



A treasure exists at Ucluelet's back door

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Inside these sheltered waters was an archaeological site, the ruins of a First Nations fish trap that could have been used as long as 300 years ago.

The first inhabitants of these islands dug up the large stones from the shores and the bottom of the lagoon and created a rock wall shaped in a semi-circle that met with the shore, closing off a section of water and leaving a section open as a gate.

At high tide these Aboriginal fishermen would paddle outside of their fish trap and begin to slap the sides of their kayaks and the surface of the water to scare the fish from the lagoon into their trap through the open gate. Once the trap was full of fish they would use a slab of wood to close off the gate. With the fish trapped, they could easily be gathered by nets and transported back to the village by boat.

Our guides explained that there are many ruins of fish traps in the Broken Group Islands. Fragile and worn, although still in clear formation, the remains of these walls stand as a tribute to the skilled work of their creators and the culture of the indigenous people who forged our land and our rich coastal history.

We paddled out of the lagoon, onto a shore and enjoyed a gourmet buffet lunch on a small pebbled beach on the other side of Jarvis Island. From there our strokes took us to the southwest shores of Nettle Island and we continued to weave through and around the smaller islands that surround it.

We saw California sea lions feeding on a school of pilchards. They were jumping in and out of



Kayaking in Ucluelet's harbour. John de Vries Photo

Many ruins of fish traps can be found while kayaking in the Broken Group Islands. Fragile and worn, the remains of these walls stand as a tribute to culture of the indigenous people who forged our land and our rich coastal history.

the water, chomping hard on the little fish. Sometimes a dozen fish would fly out of the water in a cloud, followed by a splash of flippers and teeth from the sea lion, anxious for his meal. Every now and then the sea lions would leap entirely out of the water in a diving arch, and return with hardly a splash.

Our transport boat picked us up on the other side of Nettle Island.

We landed on another sandy beach and loaded up our kayaks and gear. The sun finally decided to peak through the clouds and the sky was blue by the time we were exiting the Broken Group Islands. This was perfect clear weather to spot a couple of friendly humpback whales on our way back to the Ucluelet harbour.

This whale watching and sea kayaking day trip to the Broken

Group Islands was an amazing experience. The wildlife, islands and the natural and cultural history of the area will forever saturate my memories. This trip has brought further realization of how fortunate we are to have these islands protected and preserved by Parks Canada.

They are truly a treasure that exists right outside Ucluelet's back door.

Choosing your kayaking adventure

With several kayaking outfitters in town you'll be able to find the paddling adventure that suits your schedule and holiday's style. Many options are available — from multi-day kayaking/camping trips in the Broken Group Islands to the exploration of Ucluelet's rocky shores within the harbour.

On your kayaking tour of the Ucluelet harbour you could see bald eagles soar above, spot a black bear on the shore scouring for shellfish at low tide or a curious sea lion popping his head up to say hello. Learn about the fishing industry as you paddle past working commercial fishing vessels, and take in a history lesson from your guide as you explore this history rich harbour.

There are also kayaking services that will pick you up from your accommodation in Ucluelet and take you kayaking wherever you want to go. Explore the calm waters of Grice Bay in Clayoquot Sound, the remote wilderness of Toqua Bay or head out of the Ucluelet harbour for an open water view of the Amphitrite Lighthouse.

Have your own kayak? Stop in at the Visitor Centre for advice on all the best kayaking destinations near Ucluelet. Ask about Parks Canada regulations when kayaking in the Broken Group Island and always make sure to check the marine weather reports before embarking on your adventure. Kayaks and gear rentals are also available from many of the tour operators in Ucluelet.

For more information on kayaking in Ucluelet, visit www.tourismucluelet.com/



A guide from Majestic Ocean Kayaking paddles through the Broken Group Islands. Amy Hancock Photo

KAYAKING IN THE BROKEN GROUP ISLANDS

Exploring unique part of the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve

By AMY HANCOCK
Tourism Ucluelet

The morning was still. An overcast of thin clouds hovered above as we loaded the boat with our gear and prepared to depart from the Ucluelet harbour. On a guided sea-kayaking adventure and whale

watching tour, I was about to explore a special and unique part of the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, the Broken Group Islands.

The Broken Group Island Unit is an archipelago of more than 100 islands, safely nestled in Barkley Sound. It is made up of several main clusters of islands and rocks, hundreds of coves, rocky outcrops and

The Broken Group Island Unit comprises an archipelago of more than 100 islands in Barkley Sound.

channel ways. This mecca of untouched wilderness is completely sheltered from the open Pacific Ocean and makes up a world-class kayaking destination.

The boat carrying gear, kayaks and kayakers headed out of the harbour and toward the park, landing at a sandy beach on Dodd Island on the north section of the Broken Group Islands. After unloading, a thorough equipment and safety lesson from one of our guides, we were suited up and paddling away from the beach, starting our adventure along the shores of Dodd Island.

Having never kayaked before, on the ocean or otherwise, I was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was. My paddle strokes were smooth and my streamline vessel seemed to slice through the calm waters. The morning was quiet, as if the low lying overcast was numbing out disturbances from the outside

world. All we could hear was the swooshing of paddles breaking the glassy water, and the quiet conversations of our companions, complimenting our surroundings for its beauty.

As we weaved through this island group, we travelled close to the rock shores so we could see the intertidal life as we quietly paddled by. From my kayak I could spot starfish, anemone, shellfish and all kinds of plant life. Our guide scooped up a giant orange sun starfish and a purple orchre starfish to show the group. He showed us the hundreds of tube feet on the bottoms of the creatures and explained how they move, and how they hunt and eat their prey.

After releasing the colourful creatures back to their natural habitats, we crossed over a larger body of water from Chalk Island toward Jaques and Jarvis islands. Between these two islands is a lagoon, and once inside of it I felt like we had left the ocean entirely and were paddling on a fresh water lake somewhere deep in the interior's wilderness.

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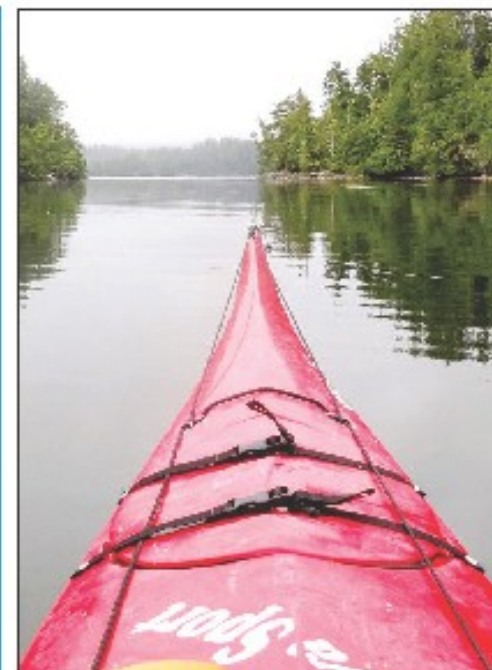
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Kayaking in the Broken Group Islands.

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