

Grizzlies of the Kutzeymateen

Instructional Photo Tour 2025



The *Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen Instructional Photo Tour 2025* combines pre-trip professional photography instruction with 5 full days of photographing grizzlies in the most breathtaking environment imaginable. You will be provided with the opportunity, the conceptual and creative tools, and the techniques needed to capture fantastic images of North America's top land-based carnivore – the Grizzly Bear.

Photography Instruction. The instructional component on this photo tour will take place in the weeks before the trip. Starting in 2022 I have taken the pre-trip photography instruction online, allowing you to take in the sessions in the comfort of your home. And, by going online and offering the instruction in the weeks before the trip you'll have time to reflect upon and digest the material long before you are face-to-face with the subjects. The two online sessions will be of benefit to all levels of photographers – from enthusiastic novices through to seasoned professionals. I'll discuss both the technical and creative aspects of wildlife photography as well as the specifics and logistics of photographing wildlife and scenery within the Khutzeymateen Inlet. While the

instructional material will be agnostic with respect to camera brand and camera style (e.g., mirrorless vs. DSLR) it will be assumed that most participants will be bringing either digital SLR's or mirrorless cameras.

The Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary. Created in 1992, the 39,000 hectare (96,000 acre) Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary is Canada's only Grizzly Bear sanctuary and is located at the tip of a long and remote inlet on the northern coast of British Columbia. There are no roads, settlements, or even campsites in the region – it is true pristine wilderness. The bulk of the sanctuary is closed to the public – only two professional guides have licenses to lead very small groups into the heart of this majestic and globally unique ecosystem. The inlet is home to about 50 resident grizzlies, with many more passing through during the year. This remote piece of wilderness is set within one of the planet's few remaining completely intact temperate rainforests and offers a stunning, verdant backdrop to observe and photograph wild grizzlies as they interact with one another as they have for time immemorial. The bears themselves grant visitors with a very rare privilege: *they voluntarily allow humans completely into their rich and behaviourally diverse daily lives.*



Launching The Attack. Although not our primary subject matter, the Khutzeymateen offers excellent opportunities to photograph Bald Eagles.

Clamming...With Vigilance

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Nikon Z9 with Nikkor 120-300mm f2.8E @ 300m. 1/1000s @ f3.2. ISO 560

Be one of under 200 people – and far, far fewer photographers – annually gifted with the intimate experience of sharing the lives of the Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen.

To explore and photograph this spectacular valley we will use a 60-foot Gulf Commander expedition power boat (the *Afterglow I*) as our floating basecamp and then travel into the depths of the sanctuary using a motorized inflatable Zodiac®.

About the Photography “Style” On This Photo Tour. On this trip – as on our other photo tours – this is a “*photography in true wilderness*” experience. This means we will spend the bulk of our time in isolated and remote wilderness and away from other humans (and other photographers). We’ll have to “track down” our subject matter without the help of other

outfitters, spotters or real-time online apps listing recent sightings (i.e., there is no “network of sightings” for us to plug into!). Additionally we’ll have no “set-up” situations where we can set up in a specific location ahead of time and with the knowledge that a certain species will predictably appear and pose for us! The advantage of our “*photography in true wilderness*” approach is that it produces a far more unique and personalized experience and it can often lead to more original and compelling photos. A possible downside is that it means we don’t know the specifics of the shooting conditions ahead of time and thus may put more onus on the photographer to make snap technical and creative decisions in a field setting. This means it may challenge – and encourage you to expand – your photographic skills more than other photo tours do!

Our Wildlife Subject Matter: While this is a *photography-in-true-wilderness* trip, we are definitely headed into a target-rich environment! Grizzlies are the dominant terrestrial mammal in this region and our primary target, but there are other species that we may encounter and, when the opportunity presents itself, photograph.

Here's a quick run down of both our "most likely" wildlife subjects and our "less likely but possible" wildlife subjects:

A. Most Likely Subjects (50% or greater probability of encounter):

- Grizzly Bears
- Black Bears
- Harbour Seals
- Bald Eagles
- Great Blue Herons
- Harlequin Ducks
- Herring Gulls
- American Mink
- Canada Geese
- Asst'd shorebirds
- Asst'd songbirds

B. Less Likely But Possible Subjects (<50% probability of encounter):

- Killer Whales
- Coastal Gray Wolves
- Humpback Whales
- River Otters
- American Marten
- Wolverine

2025 Dates: May 23-29, 2025.

2025 Price: \$8499 CAD plus 5% GST.

What's Included?

- Pre-trip online professional photography instruction
- All meals and accommodation in Prince Rupert beginning on the evening of Day 1 (see Itinerary)
- Float plane transportation both into and out of the Khutzeymateen
- All food and accommodation while aboard the *Afterglow*
- A highly-experienced bear guide and professional photography guide
- A friendly and energetic boat manager and cook
- Jaw-dropping scenery and fabulous bears!

Gentle Giants. After decades of respectful treatment by humans, most of the Grizzlies in the Khutzeymateen show their natural gentle disposition.
Nikon Z 9 with Nikkor Z 400mm f2.8S @ 560mm. 1/2500s @ f5. ISO 5000.



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Ghost of the Coast. Coastal Gray Wolves are not rare in the Khutzeymateen, but their secretive nature makes them a challenge to see or photograph. Nikon D4s with 400mm f2.8 VR. 1/500s @ f5.6. ISO 350. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca



What's Not Included?

- Transportation between your home and Prince Rupert, BC
- Personal belongings and equipment you bring on the photo tour
- Any meals and accommodation in Prince Rupert prior to Day 1
- Excess baggage charges from airlines
- Any extra personal expenses incurred because of weather, logistical delays, or delayed departures of chartered or scheduled aircraft
- Any gratuities for the crew of the *Afterglow*.

What To Expect?

- Cool weather (daytime highs of about 12-18C or 54-65° fahrenheit); rain showers are likely but often short-lived (and sunny skies are NOT uncommon at this time of year)
- Calm water in the inlet – seasickness isn't an issue on this trip

- Very long hours of daylight (giving us ample time in the field)
- Unsurpassed Grizzly Bear photography opportunities
- Hearty, healthy and delicious food
- Always warm, always dry floating basecamp!

Accommodation?

- While in Prince Rupert (night of May 23) we will be staying at the Highliner Hotel & Conference Centre.
- While in the Khutzeymateen we will be staying on the *Afterglow*, a spacious 60' Gulf Commander expedition power boat.

Common along almost the entire BC coast, Harbour Seals are frequently seen in the Khutzeymateen. And, they make excellent subjects and can lead to interesting and unique photographs!



Nikon D500 with Nikkor 500mm f5.6E PF lens.1/800s @ f5.6; ISO 900

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Sample Itinerary

This is only a sample itinerary and how we actually spend our days may differ somewhat from this proposed schedule. Two factors interact to influence how we spend each day – the location of bears and the timing of the tides (we can only access some areas – such as the channels in the estuary – during high tides). Both of these factors change day-by-day.

Day 1 – May 22 or 23, 2025.

Arrive in Prince Rupert. Make your way to the Highliner Hotel & Conference Centre to check in and stow your gear. Official check-in time is 3 PM, but if your room is ready before that they will let you check in earlier. You can stow your luggage with them while waiting to check-in. If you arrive early in the day feel free to sightsee or check the town out. Plan on assembling in the lobby of the Highliner at 6:30 PM for an informal “meet & greet”. Shortly following this we will head out for dinner together.

Day 2 – May 24, 2025.

Early breakfast at the hotel, followed by an early float plane trip into the Khutzeymateen. Following meeting the crew and guides of the *Afterglow* and allocating the cabins, we will spend as much time as possible out in the Zodiac® photographing the bears. Photography instruction during our time in the Khutzeymateen will be offered very informally and will largely be based on the questions and photographic issues faced by the participants. Note that it is very difficult to offer any instruction when actually working with the bears as we will have to remain as motionless and quiet as possible.

Days 3 through 6 – May 25-28, 2025.

In the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary. *Very full days of bear photography!*

Day 7 – May 29, 2025.

Breakfast on the *Afterglow* followed by our return float plane trip back to Prince Rupert. After which you’ll be left with many amazing memories and photos!

My Ethical Stance – *Wildlife FIRST!*

Wildlife conservation is the primary reason for my involvement in wildlife photography and for running photo tours. As such, *I place the welfare and value of our subjects above the value of any photograph of them.* This philosophy is embodied in my *Wildlife FIRST!* rules of conduct that guide our collective actions during all my photo tours. These four simple ethical rules state that:

1. **Wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* should engage in *passive* wildlife photography only.** This means striving to capture images of wildlife behaving as naturally as possible and without the photographer taking any actions to guide the subject(s) toward desirable settings and/or backdrops or elicit specific “poses”.
2. **Wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* should do nothing *intentional* to alter or influence the behaviour of their**

subjects for the purpose of photography. This includes NOT intentionally influencing their distribution in space and time or influencing their behaviour. This translates into NOT engaging in any form of luring or baiting (or any other form of food supplementation). Additionally, it extends to not using any sound to alter the behaviour of the subject for the purpose of photography, including using predator and/or prey calls, song or vocalization playbacks, vocal clicking, or making any other sound to cause the subject to alter its ongoing behaviour and look at the photographer.

3. **While conforming to and working within any legal guidelines determining minimum allowable approach distances, wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* should allow the**



Checking His Route. From a young age Grizzlies are extremely comfortable swimming, and will swim long distances in the coastal inlets of BC.

Nikon Z 9 with Nikkor Z 400mm f2.8S @ 560mm. 1/2000s @ f4. ISO 720. Wide-area AF with SD = Animal

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Northern River Otters are among the assemblage of carnivores found along the entire BC coast. I photographed this curious otter in the Khutzeymateen Estuary during my "Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen" Instructional Photo Tour in June of 2024.



wildlife subject – regardless of the species – to determine the subject-to-photographer distance it is comfortable with. This principle serves to reduce stress on the subject – and also allows the capture of photographs of the subject behaving in a more natural, and often more interesting, fashion.

4. Wildlife photographers who place wildlife welfare *FIRST* always consider both their *individual and the overall collective effects* photographic activities can have on the subject(s). This includes being aware of *your total time spent with the wildlife subject(s)* and, whenever possible, *the total time spent with the subject by all photographers utilizing the subject*. In practice this means the photographer may have to withdraw from the subject and cease photographic efforts of it, especially if there is any indication that his or her presence is

impacting on the subject's behavioural routine (including activities such as feeding, resting and/or sleeping, caring for its offspring, etc.). This consideration is always important and may become even MORE important if multiple photographers or groups of photographers are simultaneously or sequentially sharing the same subject(s).

We will be adhering to these 4 rules during all my BC coastal photo tours.

All images in this brochure and on the *Natural Art Images* website (www.naturalart.ca) were captured following these *Wildlife FIRST* rules of photographer conduct.

For more information about this amazing trip contact Brad Hill at:

seminars@naturalart.ca



Grizzly Cub – Brown on Green! This image was captured while in a Zodiac® in the Khutzeymateen Inlet in the spring of 2014. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca
Nikon D4s with Nikkor 400mm f2.8G. 1/500s @ f3.2; ISO 250.









