

Sechelt Inlet, British Columbia

Author: Dave Wallin

Rosemary Patschke and I recently lead a three-day trip to Sechelt Inlet on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia. I have not had the opportunity to do much paddling in the lower mainland of BC so I was eager to take advantage of the opportunity. Rosemary is one of our Canadian WAKE members and she has done quite a bit of paddling with us here in the US and I was able to persuade her to lead a trip for us in BC. She has been to Sechelt Inlet many times and graciously agreed to organize the trip. Sechelt Inlet is about 30 miles northwest of Vancouver. Traveling to the launch site involves taking the ferry from Horseshoe Bay, across the mouth of Howe Sound to Langdale. From the ferry landing, it was a short 30 minute drive to our launch site at Porpoise Bay Provincial Park, just outside the town of Sechelt. From our launch site, the main arm of Sechelt Inlet extends to the northwest for about 20 miles where it then joins Jervis Inlet; a larger inlet that connects to Malaspina Strait and the Straits of Georgia. The most infamous feature of Sechelt Inlet is Skookum Narrows, the very narrow passage that connects Sechelt and Jervis Inlets. Whitewater boaters flock to these narrows to play in the standing wave of more than eight feet that regularly form here during tidal exchanges. We chose to stay away from Skookum Narrows on our trip.

Near our launch site, the shores of the inlet are lined with vacation homes but after about three or four miles of paddling, we left the last of these homes behind. From this point on, the inlet feels quite remote. There are a couple of salmon farms and a few active logging sites but no roads or other development. We set up camp at the point where Salmon Arm joins the main arm of the inlet. This is one of several Provincial Park sites along the inlet and it looks like this site may get quite a bit of use at some times of the year. During our visit, we only had to share the site with one other small group. There is no fresh water at the site and there are wooden platforms for your tents. There are Black Bears in the area so it is essential to hang your food and be sure to do your cooking some distance away from where you sleep. There are two small islands near this campsite and the small bay between these islands was absolutely loaded with some of the largest oysters I've seen in quite some time.

On Sunday, we paddled northward for about four miles to the point where another arm joins the main part of the inlet. There are a few private cabins in this area but no road access. We found a great beach for a lunch spot and returned to our camp at the mouth of Salmon Arm that evening. The weather was great all weekend with little or no wind on Saturday and Sunday. On Monday morning, as we headed back to our launch site, the winds came up and we had to fight a fairly strong headwind most of the way back. Although it took us a bit longer than we anticipated, we made it back with no mishaps. We had a great weekend and all of us are eager to head back up to explore other paddling destinations along the Sunshine Coast.