

Summer in the Southern Great Bear

Instructional Photo Tour 2020



The *Summer in the Southern Great Bear Instructional Photo Tour 2020* combines a day of professional photography instruction with eight days of exploration and photography in an exceptionally special, wild and pristine wilderness. You will be provided with the opportunity, the conceptual and creative tools, and the techniques needed to capture striking images of spectacular scenery and a diverse array of wildlife. Our “targeted” subjects will include Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, Humpback Whales, Sea Otters, land- and seascapes, and more. And, we’ll do all this while traveling into the depths of the Great Bear Rainforest aboard a classic and spacious 70-foot schooner, the *Passing Cloud*.

Photography Instruction. The photo tour begins with a full day of photography instruction. The session will be of benefit to all levels of photographers

– from enthusiastic novices through to seasoned professionals. We will discuss both the technical and creative aspects of wildlife photography as well as the specifics of photographing scenery and wildlife within the Great Bear Rainforest. While the instructional material will be agnostic with respect to camera brand and camera style (e.g., point & shoot vs. SLR) it will be assumed that most participants will be bringing either digital SLR’s or mirrorless cameras.

Photography instruction will also take place during our time on the *Passing Cloud*. This instruction will be less formal and on a “time-permitting” basis. The topics will vary, depending on both the specific interests of, and requests made by, those on the trip. It could include sessions on digital workflow topics, including raw image processing through to discussions on field-techniques and camera gear.



Shake it Up! In late summer grizzlies inhabit the estuaries found at the head of the many inlets and fjords of the “inner” Great Bear in search of spawning salmon and other food. Nikon D4 with Nikkor 400mm f2.8G. 1/400s @ f6.3; ISO 560. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

The Region – And Our Expedition At A Glance. The portion of the British Columbia mainland coast that stretches from Rivers Inlet in the south to the Skeena River in the north is often referred to as “The Great Bear Rainforest”. At over 64,000 square kilometers (25,000 sq. mi.) it is the largest tract of temperate coastal rainforest left on planet Earth. Here the coastal mountains meet the Pacific Ocean – the area is cut by hundreds of steep-sided inlets/fjords and there are countless islands. The more inland portions of the Great Bear Rainforest (AKA the “*Inner Great Bear*”) are characterized by thick forests cut by steep-sided inlets – here forest literally meets salt water! Another characteristic feature is the presence of wide, fertile estuaries where inland rivers and streams drain into the inlets and fjords. These estuaries are wildlife viewing and wildlife photography hotspots!

The portions of the Great Bear Rainforest more directly facing the Pacific Ocean (AKA the “*Outer Great Bear*”) are more wind- and “sea-swept” and include many islands and islets with more stunted tree growth and are generally more open than the forest of the Inner Great Bear. Many portions of the shoreline even have long, sandy beaches!

Both faces of the Great Bear – the Inner and Outer – are true wilderness and stunningly beautiful! They are rarely visited by humans. And both faces share many fascinating wildlife species, including Grizzly Bears, Black (and Spirit) Bears, coastal Gray Wolves, Wolverines, American Martens, Bald Eagles, Humpback Whales, Killer Whales, and Harbour Seals. The Outer Great Bear adds even more species to this strong list – here Steller Sea Lions, Sea Otters, additional whale species (such as Fin Whales), and many species of waterfowl and seabirds are more commonly seen, adding even more faunal diversity to our adventure!

The southern portion of the Inner Great Bear has generally the same assemblage of wildlife species as the more northern regions. However both of our possible routes provide us with opportunities (if weather conditions and the sea state permits) to explore portions of the Outer Great Bear as well (see the accompanying map that outlines two options for our route). This gives us a greater chance of seeing and photographing coastal Gray Wolves, Sea Otters,



Steller Sea Lions and Fin Whales than on a typical northern (and Inner) Great Bear trip. But please note that on this trip our chances of encountering a Spirit Bear are lower than in the northern Great Bear trips we run in the late summer and early autumn.

This is a Tour of Exploration! The *Summer in the Southern Great Bear Instructional Photo Tour 2020* is a true tour of photographic exploration. We'll explore the inlets, bays and old-growth forest of the spectacular mid-coast of British Columbia. We'll walk trails and beaches, explore creeks, and search for the unique mix of subject matter that only the Great Bear Rainforest can provide! The photographic opportunities on this tour are always absolutely amazing.

This is a multi-faceted trip, focusing not only on the bears, but on *all* the inhabitants of the Great Bear Rainforest – and the entire ecosystem in which they thrive. While the bears are an integral part of this trip, we will be approaching this trip *with an attitude of finding and capturing any form of natural beauty and natural art we can find*. This may include many species of terrestrial and marine wildlife and birds, intertidal scenes, landscapes, seascapes, and more! *If your sole goal is to photograph bears (to the exclusion of other subject matter you will be presented with), this may not be the trip for you.*

An Exciting New Twist for 2020! In 2020 we're tweaking both of our possible routes to overlap some of our highly successful 2019 "*Summer in the Southern Great Bear*" photo tour where we had excellent encounters and photo ops with both Black Bears and coastal Gray Wolves. Of course we can not guarantee we'll see coastal Gray Wolves on this trip, but we're doing all we can to maximize our chances of finding and photographing them!

About the Photography "Style" On This Photo Tour. On this trip – as on our other photo tours – this is a "*photography in true wilderness*" experience. This means we will spend the bulk of our time in isolated and remote wilderness and away from other humans (and other photographers). We'll have to "track down" our subject matter without the help of other outfitters, spotters or real-time online apps listing recent sightings

Seeking Natural Art! While finding and working with several species of "charismatic megafauna" is a big part of our experience, we'll be approaching this trip with an attitude of *finding and capturing any form of natural beauty and natural art we can find*.



Nikon D2Xs with Nikkor 200mm f2.0 VR. 1/400s @ f6.3. ISO 100
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Kissed by the Light. Coastal Gray Wolves are common in the Great Bear Rainforest, but their secretive nature makes them a challenge to see, and an even bigger challenge to photograph.



(i.e., there is no “network of sightings” for us to plug into!). Additionally we’ll have no “set-up” situations where we can set up in a specific location ahead of time and with the knowledge that a certain species will predictably appear and pose for us! The advantage of our “*photography in true wilderness*” approach is that it produces a far more unique and personalized experience and it can often lead to more original and compelling photos. A possible downside is that it means we don’t know the specifics of the shooting conditions ahead of time and thus may put more onus on the photographer to make snap technical and creative decisions in a field setting. This means it may challenge – and encourage you to expand – your photographic skills more than other photo tours do!

Our Wildlife Subject Matter: While this is a *photography-in-true-wilderness* trip, we are definitely headed into a target-rich environment! Here’s a quick run down of both our “*most likely*” wildlife subjects and our “*less likely but possible*” wildlife subjects:

A. Most Likely Subjects (50% or greater probability of encounter):

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| • Black Bears | • Grizzly Bears | • Harbour Seals |
| • Steller Sea Lions | • Humpback Whales | • Bald Eagles |
| • Herring Gulls | • Dall’s Porpoises | • Surf Scoters |
| • Harlequin Ducks | • Common Loons | • Sea Otters |
| • River Otters | • American Mink | • Great Blue Herons |
| • Asst’d songbirds | • Asst’d seabirds | • Asst’d shorebirds |

B. Less Likely But Possible Subjects (<50% probability of encounter):

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| • Killer Whales | • Coastal Gray Wolves | • Spirit Bears |
| • Minke Whales | • Fin Whales | • American Marten |
| • Elephant Seals | • Wolverine | • Marbled Murrelets |
| • Pacific White-sided Dolphins | | |

2020 Trip Start and End Points: The photo tour starts and ends in Bella Bella, BC.

2020 Date: August 24 - September 3, 2020, including arrival and departure days. August 26 - September 3 aboard the *Passing Cloud*.

2020 Price: \$7,699 CAD plus 5% GST. Subtract \$75 CAD for shared accommodation in Bella Bella, BC.

What's Included?

- All meals and accommodation in Bella Bella beginning on the evening of Day 1 (see Itinerary)
- A full day of professional photography instruction at the beginning of the trip and multiple informal instructional sessions during the course of the trip
- All food and accommodation while aboard the *Passing Cloud*

- A highly-experienced crew, wildlife guides, chef and a professional photography guide
- All First Nation, Conservation, and Stewardship fees
- Use of onboard gear and resources, including rubber boots!
- Use of Zodiac® and all associated safety gear (life jackets, etc.)

What's Not Included?

- Transportation between your home and Bella Bella, BC at the beginning and end of the trip
- Personal belongings and equipment



I'm Currently Pretty Tied Up! This male Sea Otter has wrapped itself in kelp to help anchor it in place while it rests. Sea Otters have recently re-colonized the region after a nearly century-long absence. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Nikon D5 with 800mm f5.6 VR. 1/1250s @ f11. ISO 1250



The Original Big Gulp! Humpback Whales feeding along the shoreline in the Great Bear Rainforest.
Nikon D4 with AF-S 80-400mm VR @ 180mm. 1/1250s @ f6.3. ISO 1600

- Meals and accommodation in Bella Bella/Shearwater prior to Day 1 of the photo tour
- Any extra personal expenses incurred because of weather, logistical delays, or missed flights
- Any gratuities for the crew of the *Passing Cloud*

What To Expect?

- Cool and rapidly “changeable” weather (daytime highs of about 18-22°C or 65-72°F) with the possibility of moderate to heavy rain
- Mostly calm seas, but with some bouts of rolling or choppy water
- Hearty, healthy and delicious food

- Always warm, always dry floating basecamp!
- A truly unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Photo Tour Leader: Brad Hill

Accommodation: While in Bella Bella we'll be staying at the Shearwater Resort & Marina. Unless otherwise requested, you will have single occupancy accommodation (i.e., a room for yourself) in Shearwater.

This trip is being offered in association with *Outer Shores Expeditions*. While in the Great Bear Rainforest we will be staying on their classic 70-foot wooden schooner – the *Passing Cloud*. Please be aware that you will be sharing a berth with one other person while on the *Passing Cloud*.



Fueling the Great Bear. The annual late summer and autumn spawning runs of 5 species of salmon provides the energy and nutrients that drives the entire ecosystem we know as the Great Bear Rainforest.

Nikon D600 with 24-70mm f2.8 @ 35mm. 1.0s @ f16. ISO 200

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Fitness Requirements of Participants

This photo tour requires a moderate level of physical fitness and good mobility. We will be walking/hiking a number of times on this trip and we will be shooting images from the deck of the sailboat, from within a Zodiac®, and on shore. To participate in this trip you should be able to perform the following tasks:

- ***Be able to hike up to 2-3 km (up to 2 miles) on uneven, slanted and potentially slippery terrain and/or over some obstacles that could be up to a meter or slightly more high (e.g., large fallen logs) – all while carrying your own camera gear.***
- ***Be able to easily move between the sailboat and the Zodiac®.*** This involves climbing up or down a 5' vertical ladder.
- ***Shoot your camera from within a Zodiac®.*** This involves multiple tasks, including shooting your camera while sitting on the pontoon of the Zodiac® or, at times, while sitting on the floor of the Zodiac®. In some cases you may find that the most convenient way to shoot will be while kneeling (on your knees) on the bottom of the Zodiac®. This is the reason knee pads are included as optional items on the trip's gear list. Note that tripods can **not** be used within the Zodiac® and while it is theoretically possible to use a monopod in the Zodiac®, few photographers find it practical. The obvious consequence is that you must be able to ***hand-hold the camera/lens system*** that you will be bringing and using on this photo tour.

On some occasions it WILL be possible to stand in the Zodiac® when shooting, but you will be shooting while sitting or kneeling far more frequently. A degree of flexibility and/or suppleness can make your time in the Zodiac® far more productive and enjoyable!

Sample Itinerary

The itinerary of the *Summer in the Southern Great Bear Instructional Photo Tour* is designed for flexibility. This allows us to react to the ever-changing distribution and abundance of wildlife and fluctuating weather conditions. Here's *one example* of how our time together may look!

Note that we have several route options available to us and the actual route we'll follow will be determined by weather conditions, any recent information on wildlife distribution and abundance, and a desire to minimize travel time (and maximize time in the field). At least two of our route options (see map on page 3) provide us with opportunities to explore both faces of the Great Bear – *the Inner* and the *Outer Great Bear*. Please keep in mind this is only *a sample itinerary* and how we actually spend our days may differ from this proposed route and schedule.

Day 1 – August 24, 2020

Arrive in Bella Bella, BC. Make your way to the Shearwater Resort and Marina. You may check-in any time from 2 PM on. If you arrive early in the day feel free to go for a walk or check out the facilities. Our first official activity will be meeting in the restaurant for dinner at 6:30 PM.

Day 2 – August 25, 2020

Photo instruction in Shearwater. After breakfast we'll spend 4 to 5 hours in a classroom-style instructional session on modern digital photography, with special emphasis on the technical and creative aspects of wildlife photography. We will also discuss the nuances of bear and marine



Beauty in the Beast: Humpback Whale numbers have been on the rise in recent years in the channels and inlets of the Great Bear Rainforest. The whales are commonly seen during our photo tours – but capturing a breach shot is a special and rare treat!

Nikon D5 with Sigma Sport 150-600mm @ 550mm. 1/1250s @ f7.1. ISO 4000. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

A Low Look! While common throughout the Great Bear, Harbour Seals are exceptional photographic subjects and even after a decade of photographing them I am still in search of the “ultimate” seal shot!



Nikon D500 with Nikkor 500mm f5.6E PF lens. 1/800s @ f5.6; ISO 900

© Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

mammal photography as well as the specifics and etiquette of shooting from the close quarters of a reasonably small inflatable Zodiac®. The late afternoon activities are not firmly scheduled – options could include an extended question-and-answer session on photography, roaming the region to sightsee, getting some exercise, or, if you wish, some free time.

Day 3 – August 26, 2020

Early breakfast, followed by boarding the *Passing Cloud* at the marina in Shearwater. After meeting the crew and guides of the *Passing Cloud*, allocating cabins, and a brief orientation we'll begin our journey into the Great Bear Rainforest. Our voyage will immediately take us north into glacier-carved fjords of the “*Inner Great Bear*” where photographic opportunities can abound! The narrow channels we'll travel through are home to Humpback and Killer Whales, Sea Otters, Elephant Seals and countless seabirds. End of day will see us anchoring in a small coastal estuary where salmon may already be arriving. We'll be able to watch for wildlife from the deck of the *Passing Cloud*.

Day 4 – August 27, 2020

We'll begin the day heading north along the east side of Princess Royal Channel and towards Khutze Inlet, one of the Great Bear's many gems. Here we'll be surrounded by snow-capped mountains, steep granite walls, and stunning cascading waterfalls. We'll venture into the estuary by Zodiac® with the hopes of finding some of the local inhabitants of this rich ecosystem, which includes Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, coastal Gray Wolves, and Bald Eagles.

Day 5 – August 28, 2020

Today we'll continue heading north and over the northern tip of Princess Royal Island with the expectation we'll be encountering an increasing number of Humpback Whales and possibly even some lightning-fast Dall's Porpoises. By afternoon we'll be exploring kelp forests and visiting Steller Sea Lion haul-out rocks. With luck we may even encounter some Transient Killer Whales in search of their preferred prey – marine mammals!



Day 6 – August 29, 2020

Today we continue south on the western side of Princess Royal Island and venture in a region of the “Outer Great Bear” that’s becoming increasingly known as “Whale Haven”. Here the sightings of both Humpback and Fin Whales are increasing. Fin Whales are the second largest mammals on Earth and are often longer than the *Passing Cloud*! Evening should see us anchoring in a secluded cove.

Day 7 – August 30, 2020

Today we’ll continue our cruise south and be on the lookout for large groups of Humpback Whales that are known to engage in unique and spectacular bouts of *bubble net* feeding. Later in the day we’ll cross Caamano Sound and shortly thereafter stretch our legs on the stunning white-sanded beaches of Campania Island. Swimming anyone? ;-)

Day 8 – August 31, 2020

Our goal today will be to explore the western inlets of Princess Royal Island and have another taste of the “Inner Great Bear”. We’ll head deep into an inlet in the hopes of finding the rare white Spirit Bear. And, we plan to doing a little trekking along creeks and streams which may already be filling with migrating Pacific Salmon.

Day 9 – September 1, 2020

We’ll begin today early in hopes of catching glimpses (and possibly photos!) of coastal Gray Wolves that are sometimes seen foraging on marine life when the estuary is at low tide. The remainder of the day could see us exploring the estuary region or spending time sailing and whale watching.



Day 10 – September 2, 2020

This morning we'll pass through an almost "secret passage" of Myers Narrows en route to the First Nations community of Klemtu. By afternoon we'll sail through Finlayson Channel and Milbanke Sound, returning back to the outer coast. And, of course, we'll be on the lookout for whales and other marine mammals throughout the day!

Day 11 – September 3, 2020

As we're traveling the short distance back to Bella Bella we'll be on the lookout for last minute wildlife sightings. Once we get to Bella Bella we say farewell to our shipmates before disembarking and heading to the Bella Bella Airport. And, of course we'll be left with great memories and great photos of a wonderful adventure!

Our Ethical Stance – *Wildlife FIRST!*

Wildlife conservation is the primary reason for our involvement in wildlife photography. As such, *we place the welfare and value of our subjects above the value of any photograph of them.* This philosophy is embodied in our *Wildlife FIRST* rules of conduct that guide our actions during all our photo tours. These four simple ethical rules state that:

1. We engage in *PASSIVE* wildlife photography only. This means we strive to capture images of wildlife behaving as naturally as possible and without the use of "set-ups", contrivances, or any actions that could guide the subjects toward desirable settings and/or backdrops or elicit specific "poses".
2. We do nothing intentional to alter or influence the behaviour of our subject(s) for the purposes of photography. This means we do not engage in any form of luring or baiting (or any other form of food supplementation). Additionally, we will not use any form of sound to alter the behaviour of the subject for the purpose of photography (including using predator and/or prey calls, vocal clicking, or making any other sound to encourage the subject to look at us).

Searching the Shoreline. Northern River Otters are commonly seen in both the rivers feeding the Great Bear Rainforest and in the intertidal zones of the region's many inlets



3. While respecting any legal guidelines on minimum approach distances, we always allow the wildlife subject – regardless of the species – to determine the distance it is *comfortable with* between itself and us. This principle not only serves to reduce the stress on the subject, but it also allows photographers to capture the subject behaving in a more natural, and often more interesting, fashion.
4. We strive to always consider both the individual and collective effects our photographic activities can have on our subjects. This includes being aware of the total time spent with the subjects. This means we will often break contact and withdraw from the subject, especially if there is any indication that our presence is impacting on the subject's behavioural routine (including activities such as feeding, resting and/or sleeping, caring for its offspring, etc.). This consideration is always important and may become even MORE important if multiple photographers or groups of photographers are working with the same subject.

Those participating in our photo tours are expected to conform to these rules of photographer conduct.

All images in this trip brochure and the Natural Art Images website (www.naturalart.ca) were captured following these *Wildlife FIRST* rules of photographer conduct.

For more information about this amazing trip contact Brad Hill at:

seminars@naturalart.ca



The Blow! This female Killer Whale and her calf are part of a small pod of 5 transient Killer Whales hunting for their primary prey – marine mammals. Transient Killer Whales can be seen in both the inside and outside coastal waters of the Great Bear Rainforest.

Nikon D4 with 400mm f2.8 VR. 1/1000s @ f5.6. ISO 2000. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Incomparable Khutze Inlet! Spectacular moody light, stunning backdrops, and dramatic subjects – what more could you ask for?





A Curious Family. Black Bear mom with her Spirit Bear Cub – photographed during the 2019 version of the “Summer in the Southern Great Bear” Instructional Photo Tour

Nikon D5 with Nikkor 180-400mm f4E @ 400mm. 1/500s @ f6.3; ISO 1600.

The "Inner" Great Bear. Our photo tour begins in the glacier-carved channels, inlets, bays, and estuaries of the central BC coast. Here towering mountains fall steeply to the Pacific Ocean, with forest often meeting the water line! Humpbacks, Killer Whales, Harbour Seals and the occasional Steller Sea Lion are found in these waters. Brown and Black Bears, coastal Gray Wolves, and many other species reside in the thick forests.



The Untamed Beauty of Khutze Inlet. Solitary Humpback Whale dives deep in Khutze Inlet



Unnamed Falls! Go off the beaten path in the Great Bear and you can find stunning scenes that few have ever witnessed.



The "Outer" Great Bear – Where Rock Meets Sand! Many of the western-most islands and shorelines on the BC coast offer a beautiful mix of beach, forest, and rock! In this region we find greater numbers of Sea Otters, Steller Sea Lions, and Coastal Gray Wolves



