



Prince of Wales: A Different Kind of Southeast Alaska

Stand on the shore or take a boat tour to spot whales, sea otters and other marine mammals. Look for bears, eagles and other wildlife along streams, beaches and roads. Venture into a cave that has been used by wildlife for thousands of years. Watch salmon as they spawn in one of the island's many streams.

Twelve friendly communities are scattered around Prince of Wales Island (POW), ranging in population from over 1,000 (Craig) to about 35 (Point Baker). Much of POW remains undiscovered by tourism, but traveling around the island is relatively easy, due to an extensive system of both paved and unpaved roads. Plan to spend many days exploring, as Prince of Wales Island (140 miles long by 45 miles wide) is the third-largest island in the United States. Only Alaska's Kodiak Island and Hawaii's Big Island are larger.



For information on tours and lodging, consult the Prince of Wales Chamber of Commerce. Visit their website at www.princeofwalescoc.org or call (907) 755-2626. On the island, visit their office by the grocery store in Klawock.



From the bears of Hyder to the bald eagles of Haines, the whales of Frederick Sound to the birds of the Stikine River, the Inside Passage Segment of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail highlights over 70 wildlife viewing sites in and near the communities of Gustavus, Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Prince of Wales Island, Sitka, Skagway and Wrangell.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wildlife Conservation and
Restoration Program

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
about the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail, or to
browse through wildlife viewing sites in other
communities, visit wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov

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Bear safety, rainforest islands and deer photos © Jamie Karnik, ADF&G.
Owl cover and black bear photo © Jim Baichtal.

PRINCE OF WALES

Wildlife Viewing Guide



www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov

Alaska Department of
Fish and Game
Watch Our Wildlife

Wildlife Viewing Tips

 **Keep a Low Profile.** Enjoy watching animals' natural behaviors. Resist the temptation to try to attract their attention with sounds. If your presence is causing an animal to stop feeding or act restless, give it more space. Be especially respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries and calving grounds, and critical feeding areas.

 **Time it Right.** Dawn and dusk are when many wildlife species are most active. Midday warmth energizes dragonflies and butterflies and creates thermals for eagles and hawks. Low tides expose tidepools and a wealth of food for birds and mammals.

 **Look for Clues.** Tracks, droppings, trails and twigs tell stories of wildlife in the area - what they are eating, where they live and when they passed through. Noticing and reading these clues adds richness to wildlife viewing. Tracking books and workshops will help you.

 **Help Keep Wildlife Wild.** Never feed wild animals. Doing so can cause them to associate people with food, which can cause trouble. Human food can also make them sick.

 **Be Considerate of Others.** People use and enjoy Alaska's wildlife in a variety of ways. Respect private property and give hunters, anglers and others plenty of space.



A variety of wildlife, including Sitka black-tailed deer, may be seen anywhere along the road system on Prince of Wales Island.



Watchable Wildlife “Fun Facts”

Alaska's Rainforest Islands: For a diverse complement of wildlife viewing, landscapes (from a tidewater glacier to caves with ancient animal bones), cultures, and old-fashioned Alaska hospitality, combine your Prince of Wales visit with trips to Wrangell and Petersburg. The new Inter-Island ferry offers convenient connections between these three destinations. For more information, visit www.alaskarainforestislands.com.

Fishing Wolves?: Wolves in Alaska primarily depend on large mammals like moose, deer and caribou for their food. In Southeast Alaska, salmon are also an important food source for wolves, making up about 20% of their diet. Biologists have observed that protein-rich salmon may be especially important to young pups after they are weaned, when their role in the pack changes from offspring to pack members at the bottom of the hierarchy. Wolves come to estuaries and creeks on Prince of Wales Island to fish for salmon in July and August. Look for wolf sign like tracks and scat to discover if wolves are in the area. Wolves are elusive creatures, and it may take several trips to Prince of Wales before you're lucky enough to see one.



Traveling Safely in Bear Country (All of Prince of Wales is bear country)

Making noise (sing, clap, talk) while you travel will reduce your chances of surprising a bear. Be alert along noisy streams, in thick brush, and when visibility is poor. Always keep your belongings (backpack, food, fish, etc.) with you or in bear-proof storage.

If you see a bear, **stay calm**. If the bear does not notice you, quietly leave, keeping your eyes on the bear. If it does notice you, face the bear, wave your arms and talk to it calmly. If it approaches you, stand your ground. **Never run from a bear.**

If a bear is surprised at close distance, it may feel threatened and act defensively, especially if it has cubs or food. **Stand your ground!** If the bear strikes or bites you, lie on your front, protect your face and neck and remain still. In rare instances, bears may be predatory. Fight back if the attack is prolonged.



STAY SAFE!

The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail are wild lands. For safety, take a guided tour or take a companion, let someone know your plans and be prepared for emergencies with spare clothes, a first aid kit and a means of communication. Visit the Alaska State Parks' Staying Safe web page for details: www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/safety.





PRINCE OF WALES Wildlife Viewing Sites

Sandy Beach Road 1 hugs the eastern shoreline of Prince of Wales Island, connecting the communities of Coffman Cove and Thorne Bay. Stretches of the road overlook Clarence Strait, a rich feeding area that attracts humpback and killer whales, harbor seals, and Steller sea lions. Roadside pullouts offer good marine viewing. Watch for Sitka black-tailed deer year-round, and trumpeter swans at the Ratz Harbor estuary during fall migrations. The **Sandy Beach Recreation Area** is a great place to look for great blue herons, bald eagles and harbor seals. There is also good tidepooling here, with a chance to see live sand dollars at low tide.

Gravelly Creek 2 has a run of pink salmon during August and September, making it a popular fishing spot for both people and black bears. Evening is the best time to see bears, when there is less human activity here. Sitka black-tailed deer roam along the short, wide gravel path between the parking area and the creek. Keep an eye out for bald eagles, red-breasted sapsuckers and many songbirds. Gravelly Creek is a day-use area three miles outside of Thorne Bay on Forest Highway (FH) 42.

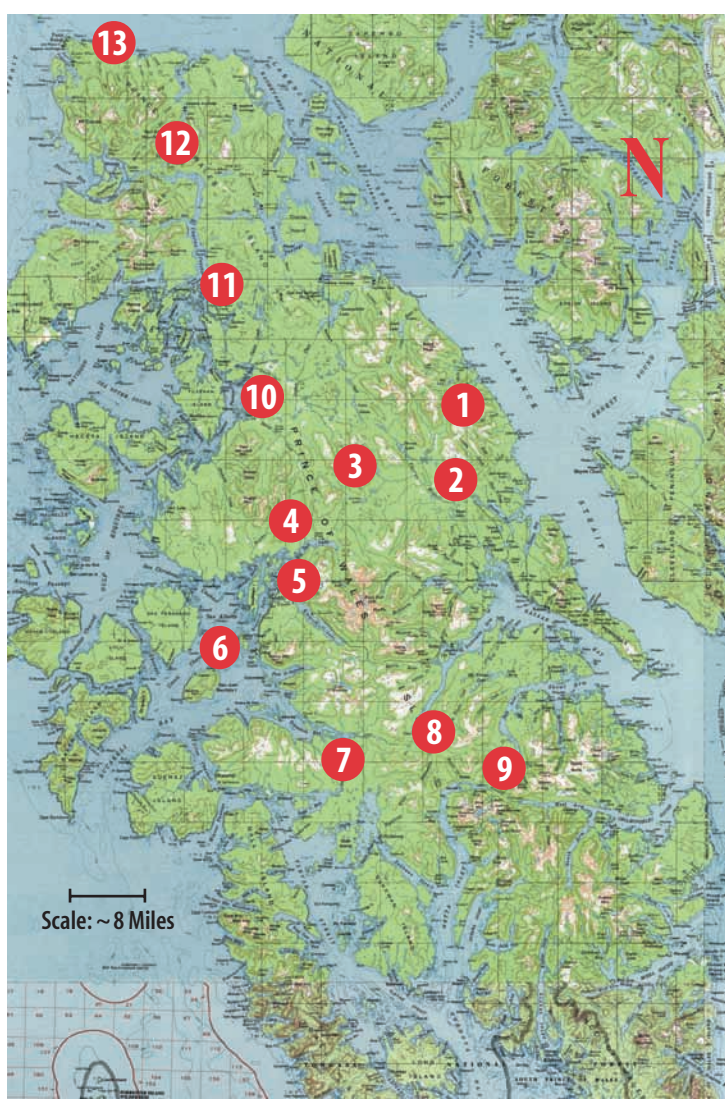
Balls Lake 3 is near the center of Prince of Wales Island. Watch for waterfowl swimming in the lake. Listen for the melodies of forest songbirds in the spring. The forest around the lake provides habitat for Sitka black-tailed deer and black bears. Bald eagles are seen all year. Balls Lake is on paved FH 42, near the junction with FH 9 that leads to Klawock. A flat 2 1/4-mile trail, with some boardwalk planks and stairs, loops around the lake. The Eagle's Nest campground here is one of the island's few maintained camping areas.

Look for trumpeter swans at **Big Salt Lake 4** between October and January. Most rest and feed here for a few days to a few weeks during migrations, though some swans overwinter at the lake. Winter storms on the Pacific Ocean sometimes drive buffleheads, Barrow's goldeneyes and other sea ducks to the lake. Big Salt Lake is on FH 9 about five miles north of Klawock. Use the pullouts along the road for swan viewing, especially if you have binoculars or a spotting scope.

The fish ladder at the **Prince of Wales Hatchery 5** is a good place to see large numbers of coho and sockeye salmon spawn in the Klawock River. The salmon attract bears throughout the summer and fall, especially in August when the run is at its peak. River otters follow the salmon in search of a meal, and bald eagles perch in the trees along the creek. Early morning is the best time to look for wildlife here, before the activity of the day drives most animals away. The Prince of Wales Hatchery is two miles outside of Klawock on FH 6. Call 907-755-2231 to arrange a tour.

Fish and microorganisms in the **Waters Near Craig 6** attract marine mammals and sea birds to feed, in part due to the area's proximity to the open Pacific Ocean. Look for sea otters tangled in kelp beds, humpback whales feeding close to shore, and harbor seals and Steller sea lions exploring the coves and inlets. Great blue herons fish on the shorelines and pelagic cormorants stand on rocks or buoys, spreading their wings to dry. Other birds seen here include surf scoters, pigeon guillemots, and rhinoceros auklets (rarely seen elsewhere in the Inside Passage). Boat tours depart from Craig's harbor throughout the summer.

Cemetery Island or the **Ballfield**, both found south of Craig's harbor on Hamilton Drive, offer good shore-based views of the water. A half hour boat ride outside of Craig, Point Amargura is one of the best places to see sea otters



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near Prince of Wales Island. A USDA Forest Service cabin can be booked for overnight stays (see below for details).

Watch salmon spawn at the **Cable Creek Fishpass 7** between late July and the end of August. The wheelchair accessible viewing platform at the end of a short boardwalk is a good place to stand and look for wildlife. Black bears gorge

themselves on protein-rich salmon, an essential part of their yearly diet. Scan for river otters chasing the salmon upstream, and look upwards for a bald eagle. Cable Creek Fishpass is on FH 13, about nine miles south of the junction with FH 6.

Waterfowl and mammals visit the **Twelve Mile Estuary 8** throughout the year.

Look for Sitka black-tailed deer and black bears at the water's edge or near the road. Sandhill cranes come to the area in the spring. Other migratory birds stop here in the spring and fall to rest and feed before continuing on. Twelve Mile Estuary is on FH 21, which heads east from FH 13 just south of Cable Creek.

Black bears and bald eagles are drawn to the **Dog Salmon Fish Pass 9** by pink and chum (commonly called "dog") salmon runs that occur between late July and early September. The fish pass is at the outlet of Dog Salmon Creek on the west shore of Polk Inlet. The Dog Salmon Fish Pass is near the eastern end of FH 21, and is one of the most popular bear viewing sites on Prince of Wales.

Look for Sitka black-tailed deer, bald eagles, black bears, harbor seals and river otters at **Staney Creek 10** throughout the summer. Wildlife is densest during a small salmon run in September. Loons and other waterfowl may also be seen here. Book the USDA Forest Service's Staney Creek Cabin for greater opportunity to watch for wildlife in the early morning and late evening, when activity is highest (see below for details). Look for the sign for Staney Creek on FH 43 between FH 42 and FH 44.

Watch for wildlife from land or a canoe at the **Sarkar Lakes area 11**. The **Sarkar Rapids** burst with sockeye salmon each July, attracting black bears and harbor seals. The bridge on FH 43 offers good views. In the spring and early summer, Sitka black-tailed deer and black bears feed on emerging lakeside plants. Bald eagles are seen throughout the year. The **Sarkar Lakes Canoe Route** includes six lakes connected by short

1. Sandy Beach Road	 	2-4 hours
2. Gravelly Creek	 	2-4 hours
3. Balls Lake	  	2-4 hours
4. Big Salt Lake		2-4 hours
5. Prince of Wales Hatchery	 	2-4 hours
6. Waters near Craig		2-4 hours
7. Cable Creek Fishpass	  	2-4 hours
8. Twelve Mile Estuary		2-4 hours
9. Dog Salmon Fishpass		2-4 hours
10. Staney Creek	 	2 hrs. - full day +
11. Sarkar Lakes area		Half - full day +
12. El Capitan Cave	 	2 hours
13. Memorial Beach	 	Half - full day +

-  Wheelchair accessible*
-  Hiking trails
-  Entry or tour fee
-  Guided boat tours
-  Interpretive signs
-  Camping in area
- * Check with the Chamber of Commerce for information on wheelchair access
- + Multi-day trips offer the best experience

boardwalk portages. A developed boat launch and parking area along FH 43 north of Naukati provides easy access to the canoe route, and rental companies will deliver boats and gear upon request. Check with the Chamber of Commerce for details. The USDA Forest Service maintains a tent platform and cabin at the lakes.

A variety of wildlife uses the **El Capitan Cave 12** for shelter. River otters follow a scent trail to find their den in the darkness. Otter tracks are sometimes visible and their fur can be seen on the gate. Two species of brown bats seek shelter in the cave during the winter. Small cave-adapted organisms such as amphipods, collembolans and mites are found in the small pools. Bears have used the cave for thousands of years, with remains of brown bear dating back over 12,000 years. Wolverine, caribou and red fox fossils have also been found. The USDA Forest Service runs free naturalist-guided cave tours in the summer (reservations required). Call the Thorne Bay Ranger District at 907-828-3304 to reserve a spot. A 370-step staircase leads to the cave entrance. Caves are fragile and dangerous areas; independent visits to El Capitan are not allowed.

Memorial Beach 13 is on the shores of Sumner Strait, a narrow waterway used by marine mammals and sea birds to reach the rich summer feeding areas in Clarence Strait from the open waters of the Pacific Ocean. Look for humpback whales and killer whales out in the strait, and harbor seals and Steller sea lions closer to shore. Pelagic cormorants, rhinoceros auklets, buffleheads, storm petrels and pigeon guillemots may be seen in the summer. Larger rafts of sea birds are often visible in the fall and winter. Look for Sitka black-tailed deer and black bears along the shore. Memorial Beach is on Forest Service Road 20860 at the north end of Prince of Wales. A 1/4-mile trail leads from the parking area to the beach. Memorial Beach is an approximately four hour drive each way from Craig or Thorne Bay. Plan to spend the night in one of the northern communities on the island.

Looking for more? Check with the district ranger offices in Craig (907-826-3271) or Thorne Bay (907-828-3304) for information on wildlife viewing near a **USDA Forest Service cabin**, or visit www.reserveusa.com to browse available cabins. Rustic cabins rent for \$25-45 a night and have a wood or oil stove for heat and bunk beds.