

Our visit to Grizzly Bear Lodge, Minstrel Island 2nd -5th September 2015

We departed from Campbell River with 3 other guests on a float plane in weak sunshine. We had a very smooth and enjoyable flight with sunny spells and mist! The views were magnificent and a promise of things to come.



After about 45minutes we arrived at our destination and our first view of the lodge.



After meeting Angus, George, Glen, Joe and Madeline we settled into our rooms (well just dumped the luggage!) and joined the group for a welcome drink and excellent Dungeness crab. Angus outlined the programme for our excursions over the next 3 days and divided us into 3 groups each with their own boat and guide. After that, we donned our survival gear and departed for our first tour of the local coves.



Our first day trip was with Angus which was described as a “wilderness walk to see the salmon leap”. After a boat ride, trek, truck ride and another trek we arrived at “the ferry”. The previous 5 days had been very wet and the river was running fast. After emptying out the boat the ferryman transported us across the river.



After another trek without meeting any bears we arrived at the lodge by the salmon river where we spent the rest of the day. The salmon were leaping in the river which was helped by the rapid flow due to the rain.

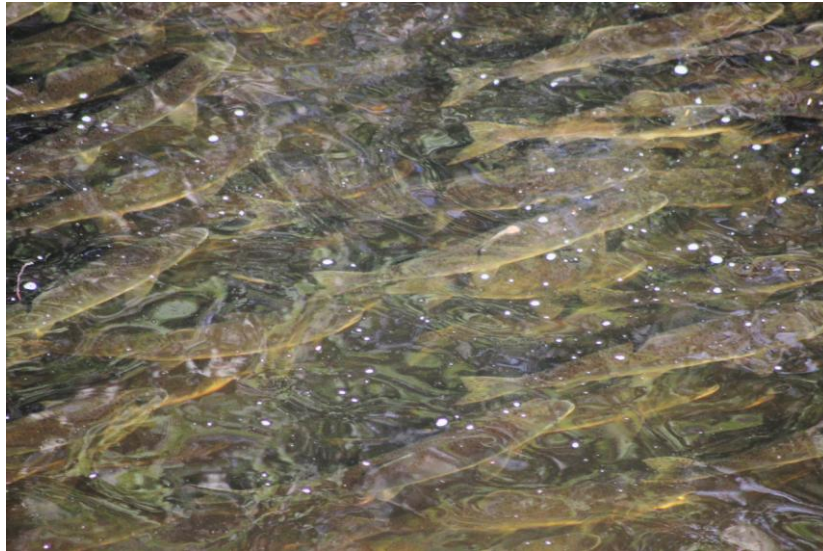


We all arrived back safe and sound for coffee, tea or beer!

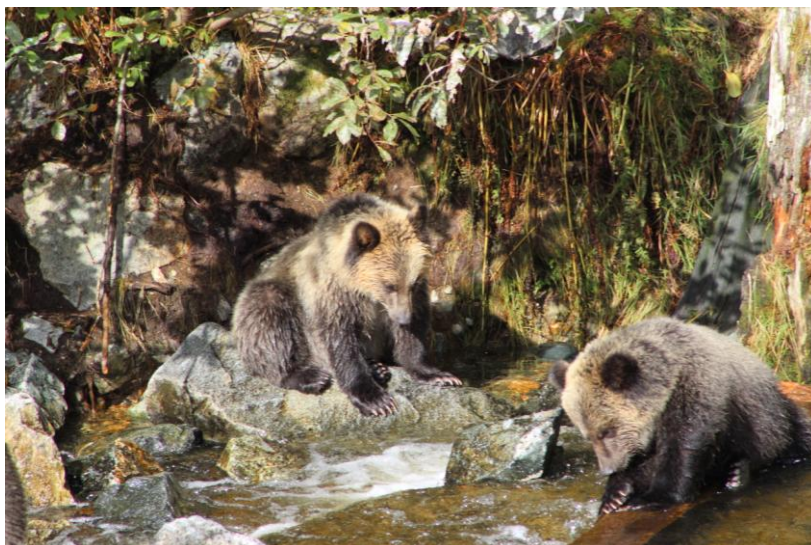


In the evening we shared our experiences (well some of them) with the other guests and looked at each other's photos before a delicious evening meal and an early night as we had an early start the next day.

Our next trip with Angus was to see the Grizzly Bears from the hides. The two hides were joined by a walkway and overlooked a main river and subsidiary stream. The stream was full of salmon which had collected waiting to migrate upstream. You could almost cross the river on their backs.



But the bears were waiting! A lazy bear downstream spent most of the 2 hours just sitting in the water. A mother with 2 cubs was the most prolific “catcher” and took her fish to a bower on the bank where they fed. During the time we were there she must have caught 7-8 salmon.



Our last day was whale watching with George. Although we had seen humpback whales on our other outings, this trip was to go further out into Knight Inlet to see whales, dolphin and orca. We were not disappointed. We saw humpback feeding on herring and salmon before a pod of orca arrived. One appeared, dived under the boat and then disappeared. George lowered his hydrophone and we could hear the orca communicating. He had to whip it out when they started bumping into it! One kept his eye on us!



Then the dolphins arrived! They were in a playful mood and started “buzzing” around a humpback whale who was clearly getting more annoyed before he dived and disappeared. He also tail flapped and beat the water.



They then thought we would be a good target and a pod of 50-60 swam with us and rapidly overtook us.



On our way back to the lodge, George showed us some rock paintings done by the First Nations people.





Sadly this was the end of our trip and we departed back to Campbell River where we all spent the night. Our group really gelled and although we were staying in 2 hotels decided to meet up for dinner before our final farewells. A wonderful, unforgettable experience which was helped by good weather and we didn't get really wet!