



Southeast Alaska aboard the M/V Glacier Bear!

(July 16-23, 2021)

Day One

AURORA HARBOR

Our journey begins at 10:00 am at Aurora Harbor in Juneau. The crew will welcome you at the dock and will help you get your gear aboard Glacier Bear. The captain will introduce the crew and provide a boat and safety orientation. Rex will preview the upcoming eight-day photo adventure. We will have your staterooms assigned, take a tour of the beautiful vessel, settle into our cabins, and begin our journey.

We'll sail south through Gastineau Channel, past the cruise ships docked in Juneau. This morning we cruise into the heart of the Inside Passage. Along our route of travel, we'll have the opportunity to hike along secluded beaches, paddle in scenic coves, and photograph a variety of wildlife, including marine mammals, shorebirds, Dall's porpoises, orcas, and more along our route of travel. Traveling by motor yacht, via motorized skiff, in kayaks and by foot allows us to closely experience this elaborate ecosystem. We'll continue heading south through Stephens Passage, with a short stop at Taku Harbor.

Taku Harbor State Marine Park is a natural, bowl-shaped harbor that was once home to a major salmon cannery. The 700-acre marine park is located on the eastern shore of Stephens Passage, about 22 miles southeast of Juneau. The harbor is frequently used as a night anchorage by commercial fishing boats and small tour ships.

We'll explore the small cabins and abandoned building in Taku Harbor, and gear up for an optional paddle inside the safe, protected waters. It has been an amazing start already, to a week with new friends, new challenges, and unparalleled scenery on our nearly 400-mile journey. Tonight, we'll celebrate. Our destination this evening is a small cove nestled safely inside of Holkham Bay. Arriving in a light rain, we drop anchor and prepare for dinner. And what a treat — fresh halibut crusted with macadamia/panko bread crumbs. Dinner (as always) is awesome.

Wildlife abounds throughout the area. Our anchorage in No Name Cove provides a great opportunity for a beautiful evening paddle. After dinner, we'll check out the on-board library of videos, and the "stash" of enticing board games. Oh my gosh, there's a hot tub? And did we mention beer and wine? Yeah there's that too.

Day Two

From the comfort of our berths, we hear the buzz of activity in the early morning hours. The crews start the generator and boat engines, while the chef prepares salmon quiche, muffins, granola, fresh fruit and juice. Yummy! Soon we pull up the anchor, and Glacier Bear is underway. Rex suggests getting out on deck early before breakfast for a bit as this can be a great time for photos. Mornings are often calm with perhaps a low hanging mist over the water and you never know what may swim or fly by!

SANFORD COVE

We have planned our day to make the slack tide across Wood Spit and into Endicott Arm. Along the way we'll be alert for drifting icebergs, as well as humpback whales and orcas. We are bound for Sanford Cove, the abandoned site of the mining community of Sumdum. Only a few decaying pilings remain from the turn-of-the-century. This is prime salmon-spawning habitat, luring brown bears to the area. Black bears are on the prowl too, feasting on abundant berries. We hike along the bank of tiny Sanford Creek, through an old growth Sitka spruce and Douglas fir forest, and discover a stunning waterfall, illuminated by the

late afternoon light in a remarkable grotto of ferns and mosses. It's absolutely unbelievable, and it's the perfect location for capturing some great photos!

By late morning we'll proceed into Ford's Terror, one of the most spectacular destinations in Alaska. There are several places to explore by skiff, kayak and on foot. Once again, it's all about timing. We have to enter at slack tide, and we can only remain for an hour or so. The current builds exceptionally quickly and standing waves will block our escape. Hence the name "Ford's Terror." An early surveyor of the area (Ford) described the standing waves in chilling terms.

We'll make our way through the tidal rapids (at slack water, of course) into the majestic and stunning inner fjord. Rushing tidal currents and whirlpools prevent us from entering (and exiting) when the current is at full strength. We cautiously proceed through Ford's Terror, and slowly find our way into the T-shaped terminus of this section of the fjord. We are in a vertical world of granite cliffs and glacier-carved cirques. Dozens of waterfalls cascade down their slopes, emptying into the turquoise waters of the fjord. Surrounded by 3,500-foot granite faces, we marvel at the mist clinging to the precipices. We'll make our way back before the tidal rapids begin to build, leaving behind the majestic and stunning inner fjord.

Our evening anchorage is near a delightful waterfall. Black bears often visit the area, grazing on the abundance of berries in the meadows, and fishing for salmon in the stream. And what a dinner! Sockeye salmon, risotto and asparagus. With boysenberry pie and ice cream for dessert.

Day Three

FORD'S TERROR

After a hearty breakfast this morning, we'll start our day cruising east out of Ford's Terror. But first, we can do a little exploration for photo opportunities along the shoreline. With so many waterfalls cascading down the granite cliffs, it's a good choice!

Today will be an action-filled day! An early morning departure takes us deep into Endicott Arm, a narrow fjord that twists and turns through towering mountains. Massive glaciers have carved their way through these coastal mountains. Waterfalls cascade thousands of feet off the granite mountains, and one looks like stair-steps. Sapphire-blue icebergs serenely float by in the murky emerald green water. We'll continue all the way to the Dawes Glacier, at the ice-choked end of the fjord. Extraordinarily blue and beautiful, this glacier is famous for its active calving, and we'll linger at the face of the glacier, hoping to witness gigantic chunks of ice breaking away.

While cruising among the icebergs, we're able to observe the antics of dozens of harbor seals hauled out on the ice. Like the explorers here before us, the majesty and awe of this ice-carved landscape is etched into our memories. If time and conditions permit, we may hike up a newly-formed valley on the north side of the fjord, recently uncovered by the receding North Dawes Glacier. The icy glacial outwash river divides a meadow and scree slope and features a big waterfall. Bears occasionally come down to the shoreline graze. Where did they come from? And how did they get here? We'll take in the magnificent vistas, and listen for the mournful howls of wolves.

ENDICOTT ARM

In late morning we'll reverse directions, and head west from Dawes Glacier, back through the length of Endicott Arm. Our destination this evening is a small cove nestled safely inside of Holkham Bay. If conditions are right, we may even push further. The evening light is beautiful, as we dodge icebergs and wind our way back down Endicott Arm and into the bay.

Aboard the Glacier Bear, we prepare for dinner. Drinks and snacks anyone? What a perfect way to slow things down. Soon the Chef announces that dinner is ready. A platter of perfectly-cooked filets appears, and is placed on the dining table, right next to a platter of crab melts. Hmm... so there's a grille hiding under the black cover next to the hot tub? A secret grille.

Everyone seems hushed this evening, both during and after dinner. Drinks and steaks (plus an amazing dessert) are the exclamation point to a phenomenal day.

Day Four

This morning we're having Crab Benedict for breakfast. It's the Captain's favorite. We'll get underway around 8:00 am and begin our journey to The Brothers, a group of small islands near the southern coast of Admiralty Island. The scenery changes quickly as we leave behind the granite cliffs of Endicott Arm.

STELLAR SEA LIONS

Throughout the day, we'll watch for whales, sea lions, Dall porpoises, orcas, and sea birds. We'll be cruising to Admiralty Island, known for its dense bear population. We'll pass by Five Finger Islands Light, pausing to view a colony of Stellar sea lions, crowded on the rocks near tiny Sail Island. The males vie noisily for dominance over their harems. As we continue cruising, we'll watch for breaching whales, fast-moving pods of orcas, and Dall's porpoises.

Around noon we'll have lunch. OK, who's ready for a Halibut sandwich on a brioche bun? And an enticing salad of watermelon, fresh basil and feta cheese?

Arriving at The Brothers, we anchor in an idyllic cove between two small islands, where the sounds of breathing whales, grunting Stellar sea lions, and screeching eagles drift in. During an extra-low tide at The Brothers, various anemones gleam brilliantly.

Beautiful, remote and protected from outer waters, our stop at a small cove between The Brothers Islands provides a pristine sanctuary — and the perfect place for reflection. Verdant green moss covers the forest floor of East Brother Island, while rocky West Brother Island is strewn with a profusion of blue gentians, Indian paintbrush, river beauties, lupine and other colorful wildflowers. The choice is yours — hiking, wildflower photography or paddling? Eventually we have to depart, but we'll pause for a close-up look at a colony of Stellar sea lions, crowded on the rocks of one of the outer islands that comprise The Brothers.

This evening we'll anchor in Scenery Cove, an idyllic setting inside Pybus Bay. The sounds of nature drift in across the evening calm. Beautiful, remote and protected from outer waters, Scenery Cove is pristine wilderness. We often catch a glimpse of brown bears fishing in nearby salmon-filled streams and rivers. With the largest concentration of nesting bald eagles in the world, Admiralty Island offers many chances to also see Canadian geese, trumpeter swans, cormorants and blue herons found in the fringe habitats between the forest, muskegs, meadows, and along the shore.

DALL'S PORPOISE

Throughout the day, we've been hoping to see fast-moving pods of Dall's porpoises. One group notices us, and they intercept our course heading. Porpoises joyfully ride our bow wake, darting in and out, and everyone has their iPhone or GoPro in hand, filming the experience. As we continue cruising east, we're also as always looking for humpback whales.

The Glacier Bear arrives in Pybus Bay in late afternoon, and we prepare for a shore hike before dinner. The feeling while ashore is one of excitement and danger. Our guides have pepper spray, and several people carry air horns. We want to see bears up close... or do we? But it doesn't matter — tonight is not our night. No bears. Still, we jump for joy in our photos.

Arriving back at the Glacier Bear, the chef announces that dinner is ready. We're having sockeye salmon with a honey, basil and garlic glaze. Delicious. Following dinner several people wander up to the fly bridge deck and jump into the hot tub. The sounds of Latin music and happy dancers linger into the night.

Day Five

HUMPBACK WHALES

After a relaxed breakfast, Glacier Bear is underway once again. We have a long transit this morning, to a location known as Red Bluff Bay. We'll cruise west through Frederick Sound, hugging the southern coast of Admiralty Island. Humpback whales alert us along the way, showing us their tail flukes, and loudly slapping the water with their pectoral flippers. We can smell their fishy breath as they surface, and spout through their blowholes.

As we near Chatham Strait, we'll begin looking for larger pods of humpback whales, this time exhibiting a number of varied feeding behaviors. Some practice bubble-net feeding, swimming in circles while blowing bubbles to form a curtain to corral in a school of tiny fish. Others practice include lunge feeding, breaking the surface at a 45-degree angle, mouth fully open, and throat cavities expanded like an accordion to scoop up all the fish they can.

Beautiful, remote and protected from outer waters, we'll view dozens of waterfalls cascading into Red Bluff Bay. We enter the bay through a narrow passage with frequent turns, and suddenly find ourselves in a secluded jewel of a fjord, with an open meadow at the end. We count dozens of small waterfalls, with one particularly spectacular waterfall that roars into the waters of the fjord. Steep mountains surround us on all sides. It's a glorious place to paddle. Cute little Marble Murrelets are often found feeding in the bay.

WARM SPRINGS BAY

We're soon cruising once again, pointed toward the entrance to our anchorage near the small settlement of Baranof Warm Springs. We'll cruise along the east shore to Warm Springs Bay, where a natural hot spring is situated next to a rushing waterfall. Baranof Warm Springs is the outlet of Baranof Lake and the Baranof River. We'll visit the public bath house featuring three separate tubs or the communal hot springs pools. Or both – your choice! A boardwalk takes us through the flora and fauna to picturesque Baranof Lake. We're excited to experience it all, but first... how about a paddle through a beautiful narrow passage to a salt chuck lagoon? Be ready to challenge our paddling skills — the current runs strong here. We've timed our arrival for high slack tide, so that we can easily paddle through the narrows into the lagoon. As we enter, there's a dramatic change in the landscape. It's mystical. But we'll save that surprise. We plan to linger in this Shangri La for an hour or so, until we observe the lagoon starting to empty. Then we'll ride the building current back through the narrows and return to Warm Springs Bay. We see the Glacier Bear, the Baranof dock with a dozen or more fishing boats and sailing boats tied up, the boardwalk, the hot tubs, and of course Baranof Falls. It's the perfect opportunity to pose for photos in front of the thunderous waterfall that drains Baranof Lake into Warm Springs Bay. Two groups are shuttled by skiff to the dock. Most people head straight for the hot springs or hot tubs. But usually a couple of stragglers find time to gather wild strawberries or salmonberries along the boardwalk. Hey, what's the rush? Aboard the Glacier Bear, we prepare for another glass of wine and a tasty dinner of Black Cod. We're swinging slowly in front of a delightful waterfall. Black bears often visit the area near our anchorage, grazing on the abundance of berries in the meadows, and fishing for salmon in the stream. With each passing day, the wonder and amazement builds. Such anticipation for each unfolding day. What's in store for tomorrow?

Day Six

ORCAS

Today will be an action-filled day! This morning we continue north up Chatham Strait, and we'll soon need our cameras and binoculars. In this area of Chatham Strait, humpback whales often catch herring and other small schooling fish using the bubble-net feeding technique. Unique to this particular population of humpbacks, bubble-net feeding requires a group of whales to work together cooperatively. They gather in formation below large schools of fish and begin releasing bubbles, which confuse the fish and bunch them tightly together. The cylindrical wall of bubbles acts like a net, which fish are reluctant to swim through. On cue, the entire group surges upward through the bubble net, mouths agape – a dozen or more humpback whales all rising to the surface in unison. Each whale collects a huge mouthful of water, and then expels it, straining the fish through their baleen. Often the group will display this feeding behavior over and over again.

Suddenly we encounter a pod of orcas. It's a group of three or four, including a male with his large dorsal fin, one or two females, and a juvenile. We observe their behavior as they linger in the area for 15 to 20 minutes. After the pod of orcas departs to the north, we continue cruising to the south. But there's never a paucity of wildlife-viewing in Alaska. An hour later, humpback whales begin to make their presence known. Some may be near enough that the boat swings in their general direction. Others are far off in the distance but, always exciting to see!

LAKE EVA

We enter a channel between Baranof Island and Chichagof Island, and sail west into Peril Strait. Not named for its navigational challenges, it gets its name from an unfortunate occurrence in 1799, when nomadic Aleut hunters stopped to camp there. Finding the shore lined with large mussels, they helped themselves to a fabulous feast. Unfortunately, the mussels were infected with paralytic shellfish poisoning, and more than a hundred Aleuts were poisoned and died. The narrow channel a great place to encounter Orcas.

Our afternoon is spent exploring Lake Eva, on the northern shore of Baranof Island. This area is known for Alaska's famous brown bears. We'll walk along a forest trail, stepping over tracks left by passing bears in the soft mud, and pausing to admire the abundance of mosses, ferns, and small flowering plants. Huge hemlock, Sitka spruce and cedar trees are all flourishing because of the ample supply of rain. Coastal brown bears are sometimes spotted grazing on newly sprouted grasses but, may quickly retreat into the forest, perhaps spooked by our approach. We'll enjoy a small lake that ends in a cascading waterfall.

And suddenly it's 6:00 pm. Where did the day go again? Our evening is spent at a quiet anchorage in Appleton Cove, dining on Dungeness Crab, with a fruit torte for dessert. Remember all those berries we saw along the boardwalk in Warm Springs Bay? There's a few less now.

Day Seven

KRUZOF ISLAND

After a relaxed breakfast, Glacier Bear is underway once again. On our journey today, we'll encounter the Sergius Narrows in Peril Strait. Here the shore seems close enough to touch, and a very strong current flows through the channel markers. The forest is hushed, except for the occasional call of an Arctic tern. Periodically the surface of the water is broken by the silver streak of a leaping salmon. We'll scan the shoreline to see Sitka black-tailed deer, elk and moose, as well as black and brown bears. As we enter the Narrows, we'll power through the strong current. A mere hundred feet away, the forest passes by ever so slowly.

Southeast Alaska has semi-diurnal tides, meaning that there are two low tides and two high tides each and every day. When the moon and sun are in alignment, the tidal range is at its greatest vertical difference. The vertical tide range as we pass Pond Island can approach 20' or more!

During a low tide all sorts of wonderful invertebrates are exposed. They live their lives in these incredibly difficult tidal cycles. Perhaps the most beautiful and colorful is the sunflower star, the largest and fastest moving sea star in Southeast Alaska. When it gets motivated, it can move up to six feet in a single minute! Growing to almost three feet across, its rays break easily and then regenerate. It is so aggressive that even the lethargic red sea cucumber will gallop away when the sunflower star approaches.

We'll cruise through Salisbury Sound, and arrive at our evening anchorage in Kalinin Bay. As we navigate the narrow entrance to the bay, several playful sea otters paddle slowly past us. This afternoon we'll explore the pristine Alaskan wilderness on Kruzof Island.

SEALION COVE

Our first hiking stop will be at an estuary. The meadow is full of Alaska's beautiful vegetation and wildflowers and is a great place to look for brown bears and Sitka black-tail deer. The trail to Sealion Cove is an ambitious 2.5-mile hike (each way) through forest and muskeg, to a lovely white sand beach. The cove is on the Pacific Ocean, and big waves are always breaking on the sculpted rocks, reminiscent of the shorelines in Maine. Locals come to here to test their surfing skills in the extreme surf of the outer coast. But it's also a wonderful location for beach coming, hiking, photography, relaxing in the sand, or just simply taking in the views.

Our journey is nearing completion, and we can all feel it. We want to remain as long as possible in this magical world, and the Captain fully understands our emotions. After all, he's a waterman, a surfer and paddle boarder! After a couple of hours of spectacular hiking, we gather one last time — this time directly in front of the Pacific Ocean, for a final group photo. And it's a keeper! As the light gets lower on our return hike, brown bears begin to appear along the shoreline. They are searching for a quick meal, and occasionally quarrel with one another over "territorial disputes." One bear chases another for a hundred yards along the shore. Probably a sow driving an adolescent male

away from her cubs. In the evening, we'll enjoy a quiet anchorage in Kalinin Bay, dining on Rack of Lamb. After dinner, we'll celebrate the many memories we have shared.

Day Eight

ELIASON HARBOR

Our eight-day adventure concludes today. A light breeze fills in out of the north, as we cruise quietly into the protected waters of Olga and Neva Straits. This morning we begin our entry into Sitka Channel, on our way to docking at the downtown marina. Time-permitting, we may stop to see the delightful puffins at St. Lazaria Island. And we may even see humpback whales and mischievous sea otters – right in Silver Bay as we approach Sitka and Eliason Harbor.

The chef prepares a salmon quiche and lots of tasty goodies. We'll enjoy breakfast while watching a slideshow of the week's highlights on the television above the buffet. Some are brought to the verge of tears. It has been an amazing week, and for many it's still sinking in.

We plan to arrive in Sitka no later than 12:00 noon, so if you need to catch an afternoon flight, you'll make it to the airport in plenty of time. Sitka is the former capital of Alaska when it was Russian territory. With views of island-studded waters and stately spruce forests reaching to the water's edge, Sitka is considered Alaska's most beautiful seaside town. The scenic community is nestled between forested mountains and the great Pacific Ocean, on the outer waters of Alaska's Inside Passage. Sitka offers an unparalleled combination of arts, Native culture, Russian history, and Alaskan wilderness.

There's plenty to see and do around Sitka. You'll want to visit the Alaskan Raptor Center for a close encounter with the local wildlife. The Center does great work rehabilitating injured birds of prey, especially bald eagles, and then retrains them to return to the wild. The flight training center includes a huge indoor coastal rainforest, large enough for rehabilitating eagles to relearn their flying skills without leaving the facility. Sitka boasts the highest saltwater sport-fishing "catch rate" for king salmon in the United States. Novice or expert, you can be guaranteed a first-class fish story! Fishing is best from June through August, and commonly hooked fish include king salmon, silver salmon, pink salmon, halibut and lingcod. Licenses can be obtained at one of the sporting goods stores in Sitka.

You'll be able to catch an Alaska Airlines flight from Sitka, with connections to Juneau or Seattle. If you're in Sitka this evening, join us for happy hour in the lobby of the Westmark Sitka.

END OF TOUR

Price: \$7,850 shared berth. For a single berth please inquire

Included: Accommodations aboard the Glacier Bear, all meal and beverages while on board, ground transportation to and from the ship/hotel, local guides and photo instruction.

Not Included: International and domestic airfare, hotels before and after the cruise, gratuities for local guides and hotel/restaurant staff, laundry service.

****note:*** this itinerary may require some slight modifications prior to the tour departure date.