

# August Gulf Islands Paddle

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August 11th my husband, Scott and I headed north hoping to catch the noon ferry to Duke's Point on Vancouver Island. We arrived at Tswasseen 45 minutes early but unfortunately did not make the ferry. Next time we will make an online reservation. We caught the next ferry at 3:30 which left at 4. The bow of my boat put us overheight one inch which cost us an extra \$40. Maybe we will put it on upside down next time. (Height limit is 7 feet) We were glad we wore our new WAKE tee-shirts as it prompted conversations with fellow kayakers that gave us some great tips.

Once arriving at Duke's Point we drove south to Blue Heron Park at Yellow Point, our launch site. Our destination, Blackberry Point on Valdes Island was straight ahead. I had been there once before with a group, launching from Cedar Creek. By this time we were racing daylight. After loading up our boats with what we thought would never fit into them we paddled the very still waters against the remaining daylight. The sunset was fabulous behind us but we could only afford ourselves a quick look over the shoulder.

As we approached the shoreline we were greeted by the local camp wardens, Gerry and Maggie. I recognized them from my previous trip with the parks department. They are a delightful Canadian couple, semi-retired. Gerry and Maggie spend their summers traveling the Gulf Islands from camp to camp monitoring and helping as needed.

We scored by setting up camp in the best campsite (we think) along the shore. It was up about 12 feet with a fabulous view of mountains, water, other islands and sunsets. We looked down onto the white crushed shell beach where we had secured our boats.

After a large first day breakfast we headed up to Maggie and Gerry's site. There had been a cougar sighting earlier that morning by the solar toilet. With that in mind we abandoned our idea of hiking up Mexican Hill. I did the hike on my previous trip, starting from the logging landing just north of Blackberry Point and was rewarded with a spectacular view of many of the islands. Instead we paddled over to Thetis Island in search of fresh donuts. Unfortunately they (private residence) were soldout by the time we got there. Next trip! Between Thetis Island and Lukar Island there is a channel that was dredged out many years ago. It is passable only by small craft and takes you to the Marina on Thetis. We bought hamburger buns in the Marina store and headed back to Blackberry point.

I have to say we picked one of the best weeks of the summer to paddle. It was warm, sunny and calm everyday. There was not even any morning fog. We enjoyed swimming at Pylades Island, Blackberry Point and several other small beaches that we passed on our outings.

Our neighbours in the bay next to us were canoeists from Vancouver and Victoria. We gave their dog, Samantha, a Roasted Potato Burrito and became instant friends. Both with Samantha and the 2 Canadian couples. They shared their crab catch with us and invited us over for a candlelight and wine visit.

The evening paddles were one of the highlights of the trip. We had discovered the bioluminescence the night before and decided to go for a late night paddle. The first night we invited Maggie, Gerry and another new neighbour, Lauren from Victoria, to go with us. We launched about 10 PM. By 11, the water was alive with sparkles like we had never seen before. Tapping the side of the boat triggered an underwater fireworks display that cannot easily be described with words. Every fish that swam beneath us left a trail of glitter. Every paddle stroke was like a shooting star with a long tail. Above us we saw so

many shooting stars that we had trouble knowing where to look, up or down. Both air and water light shows were amazing!! Later we found out there was a meteor shower that night.

The following evening, hooked, we went out again. This time with our canoeist friends. The guys and Samantha went swimming. Again words cannot describe how Samantha looked as she paddled around with sparkles and lights all around her. The bioluminescence sticking to her fur gave the impression of a thousand sparklers all lit at once.

Our last full day we paddled north to see the sandstone formations along Valdes Island's shoreline. The formations are eerie, fascinating and made a perfect backdrop for our upcoming Christmas card. It was a successful trip with many highlights. We made some friends and relaxed! What more could you ask for?