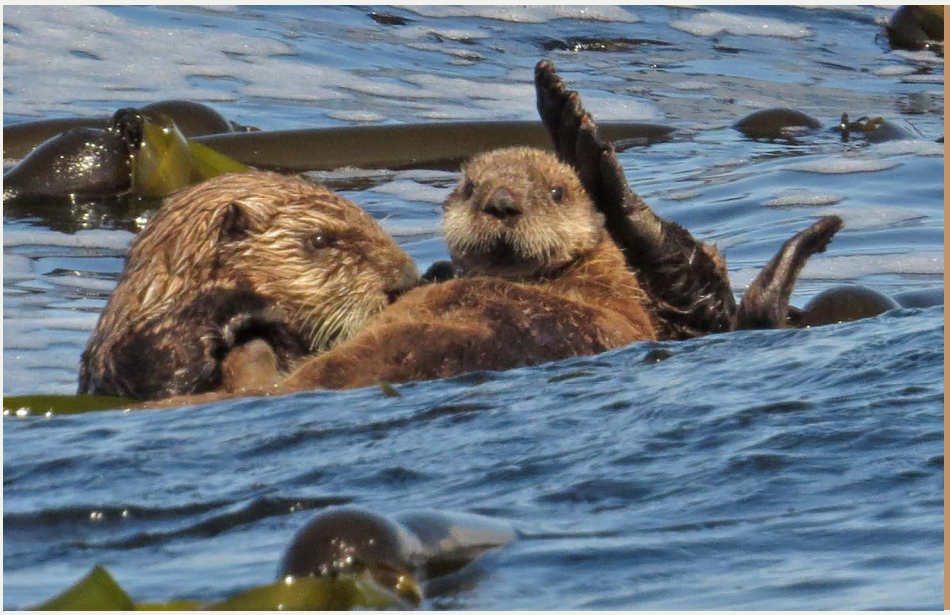
BRITISH COLUMBIA



"I feel very lucky to be returning to British Columbia again in 2017, being my 6th consecutive year on this extraordinary tour. This is arguably my favourite wildlife holiday of my calendar year 'ticking all the boxes' with some fabulous wildlife, stunning scenery and awesome boat excursions." Julian Sykes

Dates	Sat 9 - Fri 22 Sept 2017
Price	£4,595
Deposit	£900 Single Supp £850
Leaders	Julian Sykes
Flights	British Airways, scheduled Outbound: Morning, Heathrow-Vancouver Inbound: Overnight, Vancouver-Heathrow
Weather	It varies across the island, with wetter conditions in the west around Tofino and Zeballos, drier on the east coast. Expect some rain (we sometimes have rain for a whole day or more) and fog is possible in the west but generally warm and sunny to mild conditions (14°-22°C)
Walking	There'll be some short easy walks on wide tracks in the forest, in some places with lots of steps. Nothing steep or strenuous, but a reasonable degree of fitness is required
Meals	All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 13
Insects	Biting insects are generally not a problem on Vancouver Island, but repellent is a good idea just in case
Boat trips	Boats vary from larger boats with indoor seating areas that can hold over 50 people, to smaller uncovered boats with no facilities. Sometimes the groups may be split between two boats each with a guide. All boats are excellent
Accom	Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite
Group	7

Just some of what we hope to see:

Grizzly Bear
Dall's Porpoise
Black Bear
Black Oystercatcher
Sea Otter
Black Turnstone
Humpback Whale
Heermann's Gull
Orca
Rhinoceros Auklet
Gray Whale
Marbled Murrelet

On Canada's rugged west coast, Vancouver Island awaits – brimming with bears, birds, whales and more as they seize the autumn bounty before the winter closes in.

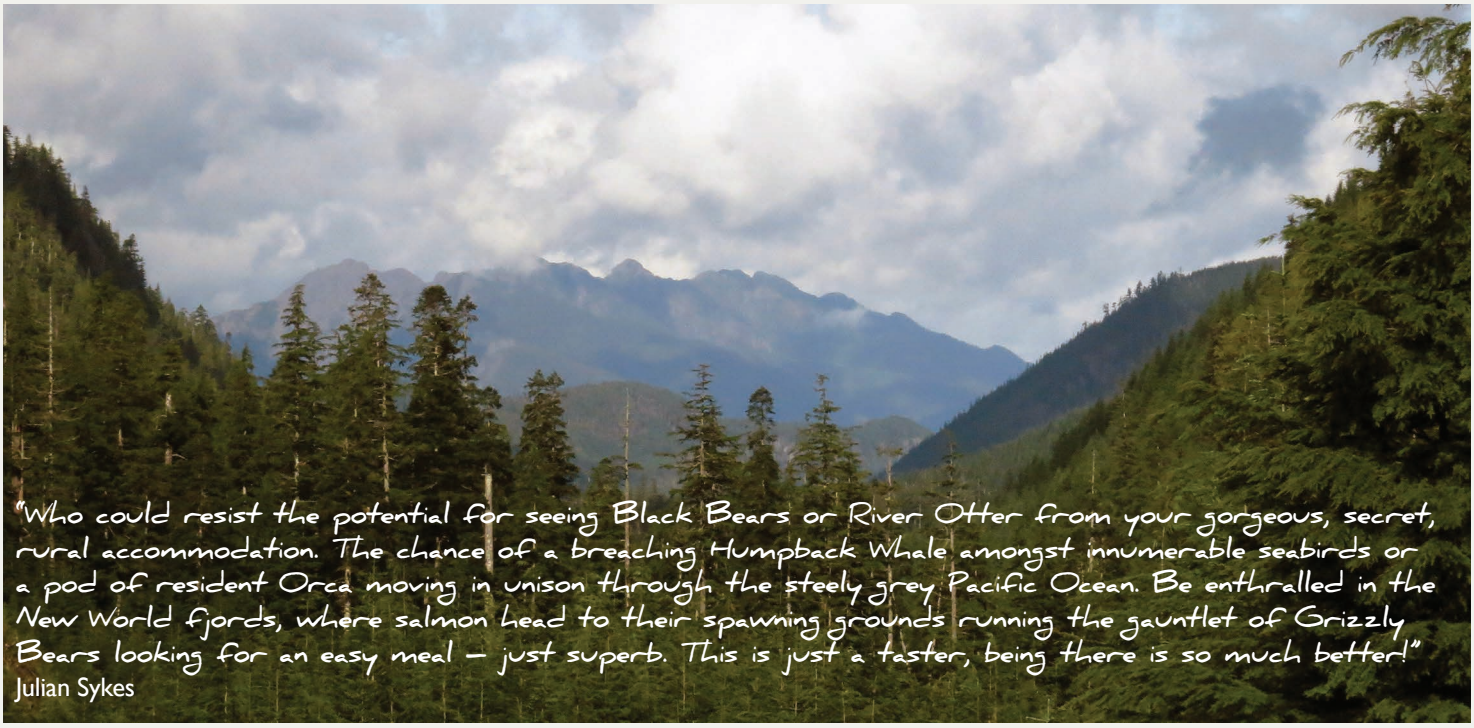
- Boat trips in search of Orcas, Humpbacks and Gray Whales
- Grizzly Bears hunting salmon on spawning grounds
- Dall's Porpoise, Steller's Sea Lions plus, with luck, Pacific White-sided Dolphin
- Black Bear, Beaver, Sea Otter and chance of Raccoon
- West Coast special birds including shorebirds, seabirds, divers and scoters
- Beautiful Pacific Rim Rainforest and famous Long Beach
- Stunning scenery of lakes, fjords and forest amidst towering mountains

1-2 Arriving in Vancouver we transfer to our hotel in Delta. The following day we enjoy a full day at George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary, where Sandhill Crane, Wood Duck, dowitchers and yellowlegs, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Harrier and Bushtit are all possible. It is a fabulous Reserve, but the whole area can be great birding and this may prove the most bird rich day of the trip!

3-4 After some relaxed birding enroute to the Nanaimo ferry for shorebirds, gulls and scoters, we board the ferry and check the jetties for Black Turnstone and perhaps Surfbird. We then have a long drive north to our ocean front lodge overlooking Johnstone Strait. The grounds are a haven for wildlife and we have watched Black Bears turning rocks on the shore here and, with luck, even River Otter and Raccoons. We can relax, or wander in search of White-crowned and Fox Sparrows, warblers and woodpeckers in the surrounding woodland.

We shall be picked up from the jetty for a boat ride into rich waters covered in gulls, Common and Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets and dainty Red-necked Phalaropes. Watched by tree top Bald Eagles, this is our best chance for Orcas and we hope to encounter resident groups at close quarters! Dall's Porpoise and Steller's Sea Lions are here too and, with luck, Pacific White-sided Dolphins. Even if we don't see Orcas, we'll be thrilled by great sightings of Humpback Whales!

5-6 We move on to Zeballos on a scenic west coast inlet, an old Gold-rush village where Cedar Waxwing, Steller's Jays and migrant



"Who could resist the potential for seeing Black Bears or River Otter from your gorgeous, secret, rural accommodation. The chance of a breaching Humpback Whale amongst innumerable seabirds or a pod of resident Orca moving in unison through the steely grey Pacific Ocean. Be enthralled in the New World fjords, where salmon head to their spawning grounds running the gauntlet of Grizzly Bears looking for an easy meal – just superb. This is just a taster, being there is so much better!"
Julian Sykes

warblers such as Wilson's and Yellow-rumped are possible and we hope to find Beavers on a nearby pond. Sea Otters have a good population in this area and we'll explore the beautiful inlets and rocky shorelines by boat to enjoy great views, as they lie on their backs and smash shellfish on a stone on their belly! Black Bears are also possible along the shoreline, turning over boulders as they search for crabs.

7-9 After breakfast we head for Campbell River, a great area for birding, with shorebirds, Harlequin Duck, Bonaparte's Gull, grebes and divers, plus Red-breasted Sapsucker in the trees. We'll also visit the sub-alpine forest of Mount Washington in search of tame Gray Jay, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, woodpeckers and more.

There is lots to see, but we'll tear ourselves away because there's the lure of Grizzly Bears! We'll have a full-day boat trip to a picturesque inlet, where guides will take us to a purpose built viewing platform. We hope for great close up views as the bears walk the banks, or down the middle of the river, scanning the water for any hint of a fish to chase - then it's a mad dash, with the occasional bear even being successful!

10-11 It is a long and spectacular drive to Tofino on the west coast. We'll break the journey, pausing to enjoy the astonishing trees of Cathedral Grove enroute and visit a beautiful river to watch Chinook Salmon migrate upstream and leap the falls!

From our hotel near Tofino we'll visit Pacific Rim National Park - lush temperate rainforest, with cushions of moss on branches of towering Hemlocks, vast beaches and the ocean stretching off as far as the eye can see.

The forest can be quiet with Pacific Wren, Steller's Jay and Chestnut-backed Chickadees often the only birds, but is beautiful and well worth the visit! The beaches may hold flocks of Western Sandpipers, while offshore are Red-necked Grebes, Surf Scoter, Pacific Loons and Marbled Murrelet, with Bald Eagles overhead.

We'll go whale-watching too, taking a boat trip into Clayoquot Sound, looking for Gray Whales, or Humpbacks if the last Gray Whales have left. Amidst the maze of rocky islets, there'll be Harbour Seals and huge Steller's Sea Lions, plus Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants, Heermann's Gull, Rhinoceros Auklet and Pigeon Guillemots and we'll check rocky islands for Wandering Tattler and Black Oystercatcher.

12-14 We head back to Vancouver, where we overnight in Delta again. On the following day we visit the huge area of Boundary Bay, before dragging ourselves away for our flight home, arriving in London on Day 14.

Outline Itinerary

Days 1-2	Fly to Vancouver. Full day birding local area and George C. Reifel Bird Sanctuary 2 nights at Tsawwassen Inn
Days 3-4	Ferry to Vancouver Island, then drive towards Port McNeill and our hotel overlooking Johnstone Strait. Boat trip to look for Orcas 2 nights at Hidden Cove Lodge
Days 5-6	Drive to Zeballos on west coast to explore the coastal forest and inlets from our Sea Otter boat trip 2 nights at Cedars Inn
Days 7-9	Drive to Campbell River, then birding local area and a full-day boat trip to Grizzly Bear fishing grounds 3 nights at Painter's Lodge
Days 10-11	Transfer to Tofino on the west coast, with boat trip for Humpback/Gray Whales and walk in Pacific Rim Rainforest 2 nights at Jamie's Rainforest Inn
Day 12	Return to Vancouver 1 night at Tsawwassen Inn
Days 13-14	Birding Boundary Bay before flight back to London in afternoon, arriving in London on Day 14

Roy Atkins: Sea Otter, Landscape, Orca, Heermann's Gull, Black Bear, Gray Whale Fluke,