

2012 Alaska Cruise Journal # 6



Canadian History We deviated off the cruise ship route as we continued south taking time to explore some of the deep inlets along the coast of British Columbia.

Fur trader Sir Alexander Mackenzie was the first Canadian to cross the mainland of North America on foot in 1793 in search of the Pacific Ocean.

When he sighted the head of the inlet of the Bella Coola River where it enters salt water, he was satisfied that he had reached his destination.

It is a historical fact that Mackenzie just missed sighting George Vancouver who was on his first sailing expedition to this area.

We cruised through the spectacular scenery along Dean Channel with its multi-hued rock cliffs, vertical granite faces and breathtaking waterfalls. At one spot we were only 100 feet from the walled shoreline and the depth sounder indicated a depth greater than the height of a 100 story office building (photo).

Hot Springs The entrance to Eucott Bay was one of the few locations in the area shallow enough to anchor. It also offered the potential for a soak in a natural hot springs that emerges from a rock wall at the base of the mountain (52 27.338 N, 127 18.685 W).

The hot pool lies between natural boulders that have been augmented with some concrete slabs (photo).



2012 Alaska Cruise Journal # 6



We tested the waters after breakfast and had the beautiful setting to ourselves. Contrary to past experiences where we often found these natural hot springs too hot to enjoy, we decided that this one was determined “just right”.

Bella Coola Located at the far eastern end of Burke Channel, this small town is just one of three in Northern B. C. that connects the coast to the interior of Western Canada (52 22.543 N, 126 47.639 W).

Bella Coola was a two mile walk from the harbor and we enjoyed the chance to again stretch our legs on land. The

town museum was closed but we visited some of the local stores that were scattered within a few block area. The population is a mix of descendants of both Norwegian settlers and First Nation’s population.

Cruising Companions As we returned down Burke Channel, we saw a large pod of at least 25 Pacific white-sided dolphins. Rarely seen by us, these acrobatic and demonstrative dolphins swam alongside for a considerable distance. In addition to riding our bow wave, they twisted and turned and kept pace with us on both sides of the *Inside Passage*. This was done with little apparent effort (**photo**).

Blunden Harbor The next day we crossed Queen Charlotte Sound, one of the few areas in the Inside Passage exposed to the North Pacific Ocean.

We spent the evening in Blunden Harbor, an abandoned First Nation’s village (50 54.343 N, 127 17.518 W). A native culture existed here for several centuries but the tribe was relocated along with other remnant villages to Alert Bay. Too many people went missing while crossing the 30 mile Queen Charlotte Strait in small boats to attend schools or receive medical treatment.

Of particular interest at this site was an extensive white shell midden along the northeast beach and rotting giant logs that indicated the remains of an old longhouse



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in this traditional territory and homeland of the Nakwaxdaxw People.

We kayaked to look for signs of the ancient village remains. There were only a few original beams, but sadly we saw a carved wooden sign explaining the loss of a child to a mountain lion (**photo on previous page**).

Shortly afterwards we passed a native in a traditional wooden canoe. We have seen this style in museums but never before in practical use (**photo**).

Orcas Finally After an overnight stop in the town of Campbell River, we spotted our

first and only orca whales of the season in the Strait of Georgia. This large body of water between Vancouver Island and the B.C. mainland hosts a sizable pod of resident orcas that arrive every summer. They are powerful yet graceful creatures and are exciting to watch (**photo**).

Vancouver Reunion Last winter on Maui, we discussed our summer itinerary with friends and learned that their plans to visit the Pacific Northwest and Vancouver. B.C. coincided with the time of our arrival. The concept expanded with the addition of two other couples and ultimately there were twelve of us. The entire group joined us for our last day in Vancouver on a luncheon cruise around the harbor, a great way to end our 2012 Alaskan adventure.

