

## Hop aboard Raincoast Maiden to see whales, seals, sea lions and more

A research boat, below, explores a colony of sea lions.

JEREMY FERGUSON PHOTO



# On safari in B.C.

**JEREMY FERGUSON**

Special to the Toronto Sun

Ucluelet, Vancouver Island — The west coast of Canada's west coast boasts its own brand of safari — a mittful of adventures bringing visitors up close and personal to critters from bald eagles and sea otters to humpback and killer whales.

But the Raincoast Maiden does 'em all.

The Maiden's agenda for a day includes grey, humpback

and killer whales, bald eagles, harbour seals, sea lions, sea otters and black bears. Plus a cruise through the Pacific Islands of Barclay Sound. Plus a "gourmet" lunch aboard, Island beer and B.C. wine optional.

It's one-stop shopping for tourists with limited time and money. Trip Advisor rates it the No. 1 outdoor activity in B.C.

Under the banner of Archipelago Cruises, the two-storey, 23-passenger motor yacht sails daily from Ucluelet, half an hour south of the luxe resort of Tofino.

Queasy sailors will be pleased to know state-of-the-art hydraulic stabilizers guarantee a stable,

comfortable journey.

Pilot-proprietors Al and Toddy Landry, former shrimp fishers, launched their cruise five years ago. They try to show their passengers everything on the checklist. Sometimes, they see more than everything.

The whales, for instance. In April and May, this swatch of coast sees the greatest whale migration on the planet — 17,000 grey whales in transit from their birthing grounds in Baja, Mexico, to their summer home in Alaska.

The greys are up to 18 metres long and as buoyant as butterflies. Talk about kick-starting your sense of wonder.

Throughout summer until early October, humpback and killer whales rarely fail to deliver stellar performances.

"You ought to see humpbacks breach," Al Landry says. "They can come flying out of the water at any time. You can see fountains of fish spewing out of their mouths."

"It happens too fast for anyone to shout, 'Thar she blows!'"

"One of our most exciting sightings," he says, "was a pod of transient whales attacking a seal colony in search of lunch. And where resident whales



Bald eagles are hits on the Pacific Safari aboard the Rainforest Maiden.

PHOTO BY CAROL CLEMENS



## IF YOU GO to British Columbia

### PARTICULARS

For information on the Raincoast Maiden, visit [archipelagocruises.com](http://archipelagocruises.com). The five-hour cruise costs \$139 adults, \$99 children. For tourist information, visit [hellobc.com](http://hellobc.com).



PHOTO BY  
CAROL CLEMENS

Toddy Landry,  
above, aboard  
the Raincoast  
Maiden.

JEREMY FERGUSON  
PHOTO

Orcas or  
killer whales,  
above, get  
curious about  
humans, too.

A pod of  
Transient  
Orcas, right, —  
killer whales  
— prepares  
to attack a  
colony of sea  
lions for lunch.



AL LANDRY PHOTO

are fish-eaters, transients — nomads — are carnivorous. It wasn't pretty, but it was a part of nature few humans ever witness."

"Look at the sea otter," Toddy says. "He dives for sea urchins, flips on to his back, reaches into his armpit for his stone — about the size of a small egg — smashes the urchin on his chest,

wolfs it down and dives for another."

After a full morning of wildlife viewing, the Raincoast Maiden sweeps her passengers through the Broken Islands, an archipelago of 20,000 islands.

Toddy distributes picnic hampers with lunch of wild poached salmon, chili-roasted chicken or vegetable roulade

with goat cheese. The occasional cork pops, too.

Among these islands, humpbacks may swim up to the boat at any time. The most the Landrys have seen is 20 in a day.

"One breached beside us for a full hour," says Al. "That's the most our passengers have had their mouths open without saying anything."