

Standard Glacier Bay Lodge Day Tour Itinerary

Depart Dock in Bartlett Cove: The first 15 minutes of the trip are usually taken up with the Captain's greeting, safety briefing and general trip announcements made by the ship's crew. Passengers are exploring the ship - finding heads, hot chocolate, binoculars, ranger information, open decks - and settling in. By the time the ranger is introduced, the SOA is entering Sitakaday Narrows.

Sitakaday Narrows: Sitakaday Narrows provides a good opportunity to see a variety of marine mammals. While in Sitakaday looking for animals and birds, the ranger introduces self, talks about the route of the day/highlights, and introduces the theme for the day.

South Marble Island: One hour to 1-1/2 hours after leaving the dock, the vessel is approaching South Marble Island. This is the place in the bay to see a myriad of nesting birds and an excellent chance of seeing Steller sea lions. The birds present in and around South Marble represent many of the species the passengers will be seeing over the course of the day. Just prior to arrival at the island, the ranger gives an in-depth bird identification talk lasting 10-15 minutes so passengers will know who and what to look for. Then, everyone is urged to get out on deck for viewing. Due to the sheer numbers of birds, all passengers will see something. If the Captain is able to shut down the engines, passengers will be amazed by the cacophony of birds, sea lions, and even whales. Though it may be chilly, passengers are usually out on deck until the vessel begins to pull away from South Marble.

Transit: The transit from South Marble to North Sandy Cove offers passengers the opportunity to come inside, warm up, sit down and talk about what they have just experienced.

North Sandy Cove: This intimate channel often offers rich wildlife viewing - bears, coyotes, eagles - off both sides of the vessel. As the vessel must slow down to go through this passage, this is an excellent time to get people out on deck looking. Even without wildlife, visitors can get a good close look at bull kelp, the shoreline, the forest, etc.

[Possible stop at Mt. Wright to drop-off or pick up kayakers.]

Transit: As the vessel transits across to Tlingit Point, passengers are starting to grasp the rhythm of the day, which is that there are highlights worth bundling up and getting out on deck for. But there will be time afterward to come inside, warm up and a little personal time.

Shoreline: Hugging the shoreline from Tlingit Point to Tidal Inlet can be productive for bears and eagles especially at low tide. This keeps people alert watching, though they can do this from their tables inside.

Tidal Inlet: The stream within the entrance to Tidal Inlet can be a good place for wildlife: eagles, bears, even goats on the hill above. Large rafts of molting scoters are not uncommon. The view down the inlet presents another scenic opportunity. This is a good place to get people out on deck looking.

Gloomy Knob: Immediately after Tidal Inlet, it is worth it to stay out on deck for a slow cruise past Gloomy Knob - a large dolomite dome of rock polished smooth by the glacier. While admiring the glacial

striations that eloquently tell the glacier story, visitors can also be on the lookout for mountain goats and seabirds.

[Possible stop at Queen or Rendu Inlet to drop-off or pick up kayakers.]

Russell Cut: The passage between Russell Island and the mainland - Russell Cut - once again affords passengers with a close view of the shoreline off both sides of the vessel. Bears are not uncommon. The passage also affords an excellent view of another glacial feature. The large u-shaped valley coming down from Mt. Abdullah features a v-shaped valley cutting into it.

Glacier Country: Following Russell Cut, the vessel is suddenly within "glacier country." The Grand Pacific and Margerie Glaciers come into view. Reid and Lamplugh glaciers are visible at a distance. Ice appears in the water. Excitement builds as the vessel is finally approaching the ice. From this point to the glacier faces, passengers are usually excited and getting ready for their time at the glaciers. People bundle up, get their cameras/film, and start to head out on deck.

Glacier Approach: If ice conditions permit, the optimum approach is generally a slow counter-clockwise turn from the eastern shore of Tarr Inlet, past the face of the Grand Pacific to the face of Margerie.

Glacier Face: Time spent in front of the glacier is an absolute highlight with virtually all passengers out on deck the entire time. The ranger is off the microphone, allowing passengers to talk among themselves. If the vessel captain is willing shut down the engines, passengers are often captivated by the glacial symphony of popping ice bubbles, excited birds and the booming thunder of a calving glacier.

Back down Tarr Inlet: After 30 minutes or more in front of the glaciers, passengers generally move inside and warm up. Lunchtime falls somewhere in here. The west side of Tarr Inlet can be good for bear viewing, so the vessel's route often hugs that shore to give people a chance for some bear viewing as they dine.

Johns Hopkins Glacier: Lunch is usually finished by the time the vessel reaches the entrance to Johns Hopkins Inlet. If ice conditions permit, the vessel can maneuver past Jaw Point for a distant view of Johns Hopkins Glacier. Prior to May 1 and after August 31, the captain may proceed further for a closer view (or elect to skip Margerie Glacier entirely in order to spend more time in Johns Hopkins Inlet).

Lamplugh Glacier: If floating ice makes viewing Johns Hopkins glacier impractical, the Captain can choose to linger in front of the Lamplugh Glacier. Though it calves ice only infrequently, Lamplugh is noteworthy for the deep blue ice often seen at its face.

Reid Glacier: A few minutes south of Lamplugh Glacier, Reid Glacier looms on the starboard side of the vessel. Named after one of the park's early glaciologists and site of some early mining activity, this tidewater glacier has several options for rich interpretation.

Unstructured time: Following Reid Glacier, passengers have been aboard for about six hours and have seen many of the day's highlights. Interpreters use this time to chat informally with people or to lead

Junior Ranger activities. Things are quiet, but passengers watch for wildlife –with occasional sightings of bears, whales, sea lions, or wolves.

Note: The highlights from Gloomy Knob to Reid Inlet can be done in reverse if necessary to avoid other vessels or if weather conditions dictate. However, prior to Gloomy Knob vessel would be expected to be traveling north on the eastside of the bay. Traveling south, the vessel would be expected to be on the west side of the bay by the eagles' nest at Geikie Inlet.

Eagle nest at Geikie Inlet: There is often an active eagle nest along the north entrance to Geikie Inlet. Located in a cottonwood trees close to the shore and low enough on the hillside that visitors can usually see activity in the nest, offering a rare glimpse into the lives of these birds. This is a good time to stop the vessel and get everyone out on deck. Usually everyone can find the nest and observe any activity - even with the naked eye. The shoreline that stretches from the nest around the corner into Geikie to the first stream - Oystercatcher Creek - often affords additional views of eagles. The stream itself is an active salmon stream and often attracts a variety of birds and large mammals, especially in the latter part of the summer.

Interglacial stumps in Whidbey Passage: With the eagle's nest as a wake-up, passengers usually refocus on the trip as it winds down. During the passage through Whidbey Passage, they once again have land relatively close on both sides of the vessel. On the west side of the passage near the end of Drake Island, passengers can readily see the "interglacial stumps" - remnants of ancient forests. Once covered by ice but newly revealed since the last advance, these stumps embody Glacier Bay's story of change and renewal.

Sitakaday Narrows: Exiting Whidbey Passage, the vessel once again enters Sitakaday Narrows and passengers are encouraged to be looking for wildlife - whales, otters, sea lions, harbor porpoise, and a great variety of birds. Passengers are often out on the protected outside decks, taking in their last sights of the bay.

Approaching Bartlett Cove: This is time to wrap up the day, complete commentary, collect personal articles and stop for wildlife viewing if time allows.