



# WATERWAYS

Natural History Coastal Adventures

FALL 2012

## The Quest

There is a quality to Bluewater Adventures' voyages that connects with our individual need for a mythic quest. Do we not all need to leave the perceived 'safety' of our homes, our 'regular' lives and seek adventure? Does successful adventure not make us feel more fulfilled and alive? We need to find 'peaks' in our lives, special moments and accomplishments, to look back on with pride.

Like Jason and the Argonauts, on each trip people come from far and wide to join together on a quest. People know there is uncertainty. The challenges of weather, leadership, group dynamics and simply fate make the outcome unknown. But isn't the uncertainty of achievement why we do it? If the wild life was guaranteed (like at a zoo) there would be less joy in the discovery. If we knew what we would feel standing before ancient totem poles or a glacier thousands of years old, we could stay at home. When the group shares amazing experiences, is the bond, the camaraderie and joy not extra special?

Very literally, the quest for the all-white Spirit bear is a search for a 'golden fleece'. The wild animals we encounter – orcas, grizzly bears, sea lions – challenge (and excite) us. They are both majestic and

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## Totem Poles

**"The best known and most distinctive feature of Northwest Coast Indian cultures is the tall, carved cedar log commonly referred to as a "totem pole."**

– Author Hilary Stewart

### *The Cedar*

"The Wood is soft, but of wonderful firmness and in a good tree, so straight grained it will split true and clean into forty foot planks, four inches thick and three feet wide, with scarcely a knot. Across the grain it cuts clean and precise. It is light in weight and beautiful in color, reddish brown when new, silvery grey when old. It is permeated with natural oils that make it one of the longest lasting of all woods, even in the damp of the Northwest Coast climate.

"When steamed it will bend without breaking. It will make houses and boats and boxes and cooking pots. Its bark will make mats, even clothing. With a few sharp bits of sharpened stone and antler, with some beaver teeth and a lot of time, with later on a bit of iron, you can build from the cedar tree the exterior trappings of one of the world's great cultures. Above all, you can build totem poles.

"Each pole contained the essential spirit of the individual or family it commemorated, as well as the spirit of the artist who made it, and by extension, the living essence of the whole people. While the people lived, the poles lived, and long after the culture died, the poles continue to radiate a terrible vitality that only decay and destruction could end."

– Bill Reid, Haida Artist

### *Carving a Pole –*

Carving a pole was a major undertaking only taken on by a special artist. First a tree had to be selected,

**Haida Watchmen explain the totem poles at SGang Gwaay**



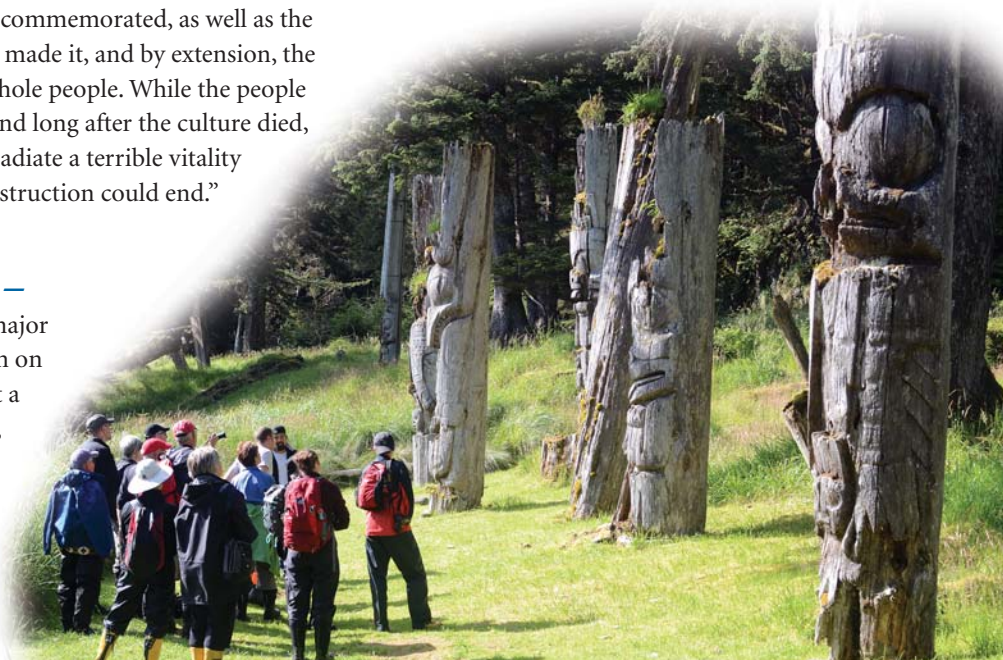
cut down and towed by canoe back to the village. The artist then discussed the design or story to be represented with the person paying for the pole. After removing the bark and outer sapwood, the artist then started roughing in the figures with an adze, a curved knife or chisel. To keep the log from drying out, water was frequently added to the wood. Methodically, refining the details the artist worked on one side, and often an apprentice copied him on the other side.

Red, black, white and blue-green paint was sparingly used to highlight the eyebrows, mouth, and nostrils.

Once completed the pole was carried by up to a hundred people to where it would be raised. Then using ropes, crutches and scaffolding it would take hundreds of people to slide it into a specially dug hole and raise it into the air. The event would be celebrated by a potlatch feast where guests would be recognized with gifts.

There were three different types of totem poles: **■ House frontal poles** stood tall at the front and centre of the long house. The entrance to the long house passed through the base of the totem, often

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Randy Burke

## The Quest

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fearsome. The Haida Watchmen are the wise strangers along the way who help open up the doors to an ancient culture.

For the crew onboard, their roles allow them to visit the heightened world of adventure each trip. Yet each trip when the magic starts with the first truly special experiences, they feel it as intimately as the passengers. It is an honour to guide and support passengers on these adventures (and one of the reasons Bluewater's crew stay so long with the company). Each day, sirens of the sea tempt the Captain, requiring difficult choices in order not to be lead astray from our goals. Each day is like no other, created from the experience and creativity of all.

There is a reason the company is named Bluewater ADVENTURES, and we named our second yacht, Island ODYSSEY. It is with pride and confidence that we share these voyages with you. We know the quest is worth it.

Owner – Randy Burke



## Totem Poles

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the open mouth of the lowest carved creature. Carved into the pole were the animal and mythological crests of the family that lived in that long house. These crests identified the inhabitants in the same way a tartan identifies a Scotsman, or a shield for a medieval knight.

## Special 2013 Trips

*We are really excited about our plans for next summer.*

### Southeast Alaska

In Alaska, we are bringing back our 11-day "Super" trip itinerary including both Anan Creek and Pack Creek for arguably the best bear viewing on the Pacific coast. We are excited to announce that bear researcher Grant McHutchon will be leading this trip, running **July 18-28**. British naturalist and author "Mark Carwardine" is leading "Humpback Whales of Southeast

Alaska" in late August with plans to complete photography for his upcoming whale book. Perhaps best of all, aboard "Snow Goose" we are now able to explore Glacier Bay National Park named by Naturalist John Muir – probably the best glacier viewing site in North America.

**Bear viewing along the banks of Pack Creek – perfect for brown bear viewing!**



Erin Boyle



**A great way to explore the wild coastline**

Crests were considered property. An artist could only depict animal crests that his family owns.

■ **Memorial poles** were raised in memory of a high-ranking person. A year after an important chief's death, his successor raised a pole in his memory.

■ **Haida Mortuary poles** had a cavity at the top, into which a burial box was placed with the remains of a high ranking chief, a year after their death.

### Haida Gwaii

Calgary educator, conservationist and world-wide travel guide Brian Keating rejoins us in Haida Gwaii, **May 20-28** and **May 29 – June 6**. After a 10-year hiatus, we are thrilled to have him back aboard and know his infectious enthusiasm and wide following will quickly sell out these trips. Art Historian Dr. Robin Wright joins us for her annual voyage focusing on Haida history, art and carving **July 20-28** in conjunction with the Burke Museum at the University of Washington.

### North Coast/ Khutzeymateen

Bear Biologist Dr. Barrie Gilbert will once again be joining us for the North Coast/ Khutzeymateen trip **June 16-22** when the grizzlies have emerged from hibernation

to feed on the shoreline sedges and northern resident orcas can be regularly sighted.

### Great Bear Rainforest

We are thrilled that World Wildlife Fund Canada will be returning in September as part of their efforts to protect the "Great Bear Sea". WWF is bringing some of their most influential followers to experience the area for themselves. Toronto Star chair and past editor, John Honderich published an eloquent account of this year's trip,

**"Why Northern Gateway shouldn't go near Great Bear Rainforest"**, focusing

on the threat from oil tankers and proposed expansion of the Alberta tar sands.

**Northern resident orca with a tiny juvenile**



Randy Burke

# Bear Viewing Alaska Style

Anan Creek is one of the incredible highlights we are privileged to visit on many of our Southeast Alaska trips. The US Forest Service distributed their summer bear statistics. 72 individual black bears were sighted and 13 brown bears. Amazingly, on average there were 4 bears in view at any one time throughout the two months of summer. Carl Safina lends a peek into the experience, quoted from his novel, *“The View from Lazy Point; A Natural Year in an Unnatural World”*

“We beach the boat near the mouth of Anan Creek and step into rainforest thick with undergrowth, swollen with ripe salmonberries and huckleberries, cushioned with mosses hanging from every branch and padding the forest floor... The stream bottom appears to be made of black stones – but I suddenly realize: they’re fish. Only right along the shore do they part enough to show light between them. I’ve seen a lot of fish, but this stream is, in places, packed with salmon – stacked with them. Pink salmon, about five pounds each – thousands and thousands.

“A few minutes farther upstream, two steep bouldery banks pinch the flow... Fish leap and fall back, leap and fall back, against the roaring blast of opposing water. Many get washed right back to the starting gate. Pretty soon, two Black Bears emerge from between big boulders lining the opposite bank. Two others come from the woods behind us. Brenda and



Pink salmon, packed together, return to spawn



Sturdy inflatable boats provide easy access for daily shore excursions



Jenny Varley

A black bear among the boulders with its salmon bounty

I watch from the tenuous safety of a low platform built specifically for viewing the bottleneck. In addition, to the four Blacks, the large Brown Bear just downstream is stripping another salmon. That seems like a lot of bears, until the Black Bears increase to seven adults. Two have jet-black cubs. One has cinnamon twins. Bears come and go repeatedly from the shadows. I lose track of who I’ve seen and who is new. Between their padded paws and the padded ground and the sound of falling water, we never hear them coming. At one point I am startled by a bear walking right past me.

“So many fish fill this stream that the bears hardly need to “catch” them. When a bear steps into the water, it has salmon swimming around its legs, under its belly. Bears just dunk their heads and clamp their jaws around a wagging fish. Bears too full to eat pluck salmon from the throng, take a bite or two, and then release their grip. In this version of catch-and-release, the fish dies; what’s released includes all the things the fish was: protein and fat and nitrogen and phosphorus and more. These forests are where the ocean comes to die – and be reborn as trees. It’s no coincidence that the world’s densest salmon runs and the world’s lushest rainforests go together. Bears bring so many salmon into forests that nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations near some Alaska streams exceed recommended applications for commercial fertilizer.”

## Just Announced!

Bluewater Adventures has been selected as a finalist for the **Parks Canada Sustainable Tourism Award**.

In conjunction with the Toronto Star, The Tourism Industry Association of Canada will present The Canadian Tourism Awards on November 20, 2012 in Gatineau, Quebec - stay tuned!



## 2012 Quotes from you...

“I was overjoyed to be in Haida Gwaii, a very amazing place, home to an extraordinary culture. The Crew was just the best.”

– B.M., Seattle, WA

“It gave me an appreciation of the wilderness and the varied aspects of Canada’s Pacific culture and potential. I will never forget what I experienced – it has had a significant impact on me, as I had hoped”

– M.H., Toronto

“Thank you for such a wonderful trip, the food and company were great. The memories will be there forever, howling wolves, spirit bears, grizzlies and wonderful scenery and lighting. Plus most informative guides.”

– C.H., United Kingdom

“First class, fresh beautifully presented, always plenty of healthy choices. We had the best chef this side of the equator.”

– G. B., Alberta

“Both Pack Creek and Anan Creek afforded us the closest, most interesting bear viewing we have ever had.”

– B. K., Vancouver, BC



