

Nootka Sound

Author: Noel Collamer

It's an all day trip of 260 road miles and a two hour ferry ride from Twassessan to Nanaimo to Gold River plus a two another hour plus on a very rough road to the launch about twenty miles past Cougar Creek campground.

From the launch it's a 4 hour paddle to a wonderful base camp in a lovely protected double cove facing both east and west on the western tip of Bligh Island. The campsite is surrounded by huge old trees, but clearcuts are in view everywhere.

Paddle to the north of Friendly Cove in, hopefully, gentle swells skirting a long sandy beach with small rocky islets to a lagoon on the far end. Clean up in the fresh water lagoon, but keep watch for bears, we saw fresh tracks when we were there. Weather permitting, spend hours hanging out, napping, reading, talking, ambling about, and just staring out into the constantly changing beauty of the natural world. Be careful of the wind that regularly freshens in the afternoon; the 2 mile crossing and the quartering seas astern with provide you with more excitement than you may enjoy.

Try to find a very well hidden inlet with a beach and a camp spot just right for one tent to the south of your basecamp. Bring a mask and snorkel and float around looking at reddish spiny urchins glowing in the sunlight and thousands of hermit crabs. We paddled one evening only by the light of the full moon. Under the starry sky we glided across velvet waters towards the outside with its phosphorescence riding up the islands like a baby's cradle rocking. Dark shadows made it spooky out there too. Be careful, it's easy to get lost in the rising and falling motion and feel like letting go.

To more things, consider taking the boat the Uchuck III from Gold River and being dropped off in the middle of Nootka Sound and, if you're skilled, explore the many beautiful beaches (Escalante) on the south side of the Sound which are reported to have good protected access. A week in the area would not be too long.