



*Juneau to Ketchikan  
23 ~ 28 July, 2022*



# The Log

A Trip to Alaska – July 2022

## *Chapter Two- Southbound to Ketchikan*

On boarding the ship, we were each escorted to our cabin. By then they had a new manifest with our names on it, and cabins assigned. My luggage had even arrived there successfully. The planets had aligned, all was good.

The National Geographic Sea Bird is 152 feet (46 m) with 3 main functional decks for passenger access. The 'Main Deck', actually 'below decks', has the lounge, dining room, galley and a few cabins. Below that is the crew's quarters and engine room. Guest cabins are mainly on the "Upper Deck" and "Bridge Deck". At the top is the "Boat Deck", where the Zodiacs and kayaks are stored.



My cabin, 203, was 2<sup>nd</sup> from the bow, port side on the "Upper Deck", below the bridge. It was very comfortable and spacious, especially for one person. Accessed from the port side deck, it was about 4 m square with two fixed single bunks, vanity, wardrobe, storage under the bunks, and a small 'ensuite' with toilet and shower, of similar size to the heads on Tramondana, or a little smaller, but with a flush loo.

We had boarded at about 5 pm. First up was an evacuation drill, to muster at the forward lounge and try on our big bulky boxy lifejackets. I hoped I would not have to use that. Shortly after it was champagne and nibbles while we were introduced to the crew and activities of the first 24 hours. A meal of Alaskan salmon, with wine, was the best we'd had in Juneau. The engines were started during this time, and we expected imminent departure. They preferred to let the big cruise ships head out first, and it was soon after 10 pm when the last of them finally pulled away from the dock. The most southerly of the big ships, it swung its stern out and backed up-harbour until it had room to swing the bow around. We followed straight after. The lights of the cruise ships tailing each other down the harbour was like planes in procession in or out of an airport. The drizzle had evolved into rain and we headed away from the city lights of Juneau, with their glow lighting up the low clouds still hanging around the mountain slopes in the same Jurassic scene as on our flight in.

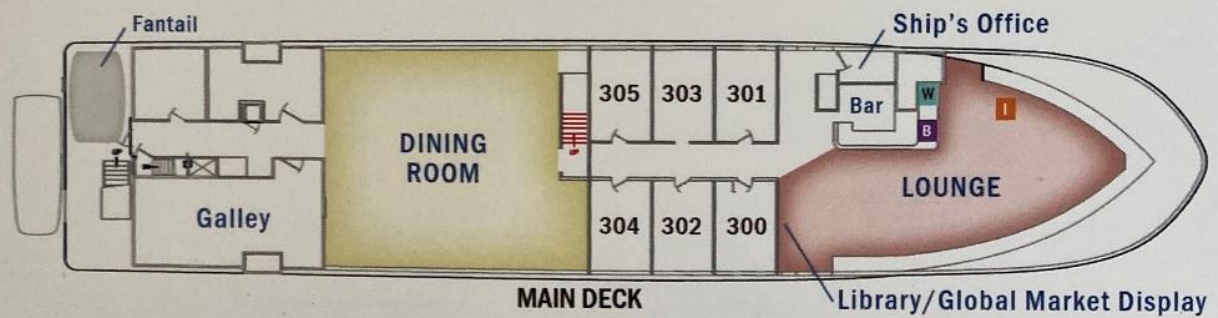
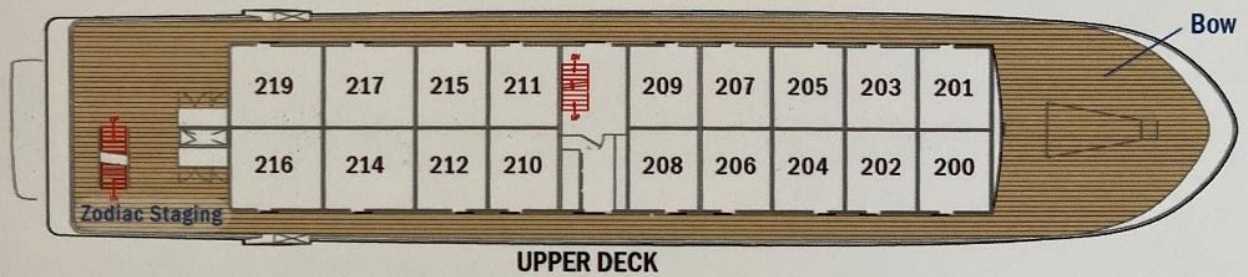
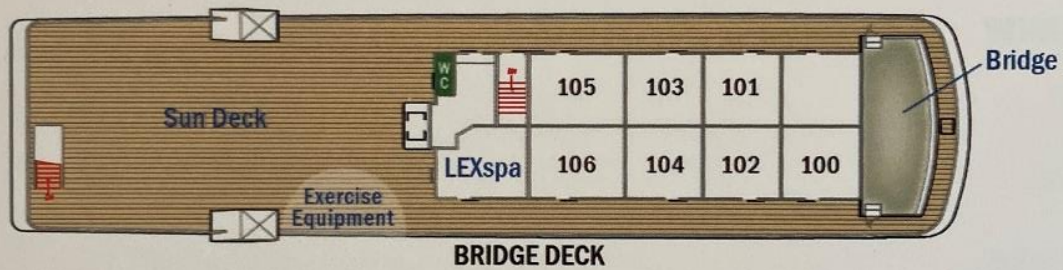
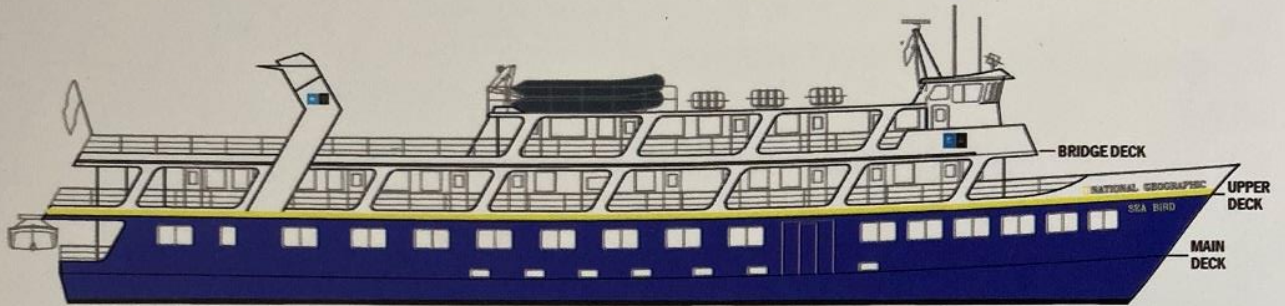


*Our mini cruise ship – boarding at Juneau*

# VESSEL DECK PLAN

**KEY**

<b>WC</b>	RESTROOM	<b>I</b>	INTERNET KIOSK
<b>B</b>	BEVERAGE STATION		STAIRWELL
<b>W</b>	WATER/ICE		EXTERIOR DECKING





# VESSEL PARTICULARS

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Vessel Name MV National Geographic Sea Bird  
 Call Sign WAK8004  
 Date Built 1-Jan-81  
 Port of Registry Seattle  
 Flag U.S.A.  
 Documentation/Registration # 644046  
 I.M.O. # 89664444  
 Type of Ship Expedition Passenger Ship  
 Class N/A  
 SOLAS SOLAS 1978/1981  
 Regulations ABS Loadline, Near coastal  
 Capacity Passengers - 62, Crew & Staff - 29

## OWNER/OPERATOR

Owner SPEX SEA BIRD Ltd.  
 Operator Lindblad Expeditions  
 Operator Address 1415 Western Avenue, Suite 700  
 Seattle, WA 98101-2051

## COMMUNICATIONS

Cellular Telephone (GSM) # +1 206 316 0913  
 Satellite Telephone # + 1 954 518 7420  
 eFax # +1 206 299 9313  
 MMSI 366892350

## OPERATING DETAILS

Fuel Type Marine Gas Oil (MGO) - #2 Diesel  
 Fuel Capacity 

11,300 gal.
42,800 liters

37 tons
43 m3

  
 Fresh Water Capacity (gal./m3) 5,260 gal./20 m3  
 Cruising Speed 11 knots  
 Maximum Speed 12 knots

## HULL

Tonnage 

Net (LT)
65 U.S.
189 I.T.C.

Gross (LT)
95 U.S.
630 I.T.C.

Length - LOA (ft./m) 152'/46.3 m  
 Beam/Breadth (ft./m) 31'/9.45m  
 Maximum Draft (ft./m) 9'½"/2.75 m  
 Air Draft (ft./m) 50'/15.24 m

## LANDING CRAFT

Landing Craft Type 4 Zodiac Mark V

## *Sunday, 24 July - Endicott Arm & Dawes Glacier*

We had motored quietly overnight and entered Endicott Arm over the moraine bar around 5:30 am, an hour or so after sunrise. My cabin, second from the front, was close enough to hear the soft sound of the bow wave through the night. We were at the head of the Arm by the time the buffet breakfast was served at 7:30 am. Our outlook was a bay of ice ranging from small icebergs, bergy bits, growlers and mash ice, and a canopy of low cloud and continuing drizzle.



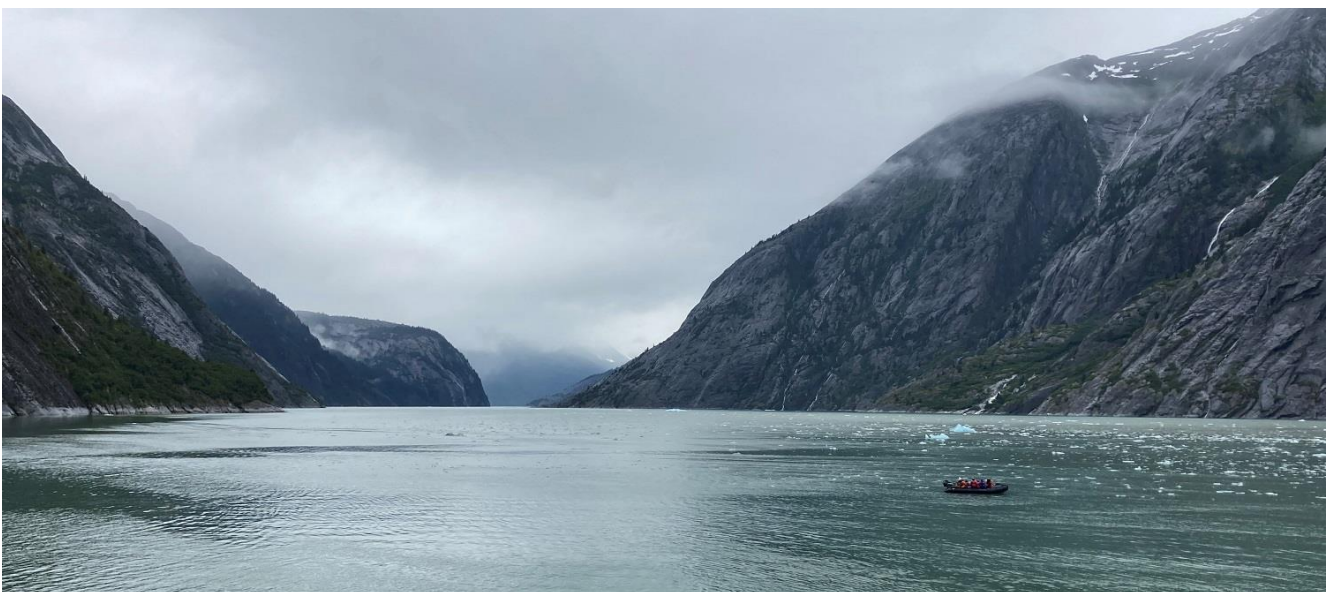
We were split into two groups for Zodiac tours to the Dawse Glacier. Ours was first, departing at 8:45 am. Steady rain, low cloud, temperature around 10°C. The wind had died down to a few knots. I donned all layers I had, including one Merino, plus Merino gloves and hat, neck-warmer, peaked hat, and parka. It was like I used to dress going skiing in the Ruapehu liquid sunshine. Ski boots replaced by gumboots and thick socks. Over the top was the bulky lifejacket – not the evacuation one, but still bulky. Like others, I waddled onto the Zodiac and sat on the port side pontoon. Oh dear, the Kathmandu hiking pants are not so waterproof after all – wet bum. We were away for 1.5 hours, and it rained the whole time. Good thing for the warm layers on the torso to feed warmth to the wet frozen legs.

We meandered up the inlet, making our way between the icebergs toward the glacier. Harbour seals poked their head up around us to check out the strange object in their territory. Arctic terns flitted around us. The icebergs rolled in the swells created by ice carving off the glacier, some teetering on stability. On our way back we found one of the larger ones had overturned. We lingered about ¼ mile from the glacier face. Pieces were falling off quite frequently. There was one particular tower with a split down the middle, looking like it could go any time. Other big chunks fell and sent small tsunamis our way, just swells when they reached us. By this time, most in our group were getting pretty cold. I was glad for my Merino gloves, still warm(ish) even when sodden. As our boatswain turned us to head back, the big tower we had been watching sent out a crack and we watched as the big chunks dropped and churned the water.

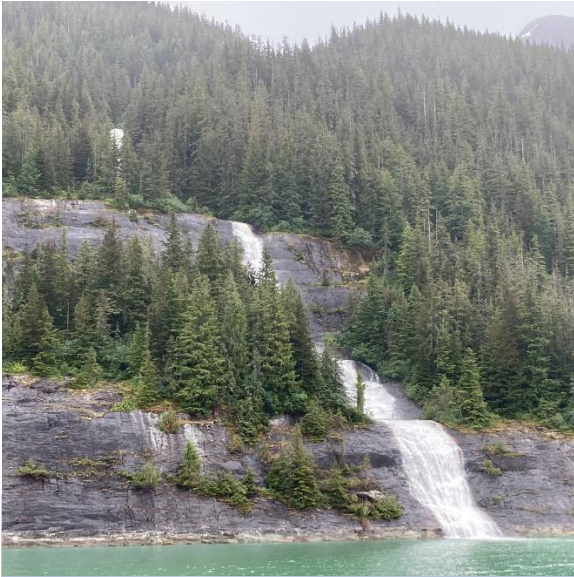
Back at the Sea Bird, we were welcomed with rich hot chocolate, laced with Kahlua or other options. A hot shower in the mini-ensuite, and wet clothes draped around the cabin in an effort to dry them. No other drying room on the ship.





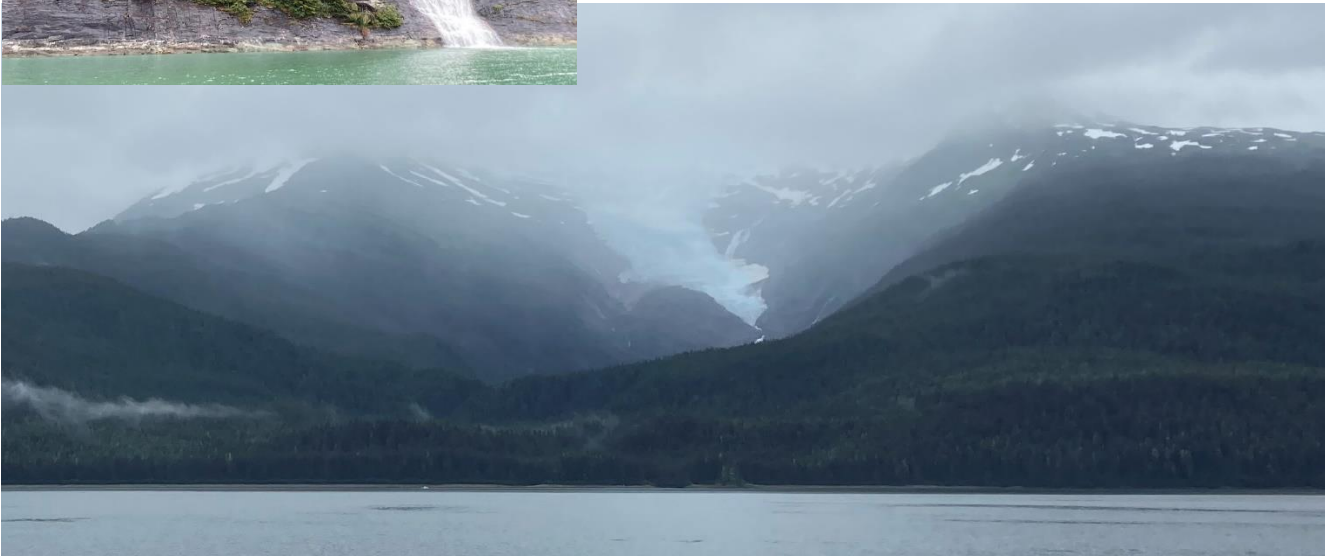






Heading back out the Endicott Arm in the afternoon, spotters were out for wildlife and we swung close by the more interesting waterfalls. Near the mouth of the Arm, in the region of the moraine, a Humpback whale treated us to some blowing and fluke shows as it went about its feeding.

Heading south from the Arm, we encountered a family pod of Orca with one male displaying his tall dorsal fin. With the light fading in the evening, we passed by a Sea Lion boys club gathering on a rock extending from a small wooded island, with lots of chatting (grunts) going on between the members.



### *Monday, 25 July - Totem Bay & Kuiu Island*

The ship continued through the night, passing by Petersburg around 2 am and continuing down the Wrangell Narrows passage to the west of Mitkof Island. As we arose in the morning, we were entering Totem Bay. Sea Otters and Surf Scoters were busy finding their breakfast. We anchored near the northern shore of the bay in about 35 feet of water. With next to no wind, the sea was glassy calm all around us. The drizzle had stopped through the night and low cloud hung around the island hills.



Morning activities onshore were kayaking with the otters and walks along the shore and into the “Temperate Rainforest” of spruce and hemlock. After the walk, I was lucky to join two of the crew on a videoing session in one of the Zodiacs, scouting around the western area of the bay trying to get wildlife close-ups. Otters and Loon birds teased us by dipping underwater before we could get to good filming distance.



After lunch, we headed off to Kuiu Island in search of wildlife.





*Naturalist Lee describes details of a Banana Slug reproductive system.*

This was the routine, to travel through the night to a new destination, do activities during the morning, then head on in the afternoon, to look for wildlife while there was still light and continue on through the night to the next destination. Usually the crew put on a presentation or two in the afternoon on topics of interest on the Tongass National Forest region.



*An afternoon presentation in the Lounge.  
Photographer Nathan had tips on iPhone camera use.*

This afternoon we did discover two black bears foraging on the beach. Watching through binoculars, a few of us spotted a Bald Eagle soar across our lense and we tracked it swooping up into the tall spruce tree. There it kept a close eye on the bears for any find that it might benefit from. We couldn't get close, so photos only show a black splodge.

We watched for quite a while and then headed off to Wrangell, motoring through the night and anchoring in the eastern lee of the town.



*Tuesday, 26 July - Wrangell Tribal House, Petroglyphs & LeConte Glacier*

By breakfast we had motored round to Wrangell township and tied up at the wharf. There were jetboat tours arranged up the Stikine River to Shakes Lake, where branches of the LeConte Glacier still reach the lake. Having chosen the afternoon tour, we joined in the town tour to the tribal house in the morning and on to a beach where petroglyphs could be found carved into the rocks. The morning fog had lifted and the sun beat down on a glassy calm sea.



*Small-boat harbour next to the tribal house at Wrangell.*



*The tribal house.*



*Petroglyph Beach*





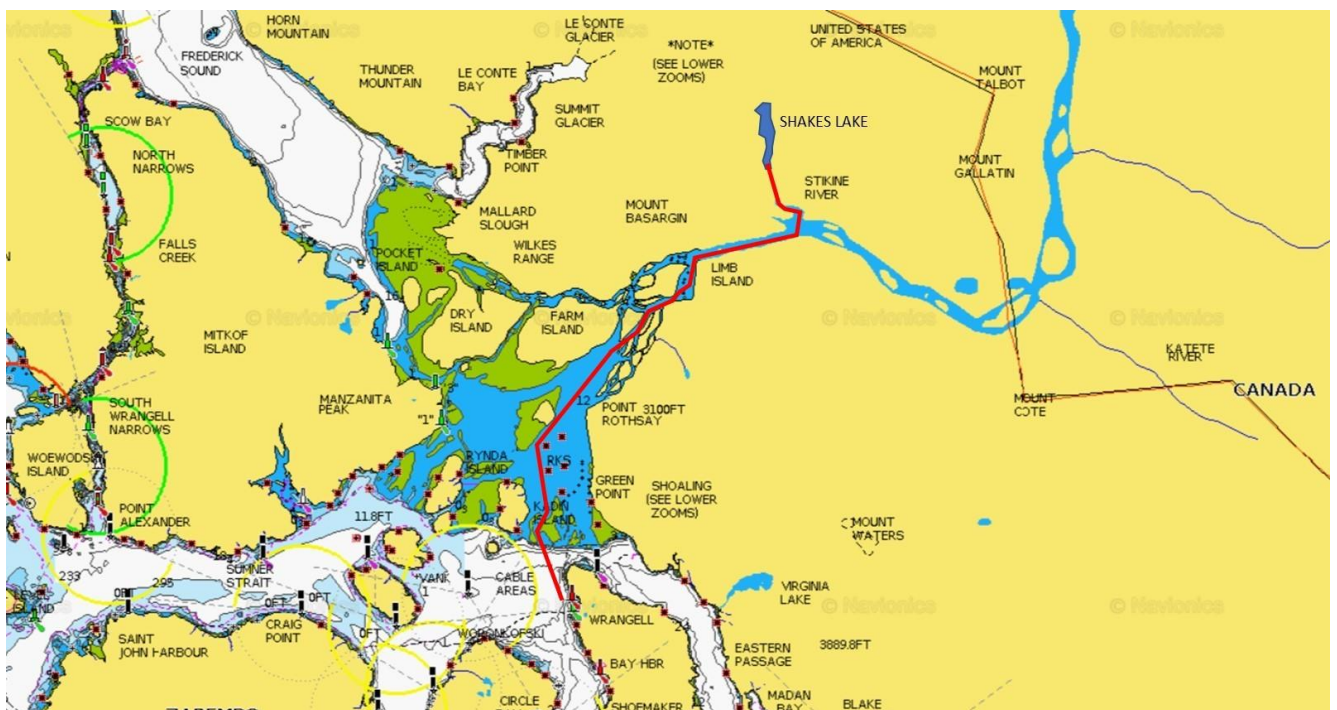
At the petroglyph beach, small porpoises rode the strong flowing tide, hunting for lunch. A local launched his orange plastic kayak and paddled a little way out to deploy a set line and fish patiently with a rod while he waited.

We were initially cautious about signing up for the jetboat tour to a glacier, the freezing wet trip to the previous glacier still fresh in our minds, combined with mental images of the Shotover Jet open boats and high speeds. Jane had the good sense to query and, when it was confirmed that the boats are covered, pretty much everyone signed up.



With a dry weight of about 4.5 tonnes, plus fuel and about 20 passengers, it took quite a while to get up on the plane, even with two large jet units.

We travelled about 20 miles up the Stikine River and another 8 miles up to Shakes Lake and the glacier. The red track marked on the chart below is only indicative. All the blue area is shifting sand bars and the driver navigated amongst them, explaining how we would see sand bars later as the tide dropped. For us it was an open expanse of water; however, I had scored a front seat next to the driver and I eventually realised he was following course lines he had mapped out previously on his GPS plotter.



Heading up the Stikine River.





*Stranded ice at the outlet of Shakes Lake.*

The entrance to Shakes Lake was guarded by stranded ice sculptures, caught on the mini moraine at the head of the river. They sometimes block the path to the lake, but this time we were lucky and a track through to the lake was not difficult.



*Glacier at Shakes Lake.*

All around, the mountainsides are scoured by glaciers. U-shaped valleys carved out by the glaciers, and even mountain tops are rounded, illustrating the land was once fully covered in ice. Melt water flows down the polished granite rock face of the valleys.







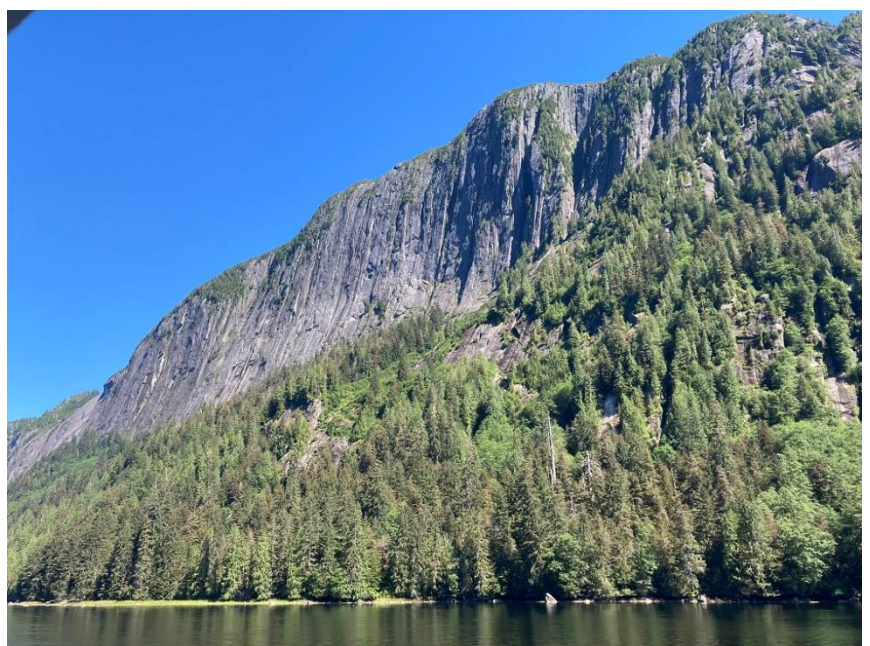
From Wrangell, we headed out toward the Clarence Strait for the night cruise. It was a beautiful evening for beers on the Sun Deck before a dinner of Dungeness Crab.



### *Wednesday, 27 July - Misty Fjord*

Overnight we had cruised down the Clarence Strait and passed south of Ketchikan before heading up the Behm Channel into the Misty Fjords National Monument. At wakeup call we were passing New Eddystone Rock, a spire of rock in mid-channel. After breakfast we arrived at Misty Fjord and dropped anchor in Punchbowl Cove.

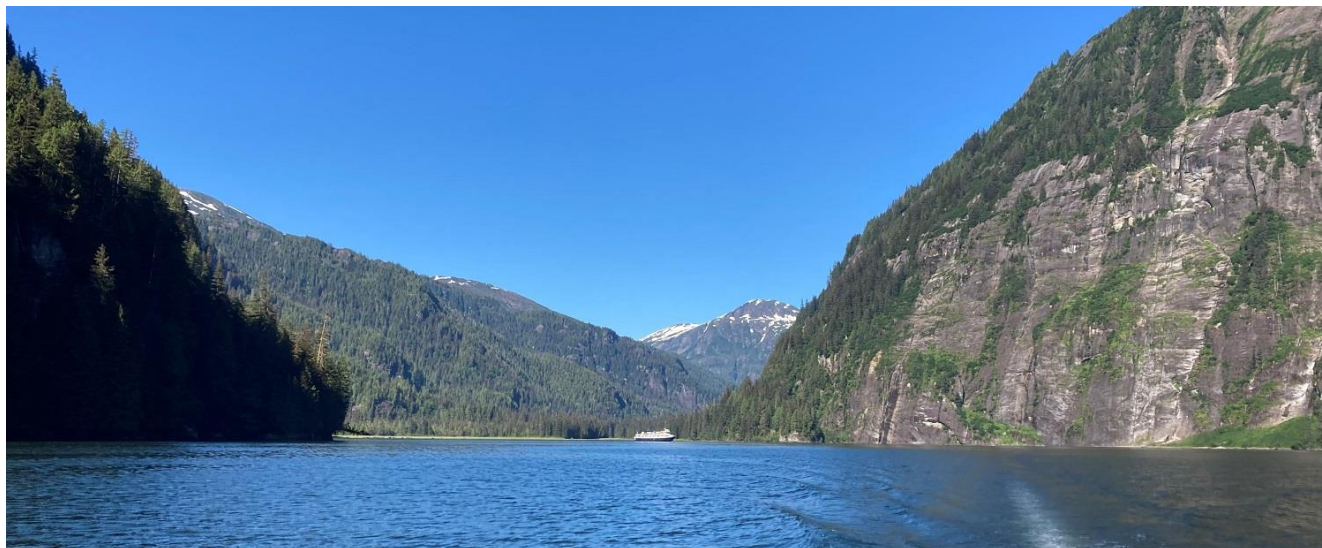
Here was opportunity to explore the still, calm bay by kayak. The backrests fitted to all the kayaks made all the difference to the comfort level and the hull shape tracked fairly well, so it was a pleasant paddle around the bay.



Above us rose a spectacular cliff, ground smooth by an ancient glacier but scoured with vertical grooves.



Over lunch we cruised around to another arm to catch the high tide to get the Zodiacs up a creek where we hoped to sight salmon or even a bear. It was a disappointing trip, as the young boatswain lacked the experience to venture into the shallow fast-flowing waters and, understandably, had to be cautious with the guests aboard, so we didn't get far or see anything of interest.



Beautiful cruise back out the fjord, stunning scenery. Slow over dinner. There was a bear sighting after dinner – I never saw it, but did see an eagle in the grass. In the evening, packed for departure next day.



#### *Thursday, 28 July - Disembark at Ketchikan*

We continued the slow cruise overnight, silently slipping through the calm sea. I was awake at 6 am to get ready for disembarking. Luggage had to be ready on the deck outside the cabin before breakfast at 7 am. The captain had picked a new wharf that they hadn't used before and discovered that the tide was wrong to use the gang plank, so we donned lifejackets one last time for a short transfer in the Zodiacs at 8 am.

We were bundled into a bus to the hospitality rooms at the Cape Fox Lodge, which was the base for farewelling guests and greeting the new lot. The crew have a busy day to get previous guests to the airport, process the new arrivals, along with the covid testing, and prepare the ship for departure on the new cruise in the evening.



On the way to the Lodge, our driver gave us a short tour through Ketchikan and to the Totem Pole Park. From Idaho, he had a good knowledge for the 3 months he had been in Ketchikan.

Once at the Lodge, we were on our own. Our luggage could stay there until 5 pm and we could check into our hotel at 3 pm. To fill the time, we walked into town via the Fish Ladder and the famed Creek Street boardwalk.

The Fish Ladder was uneventful; overgrown bush prevented an otherwise perfect birds-eye view over the raceway. We couldn't see much evidence of the salmon using the ladder. The waterfall it was built to pass seemed like an easier route. An angler arrived on the rocks below and cast into the pond below the ladder and waterfall. We watched large salmon congregate, contemplating the climb ahead and evading the angler's lure. Just as we were leaving he hooked a huge salmon, which nearly pulled him in at one point, but he succeeded in landing it.

Farther down on the Creek Street boardwalk, we watched Harbour Seals chase the salmon, one being successful in the time we watched. Creek Street is famous for its 'ladies of the night' and is now a string of tourist shops.

After a chowder lunch we walked back up the same way and caught a taxi from the fish ladder to take us up the steep climb back to the Lodge. There we rested in the comfy lounge chairs until we could taxi along to the "Super 8" hotel and check in. At the nearby Oceanview restaurant, several seals entertained us by leaping up onto seaplane pontoons and looking round to see what audience they had for such a feat.

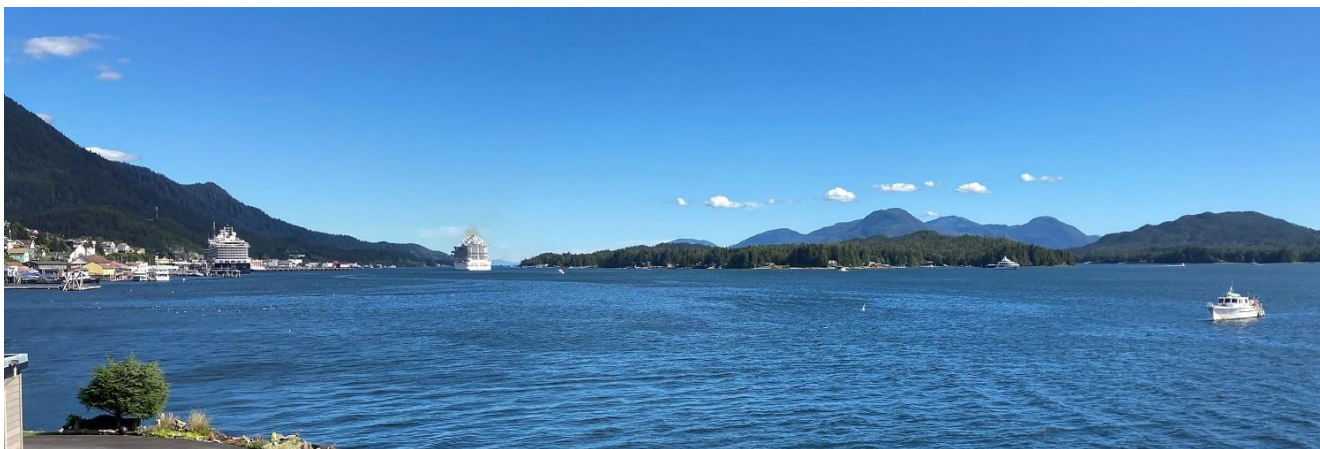


*Creek Street, Ketchikan.*



## *Friday, 29 July - Depart Ketchikan*

The Super 8 hotel is on a small promontory into the harbour next to a seaplane base. It seemed like dozens of planes started taking off and landing from early hours. Not much chance of a sleep in. Plenty of activity to watch from my sea-view window, with planes, cruise ships, seals and even a humpback whale slowly cruising past the wharves.



Here we separated. Bryan and Jane had a midday flight to Seattle, to start their onward journey to catch up with relatives in UK and France. I had an evening flight to Juneau, to resume my original travel plans; a night in Juneau then two in Seattle before returning to Fort St John.

I filled in the day with a lot of walking, just following my nose around Ketchikan, gravitating to the marinas to see what boats were about. Mainly local fishing vessels, but a few visiting yachts.



It didn't make a lot of sense to fly up to Juneau just to sleep overnight and fly back south the next day. It had just been the simplest change to make after the boat trip plans had changed, and I had hoped for a scenic flight over the areas we had cruised. While the weather was clear at Ketchikan, it closed in quickly as we flew north. Arriving into Juneau was just as wet and misty as the first time, actually even more so, and stayed that way the whole time. Flying south to Seattle the next day, the clouds gradually cleared as we approached Vancouver Island. In Seattle, I didn't do much. I needed rest and was happy to take it easy before my flights back to Vancouver and Fort St John.

*~ The End ~*