

Tofino Trip Report
April 21-24, 2023
SD73 International Student Program



A group of international students, staff, and chaperones left Kamloops at 7am on Friday April 21, 2023. We turned our large coach bus south on the Coquihalla Highway towards the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal near Vancouver. On the way, we had a quick stop at a rest area where there is a washroom and food truck. The surroundings at the rest area certainly did not look like Spring!



The ferry was on time and our reserved sailing made sure that we were one of the first ones on. We sailed over to Vancouver Island without issue which is always nice on this trip. We arrived in Tofino at 6:30pm, checked in, and grocery shopped for the next few days. Photos below show a Harbour Seal seen from the ferry, students on the ferry, and students in the kitchen of the hostel preparing their dinner.



The public dock near our hostel is a great place to see wildlife early in the morning. Many of the students ended up wondering out on the dock the first morning and the photos below show what was seen from there.



River Otter, Sea Otter, Raccoons, Ochre and Leather Stars

Our first tour with Remote Passages Marine Excursions was whale watching. We walked over to their building and dock at 9:00am and soon were kitted out in lovely red float suits and yellow rain jackets.





Wildlife seen on the whale watching tour clockwise from top left: Pigeon Guillemot, Gray Whale tail, Sea Otters, Harbour Seals.





After whale watching, we had a short break for lunch and then drove down to the Rain Forest Hike trailhead. This hike takes you through an old growth forest with some very large Western Red Cedar Trees. It seemed fitting that it was raining in the rainforest. After this, we drove north a short distance to Long Beach and had some beach time. One of the staff members had brought a trick kite along which was a nice addition to our time on Long Beach. As usual, some of the students decided it was a good idea to jump in the Northern Pacific Ocean in April 😊.





Students then had some free time to make/go out for dinner. The heavy rain had returned so we spent most of the evening hanging out inside the hostel and preparing for a busy following day. The next day we left the hostel at 8:00am and walked the short distance to Remote Passages again for our bear watching tour. We were dressed in the same float suits and rain jackets and boarded the same boats. The bear watching happens on inland water so there are almost no waves to speak of. After some searching, we were able to locate two Black Bears feeding along the shore at low tide. We also added 3 American Mink to our growing mammal list on this tour. They were all seen running along the shore.





Following bear watching, we had a short time for lunch and then met at the bus to take the short drive to Mackenzie Beach. Some students took the short hike to end of a headland, some climbed on the rocks, some swam(!), and some did some drawing on the sand. Despite the steady rain, it was a great time on the beach.



After this, there was a request for another hike, so we decided to try a new one behind our hostel. We followed a few roads to a trailhead into Tonquin Park to Tonquin Beach. The hike is actually quite short, once the trailhead is reached. The entire west side of Tofino, Pacific Rim National Park, and Ucluelet is lined with such beaches.



A map of Clayoquot Sound

Breakfast the last morning in Tofino



The wheels on the bus were turning a few minutes after 7am on the last day of the trip and soon we were headed south and then east across Vancouver Island to the Duke Point Ferry Terminal. This drive takes around 3 hours and we had just enough time to stop at Cathedral Grove just outside of Point Alberni. The short loop trail from the parking lot takes you through huge Douglas Fir trees. This is truly one of the gems of Vancouver Island.



The rest of the trip went well (slight delay waiting for the return ferry) and we arrived back in Kamloops around 7:45pm.

Mammal List

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|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Northern Sea Lion – 150 | 6. River Otter – 1 |
| 2. California Sea Lion – 10 | 7. Raccoon – 3 |
| 3. Gray Whale – 4 | 8. Black Bear – 2 |
| 4. Harbour Seal – 8 | 9. American Mink – 3 |
| 5. Sea Otter – 15 | |

My Favourite Moment of the Trip

Justus – Whale watching because I had never seen a whale in my life before.

Keeti – When we went whale watching and the boat went over the waves. It made my heart feel funny.

Selma – Being able to swim in the ocean when it was cold and rainy. Feeling the waves and the salty sea water against my body.

Kian – Swimming in the Pacific Ocean because it was a one-time experience and it was really cool to float in the waves and let them move you.

Carla – Swimming in the ocean because I didn't expect to be so calm when the water was so cold. It was such a fun experience and I would definitely do it again.

Nanami – Whale watching because I have never seen whales before.

Rinka – Hiking in the rain forest because the rain forest is a secret place and it made me calm.

Agata – The rain forest trail because I had never seen something like that before and it was a nice experience.

Norah – When we jumped into the sea at Mackenzie Beach and it was raining. It was something I had wanted to do for a long time. It was the kind of thing that makes you feel alive.

Heloisa – When we saw whales because I liked the rough boat ride on the big waves.

Jannika – The entire time at Mackenzie Beach with all the rocks that we climbed and the short hike there. I also liked jumping in the waves because I like cold plunges. Doing it in the rain was a nice atmosphere.

Alice – When I touched the sea star with my hands because I have never seen one or touched one before.

Carter – Standing by the ocean because it is really peaceful to hear the sound of the waves.

One Thing I Learned On This Trip

Justus – Not to stay too long in the water if you are swimming in the Pacific Ocean in April.

Keeti – How to fall asleep on a boat that is moving very fast after being forced to wake up an unholy hour.

Selma – You can see wild cows on the beaches of Tofino.

Kian – Male Black Bears sometimes eat the cubs of female Black Bears in order to mate with her.

Carla – I didn't expect so many animals eating on the shore. Sea Otters, River Otters, Black Bears, Raccoons, Seals, etc.. They all found food there, which was surprising.

Nanami – I could learn another language. Portuguese, Chinese, and French.

Rinka – Rain makes a very beautiful forest. I learned to appreciate rain.

Agata – It always rains in Tofino but that's why the nature there is so pretty.

Norah – Hummingbirds can change the colour of their face.

Heloisa – How whales live in the sea and what whale breath looks like.

Jannika – The small islands around Vancouver Island are made of more resistant rock that were not moved by the glaciers. This is why we can see them as they are today.

Alice – If you want to find something unique, you will need to get up earlier, and sometimes you may find some surprise.

Carter – When you get up early you can see beautiful things like raccoons.

***Students on this trip came from: Japan, China, the Czech Republic, Spain, Germany, and Brazil.**