged Gulls fly overhead. Pigeon Guillemots dive in front of the Catdaddy.

Around Hoonah and Icy Strait, the days take on a rhythm of prolonged marine encounters—whales rolling through glassy seas, orcas cutting purposeful lines across the horizon, and bears working the shoreline, turning stones or fishing in tidal shallows. From here, we transition along the dramatic Waterfall Coast between Hoonah and Kake, where mist spills down moss-covered cliffs and Grizzly Bears fish in emerald-green pools below Hidden Falls. Eagles gather overhead, and under the right conditions, humpbacks may erupt in coordinated feeding events nearby. In Kake and Kupreanof Island, the experience becomes more intimate — Black Bears in quiet forest creeks, the sound of rushing water, and then the raw power of a Steller Sea Lion haul-out, where hundreds of animals jostle and roar in tight formation.

We'll spot Black-tailed Deer too along the shorelines and during the course of the voyage, or just as likely around the lodges themselves, we'll have a chance to watch Martens, less elusive here than in some areas, and American Mink too. North American Porcupines are often around the lodges too.

The final days build toward a crescendo in Frederick Sound and LeConte Glacier—a place that often feels alive in every direction. Orcas patrol, Humpbacks rise slowly through calm water, and Harbor Seals rest on luminous blue icebergs as the glacier cracks and thunders in the distance. By the time you reach Petersburg, you've travelled through a vast cross-section of Southeast Alaska—from rich coastal systems to glacial wilderness, with an extraordinary diversity of wildlife and wonderful photographic opportunities throughout.

Though our voyage is essentially from Sitka to Hoonah, then to Kake and finally into Petersburg, the exact itinerary will depend on various factors including weather, recent wildlife sightings and Captain Neil's intuition!

Day 12(pm) **Flight to Juneau**

An early afternoon flight takes us across the Inside Passage to the mainland and Juneau, where we'll spend the night close to the airport.

Day 13
Depart Juneau

A morning Air Alaska flight takes those heading to Europe to Seattle for their connections. Or, why not continue to Nome in the far northwest of Alaska for a bit of the Arctic?

Day 14
Arrive Europe

If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

To Book a on this Holiday please fill in the booking form which you can download from www.greentours.co.uk (also found in the Greentours brochure) and post to Greentours, 8 Eliot Close, Armitage, Rugeley, WS15 4UP, UK. Tel +44 (0)1298 83563. After booking your place you'll receive a confirmation letter and a detailed information pack will be dispatched twelve weeks prior to departure. Mammal and bird checklists are available.