



Into the Wild

Exploring what's left of B.C.'s majestic Great Bear Rainforest **by Masa Takei**

Some knucklehead is yowling like a wolf up on deck. I lean up in my bunk and pull out my earplugs. There's nothing, just the lapping of water and the gentle bobbing of our 68-foot wooden yacht at anchor. Then it comes again, not from above this time but from shore. It's unmistakably the real thing – the baying of a wolf pack. By the time I wipe the morning mist from my eyes and make it topside, nothing – and no one – is howling anymore. Just another wake-up call in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Billed as the largest intact coastal rainforest in the world, the Great Bear stretches up the B.C. coast

from Bute Inlet to Alaska. It's a massive expanse of land – some 64,000 square kilometres, roughly 5,200 times the size of Stanley Park – and represents 25 per cent of what's left of the Earth's ancient coastal temperate rainforest. A 2006 agreement between the B.C. government, First Nations, conservation groups and forestry companies sought to protect a third of this irreplaceable wilderness from industrial logging, but it remains to be seen whether the agreement will be fully implemented. Meanwhile, the best way to explore what's left is by ocean, making a floating base such as Mothership Adventures' ►

WEATHER It's called "rainforest" for a reason. Make sure to bring gum boots and waterproof pants. Touring season runs June through September.

CAN'T MISS Many people come specifically searching for a glimpse of the rare white Kermode or "spirit" bear.

COOL EATS Galley fare on Columbia III includes fresh cinnamon rolls, pizza crusts from scratch and halibut parmesan with capers.

BEST BED The vessel offers hot showers and private staterooms, one with a "head" ensuite (nautical-ese for "toilet").

mothershipadventures.com □

My Secret Place

WHO: Kaity Arsoniadis Stein, president and secretary-general of International Ship-Owners Alliance of Canada Inc. **WHERE:** Therme Vals, Vals, Switzerland **WHY:** My husband and I discovered this spa deep in the Swiss Alps. The spa, carved into the mountainside, is built from 60,000 slabs of quartzite from a local quarry and offers different baths – ones with ice, rose petals and even a cellist playing Bach. The outdoor pool looking onto snow-capped mountain peaks, the natural light, the pure mountain air, the beauty of the surroundings – the experience is so authentic. It seizes all the senses. therme-vals.ch □



Columbia III the ideal mode of travel.

Though the mother ship regularly hosts pods of kayakers, the focus of this particular trip is a filmmaking workshop run by adventure filmmakers Patrick Morrow and his wife, Baiba. The Morr-ows are teaching us how to capture and preserve the natural world in moving images. Patrick Morrow – the first mountaineer to summit the highest peaks on all seven continents – has filmed in the farthest reaches of the planet, but right now he's ensconced in the old-world luxury of the ship's mahogany-, brass- and leather-lined salon, editing the previous day's footage on his brushed-aluminum laptop. The other guests – a lawyer, an accountant, a map-maker and a bureaucrat (all retired), as well as a pair of photographers and myself – gather around Morrow to view his raw material.

We're five days into our one-week voyage exploring the rainforest. Our trip began in Bella Bella and has continued north through the coastal archipelago, keeping pace at times with spouting orcas and humpback whales. Each night we anchor in sheltered bays, emerging from the womb of our mother ship during the day to explore our new world. Massive cedars – mere saplings when Leif Erikson first landed in North America a millennium ago – stand shrouded in cobwebs of moss like underappreciated works of art. Islet tidal pools, gardens of rose sea anemones and sea stars yield brilliant displays of green, purple and orange.

Today our 14-foot Zodiac is on a mission to the estuary at Mussel Bay, where five bears can be spotted within lens shot. One wades the river mouth. He pauses and stands in deep water with a slack-jawed, quizzical expression on his face as he fishes a dead salmon from the bottom. He grasps the rotting fish in his forepaws and we can hear him munching, as content as we would be with a meatball sub. Another grizzly appears on the scene – a female with a distinctive blond tint to her facial fur known to the local guides as Pale Face. When she looms so close as to fill our viewfinders with alarming detail, we get to feeling like a floating buffet and beat a dignified retreat. We have our own hot feast (and mulled wine) waiting for us aboard the mother ship. Later we will savour the sights and sounds that we'd captured, recognizing, however, that they are a poor substitute for the real thing. ■



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