

The Path Less Trod Upon

- We left Prince Rupert headed for the outside passage alongside Hecate Strait. This bypasses most of the cruise ships and other large vessels using the beaten path. It also gives us a chance to see some more remote areas.
- In fact, there are still a few spots along this path that are uncharted and show up blank on the charts. All the places we plan to visit on this leg have been charted, however the charts are very small scale (covering large areas) and not complete (or accurate to GPS standards). Thus, relying on them entirely is risky. I have to keep a sharp eye out from the bow for many miles while Sherrell does her best to pilot using the physical layout of the land.
- Anyway we began by getting away from Prince Rupert. Just outside of Rupert, we hit some very thick fog. There were several boats near us that were less than 0.5 miles, but we couldn't see them. Fortunately, all our practice in clear weather with the radar paid off as we avoided the other boats and hazards successfully, and about three hours later, the fog began to lift.
- A breeze filled in and we were able to sail for several hours under a bright sunny sky.
- We anchored in Newcombe Harbor, along with two other sailboats who left the anchorage very early the next morning and we didn't see them again.
- Our plan was to head to a set of islands nearby so we slept in and then set off.

South Some More



Math is Fun

- Next, we anchored in a place called Clear Passage. It is right between Sine Island and Cosine Island, not far from Azimuth Island and Tangent Island. You know the place - right off Logarithm Point.
- Here's a photo of us anchored (and stern tied) to Sine Island. The dinghy and I are on Cosine Island. I guess the surveyors dedicated these islands to their art.
- We had to stern tie here because the current was so strong. It allowed us to get a peaceful night sleep without the boat swinging all over the anchorage.



Cosine Island

- The beach on Cosine Island was a little easier to access, so I hiked around a little.
- The cedar trees were quite large in girth, but their height was stunted by the tough winter weather. I was feeling pretty “explorerish” and wondered if anyone had hiked around on this little island much before.
- Suddenly, deep in the trees, I noticed something that seemed out of place. A rusted Cool Whip spray can, probably from the 80’s by the artwork, lay there in the mossy green grass. It seemed we were going to have to work harder to escape.
- Well, at least the cedars have been left alone to grow, so far. The Canadians haven’t clear cut very much of this area, which we can’t say the same for much of the other parts of the coastline.



Self-portrait of a disgruntled explorer

Ala Passage

- There's a short cut of sorts around Anger Island and Pitt Island called Ala Passage (I'm not making these names up). Since the weather was nice, and there were no other boaters around, we decided to take things slowly and take this more scenic route. I dubbed this passage "Anger Pitt", not because of the islands on either side, but because it looked like someone had thrown a bunch of rocks in the middle to frustrate boaters.
- This passage looks innocent enough at high tide, but don't let that fool you, it's full of hidden rocks and shoals. The best part is the chart is almost impossible to use because the scale is so small the passage looks like a rock pile with the way through barely distinguishable.
- The narrow bit you see at the end, is the Ala Narrows or the "Anger Arm Pitt". The current can run fast through there giving the bow watch and the pilot little time to alter course for rocks (which are on either side), so we went at slack high tide.
- To our own surprise, we snaked our way through with no trouble.



Ire Inlet

- After reading about the peace and seclusion of this inlet in one of our guide books, we decided this would be our next stop.
- This narrow entrance has a large rock in the middle of the fairway, but after tackling “Anger Pitt”, the 25 foot wide squeeze was a cinch. Although, there was an overhanging tree that came within 10 feet of our mast.
- The passage leads to a land locked little bay that made for an amazingly calm anchorage (better than being at the dock)!



Mithrandir Tree

There's a story about this sawed off tree inside this narrow entrance to Ire Inlet:

- A 52 foot sailboat ("Mithrandir") was leaving the anchorage during flood tide (with 2 knots of current against them).
- There just so happens to be a conveniently placed rock in the middle of the channel and you have to squeeze to one side to get around it.
- Well, this tree was also there growing out into the pass where it could get some extra sunlight. This made the squeeze a little too tight for Mithrandir and instead of hitting the rock, they chose to brush up against the tree.
- The tree, claiming it's own right to the spot, caught their stern rail crushing their bicycles that were on deck, then pushed thru the boat bending their rigging, dodger, stanchions, railing, and other items. Not being satisfied with minor destruction, the tree then held the boat in place while the current swung it into the rock.
- Fortunately as the boat hit the rock, the tree dislodged itself from the steering wheel, and the crew was able to steer the boat away from the rock so they could remove the tree (which was still lodged thru the stern).
- They quickly set to work cutting the tree to free the boat and drifted back into the anchorage where they spent several hours cutting up the tree to get it off their boat. They were lucky to escape with only some minor damage.



Ire Inlet Residents



- Lions Mane Jellyfish – Largest in the world, also very toxic. They become more red as they grow larger. The biggest on record is 8 feet!

Monckton Inlet

- Our plan was to leave Ire Inlet at slack tide early in the morning when it would be easier to navigate around the rocks. But we were socked in by fog.
- The next slack tide was at 2pm, so we planned a new route to a closer anchorage and waited for the fog to disperse.
- At about 11am the fog cleared nicely and the sun slowly burst through.
- We had a great breeze of about 15 to 20 knots fill in from the west and we sailed down-wind the entire way...all the way into the anchorage!



Dunn Passage

- When we left Monckton, we narrowly dodged a large rock. It was so close, I don't know how we missed it. Not to be deterred, we continued south to the next stop, Dunn Passage.
- Dunn Passage is littered with islands. Tiny islands that are somehow unbelievably packed with trees.



Dunn Passage

- Wandering the maze of islands and hiking in the dense old cedar groves was a blast. It seemed like we were the only people in the world.



Camano Sound

- Our next leg involved crossing Camano Sound to venture down the West coast of Princess Royal Island. Camano Sound is open to Hecate Strait; it can be a rough ride as the swell often pours into the sound with a flourish.
- This day though, we only had fog, light rain and a breeze from the south.



Crossing the Sound in calm seas



Birds enjoying a free ride in the Sound

Lions and Seals and Bears, oh my!

- Evinrude Inlet is not often visited since it is tough to find a spot to anchor because the depths are tremendous. However, the Inlet is well protected and we were hoping to see a Kermode Bear (also known as the “Spirit Bear”) so we decided to give it a try.
- Princess Royal island has the highest population of these bears which are cream colored instead of black. They are rare and difficult to spot.
- After struggling to get the anchor in place and stern tied to shore, we went rowing to the nearby creek to see if anyone was busy fishing.
- The creek turned out to be a very warm river that trickled down very large boulders. Our hopes that salmon might be running there were quickly dashed, and so was the idea of seeing bears.
- We suspect there might be a hot springs further up the creek because the water was so warm. We tried to hike up there, but the quickly dropping tide would have forced us to carry the dinghy a long way over slippery rocks, so we abandoned the search.
- Upon arriving back at the boat, I took a shower and thought I heard something very loud on the shore. After a while we heard it again. It was a Mountain Lion! As clear as day, roaring and huffing around in the trees.



- The weather forecast was calling for gales, so we sat at anchor another day and listened to the antics of the lion. We were curious about the lion’s condition (dying, fighting, etc.) because the big cat would make quite a ruckus at times. Even the resident seals were near the shore peeking into the trees to see what the fuss was about.

Evinrude Inlet Residents



- These are Moon Jelly fish and you can see right through them. Unlike Ire Inlet, these eerie pulsing critters dominated Evinrude. Only occasionally did we see some of the Lion's Mane jellies. In the photo on the right you can see them dotting the water.
- They aren't as toxic as the Lion's Mane, but they'll give you something to think about if you cross them.

Porpoise Ho!



- In Laredo Channel, on our way south from Evinrude, we encountered a pod of about 10 Dall's Porpoise. These playful guys swam and dove off our bow for about 20 minutes. We've come across them a few times before, but I've never been able to capture them on "film". On the left is one under water. They look like mini Orcas with white stripes on their tails. They leap out of the water and rocket back and forth at amazing speeds. I took about 30 photos and half turned out, but I'll spare you from having to see them all.

More Porpoise



Fifer Cove

- We left the porpoises behind and turned up Laredo Inlet to Fifer Cove. This is supposed to be a good place for seeing bears and we again hoped to see a Kermode Bear!
- What we got instead was a howling pack of wolves!



- We could hardly believe our ears when we heard them calling by the setting sunlight.
- I howled back and soon about 6 wolves appeared on the beach, 2 of them black!
- We were able to get a few clear photographs of them before they darted away and I also got a short sound recording of their howling (not mine).

Meyers Passage

- Despite our best efforts we didn't spot any Kermode Bears (or any bears) on Princess Royal Island. We found out from some Kitsoo First Nation people that the salmon run in Sept. and Oct. in this part of Canada and it is a little early to spot bears in the streams.
- Anyway, we were going to head out into open water and round some of the islands as a short cut, but another gale was predicted to arrive shortly. So we beat a hasty retreat down Laredo Inlet, and through narrow and shallow (only 12 feet under our depth sounder and we need 5) Meyers Passage (photo on the right).



- The fog started to roll in slowly until we could barely see 200 feet. As we rounded the corner to Klemtu, we encountered huge patches of drifting logs.
- I had to stand on the bow for about an hour in the thick fog trying to direct Sherrell through the packed maze of debris.
- Fortunately there wasn't much traffic out there because of the storm that was predicted to arrive that day.

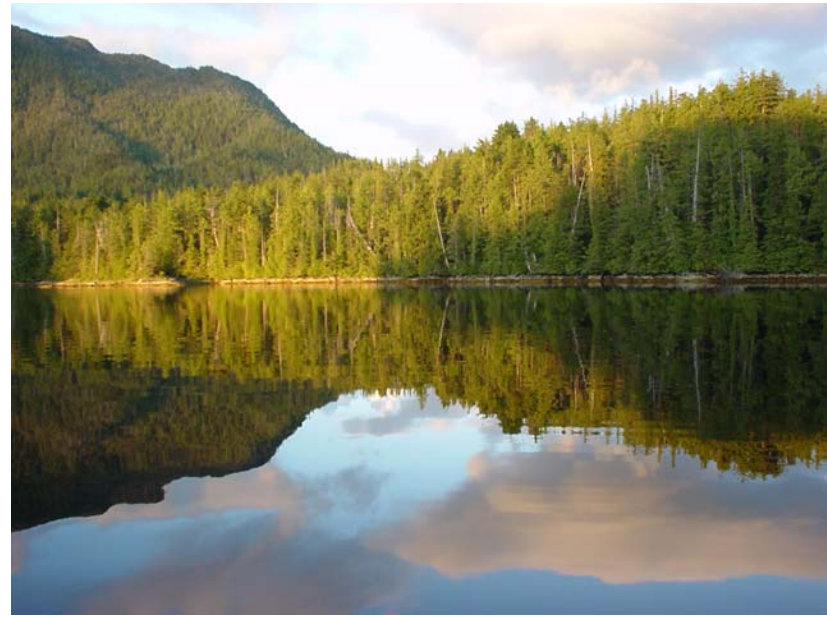
Klemtu

- Klemtu was going to be just a quick fuel and water stop for us, but the town and facilities were so nice we stopped for the night at the dock.
- We took a guided tour of the Big House and the Harbormaster told us about all the old camp sites and fish traps that were all along the area we just transited.
- The outer passage seemed so isolated we felt like we were the only people in the world, but the Kitasooos were quick to point out a half dozen sites right along our path where there were old Big Houses, Fish Traps and even old canoes. All of them have been overtaken by the forests or streams, but they showed us photos of some of them and it was obvious that a sharp eye could have picked them out of the landscape.
- They also told us that 10% of the black bear population is Kermode (or Spirit Bear). So out of the 1000 bears on the island, about 100 are the cream colored bear. They asked us about the other wildlife we saw along the way and were quite impressed with the list we rattled off. They said that no one else that has come through saw or heard all those animals. I guess missing the spirit bear wasn't too bad. They also confirmed that there are lots of wolves on Princess Royal Island and people see them from time to time.
- If Klemtu only had a good grocery store, we would have skipped the stop in Shearwater. It was a really cool village with very friendly people and we were sad we didn't have enough time to explore it.



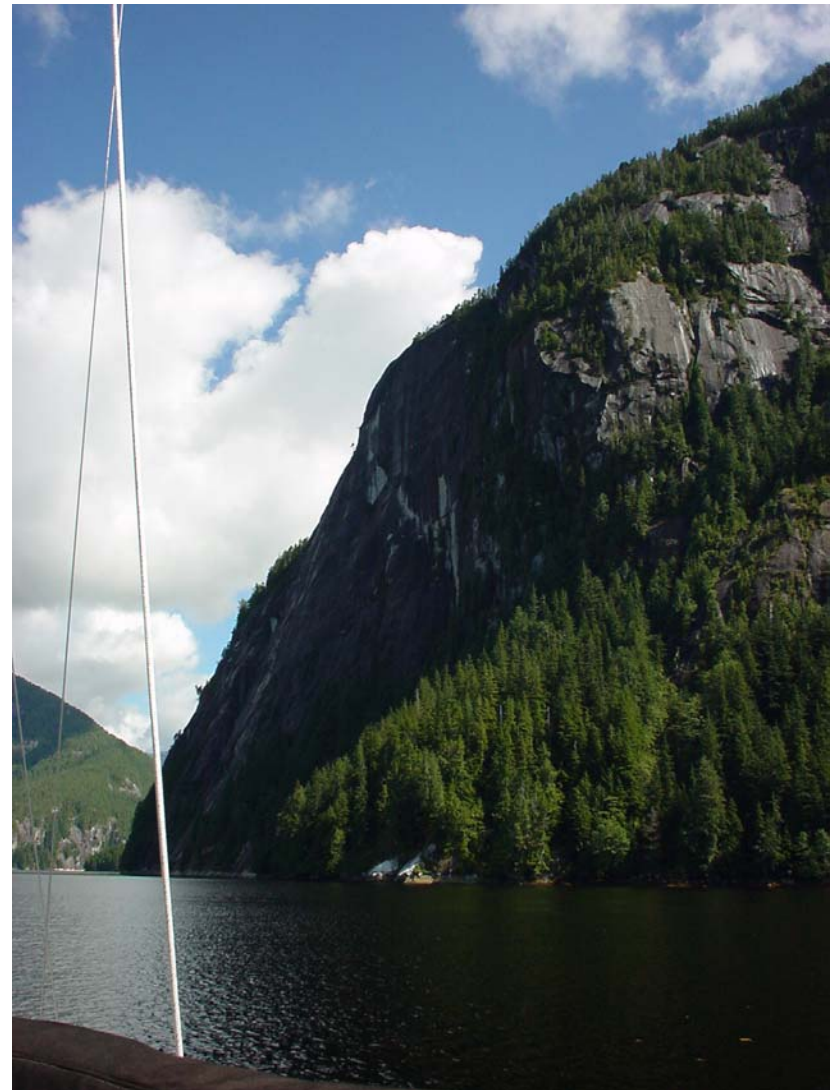
Rescue Bay & Morehouse Bay

- We didn't travel far from Klemtu because the weather had started to get rough, and the storm was quickly closing in. So we stopped at Rescue Bay. We rode out the storm which brought about 2.5" of rain and gusts of 20 knots of wind in the anchorage (35-40 knots in the open areas). It was fairly calm in the anchorage and we got a great nights sleep. By morning, the winds were a little calmer.
- Getting to our next anchorage, Morehouse Bay, was a little exciting. We had to cross two areas that are open to the Pacific thru Milbank Sound (ends of Matheison Channel and Seaforth Channel).
- We tried to time the tides right to avoid the nasty chop, because the wind was blowing about 20 knots and the ocean swells were already running about 3 to 5 feet.
- The rain poured down on me in buckets like a cold tropical rainstorm. As we approached the open water, the waves were breaking on all the rocks but it was just ocean swell, not chop.
- The ocean swells are much nicer than the steep chop that comes from the wind and opposing tide. We much prefer 10 foot swells to 3 foot chop. Fortunately, both were pretty moderate, but as the swells broke on the rocks around the boat, it still rose our heart rates a little.
- Our first crossing went well - we rolled around some but nothing dramatic. We tucked into Reid Passage to escape the waves until getting to Seaforth Channel. We had a bad experience last time at Seaforth, and were a little nervous about it in the even bigger sea conditions.
- Since we were going downwind with the swell, we expected the ride to be much smoother. As we rounded the channel marker, we met some big swells, some were easily 6 feet or more. They were crashing on the reefs with dramatic sprays into the air, but we set the sail and turned down into them and surfed along at 7 knots.
- The sun came out and dried us off and in no time we arrived at Morehouse Bay where the water was as still as glass.
- The anchorage is in a small cove deep inside several islands and shoals which required tricky navigation. The water is filled with tannin, so it is a inky brown color (like English Tea) and makes it impossible to spot rocks. We found a nice spot by a stream so we could watch for bears or other animals.

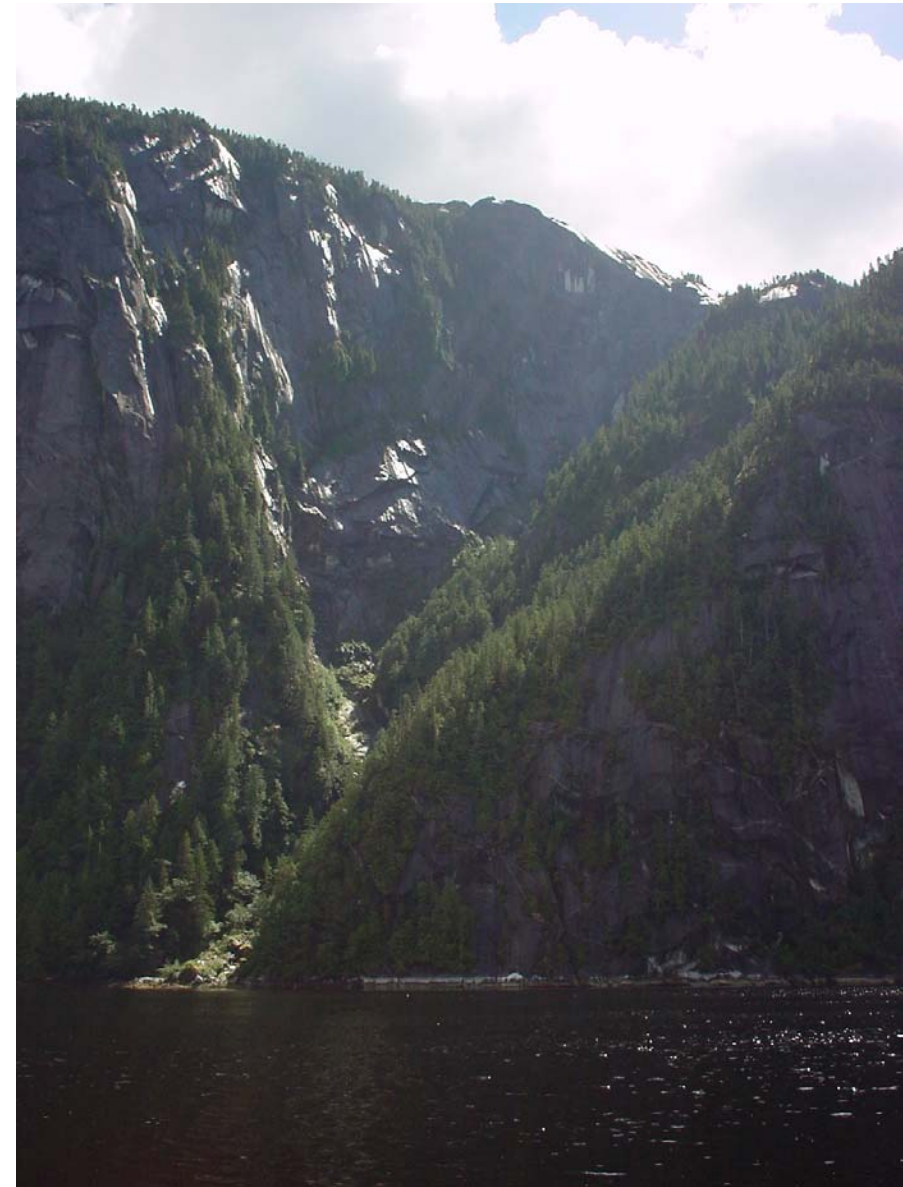


Roscoe Inlet

- From Morehouse Bay we headed to the last big fjord on our trip, Roscoe Inlet. Roscoe is about 25nm long with 3000 foot peaks towering overhead.
- The following photos are a poor substitute for seeing it in person.



Roscoe



Roscoe Anchorage

- We went all the way to the end of the fjord as was recommended to us by some friends who were here last year.
- Can you spot our boat in the photo? How about the waterfall showing through the trees?
- While at anchor we relaxed to the sound of the falls and enjoyed the nice warm weather.



Roscoe

- We had hoped to see some more bears here in Roscoe, but it appears the salmon aren't running the streams yet.
- While hiking around, we did see lots of evidence of bears so we know they're around. We also heard another cougar roaring deep in the trees across the bay, so we didn't wander too far.
- What was surprising was finding a bunch of frogs on shore. Usually frogs don't live near seawater, but there is so much fresh water run off in this area from all the rivers that they seem to be thriving. We had to literally tiptoe thru the meadows to avoid stepping on these little guys.



Shearwater

- We spent an extra day in Roscoe Inlet in a vain attempt to see more bears. After Roscoe, we needed to pickup some more fresh veggies, laundry, fuel and water and start heading for Cape Caution.
- Since leaving Juneau, we've only stopped for 4 days out of the past 30 or so. It's been tough trying to get caught up for our two lost weeks, but we're back on schedule now.
- Shearwater and Bella Bella was where I sent part 1 of the photo-journal. Our trip isn't over yet through. We still have some other islands to explore after Cape Caution! Hopefully we'll find some of those damn elusive Canadian Bears.