

British Columbia Boat Trip 1999
by Thom Vetromile
Pictures by Bill Nance & Thom Vetromile

The Summer of '99 was cool and wet in the Seattle Washington area. Even our regular August vacation, where the family traveled to the northern panhandle of Idaho to messabout on Lake Pend Oreille, was fraught with cool and rain. Just at the Labor Day weekend the Pacific High we had been waiting for all summer moved into the upper left hand corner of the US. After making a few calls, and looking at that clear satellite weather photos, including the British Columbia Sunshine Coast and Vancouver Island, we packed up 3 Kayaks, the Pacific City Skiff, attached all to Bill Nance's 4 Runner and headed north.

We zoomed up I-5 to the Canadian Boarder crossing—"Where you boys headed?" said the Boarder guard. "Lund BC with a few stops in between" said we. After crossing the Fraser River to negotiate past False Creek (Geez, these Canadians have a lot of very nice boats moored near a beautiful city) then a most delightful wending through Stanley Park to the First Narrows Bridge---next stop Horseshoe Bay.

After a dinner out at a tavern in Horseshoe Bay, we head north on Route 99 to find a camp spot along east side of Howe Sound to rest for the night. This was no easy chore as all spots were full due to the good weather. We ended up at a parking lot walk in camp ground and found one of the last spots and set up our tents by flash light.

Next morning we hustled through the camp take down and breakfast. Then, off to catch the ferry at Horseshoe Bay.



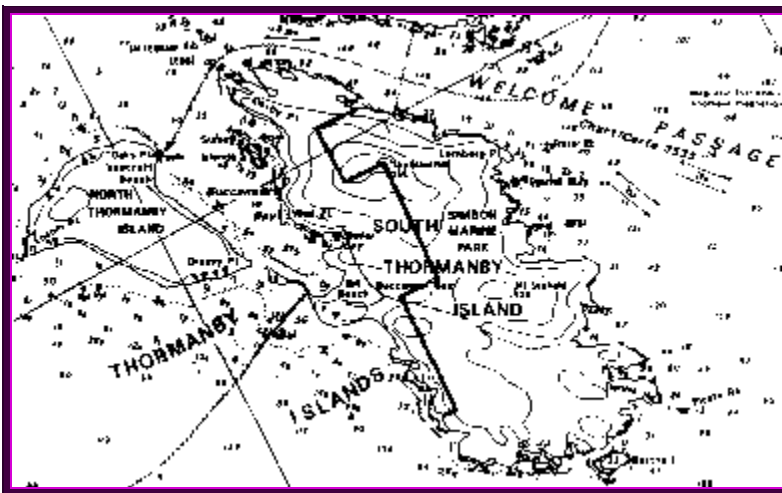
Horseshoe Bay BC filled with about as many power boats as sail boats. The ferry is about to depart across Howe Sound to the north of Bowen Island to Langdale.



Aboard the ferry cruising through Howe Sound to Langdale on a most beautiful clear sunny day.

After exiting the ferry at Langdale we traveled through the town of Gibsons Landing on Route 101 and headed for Sechelt, a nice quiet town with a great BC Visitor Center just off the main drag. Here we loaded up with coastal brochures, maps and charts. Just a bit north of Sechelt is Halfmoon Bay and just north of that Secret Cove. It is here we found our first access to the water at a nifty, somewhat isolated bit of Shangri-La --- Buccaneer Marina and Resort. Here the good owners let us launch our crafts and we stocked up some fishing goods, licenses, and prepared to paddle out to Buccaneer Bay to camp on the south end of North Thormanby Island at Grassy Point.

Paul checking out the launch ramp while Bill unties the kayaks.



North Thormanby Island with Grassy Point at its southern end. Buccaneer Bay is open past Grassy Point at high tide and the 2 islands 'dry' connect when the tide ebbs.

Bill and Paul paddled out of Secret Cove in their kayaks. Thom's Pacific City skiff was loaded with most of the camping gear and he towed his kayak. It was another glorious sunny day. The current down Welcome Passage made more ripple on the water than the wind. After an hour or so the beach of Grassy Point showed up and we beached the boats to set up camp.

Camp set and relaxing with the view





“Hey, let’s go for an evening paddle...”



Thom and, in the distance Paul, paddle on the west side of South Thormanby Island.



Paul in his 19'+ 2 chine kayak & Bill in his glass kayak take in the last rays of the sun setting over Texada Island.



Last catch of the day...

Next day we left camp at Grassy Point for a paddle trip across Buccaneer Bay, to West Point on South Thormanby Island and turned north to wend our way through the rocky Surry Islands (with resident Harbor Seal slipping into the water) to Derby Point. Then we crossed Welcome Passage to the opposite shore and headed south to Frenchmen's Cove--just past Jeddah Point.



Heading around Derby Point to cross both Tattenham Ledge (good fishing spot) and Welcome Passage.

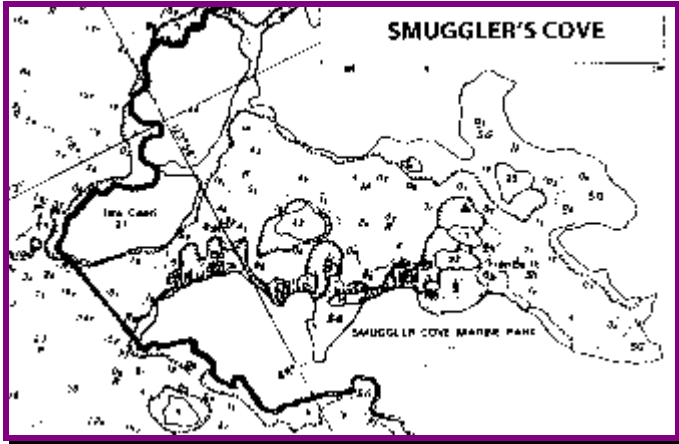
Paul coming off the beach at Frenchman's Cove.



Exiting Frenchmen's Cove through the cut at Jeddah Point

Heading back out to Welcome Passage we realized the breeze had come up with the passing of the afternoon and the tide had turned so that both were 'on the nose' of our boats. The paddle back up Welcome Passage was less 'welcome' with each stroke as it became an effort to gain headway. The trick was to cut back across the passage to find a bit of a lee on the northwest wind and just stroke out against the current. After an hour or so Derby Point looked pretty good and we headed back to camp.

The following day we again loaded up the kayaks with our safety gear (flotation devices, extra clothing and snack food with water) and paddled to Derby Point and across Welcome Passage to explore Smuggler Cove. Here is a very nice BC Marine Park with a rich history as a hide out for the smuggling trade of bygone times.



Smuggler's Cove is just south of the entrance to Secret Cove and is a most popular anchorage for vessels heading to & from Desolation Sound.

Paul & Bill 'parked' at the entrance sign of Smuggler's Cove



This inner cove is just under the 'le' in the word Smuggler's on the above chart.

We paddled back to our Grassy Point camp site and set about planning the rest of our boat trip further north to Lund. This would require loading up the 4 Runner with all our gear and boats and taking highway 101 to Earls Cove to pick up the ferry to Saltry Bay. From Saltry Bay we traveled to Powell River, a very nice bustling community and re-supplied the food pantry. Then on the road again to enter the

Malaspina Peninsula and an overnight camp at Okeover Arm Provincial Park. This camp site shores up to Okeover Inlet the water gateway to the Gifford Peninsula and Desolation Sound Provincial Marine Park. Truly a water paradise at the entrance to Desolation Sound.



Camping at an old Native American midden, Okeover Arm Provincial Park.

We stayed but one night at Okeover as we could not take all our gear out into the other island parks and were a bit uncertain leaving behind unattended items... So the next morning we took the ever winding, twisting, turning -- a view at every corner--Highway 101 to Lund. Lund was in 'sleep' mode as the tourist season was over and no fish were running.

Governor Harbor at Lund with the new shower and bathroom facility. Looking out towards Hernando Island.



The island way to get your gear from place to place. The mini tug tows a barge with 2 trucks -1 towing a fishing boat (!) After lowering the barge ramp the taught pair backs toward the launch pad.

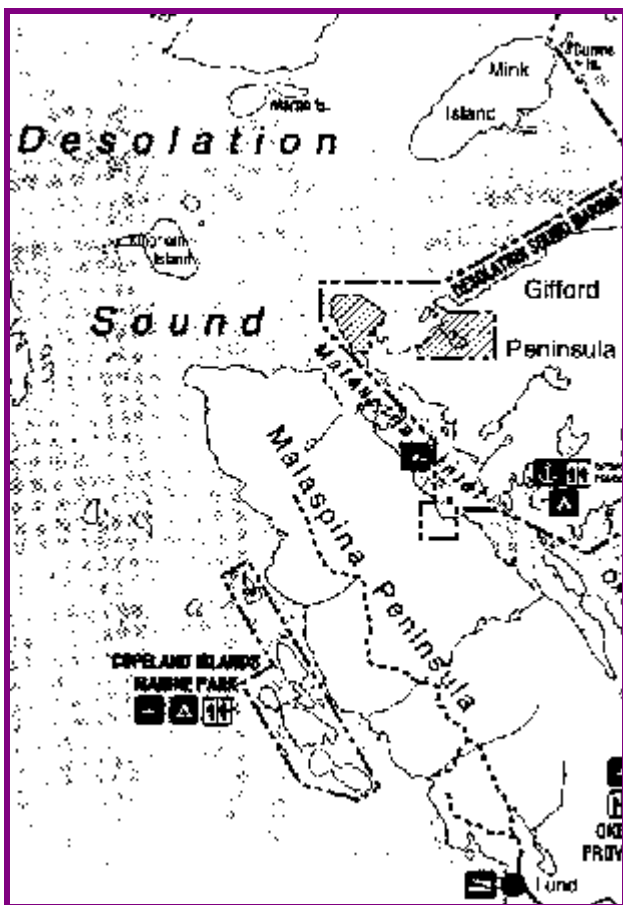
After enjoying a fine lunch at a Lund hillside restaurant, with an outside open deck, we check in all our gear to a nearby private camp. The idea here is to leave our

gear at this establishment and the next day head up the coast in the Pacific City outboard skiff.

From the campsite a colorful evening sunset overlooking the harbor at Lund.



Now into our 8th or so day and the weather has yet to give us a bad nod. The Pacific High is holding in place on the Sunshine Coast. Each day so sunny with warm gentle breezes, nights so clear the stars seem just a raised hand away. We did 'study' the night sky a bit. Each evening the star filled Milky Way arched across the heavens giving an idea where you were, in terms of the universe, broken by these moving luminescent satellites --- 3 to 5 every 20 minutes or so (!). We pondered the fact that the night skies really are not untouched anymore. One can no longer look out to the stars and see the heavens as our ancestors did...



Lund is at the bottom of this 'chart' with the Copland Islands up about midway on the west side of Malaspina Peninsula. The headland of Malaspina is Sarah Point which opens up the 'doorway' to Desolation Sound. Next stop Mink Island with the Cume Islands sitting just off the right top of this image.

Heading out from Lund in the skiff we encountered some young folks in a runabout that had apparently run out of gas. We actually went by them but turned around and asked if they needed assistance. Yes, they did and we put over our ski tow 'turtle' hooked up a line and towed them to one of the Lund docks. Starting out again we turned north up Trulin Passage and checked out the east side of the Copeland Islands.

The Pacific City Skiff
cruising up Trulin
Passage.



Sarah Point on the
starboard bow -- the
'doorway' to Desolation
Sound.

Beached on an
oyster bed on the
larger of the Cume
Islands.



We round Sarah Point and head towards Mink Island. The skiff is at about $\frac{3}{4}$ throttle cruising at about 20+ miles per hour. We scoot along on top of very glassy water marveling that in this pristine 'big water mountain land' there are quite a few cabins stuck just inside the tree line. We pass Mink Island and by landing on the Cume Islands have entered part of the large Desolation Sound Provincial Park. We scout the islands and find quite a few overnight camp spots with flat areas for tents and small fire pits. Kayakers and others during the season use these islands as they move about the park.



View of the Cume Islands shoreline. A group of seals came through just after this picture fishing the cut.

The seals must have caught the best ones. We caught these spiny robin type rock fish!



Heading back to Lund with Mink Island in the background.

The trip came to an end way too briefly... We were able to travel from Seattle to Lund BC, a journey of 242 road miles, using the 4Runner, 3 kayaks, 1 outboard skiff and 2 ferries. A most memorable on the fly vacation. Next time we hope to go to the north tip of Vancouver Island, pick up the Coastal Ferry and visit the Kakai Provincial Park just north of Rivers Inlet.