

Khutzeymateen

The Great Bear Rainforest



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An eagle soars overhead, dipping its wing in reverence to the 500-year-old tree standing sentry in the coastal inlet. Orcas and humpbacks silently navigate the surrounding channels, and grizzlies graze on sedge grass silhouetted against a backdrop of lush, mountainous rainforest. To the Gits'i's tribe of British Columbia, Canada, the Khutzeymateen is a sacred area that sustained and nourished their people. It is a place of solace and contemplation, where you go to be close to your maker and hear him speak.

Established in 1994 as Canada's first and only grizzly bear sanctuary, the 174 square miles is a carefully managed territory that protects the entire watershed of the rivers and the Khutzeymateen inlet and foreshore. The area was originally scheduled to be logged, but individuals and the tribes worked together and convinced others, including Prince Phillip of England, who lobbied the government that the region should be studied. Over four years, biologists, naturalists and other scientists took detailed notes and observations of the landscape, and out of their research the sanctuary was born. Sometimes called the "The Great Bear Rainforest", it is home to the largest concentration of grizzlies in Canada. It is also the last remaining intact coastal temperate rainforest and a hidden gem within B.C.

Khutzeymateen is located 28 miles northeast of Prince Rupert, B.C. and can only be reached by a two-hour boat ride or a 20-minute float plane trip to the sanctuary. Several tour operators out of Prince Rupert offer day or multi-day trips to the area. Prince Rupert is an eclectic city where wildlife, history and people collide. It is a culturally diverse place as Japanese, Chinese, First



BREATH
OF THE BEAR



Prince Rupert ...



Shayne McGuire



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Nations and Europeans have all left their mark on the place. The city is known for its abundance of fresh seafood, and the people of Prince Rupert are proud to cook with local ingredients cultivated from the surrounding landscape. The locals have a connection to the land and to community, a place where people stop what they are doing to watch Mother Nature's display as the summer sun dips below the horizon and the curtain closes on another day. Hiking, kayaking, fishing and wildlife viewing all make up the adventures to be found in Prince Rupert.

Captain Davis of Prince Rupert Adventure Tours says that Khutzeymateen is, "the greatest show on earth." Their 7-hours bear-viewing tour gives tourists an opportunity to see these legendary giants in their natural environment. According to Davis, "Our goal is to provide you with a safe, pleasurable, unique wilderness experience. We conscientiously avoid altering the natural behavior of these creatures."

Other operators such as Wild Compass

offer visitors a unique Khutzeymateen experience with three or six day photography tours for intermediate wildlife photographers. Dan Wakeman, who was instrumental in the creation of the sanctuary, also conducts three to six day tours with visitors staying on a yacht and traveling every day with the rising tides into the estuary.

Besides bears, Khutzeymateen is also known for seals, whales, otters, wolves and eagles, but it is the bears that have people enthralled. Coming down from their winter mountain hibernation, the grizzlies make their way to the valley floor in the spring where they gorge on sedge grass. Bears eat up to 100 pounds a day of the early springtime sedge, which is 25% protein, making this an important part of the bears' diet. From July to October the Khutzeymateen rivers teem with four different species of salmon and it is at the river's edge where bears will devour up to 110 pounds of fish a day, bulking up before the snow begins to fall. Mothers teaching their cubs how to fish and forage can be seen at the rivers, as well as bears napping, playing and

posturing for dominance.

Khutzeymateen will not disappoint with its spectacular scenery of natural, unspoiled vistas and crisp, clear waters. Be an attentive observer of the behavior of these magnificent creatures, where for the bears nothing is gained or lost because visitors come not to disturb. The wildlife of Khutzeymateen holds a special place in the hearts of the First Nation tribes but it is the bears who are most revered, for it is believed that the grizzlies offer a resting place for the souls of the people who have died before, and from them the souls are re-born for the next generation.

Breath of the Bear recommends the following companies:

Prince Rupert Adventure Tours:
www.adventuretours.net
Phone: 800-201-8377

Wild Compass:
www.wildcompassstours.com
Phone: (818) 522-1677