

# Marine Mammal Explorer

*2015 Edition*



*Ocean Light II Adventures*

An August Oceanscape – in beautiful Blackfish Sound



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## Marine Mammal Explorer

The northern tip of Vancouver Island is an incredibly rich and abundant wildlife area. During the summer months it is home to a wide variety of marine mammals as the Pacific Ocean delivers nutrients to the numerous channels and inlets of the region. Orcas (or Killer Whales), dolphins, porpoises and sea lions assemble to feed on the Pacific salmon that are returning to their natal rivers. Humpback Whales and coastal seabirds feed on the nutrients stirred up by the strong tidal currents. The area is also home to a strong and prosperous native culture, the Kwakwaka'wakw who have made this part of the coast their home for over ten thousand years.

## The Orcas of Johnstone Strait

The waters of Johnstone Strait are considered the best place in the world to observe the Orca. In the early years Orcas were thought to be merciless killers and were hunted. Since the 1970's scientific research and intensive study has shown the Orca to be a highly intelligent animal capable of complex vocal communication and advanced social behaviours.

Orcas have a strong sense of family and travel in matriarchal groups called pods. In the summer months when the waters are rich with salmon and other marine life, the whales congregate in large numbers. Along the western shore of Johnstone Strait is a small bay called Robson Bight. The Orcas frequent Robson Bight for its special rubbing beaches where they sink to the shallow bottom and slide along the smooth pebbles of the beach. Robson Bight itself is protected and closed to visitors but we can watch the whales from a distance as they access the Bight and move with them as they travel to other locations. We also hope to see Humpback Whales as well as sea lions, sea otters, grey whales, dolphins, porpoises and more. Through the use of a submerged hydrophone we hope to hear both Orcas and Humpbacks vocalizing. We may encounter marine mammals at any time during the trip as they travel large distances each day. We may even have the chance to hear Orcas swim past as we are anchored for the night.

Steller Sea Lions on haul-out rocks



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## 2015 Dates & Prices

**Dates:** • August 8-15                      • August 22-29  
                    • August 15-22

**Availability:** Please email us (adventure@oceanlight2.bc.ca) to check availability on any of the trips above.

**Price:** \$2999.00 CAD plus 5% GST per person from Port McNeill, BC.

**Number of Participants:** Maximum of 9

**Number of Crew:** 2

### What's Included?

- The services of a fully qualified skipper and crew
- Use of all gear available on board
- All meals from Lunch Day 1 to Breakfast Day 8 (B = Breakfast; L = Lunch; D = Dinner)

### What's Not?

- Gratuities for crew (optional and/or discretionary, but always appreciated!)
- Transportation between your home and Port McNeill, BC.
- Personal belongings and equipment as per "Clothing & Equipment List"
- Accommodation in Port McNeill on night prior to trip
- Excess baggage charges en route to Port McNeill

## Itinerary

You must arrive in Port McNeill prior to Day 1 for an early morning start on the first day of the trip. This itinerary is a sample only – the exact itinerary of your trip will be dictated by factors such as weather, tides and group interest, with the crew working within the parameters of safety, time and the highlights of the area.

### Day 1 – L/D

Our journey will depart from the coastal resource town of Port McNeill. Once on board the *Ocean Light II*, we will head towards Johnstone Strait and the Robson Bight Ecological Reserve. This area is regarded as one of the best places in the world to observe Orcas in their natural habitat.

### Days 2 to 4 – B/L/D

Over the next several days we will hope to see the whales hunting, feeding, and playing as they travel through these scenic waters. We will take time from whale watching to visit with the local whale researchers who make this resident population of Orcas the most studied and understood in the world. The researchers will help us understand the complex social behavior of resident Orcas and point out the issues facing Orcas with regards to their food supply and habitat.

During the evenings we will anchor among the numerous islands and bays of the Broughton Archipelago. Here we may see a Black Bear foraging through the rich intertidal or Great Blue Herons fishing atop the abundant kelp beds. These islands provide us the opportunity to paddle one the *Ocean Light II* kayaks and explore our calm protected anchorage.

Sea otter numbers are rebounding around northern Vancouver Island



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Humpback whale sightings – such as this one in 2011 – are becoming increasingly common in Johnstone's Strait



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Visiting this area would not be complete without learning more about the history and traditions of the local native people (Kwakwaka'wakw). If the group is interested we can take a walk through one of their ancient village sites or take a tour through the U'mista Cultural Centre in the modern village of Alert Bay. The Kwakwaka'wakw proudly express their culture with breathtaking carvings, songs and dance.

### **Days 5 to 7 – B/L/D**

We will travel toward northern Vancouver Island in search of more marine mammals. Wildlife congregates in the nutrient rich northern Johnstone Strait region where Queen Charlotte Sound meets Queen Charlotte Strait. Many marine mammals travel this route including transient killer whales, humpback whales, grey whales, sea lions, seals, porpoise and dolphins, and sea otters.

We will focus on wildlife viewing but we will also have opportunities to kayak, fish, beachcomb and explore.

### **Day 8 – B**

Our journey will end in Port McNeill and you will depart with memories of a spectacular area abundant with the wonders of nature.

## **More About the Trip**

**The Boat.** The *Ocean Light II* is an Ocean 71' ketch and is thought by many to be the perfect B.C. Coast charter yacht. With fourteen Atlantic crossings, the *Ocean Light II* has the pedigree and comfort to make any sailing experience with her one to remember. It has a spacious, well maintained interior of mahogany, authentic Douglas Fir and white enamel.

The layout offers 5 separate guest cabins that are closed off from the rest of the yacht. A berth will be assigned to each person upon arrival. There are two heads, a shower and the interior is all newly remodeled. The main salon located below deck is a spacious 14' x 17', which seats twelve comfortably while still leaving space to move about freely. There is ample deck space and she is very comfortable under sail. *Ocean Light II* features all of the extras expected: 19' hard bottom inflatable, six kayaks as well as an extensive library for your enjoyment.

For more information about our boat – including images of the interior – just visit this page on our website:

<http://www.oceanlight2.bc.ca/html/about/boat.html>

Female Orca with Young Calf



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**The Crew.** Chris Tulloch will be the skipper/guide for this trip. He has over 22 years of experience on the coast and specializes in marine mammals. Jenn Broom provides invaluable assistance as crew, guide and cook – she has over 20 years of coastal experience as well and she'll make you feel at home aboard the *Ocean Light II*. *Ocean Light II Adventures* and her crew continually contribute a tremendous amount to the conservation of our endangered wilderness areas.

**Meals.** We take special care in preparing nutritious and delicious meals. All meals will be prepared aboard the sailboat and will include fresh seafood, homemade soups, breads and salads. Wine is served with dinner,

and you may bring your own drinks to be consumed in moderation and only when the anchor is down for the night. We will not tolerate excessive drinking on our vessel. Clients have the option to assist in food gathering and meal preparation. If you have particular dietary restrictions, please let us know well in advance.

**What About the Weather?** Weather along the coast in late summer and fall can be variable. We can expect to have all weather conditions, warm sunny days and cool rainy days. Typically, in the late summer, fog is common in the mornings. Fog and ocean breezes make it feel colder so come prepared for all conditions.

For more information about this once-in-a-lifetime expedition, please contact us at:

Email: [adventure@oceanlight2.bc.ca](mailto:adventure@oceanlight2.bc.ca)

Phone: 604-328-5339

Pacific White-sided Dolphins in pursuit of a salmon



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