



## TRIP IDEAS

# NORTHERN BC ABORIGINAL CULTURE

Northern British Columbia is rich in scenery, wildlife, and especially Aboriginal culture. Paddle a kayak to ancient village sites in Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands, or admire Tsimshian artifacts in Prince Rupert. Even the highways here are scenic: view the blue Bear Glacier off Highway 37 en route to Stewart. From Stewart, hop across the border to Hyder, Alaska to see the enormous Salmon Glacier.

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## Inside Passage Ferry

BC Ferries' MV Northern Adventure makes the approximately 15-hour journey year-round between Port Hardy on Vancouver Island and Prince Rupert on the North Coast. Cruise past deep fjords and forested islands along BC's remote, virtually uninhabited Inside Passage, spotting whales and sea birds en route.

## Prince Rupert

In Prince Rupert, enjoy the scenery (try an oceanview room at the Crest Hotel) then head out to explore this rugged fishing town. Discover Tsimshian art and technology, and maybe even catch a live dance performance, at the Museum of Northern British Columbia. Set in a stunning waterfront longhouse, it's just steps from the shops and galleries of the funky Cow Bay neighbourhood. Order seafood fresh from the boats at Smile's or the Cow Bay Café, or grab a coffee and some local gossip at Cowpuccino's. From the Cow Bay docks, charter a boat and cast a line for some of the North Coast's legendary salmon, or join a kayak guide to navigate the surrounding fjords and islets.

For more adventure near Prince Rupert, hike to or visit ancient village sites with a Tsimshian guide, or wander the quiet boardwalks and abandoned homes of the North Pacific Cannery, North America's oldest surviving cannery town. May to September is the best time to visit the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary. Home to North America's largest concentration of grizzly bears, it's accessible only by boat; chances are visitors will spot Orcas, porpoises and humpback whales en route.

## Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands

The Haida Gwaii remote archipelago (an hour's flight or seven hours by ferry from Prince Rupert) is among the most culturally, archaeologically and ecologically rich places on earth.

First stop? The Haida Heritage Centre at K'aay llnagaay. This 21st-century cultural centre in the village of Skidegate is a modern take on an ancient village that once stood on this site. Watch artists at work in the carving shed, try some fried bread or clam fritters in the Eating House and see examples of modern works at the temporary exhibit gallery. Visitors might also catch a live music and dance performance in the theatre or meet young artists honing skills at the Bill

Reid Teaching Centre on site. The heart of the village is the Haida Gwaii Museum, where artifacts, art and technology reflect thousands of years of settlement on the islands.

Accommodations in nearby Queen Charlotte City skew cozy, low key and family run. Overnight options include self-contained waterfront suites at the delightfully named Absence of Time House.

## Gwaii Haanas National Park Tour

Travel by boat or kayak through the remote, roadless wilderness in Gwaii Haanas on southern Haida Gwaii. Five hundred archaeological sites scattered among 138 forested islands include SGang Gwaay 'llnagaay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the best surviving examples of a Northwest Coast First Nations village site. Visitor numbers are limited to protect this fragile site, and visitors need to travel with a licensed tour operator (Parks Canada has a list) or obtain a permit and attend an orientation session.

## Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park

Back on the mainland, head east along Northern BC's storied Highway 16 to Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park, the site of volcanic eruption 250 years ago. Join a Nisga'a guide to trek across a moonscape of hardened lava, and learn the history and legends of the Nisga'a people and about the villages destroyed by the lava flow.

## 'Ksan Historical Village and Museum

In the frontier town of Old Hazelton is 'Ksan, a village of seven houses built to replicate a Gitksan community that stood on the same riverbank site for millennia. Each of the longhouses, set in a row facing the river, reveals a different aspect of Gitksan culture. Learn about feast traditions at the Wolf House, hear tales and legends of the distant past at the Frog House, and see dance regalia in the Fireweed House.

Gitksan guides also help interpret the village's many totem poles – revealing, for example, that the key figure is at the bottom, not the top, and that the poles have intense connections to the natural world. More poles, both ancient and modern, stand in the nearby villages of Kispiox, Kitwanga and Kitwancool. Need to stop for the night? Pull into the Hudson Bay Lodge, a family run hotel in Alpine-themed Smithers.