

# Regional Guide – Wildlife

## Great Bear Rainforest

The Great Bear Rainforest is a biodiversity hotspot unlike any other in Canada. Sheltered by the Pacific Coast mountains and nourished by the nutrient-rich waters of the North Pacific, this rainforest teems with wildlife across sea, land, and sky.

### Mammals

#### **Spirit Bear (Kermode Bear)**

Perhaps the most famous inhabitant of this region, the Spirit Bear is a white-coated variant of the black bear, found almost exclusively in the central Great Bear Rainforest. Approximately 10% of black bears in this area carry the recessive gene responsible for their unique coloration. These elusive bears are deeply revered by local Indigenous Nations and protected by conservation agreements.

#### **Black Bear & Grizzly Bear**

Black bears are commonly seen along estuaries and forest edges, while grizzlies—larger and more solitary—often forage along salmon rivers. Fall offers the best chance to witness bears fishing or gorging on berries.

#### **Coastal Wolves**

Smaller and more genetically distinct than their inland relatives, coastal wolves are skilled swimmers and often forage along intertidal zones. Their diet can consist of up to 90% marine-based foods, including salmon and shellfish.

#### **Cougar & Marten**

Rarely seen but present, cougars inhabit the deeper forest while marten and mink are more commonly observed in riparian areas.

### Marine Mammals

#### **Humpback Whales**

These majestic whales are commonly sighted in the region, engaging in spectacular breaches and cooperative bubble-net feeding. The protected bays and fjords offer rich foraging grounds.

**Orcas (Killer Whales)**

Resident and transient orca pods traverse these waters. Transients hunt seals and porpoises, while residents rely heavily on salmon.

**Pacific White-sided Dolphins & Dall's Porpoises**

Both species are frequent companions to the ship, delighting guests with energetic bow-riding displays.

**Harbour Seals & Steller Sea Lions**

Often hauled out on rocks or seen fishing in kelp beds, these pinnipeds are an essential part of the coastal food web.

## Birds

**Bald Eagles**

A common and commanding sight, bald eagles nest in tall conifers and are often seen soaring above estuaries or scavenging salmon carcasses along rivers.

**Great Blue Herons, Belted Kingfishers, and Waterfowl**

These elegant birds haunt the forest's edges and are particularly active in estuarine environments.

**Seabirds**

Pigeon guillemots, common murres, and storm-petrels are among the many seabirds observed in offshore passages.

## Fish & Invertebrates

**Pacific Salmon**

The keystone species of this ecosystem. Chinook, sockeye, coho, pink, and chum salmon return to spawn in the region's rivers, sustaining the entire food chain.

**Intertidal Life**

Zodiac and shoreline excursions may reveal vibrant tidepool life: sea stars, anemones, chitons, barnacles, and small crabs abound.

**Jellyfish & Plankton**

The base of the marine food web, these floating organisms support nearly every marine creature in the rainforest ecosystem.