



**Tofino Trip Oct. 3-6, 2025**  
**SD73 International Student Program**



Twenty nine students and several chaperones left Kamloops at 7:00AM on Oct. 3,2025. We drove south in our tour bus down the Coquihalla Highway and towards Vancouver. After some washroom stops we arrived at the Tsawwassen ferry terminal at 11:15. Our ferry to Nanaimo was on time and we enjoyed cloudy skies but no rain on the voyage over to Vancouver Island. Once on the island we headed towards Tofino with a washroom and food purchasing stop in Port Alberni. At Tofino, we checked into our hostel, made dinner, and relaxed before heading to bed at 10:00PM.



Harbour Porpoise seen from the ferry



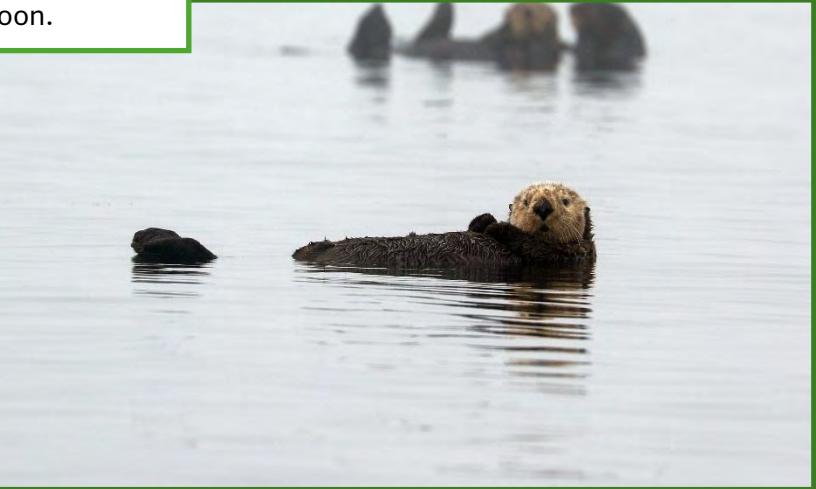


In the morning, we ate breakfast and left the hostel at 8:15AM for our 9:00AM whale watching trip. The forecast was for nice weather but, unfortunately, this resulted in a heavy fog in the areas we were looking for whales. We stopped and had a look at some Sea Otters, River Otters, Bald Eagles, and other things before finding a large Gray Whale in the fog.





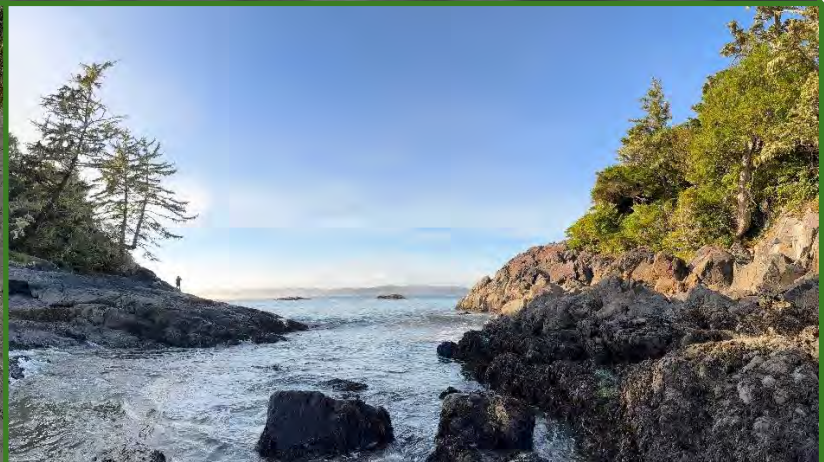
Clockwise from top left: River Otter, Bald Eagle, Sea Otter, Steller's Sea Lion, Gray Whale, California Sea Lion, Common Loon.



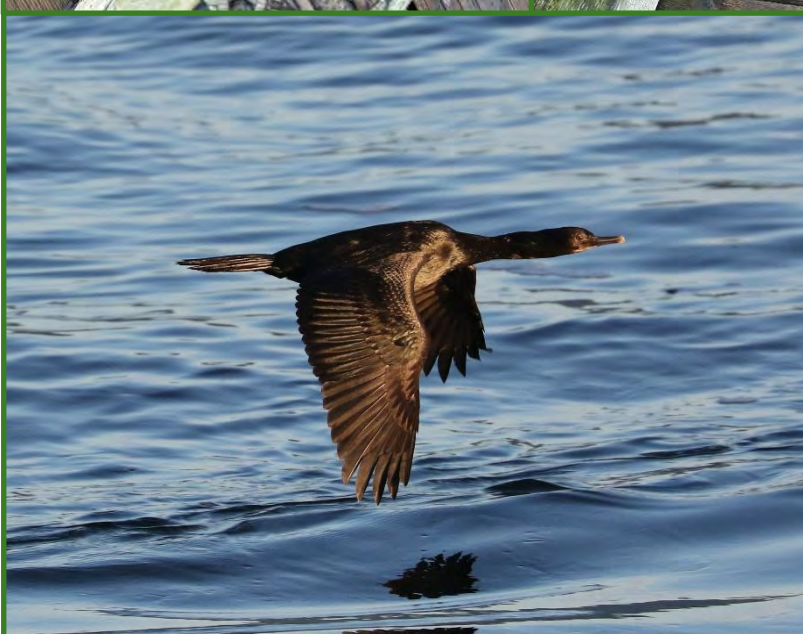
We then had a long break for lunch and shopping/free time. At 3:00PM we left the hostel and travelled to Mackenzie Beach. Here, we relaxed on the beach, did a short walk to the top of a small headland with a view, flipped over some rocks to find sea creatures, and enjoyed the sunshine. Near dark, we enjoyed a campfire on the beach where we roasted hot dogs and made smores. We stayed until dark and enjoyed a beautiful sunset. Tofino on a nice day is tough to beat!







The next morning some of the students met out on the dock in front of the hostel before our planned activities and we saw some Sea Otters, birds, and some sea creatures on the dock posts.



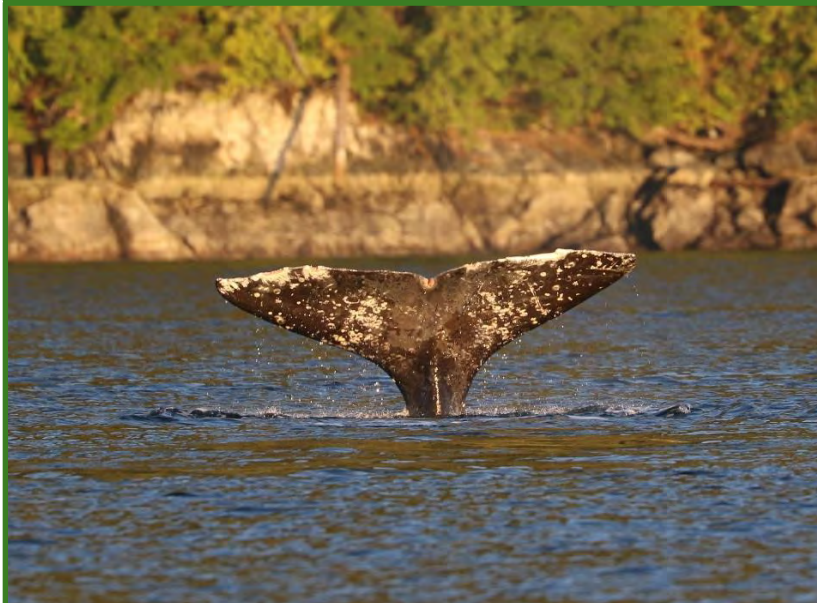


We then left at 10:00AM from the hostel for Pacific Rim National Park where we did both loops of rainforest trail. The students enjoyed hiking through a temperate rainforest and seeing giant Cedar trees, some of which are 700 years old or older. The total distance of this walk is just under 3kms and is relatively flat. We then had an hour stop at Long Beach.

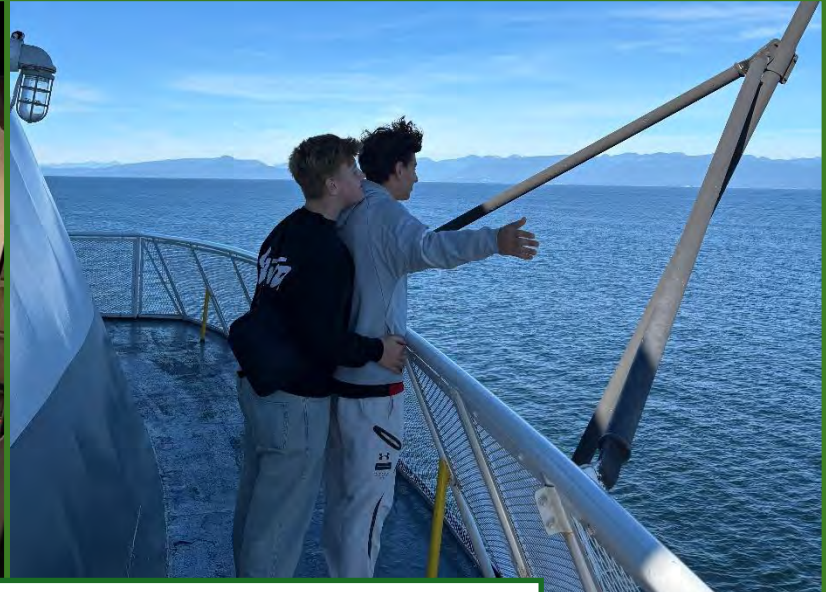


After a late lunch, we walked from the hostel at 3:45PM for our 4:40PM Bear Watch tour. This tour resulted in lots of wildlife being seen and photographed in gorgeous light. We saw Black Bears right away so we had enough time to circle Meare's Island completely and see some whales on the way back.





We returned from our Bear Watching Tour after dark and then had some free time for dinner before heading to sleep. The next morning we woke a bit early and were packed up and gone by 7:15AM. Our ferry was leaving Departure Bay in Nanaimo at 1:20PM so we had some time to stop at Coombs Market on the way home. This is a popular tourist market just outside of Nanaimo with various stores and is famous for having goats on the grass roof of the main building. On the return ferry to Horseshoe Bay, we saw no less than 9 Hump-backed Whales. One of them slapped its fin on the water and then breached several times.



Hump-backed Whales seen from the ferry and the Vancouver skyline shown below



**Students on this trip were from Germany, Spain, Brazil, Belgium, and Japan**

**Mammal List From This Trip:**

**Black Bear – 5, Hump-backed Whale – 9, Gray Whale – 3, Red Squirrel – 2,  
Harbour Porpoise – 14, California Sea Lion – 120, Steller’s (Northern) Sea Lion – 5,  
Harbour Seal – 45, Sea Otter – 100, River Otter – 5, Mule Deer – 2, Raccoon – 1**

**Accommodations: Tofino Hostel/Whalers Guesthouse**

**Company used for Whale and Bear Watching: Remote Passages Marine Excursions**



## **My Favourite Moment:**

- 1. Bruna – Seeing the mother bears and little cubs because I think they were really cute and something I've never seen before.**
- 2. Manuela – When we were coming back after we saw the bears and whales and the sunset was on one side of the boat and the moon was on the other side.**
- 3. Riku – When we climbed up that hill by the beach and saw the view of the ocean and rocks because it was the most beautiful thing I've seen in my life.**
- 4. Laurenz – When I saw the whales, otters, and bears because I've never seen animals like this in the wild before. I've seen them in zoos before but never in the wild.**
- 5. Annika – When we cruised on the boats because it was very relaxing and I liked the view.**
- 6. Zach – When we saw the first whale because I took some beautiful pictures of it.**
- 7. Kaisa – The bear watching because we saw so many animals such as bears, seals, whales, and otters.**
- 8. Jan – Seeing the tails of the whales when they dove because it was so amazing to see.**
- 9. Medina – Whale watching on the boats because it was cool.**
- 10. Noah – Going whale and bear watching because the sunset was beautiful, I loved the vegetation where the bears were, and also seeing all the Sea Otters.**
- 11. Pia – Seeing the different animals and sunshine in Tofino because everyone says it rains all the time on Vancouver Island.**
- 12. Theresa – When we saw the bears and the whales and the sunset we saw from the boat on the last night. Also having so much fun with all of my friends.**
- 13. Clara – When we were on the bear watching tour with the sunset because I like sunsets.**
- 14. Paula – When we saw the whales because it was very special and I've never seen whales in the wild before.**
- 15. Sophie – When we saw the bears and the whales because it was really beautiful and showed what kind of nature there can be in the world and that you have to protect it.**
- 16. Sophia – On the bear and whale watching tours just being around and enjoying nature.**
- 17. Joao – Watching the whale tails because I've never seen whales before.**
- 18. Leander – The sunset at Mackenzie because it was breathtaking scenery.**
- 19. Philip – Seeing the bear cubs because I've never seen baby bears before.**
- 20. Felix – the second boat trip because we saw Black Bears.**
- 21. Artur – When the bears came out of the forest because I've never seen wild bears before.**
- 22. Tim – When me and my friends went to a hidden beach and enjoyed the sun and water.**
- 23. Emil – When we at Long Beach because it was big, there were surfers there, and it's famous for several movies.**
- 24. Jakob – Walking into the Pacific Ocean because we went together and it was so cold.**
- 25. Leonard – The last student that my host family had knew a special place in Tofino. I went there and it was a good view. It was really quiet and nice to sit there.**
- 26. Paul – The sunset at Mackenzie Beach because it was just so beautiful.**
- 27. Luzie – When we saw the whale tails and the baby bears. I've never seen either before.**
- 28. Louise – Seeing the baby Black Bears because they are very cute.**
- 29. Max – Seeing the bears because I've never seen one before.**

## One Thing I Learned:

1. Bruna – Gray Whales do not eat for the entire winter.
2. Manuela – That the bear cubs only stay 1-2 years with their mother and then they separate.
3. Riku – Nature is very powerful and it makes me more relaxed and happy.
4. Laurenz – That bears most often have 2 cubs.
5. Annika – Starfish are hard on the outside and sea anemones are very sticky.
6. Zach – Bear behaviour. The mothers protect them.
7. Kaisa – That whales only go down for 4-5 minutes and then come up for air.
8. Jan – That Vancouver Island has about 10,000 Black Bears.
9. Medina – Black Bears are smaller than I thought they would be.
10. Noah – How amazing and rich the flora and fauna of Tofino is. I also learned how the Sea Otters are being reintroduced and growing to the population numbers that they used to be.
11. Pia – That Vancouver Island has that diverse of nature. Rainforest, beaches, mountains, etc...
12. Theresa – That there are rainforests in places that are also cold (Temperate Rainforests). Also that Tofino is very diverse having mountains, water, and beaches.
13. Clara – How to cook with more people. How to organize it.
14. Paula – That there is rainforest in Tofino and some of the trees are older than 800 years.
15. Sophie – That most things come unexpected. That you can see whales while bear watching.
16. Sophia – The difference between a Gray Whale and Hump-backed Whale. Hump-backs have a fin.
17. Joao – That there are 1500 Sea Otters in the Tofino area.
18. Leander – Bears come out when the tide is low because of the smell of seafood.
19. Philip – How old the trees can be. For example cedar trees can be about 800 years old.
20. Felix – Gray Whales go under water and filter the sand for food.
21. Artur – That bears come out of the forest for shellfish and crabs at low tide.
22. Tim – That it's very stressful to cook in a crowded kitchen.
23. Emil – That bears come out and flip rocks for crabs and smaller animals.
24. Jakob – That Grizzly Bears do not live on Vancouver Island.
25. Leonard – That bears actually eat nearly everything to add to their calories.
26. Paul – How to make smores.
27. Luzie – That the best things come unexpectedly. We saw the whale tails on the bear watching tour.
28. Louise – Nature is very diverse and that there is a temperate rainforest.
29. Max – That bears can smell food 5kms away.