



Points of Interest

Inside Passage

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Click each point of
interest to learn more.

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- A map of the Inside Passage in British Columbia, Canada, showing a route through the coastal waters. The route is marked by a dotted line connecting 15 numbered points of interest. The points are distributed along the coast from Port Hardy in the north to Prince Rupert in the south. The map shows the coastline with various inlets, bays, and islands. The points are numbered 1 through 15, corresponding to the list on the right.
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① Port Hardy

16 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Port Hardy is located within the territory of the Kwakiutl (kaw-gul) First Nations on the northern most tip of Vancouver Island. The territory is the home of the Kwakiutl (kwa-gul), the Quatsino (quat-see-know) and the Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw (gwa-sal-a-nawk-wa dwah) First Nations. Approximately 35% of the local population is indigenous.

The host Nations work closely with the Municipality of Port Hardy to share the costs for services such as fire, animal control, policing, water, and building inspection. Working together they have created a Memorandum of Understanding that supports meaningful relationship building and creates a foundation for future opportunities to build on their partnership.

The BC Ferries Terminal in Port Hardy is located at Bear Cove, the oldest known site of human habitation on Vancouver Island. Europeans first arrived in the area in 1816 when the steamship SS Beaver was sent on an exploratory trip by the Hudson's Bay Company. When coal deposits were discovered in the area, it motivated the Hudson's Bay Company to establish a fortified trading post south of Port Hardy in Beaver Harbour.

The trading post was named "Fort Rupert" after the company's governor, Prince Rupert, Duke of Bavaria. Though little of the fort remains today, the Kwakiutl (kwa-gul) First Nations continue to reside adjacent to the former fort site as they always have.

The Island Highway did not reach the northern community until the spring of 1979 when BC Ferries moved its Vancouver Island Terminal for the inside passage, from Kelsey Bay to Bear Cove.

② God's Pocket

40 Mins from Port Hardy 15 Hrs from Prince Rupert

To the west lies God's Pocket Marine Provincial Park, a group of islands located 20 kilometres (or 12.5 miles) north of Port Hardy. Although there are no designated campsites at this park, wilderness camping is allowed at no cost. God's Pocket is located within the traditional territory of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw, Kwakiutl, and Tlatlasikwala First Nations.

The bay was named by fishermen who navigated their small boats south through Hecate Strait. They would say, "If we can make it to the safe bay in Christie Pass, then we will surely be in the Pocket of God." This phrase led to the name "God's Pocket" sticking for the area.

God's Pocket Marine Provincial Park offers some of the world's finest cold-water scuba diving, along with opportunities for kayaking, hiking, shore walking, and wildlife viewing, including whale watching.

The focus of the park is habitat protection for wildlife; the park protects a seabird breeding colony and eagles and whales are common in the area. Among Indigenous cultures there are traditional stories and legends that believe the Sasquatch People live on the islands as well.

The word "Sasquatch" is derived from the Halkomelem word "sásq'ets," which is the name of a mythical being that is covered in hair, walks upright, and is believed to have a more powerful and much larger stature than humans. They are also believed to possess advanced spiritual abilities.

The islands in God's Pocket are believed to hold spiritual significance for Indigenous people, reflecting a deep respect for the natural world. It is an enchanting place to visit as seen as sacred and imbued with spiritual energy.

3 Scarlett Point Lighthouse

40 Mins from Port Hardy
15 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Located on Balaklava Island at the northwest point of the entrance to Christie passage, Scarlet Point Lighthouse is one of just 27 staffed lighthouses in British Columbia.

First put into operation in 1905, the lighthouse is located about 30 metres (or 100 feet) from the water's edge. The light house stands 27 metres (or about 90 feet) above the high tide line, and it's light can be seen from up to 16 kilometres (or about 10 miles) away.

In 1909 a fog bell was added to Scarlett Point, to provide an audible warning to mariners. This fog bell was replaced just six years later in 1915 by a more powerful diaphone type foghorn that could be heard from a much greater distance.

After 60 years of helping keep mariners safe, the original lighthouse was replaced in 1965. Rebuilt in the same location, the new steel lighthouse features an octagonal lantern room and a new light that emits a white light every five seconds.

Due to the remote location of Scarlett Point Lighthouse, the light keepers need to remain at the station twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year.

4 Rivers Inlet - Wuikinuxv Nation

3.5 Hrs from Port Hardy
12.5 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Rivers Inlet is also known as the Wuikinuxv (wheekin-au) Nation. The Wuikinuxv people's settlement in Rivers Inlet, particularly Wanukv River, is part of a larger community that includes Calvery Island, Wuikinuxv Lake, and portions of the Koeye Watershed. Population numbers fluctuate from 60 to 200 people throughout the year, with a notable increase during the summer fishing season when community members return home to harvest and preserve salmon for the winter months.

The cyclical way of life for the Wuikinuxv has evolved around hunting, gathering, preserving, and trading. This way of life and cycles of harvesting have been maintained since time immemorial.

A small hatchery facility operated in the area from 1981 to 1994 but then stood idle, until 2016 when the support from private donors, the Wuikinuxv Nation, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, and the Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Salmon Enhancement Program re-developed the hatchery to the Percy Walkus Enhancement Facility. The new hatchery has made a significant positive impact on the health of the local salmon.

The commitments to conservation and sustainability have ensured a plentiful supply of salmon for food, social and ceremonial purposes. Additionally, the Wuikinuxv have partnered with sports fishing operations in the territory to provide jobs and other benefits to support the Nation's vision around conservation and sustainability.

The Wuikinuxv Nation collaborated with the Museum of Anthropology at UBC and their Indigenous curator for the museum, to write the sourcebook "We are the Wuikinuxv Nation", providing a glimpse into the lives of the Wuikinuxv Nation through historical Wuikinuxv artwork, archival photographs, contemporary perspectives and photographs.

5 Kvai watershed Qqs Cultural Camp

3.5 Hrs from Port Hardy
12.5 Hrs from Prince Rupert

The Kvai watershed nestled 60 km southeast of Bella Bella in the shared territories of the Heiltsuk and Wuikinuxv people, is a place of cultural significance. In this rich landscape, the Heiltsuk host a cultural summer camp for their youth run by the Qqs Society. The programs at the summer camp embrace the social, cultural, and natural values that have fortified the Heiltsuk people since the time

of Creation. It serves as a vital space for passing down traditions and nurturing a deep connection to the land and heritage. The Qqs society was incorporated in 1999 at the behest of the hereditary chiefs, who directed the founding board to create an organization specifically for Heiltsuk youth and families, aiming to facilitate learning on the land from the land.

The organization has consistently worked to amplify the inherent strengths and leadership within the community—qualities the Heiltsuk people recognize as integral to forging a vibrant and resilient future for the Nation.

The society operates with a three-fold purpose. Firstly, it seeks to educate Heiltsuk youth about the intricacies of their natural environment, fostering an interest in science and resource management careers as well as enhancing self-confidence, communication skills, and cultural knowledge. Secondly, Qqs collaborates with other registered charities and social services agencies to support at-risk youth, extending its impact beyond its immediate community. Lastly, the society endeavors to instill in Heiltsuk youth the skills necessary for the sustainable use of the environment, ensuring a harmonious relationship between the community and the land. This multifaceted approach reflects a commitment to holistic development, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship.

The ultimate goal is to uplift an emerging generation of Heiltsuk leaders who are committed to the resurgence of their Heiltsuk culture and to sustainable relationships with our lands and waters

6 Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy Area

3.5 Hrs from Port Hardy

12.5 Hrs from Prince Rupert

The Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy, the largest provincial marine protected region in British Columbia, is located 130km (about 80 miles) north

of Port Hardy. Its original status as a provincial park was challenged by the Heiltsuk Nation in recognition of the importance of the area as a significant part of the Heiltsuk territory. As a result, the park designation was removed in 2008 and replaced with a co-partnership between the Heiltsuk Nation and the Province of British Columbia. More recently recognizing the shared territory with the Wuikinuxv people the agreement is now a Tripartite agreement between the two nations and the Province of British Columbia. This collaborative agreement aims to achieve conservation and recreation goals for the area, while ensuring that the Heiltsuk Nation has access to the land and its resources.

The Hakai Laxvbalis Conservancy spans over 120,000 hectares of land and sea, comprised of an archipelago of islands and has no developed facilities although small floating fishing lodges operate seasonally in the Hakai water inlets. Access is limited to sea or air travel, adding to the area's remote appeal.

It is renowned for its scenic coastline features, including lagoons, reversing tidal rapids, and white-sand beaches framed by forested hills. These elements contribute to the area's wilderness beauty and ecological diversity, making it a significant destination for nature enthusiasts with kayaking being one of the most popular activities in the region. This is a special place to the Heiltsuk people who hope that the area will be enjoyed by all who visit.

7 Namu

5 Hrs from Port Hardy

11 Hrs from Prince Rupert

To the east is Namu, situated on an ancient Heiltsuk village site within the Heiltsuk Territory. The name Namu is the Heiltsuk word for 'whirlwind'. Up until the more recent discovery of Triquet Island village site Namu was the oldest known village site of the Heiltsuk dating back 10,000 plus years.

Sacred burial sites dating back to 3400 BC and shell middens found in Namu align with the oral history of the Heiltsuk people. These shell middens provide an archive of ancient coastal life with each layer recording changes in diet, behavior and activities. This evidence suggests a deep-rooted connection between the Indigenous People of the region and the marine resources that sustained them.

Now a ghost town, Namu was once home to a thriving cannery operation. During the busy summer months, many came to Namu from near and far to make a living. The population would explode to 1500 or more with people coming from as far as Prince Rupert, Kitimat, Klemtu, Bella Bella, Bella Coola and the lower mainland. The community's history is rich with tales of its bustling past, where individuals of Indigenous, White, and Japanese descent labored together in the cannery before returning to their segregated residential areas. The town was once linked by a maze of boardwalks, with buildings built over the water.

In 1997 the Heiltsuk Nation embarked on the repatriation of over 200 human remains that were removed over time by archeologists. The youth of the community made and painted traditional bentwood boxes in which the remains were placed and transported back to their original burial site. It is the belief of many Indigenous People that remains are to be left undisturbed and if disturbed or moved after burial their spirits can be restless and unable to transition and be at peace.

8 Bella Bella

6 Hrs from Port Hardy
10 Hrs from Prince Rupert

The village of Bella Bella is the home of the Heiltsuk Nation. The Heiltsuk have inhabited their homelands since time immemorial. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Heiltsuk were 10,000 members strong.

Archaeological evidence corroborates over 14,000 years of what is known as their “nu’yem” (new-yim) or oral history of their stories and place. The Heiltsuk Nu’yem even tells how their ancestors survived the Ice Age.

Additionally, the Heiltsuk Nu’yem tells how their ancestors survived the subsequent great floods by moving up onto the two high mountain tops situated at each end of Hunter Island and the mainland. The location where we will be docking is the original village site called Qlc (Gull-t-s) which is also the original site for the first Hudson’s Bay trading post here, known as Fort McLaughlin that was established in 1833.

The Heiltsuk Nation is a progressive and assertive Nation. The population on the reserve ranges between 1500 to 1700. Like many remote communities, the population increases significantly when members return home to visit and work on their winter supply of traditional foods like salmon, seaweed and many other resources from the land and sea.

Today the Heiltsuk membership is more than 3,000 and growing and are the largest indigenous group on the Central Coast of British Columbia. The Heiltsuk believe that their Nu’yem means that no matter where their members live today, they are Heiltsuk and that their long ancestral connection to each other is based on deeply rooted lineages.

9 Dryad Point Lighthouse

6 Hrs from Port Hardy
10 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Located on the north east corner of Campbell Island, Dryad Point Lighthouse stands as a beacon at the junction of Lama Passage and Seaforth Channel. Initially named “Turn Point” by European surveyors due to the sharp turn required to navigate along the Inside Passage, Dryad Point received its current name in 1899 when its wooden lighthouse was constructed.

The name Dryad came from the Hudson's Bay Company ship that transported materials from Vancouver to the Bella Bella area.

The lighthouse sits on the traditional territory of the Heiltsuk Nation, and has deep ties to the history of the people and their way of life here. The very first light keeper was Captain Richard Carpenter, a high ranking Chief for the Heiltsuk, who was also an artist and boat builder. He lived at Dryad Point as the head keeper until 1930, along with his wife, a descendant of Chief Kaiete (ki-et).

The tower of Dryad Point Lighthouse emits a red and white light 11 meters (or 36 feet) above the high tide mark and is visible for 29km (or 18 miles). The red light was added as mariners would complain the white light was too bright, making it hard to navigate around the point. This light marks the narrow northern entrance into Lama Passage.

In 1930 the original wooden dwellings were demolished and replaced with concrete structures. In the 1997, the manual fog horn system was replaced, and in 1998 Dryad Point Lighthouse became completely automated. The lighthouse was designated a Heritage Lighthouse in 2015, and continues to provide a beacon of guidance as ships travel along the Inside Passage.

Klemtu

8 Hrs from Port Hardy

8 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Situated to the west, is the village of Klemtu, the modern home of the Kitasoo Xai'xais (ki-ta-soo hai- hais) people. The Kitasoo and the Xai'xais are culturally different and speak different languages but chose to unite in Klemtu in the 1870s to sell cordwood to the steamships that were using the inside passage. Klemtu has a long history as a fishing village. The name "Klemtu" means "Hidden Passage".

A story in Kitasoo Xai'xais' oral history tells of a sea monster that lives in the channel between Klemtu and the mainland. In the story Raven devised a plan to get rid of the monster by tricking it into eating a raft with spikes on it. Raven and the other animals paddled a canoe pushing the raft. The monster came and tried to eat the spiked raft, but the raft got stuck in its throat. When the monster started thrashing around it flipped Raven's canoe. The name of the island which lies between Klemtu and the channel means "upside down canoe" and the name of the small island to the north means "wooden bailer" referring to a tool used for bailing water out of canoes.

The Kitasoo Xai'xais were one of the first coastal peoples to construct a modern Bighouse from locally sourced red cedar.

The Bighouse is used for ceremonies, celebrations, and meetings that continue an ancient form of governance that rests on Kitasoo Xai'xais values.

The front of the Bighouse is adorned with the tribal clan designs of the raven, eagle, wolf, and killer whale. The area near Klemtu is home to an extremely rare type of black bear called a Spirit bear. They can be white, red-ish, or even blue-tinged and are only found in this part of the Great Bear Rainforest. Spirit bears are not albino. They have a unique genetic trait that gives them their distinctive fur color, the same gene that gives some people red hair.

The Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation owns and operates the Spirit Bear Lodge; an award-winning tourism business that provides a comfortable and culturally rich way to enjoy the territory, have a chance to walk with grizzly bears, and perhaps catch a glimpse of a spirit bear. For more information visit spiritbear.com

11 Princess Royal Island and Mainland Inlets

7.5 Hrs from Port Hardy

14 Hrs from Prince Rupert

To the west is Princess Royal Island, the fourth largest island in British Columbia after Graham Island and Moresby Islands of Haida Gwaii, and Vancouver Island. The island sits in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest and is only accessible by boat or air. Princess Royal Island has a rich history that is deeply intertwined with the Tsimshian (Sim-she-ann) culture. Prior to the introduction of smallpox it was home to many villages and harvesting camps. The landscape features on the island are not only named in the Tsimshian and Kitasoo languages but are also associated with stories and legends that are part of the oral history of these communities.

To the east are the mainland inlets and watersheds of Green, Khutze (Koots), Aaltanhash (Ahl-tan-ash) and Klekane (Kleh-kane) that were each home to villages and harvest camps. Today grizzly bears and other animals are the only permanent residents.

The rivers of Princess Royal Island and the mainland inlets were once rich with salmon, where the Kitasoo Xai'xais stories state they were once so thick you could walk across their backs to the other side. The Kitasoo Xai'xais have a long history of stewarding their territory and continue to do so despite the ongoing impacts of industrial development, harvesting, and climate change. Over 50% of this area is protected by conservancies led by Kitasoo Xai'xais.

The Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation is working to return damaged areas to their original state, revive salmon populations, and allow old-growth forests to remain undisturbed.

12 Boat Bluff Lighthouse

8 Hrs from Port Hardy and Prince Rupert

To the east, you will see the Boat Bluff lighthouse which marks the half way point for our voyage today. It is one of the most scenic of lighthouses along the Inside Passage and makes a good photo opportunity as we pass closely by. It is situated on the southern end of Sarah Island and is well known to mariners who rely on the light to guide them through this heavily travelled portion of the Inside Passage.

This lighthouse was established in 1907 and displays a white light which is visible for approximately 32 km (or about 20 miles). Though many are made of steel, Boat Bluff Lighthouse is made of pre-fabricated aluminum, which is a light and strong material that was easy to assemble on the island's rocky and wooded terrain. It is also resistant to corrosion, an important factor in a location which sees more rain during the summer than most of British Columbia.

The station has two, two-storey houses for its resident keepers, along with a fog alarm building and an engine room. The light keepers are the only residents of the island.

13 Bute Dale

10 Hrs from Port Hardy

6 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Located on Princess Royal Island to our west and part of the Great Bear Rainforest is Butedale, known as C'idax. It is situated on the southern edge of traditional Haisla territory.

The town was founded in 1911 as a fishing, mining and logging area, when Western Packers opened a cannery during the peak of the canning industry in 1917. The site was chosen for its access to fresh water, and proximity to the annual salmon runs in Butedale Passage.

At its peak the cannery supported a community of 400 people. The cannery ceased operations and closed in the mid 1950's, which left Butedale to become a ghost town. It stands as one of the few remaining northern cannery sites in British Columbia, serving as a historical landmark with a cultural landscape.

A small dam can generate power from a lake that is found immediately behind Butedale. During periods of heavy rain, a spectacular waterfall can be seen to the right of the wharves, which is the run off from this lake.

Butedale is cherished for its rich historic character, which is found in the remaining structures and the surrounding natural landscape. The site is accessible only by boat or floatplane.

14 Hartley Bay

4.5 Hrs from Port Hardy
11.5 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Situated east in the Great Bear Rainforest, the Gitga'at (git-gat) Nation calls Tsalgiuw, or Hartley Bay, home, where their community has flourished for millennia amidst the surrounding lands and waters. This isolated community is reachable only by air or water. A small population of Gitga'at members live in Hartley Bay, while others reside in various British Columbia cities including Prince Rupert, Terrace, and on Vancouver Island.

The Gitga'at Nation has deep connections to the lands and waters, which are central to their way of life. One example of this is their seasonal food gathering practices, where members who live elsewhere return home to join their families for harvests.

Within the Gitga'at territory, numerous sites hold great spiritual significance due to their connection to ancestors. These locations include petroglyphs, burial sites, shell middens, culturally modified trees, and other historical and archaeological sites.

The Gitga'at Nation is dedicated to safeguarding its cultural and natural heritage while fostering the well-being of future generations. To achieve these goals, the Nation has implemented various programs, such as the Indigenous-led environmental monitoring program known as the Gitga'at Guardians. Additionally, they have developed local eco-tourism economies, engaged in aquaculture, and collaborated on research with diverse academic communities.

15 Prince Rupert

16 Hrs from Prince Rupert

Prince Rupert is known as the City of Rainbows, receiving over 2500mm (or 100in) of rain annually making it one of the wettest cities in Canada. As a transportation hub it affords access to some of the world's most remote and admired natural scenery.

Prince Rupert is located in an area rich with history dating back thousands of years. The natural deep-water harbour has long been an intersection of trade and commerce for the Indigenous People since time immemorial. The port today handles significant volumes of commercial traffic, and provides the shortest shipping route to the Asia-Pacific, with ocean-going freighters from all over the world loading products such as grain, lumber, pulp, sulphur and coal destined for international markets.

Prince Rupert is located on the traditional territory of the Tsimshian (Sim-she-ann). Other Nations from nearby territories are also represented in Prince Rupert, such as the Gitksan, Nisga'a, Haida, and Heiltsuk people.

Prince Rupert's name came from Charles Melville Hays, president of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company, who saw the island on which it sits as the perfect terminus for marine trade, rail and sea travel. A competition was held in 1906 to name the town. The winning name of "Prince Rupert" was chosen after Rupert of the Rhine, the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

On May 8, 1908, the first sod was turned and by 1910 Prince Rupert was incorporated. Unfortunately, on a trip back from Europe in 1912 where he was raising money to finance his vision, Charles Hays met with an untimely death aboard the Titanic.

The arrival of settlers and missionaries, drawn by the fur trade and other goods, transformed many Tsimshian habitation sites into trading posts and western-style settlements. This period also saw the establishment of salmon canneries along the coastlines, with steamships and paddle-wheelers facilitating trade and transportation in the Prince Rupert area. This laid the foundation for the local economy, particularly in commercial fishing, which continues to be a significant industry today.

The All Native Basketball Tournament and the vibrant arts scene in Prince Rupert exemplify the community's commitment to celebrating and preserving its rich cultural heritage.