



Holland America Line®
SAVOR THE JOURNEY



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HOLLAND AMERICA LINE

10-Day Double Denali (D6C) Land + Sea Journey aboard *Westerdam*

Vancouver 14 July to Anchorage 24 July, 2019

7-Night Cruise Aboard the Newly Refurbished *Westerdam*

2-Night Land Experience in Denali National Park



Cruise	Date
Embark Vancouver	14-Jul-19
Scenic Cruising The Inside Passage	15-Jul-19
Ketchikan	16-Jul-19
Juneau	17-Jul-19
Skagway	18-Jul-19
Glacier Bay	19-Jul-19
At Sea	20-Jul-19
Seward (Anchorage)	21-Jul-19
Land	Date
Seward / Denali coach	21-Jul-19
McKinley Chalet Resort	21-Jul-19
Denali morning at leisure	22-Jul-19
Tundra Wilderness Tour	22-Jul-19
Transfer Rail Depot	23-Jul-19
McKinley Explorer: Denali / Talkeetna	
McKinley Explorer: Talkeetna / Anchorage	
Transfer Rail Depot / Hotel	
Westmark Anchorage Hotel	
Transfer Hotel / Anchorage Airport	24-Jul-19

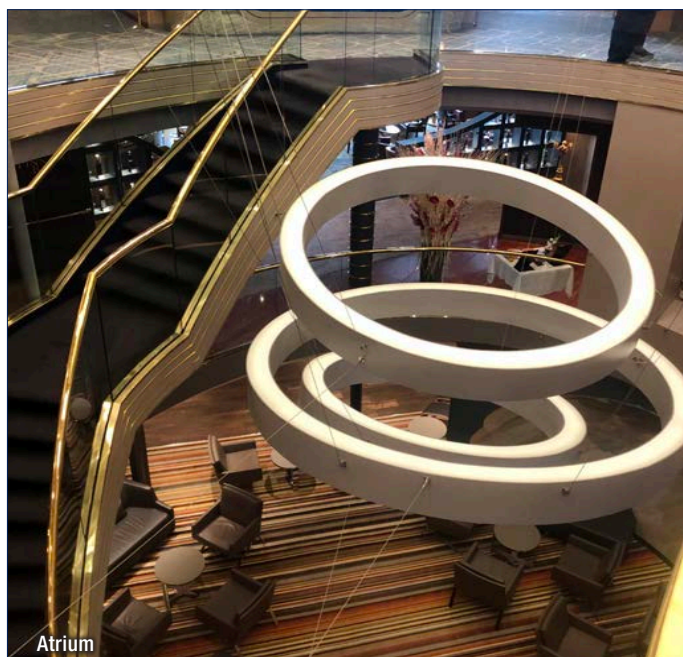


Susan Baxter
Marketing Manager
Francis Travel Marketing

Westerdam

Refurbished in April 2017, she looks AMAZING! The lighter colour palette used throughout is very tasteful, with everything looking clean and fresh. The upgrades are excellent, the space has been utilised very well, particularly on Decks 1 & 10 and the public spaces are more open plan. She has such a great feel to her, still looking elegant and sophisticated, but with a modern accent.

Deck 1 houses Guest Services, the atrium area contains comfortable seating and is surrounded with material from the Rijksmuseum at Sea, including a wall /screen displaying beautiful art pieces that changes regularly - I really enjoyed sitting in this area. *Westerdam's* atrium centrepiece has been updated to three rings suspended by wire. The gold staircase no longer goes down to the first floor, it connects Deck 2 to 3.



Atrium



Deck 1 | Atrium | Rijksmuseum at Sea



Deck 1 | Adjacent to Guest Services



Deck 1 | Rijksmuseum at Sea

Deck 2 features the Gallery Bar, which replaced Northern Lights nightclub. It has a great feel to it, it's tucked in behind Queens Lounge and flows onto the casino. It's a very elegant room with gorgeous artwork and a great place to meet. Billboard Onboard has been extended to take over the Sports Bar area, however sport channel's are still played on tvs in the Gallery Bar. The larger area has enabled duelling pianos, and more seating which opens onto the walkway and the casino.



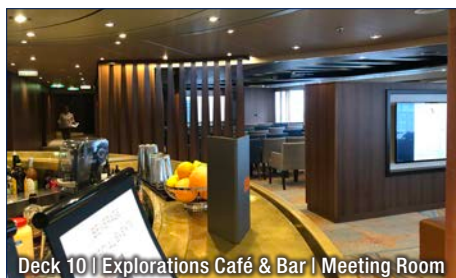
Deck 3 | Open Plan Shops



Deck 2 | Billboard Onboard | Casino

The shops on **Deck 3** are more open plan, so as you walk along Deck 3, you'll walk right through the shops. The Explorations Café has been moved up to Deck 10.

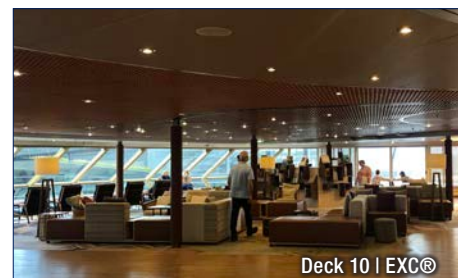
Deck 10 – Wow - Excellent use of the space, it now contains Explorations Central™, Explorations Café and the Crows Nest. It still has seats around the windows, perfect for sail-aways, with tables and couches on half the area, mid- to port side. The Explorations Café has combined with the bar, and there is a small sectioned off area just as you walk in that can be used for talks, private cocktail parties etc. In the centre are two screens that display a lot of different information relating to weather, ship position etc. The starboard side features a small library, EXC interactive tables as well as two EXC screens mounted on the wall. There is the EXC consultants desk where you can talk about shore excursions and book them. The Future Cruise Consultants have an office, starboard as you walk into the Crows nest. The EXC® area is awesome! The interactive tables feature port highlights, including a city map and split into four screens, enabling four people to use at one time. Everyday I would use them to check out the next days port.



Deck 10 | Explorations Café & Bar | Meeting Room



Deck 10 | Crows Nest



Deck 10 | EXC®



Deck 10 | Library



Deck 10 | EXC Interactive Table

Dining

Pinnacle Grill – Deck 2: Outstanding food! A new menu was introduced six weeks ago. The staff are so professional and experienced - our waiter had been with Holland America Line for 25 years! They have iPads featuring the wine selection, where you can scroll through and see pictures of the wine bottles and a description, the waiters are also very experienced and able to make suggestions for wine pairing with your meal selection. If you wish to order two mains there is a charge of US\$15 and each course on the menu has a spectacular optional dish that is also an additional charge. https://www.hollandamerica.com/en_US/dining/pinnacle-grill.html

Rudi's Sel De Mer pop up - Pinnacle Grill, Deck 2: Absolute perfection was the only way to describe the food and service. <https://book2.hollandamerica.com/content/hal/cruise-experience/dining/menus/rudi's-sel-de-mer,-a-one-night-only-experience.pdf>

Canaletto - Deck 9: Dinner in the Canaletto was superb, great menu. They've recently introduced a new menu, but have retained some old favourites.

<https://www.hollandamerica.com/blog/topics/food-beverage/canalettos-new-menu-is-amore-at-first-bite/>

The Dining Room: Dinner in The Dining Room was excellent, top quality food with a great selection. One of our colleagues was vegan, and was made a bespoke meal. The waiter made a point of asking her when she was planning on dining there next, as he would notify the chefs and have something special ready for her.

High Tea at 3pm - The Dining Room, Deck 3: Delightful 3-tiered platters with sandwiches, scones and cakes adorned every table. You were shown to tables by the maître d' and gloved waiters came around serving tea.

Gala Night - The Dining Room: The menu selection was very nice with something for everyone. It was an outstanding meal and the service was excellent. There are two Gala nights on a 7-night itinerary.



High Tea



Sel De Mer



Pinnacle Grill

Entertainment

There is so much to do every day! A must-do is the America's Test Kitchen, it's a cooking class with a twist! The Music Walk is such a great initiative. BB King's Blues Club went off every night, as did, Billboard Onboard. When BB King's took their breaks, we would go along to Billboard Onboard. Lincoln Centre Stage is the perfect way to cap off a delicious dinner. Five artists played the night I went, Italian themed music. All the musicians onboard were so talented. There were two Mainstage performances, again, top class entertainment.



Verandah Stateoom (VC)

The colour scheme in the staterooms are very appealing. There are some great new touches, such as a sensor light at the bottom of the wardrobes - good for night trips to the bathroom! There are several USB ports, with a handy one right next to the bed. The rooms have a large flat screen tv mounted to the wall. Great storage space - there was enough cupboard/drawer space for the contents of four suitcases and then they tucked away under our beds. The hair dryer is good quality and bathroom amenities are the lovely Elemis products.

Double Denali Land + Sea Journey

Vancouver, B.C., CA:

We left a stunning day behind in Auckland, to be met 13 hours later by another beautiful day in Vancouver!

The Pan Pacific Vancouver is approximately a 30 minute taxi ride (in good traffic) from the airport and is the perfect place to stay, as it's right at the cruise terminal. If your cruise ends in Vancouver, you can store your luggage at the Pan Pacific Hotel (Cash US\$5 per bag).

It's best to arrive a day prior to your cruise departure, as the ship cannot wait if you experience any delays with flights and transfers. If you miss your ship and try to join it at the next port, you may be violating the Jones Act and will be required to pay a fine on top of the costs to meet your ship.

Gastown is a lovely, historical area, just a few minutes walk from the Pan Pacific. It has a lot of tourist shops and some cool bars and eating establishments.

There is a good outlet mall near Vancouver airport. Glen Vancouver Designer Outlet Mall is two stops before Vancouver airport (Canada Line). You can store your luggage there for free. <https://www.mcarthurglen.com/en/outlets/ca/designer-outlet-vancouver/>

Sunday, July 14 | Vancouver, B.C., CA | Depart: 4:30 PM

Checkout from the Pan Pacific is easy, you can elect to have your bags picked up from your room and transferred to the ship. Then just head to the bottom floor of the Pan Pacific and you're at the cruise registration area, you don't even have to leave the hotel!



Monday, July 15 | Scenic Cruising The Inside Passage

Westerdam cruises through the Inside Passage at a really nice, relaxing speed. We were having lunch on the Sea View deck when the Captain announced there was a pod of Orcas port side, so we went to the rail and had front row seats to premium wildlife viewing!

It was nice to have a sea day as the first day, as it gave you time to settle in and explore the ship, and peruse the EXC® information to get the most out of your week ahead.

Tonight was the First Gala night dinner in The Dining Room. It was great to see most people dressed up elegantly.

Tuesday, July 16 | Ketchikan, Alaska, US | Arrive: 7:00 AM Depart: 3:00 PM

You dock RIGHT in town, the view from our stateroom was of Front Street, and when you disembark the ship you're in the middle of the main tourist part of town!

Four ships were in port today. Even though it was mid-summer, I was still in jeans, boots and a warm top.

In 2017 tourism surpassed fishing as the No. 1 industry in Ketchikan. It's the 4th wettest place on earth, BUT there's been a drought and today was the first day of rain in ages!

Tonight we were booked in for dinner at Rudi's Sel de Mer pop up in the Pinnacle Grill - an excellent meal, and every need was catered for, we spent several hours there ☺

Excursion: Misty Fjords & Wilderness Explorer Cruise

The Melinda Leigh is a brand new aluminium, jet powered catamaran, freshly delivered from Sitka the week prior. It's the fleet's largest boat and goes 30-40 knots. The excursion left on time, promptly at 7am with 148 passengers onboard. There is complimentary donuts and hot chocolate, and Clam chowder was served at 10.45am - all the food was delicious! There's also food and souvenirs to purchase. Once onboard, you can leave your bag on your seat and wander around the boat, upstairs viewing, or outside the back of the boat. They opened the front outside area when there was something to see, and provide binoculars for use onboard.

A Tlingit speaker gave a very entertaining talk, and throughout the whole excursion, the naturalist and other speakers talked periodically, providing really interesting information about the region.

There is a 23ft tidal zone in the Misty Fjords and the water is a couple of degrees above freezing!

The crew haven't seen whales in over a month, it's late in season for them, as they are typically in Juneau by now. They also have never seen two whales breach at once!! We saw a cow and calf enroute from Hawaii - where the mother gave birth before travelling 3,500 miles back to



Humpback Whale

Alaska for the abundant feeding season. At one point the pair came to within 50 feet of the Melinda Leigh. The cow was educating her calf and put on a spectacular show of breaches, flukes, and flipper slapping.... and they breached together!

Did you know: The spout whales eject is not water, it's mucus and can travel up to 200 miles/hour into the air.

We saw a bald eagles nest and a Petrograd of a sun. Wildlife spotted on this excursion: Salmon running, Porpoises and Humpback Whales!

Needless to say, this was an amazing excursion. The Misty Fjords are stunning, the weather did not impact it negatively at all, in fact, it created an awesome atmosphere. The crew were so knowledgeable and approachable, the boat was lovely and the food - perfect! My advice for this excursion is to dress warmly and choose a seat near the front of the boat, so that when wildlife is spotted, you can be first out on the deck!

Description That Helped Me Pick This Excursion:

DURATION: 4.5 Hours DEPARTURE TIME: 7:30am

ADULT: US\$199.95 CHILD: US\$159.95

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Easy INCLUDES: Snack

RATING: 4½ Stars (44 Ratings)

TOP 3 REASONS TO BOOK:

- The most luxurious way to experience Misty Fjords
- The stunning scenery of one of America's largest wilderness areas
- The sound of silence; a dramatic and eerie ambience

ABOUT THE EXCURSION:

Explore Misty Fjords National Monument, one of nature's most spectacular creations, while cruising in luxury aboard one of the fastest sightseeing vessels in Alaska. The adventure begins as soon as you leave Ketchikan's picturesque harbour, passing colourful floatplanes and fishing boats. Enjoy the service and narrative provided by your crew, and watch for marine and coastal wildlife as you cruise at sea level past the rugged coastlines bordering Revillagigedo Channel.

Voyage into Behm Canal, surrounded by the pristine beauty of Misty Fjords National Monument, described by John Muir as the Yosemite of the North. Along the way you'll stop to view an active bald eagle nest, a Tlingit pictograph, and

New Eddystone Rock -- an immense volcanic spire rising from the emerald sea. Delight in an unhurried exploration of Rudyerd Bay -- an ice-carved masterpiece deep within the Monument. Here, you'll learn the natural history of the fjords, listen to the call of nesting seabirds, and feel the mist of glistening waterfalls while gliding quietly beneath 3,000-foot glacier-sculpted cliffs.

On the cruise back to Ketchikan, enjoy a selection of snacks and beverages while watching for whales, seals, eagles and other wildlife.

You'll also have the opportunity to experience local culture and history presented by a Native storyteller and artist, or enjoy a tour-related video presentation.

Depending on location of cruise ship, participants may be required to walk up to 300 yards and negotiate a ramp (can be quite steep at low tide) to embark the tour vessel. Tour operates in all weather conditions. Dress warmly in layers. Wear a hat or beanie; bring gloves and a scarf.

Wildlife sightings are likely but are not guaranteed. This tour is accessible by standard-width manual wheelchair, but not low-clearance electric scooters.

Wednesday, July 17 | Juneau, Alaska, US | Arrive: 10:00 AM Depart: 10:00 PM

Holland America Lines' Grandfather rights really paid off today, again we were in the very best berth, and for example, the Azamara ship had to tender and ferry their guests ashore. *Westerdam* had to slip into her berth sideways as there was a ship in front and behind already berthed, it was great to watch!

Juneau is the capital of Alaska, it is sea- and glacier-locked and the only way in is by air or sea. It's a big town, so a good option could be to hire bikes for the day.

If you want to see Bald Eagles, make sure Juneau is on your itinerary as it boasts the highest concentration of Bald Eagles in all of the States.

If you want to go to Tracy's crab shack in Juneau, I would recommend booking it in an excursion that includes a meal there, as queues to dine were out the door and down the street!

Mount Roberts Tramway is very cool. At US\$35, it takes 3.5 mins to get to the top, and once you're at the top there's heaps to do. You can eat/drink at the café/bar, go on bush walks or hikes - you could even walk back down! There are also viewing platforms with stunning views and a shop. We had lunch at the café - the hot Crab and Artichoke dip was delicious!



Excursion: Best of Juneau! Whale Watching, Mendenhall Glacier & Orca Point Lodge Meal

First stop via motorcoach is Tongass National Forest - the largest in USA. You are not allowed food or drink in there!

We had one hour to explore. I highly recommend taking the Nugget Falls Trail, a 2 mile hike. It gets you closest to Mendenhall Glacier and ends at an amazing waterfall – Nugget Falls. There is also a Photo trail option, which is a 15 minute roundtrip.

Next is a catamaran ride to Orca Point Lodge on Colt Island. Left off the pier at Orca Point Lodge is a rock pool with sea stars, crabs, sea urchins, seaweed manned by a naturalist who gives a fascinating talk and answers all your questions. We were then treated to a delicious feast before heading off for the final part of the excursion.

Did you know.... Sea stars (not Starfish - they aren't fish!) will eat by suctioning open a mussel and ejecting their

stomach, they'll digest the mussel then put their stomach back in their body.

Five minutes out from Orca lodge and we spot a pod of 4-5 Humpback whales bubble net feeding. Fascinating technique: they all swim in a circle blowing bubbles and singing, it confuses the fish and catches them within this 'bubble net'. Then when the time is right they will swim to the surface with mouths open, swallowing all the fish in their 'net'. It's very well orchestrated and incredibly sophisticated.

The reason I believe the tour guarantees you'll see whales, is the minerals that come from the melting glaciers feeds the plankton population, creating a smorgasboard for the whales in Stephens Passage, hence Juneau is the feeding ground the whales return to each summer.

Description That Helped Me Pick This Excursion:

DURATION: 6.25 Hours DEPARTURE TIME: 2:30pm

ADULT: US\$209.95 CHILD: US\$169.95

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Easy INCLUDES: Meal

RATING: 4½ Stars (60 Ratings)

TOP 3 REASONS TO BOOK:

- A deluxe catamaran cruise with guaranteed whale sightings
- Orca Point Lodge -- an exclusive island retreat
- The famous Mendenhall Glacier, not far from Juneau

ABOUT THE EXCURSION:

Experience Juneau's highlights on this ultimate combination tour. Start with a visit to the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Centre, talk with Forest Service interpreters and learn about the awesome force of glaciers.

Take a motor coach ride to scenic Auke Bay and board a water-jet-powered catamaran specifically designed for wildlife viewing. Relax in the warm, comfortable cabin surrounded by large windows as you ply the island-studded waters of Stephens Passage. This area is world-renowned as a favoured summer feeding ground for humpback whales.

Once whales have been sighted, your captain will gently manoeuvre the vessel to allow exceptional viewing and photo opportunities. The whales are often close enough to hear them breathe.

An on-board naturalist will explain the behaviour and habitat of the humpback whale and other wildlife you may encounter, including killer whales, Steller sea lions, Dall's porpoise, harbour seals, bald eagles and Sitka black-tail deer.

Take a break from cruising to step ashore at Orca Point Lodge on Colt Island to enjoy a feast that includes fresh grilled wild Alaska salmon, chicken kebabs, vegetable medley, rice pilaf, coleslaw, fresh rolls and dessert. The lodge offers peaceful seclusion with modern comforts in a remote wilderness setting.

Visit the marine life touch pool or take a stroll along the beach before the return cruise to Auke Bay.

Note: The operators of this tour guarantee that a whale will be sighted. If not, you will receive a US\$100 cash refund from the tour operator. In the past 15 years, whales have been sighted on every tour. Restrooms are available at all venues.

Thursday, July 18 | Skagway, Alaska, US | Arrive: 7:00 AM Depart: 9:00 PM

The rock wall opposite *Westerdam's* berth today is covered with insignias of all the ships that visit this port. I spotted *Prinsendam*, *Ryndam*, *Westerdam*, *Noordam* from 1994 and more. This tradition began in 1902, and it's alleged the higher on the cliff the insignia is placed, the more the crew revered their ship!

Unlike Juneau, Skagway is connected to the main highway. The boardwalk town has 500 residents in winter and 2,500 in summer, and an average of only 35 days of sunshine per year. This was my favourite port of the trip.

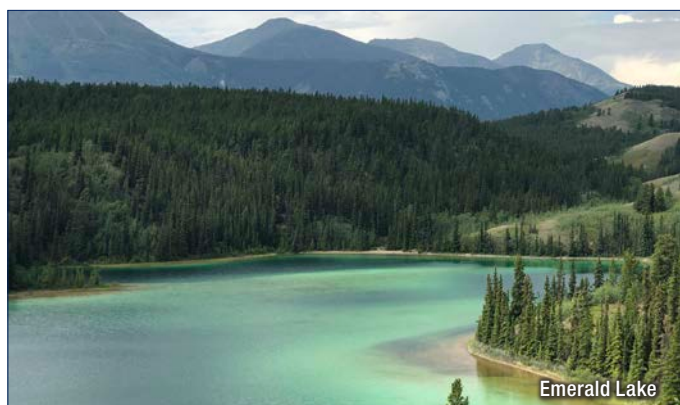
Excursion: White Pass Rail & Yukon Expedition

Passports are needed on this excursion as it travels into Canada and through a customs checkpoint.

The first part of this excursion is via deluxe motorcoach, with regular stops at stunning lakes and scenery. Tutshi Lake was incredible, its 14km long, 2km wide and over 200m deep. A few miles past Caribou Crossing is Emerald Lake that gets its name from its incredible blue-green colour, which is created by sunlight reflecting off a white layer of "marl" on the lake bed.

You travel through five climates enroute to the Yukon! A *Rainforest climate*; *Alpine Forest climate* - there is a bonsai effect at this level, as the trees only have a very small amount of soil to grow in and the result is cute, little trees! As it continues into Canada you go through a *Subarctic Tundra* - the same climate zone as the Arctic - nothing grows here as it's very high and all rock. Then it's through a *Boreal Forest climate* - this goes further than any other forest in world. The final climate zone is *Desert*.... the smallest one in world!

Caribou Crossing Trading Post is great, with tons to do. You have a couple of hours there, lunch is included, and there's time to explore and even take a dog-cart ride if you fancy (additional cost).



It's back on the coach with a short stop at the shops in Carcross - a town with 200 residents. If you have some Canadian currency left over from Vancouver, take it on this excursion, as these shops in Carcross (Yukon) will accept both USD & CAD.

A short trip on the coach to the White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad for the rest of the journey back to Skagway. The train gave me the feeling of being on the 'Gold Rush' ride at Rainbows End - although it's extremely comfortable. You're able to go out on the viewing platforms at each end of the car, and every car has a bathroom. The trip is so picturesque and as per all the excursions, the narrative that accompanied, was excellent. The journey starts at a very high elevation and you go through clouds/mist, it creates a very surreal atmosphere - gorgeous. The White Pass summit is 2,888ft and was completely misty when we travelled through it.

Description of Excursion (This was included as part of the famil):

DURATION: 8.25 Hours DEPARTURE TIME: 7:30am, 9:15am

ADULT: US\$219.95 CHILD: US\$159.95

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Easy INCLUDES: Meal

TOP 3 REASONS TO BOOK:

- Your chance to visit the majestic Yukon Territory
- The amazing and beautiful White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad
- A narrated journey featuring tunnels, trestles and grand vistas

ABOUT THE EXCURSION:

You've travelled so far already, now is a great time to make the 65-mile journey into the Yukon.

Board a deluxe motorcoach and experience the magic and the mystery of the famed Yukon Territory. Your adventure begins on the docks of Skagway and soon you'll be climbing the South Klondike Highway to the top of the White Pass -- 3,292 feet above sea level -- with views of majestic peaks, waterfalls, and glaciers from the coach. Leaving White Pass and the USA behind, you'll enter Canada and the unspoiled and untamed beauty of the Yukon Territory.

Marvel at the chain of lakes that form the headwaters of the Yukon River, explore the rustic town of Caribou Crossing (Carcross). Snap a quick photo of the world's smallest desert, and enjoy the tales of the Klondike Gold rush provided by your guide throughout your journey.

A stop at Caribou Crossing Trading Post is an opportunity to satisfy your wilderness appetite with a delicious chicken barbecue lunch complete with Grandma's all-you-can-eat homemade donuts.

Tour Yukon's most extensive Wildlife Museum, strolling among the creatures of Yukon's past and present, with favourites including steppe bison, grizzly bears, monster moose, woolly mammoth, and the world's largest mounted polar bear. Absorb some authentic Canadian culture with Caribou Crossing's newest exhibit -- the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Heritage Center. This interpretive display focuses on the history of Canada's Mounties and highlights their role in the Yukon Territory during the Klondike Gold Rush.

At the Dog Musher's Village, visit with Iditarod dog mushers and take pictures with sled dogs and husky puppies; or, for an extra fee, join them for a dog-cart ride with actual Iditarod and Yukon Quest dogs. Kids and adults alike will enjoy the petting farm.

Back at Fraser, British Columbia, you'll board the White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad for a truly unforgettable ride down this historic and breathtaking narrow-gauge track.

Notes: This adventure crosses the US/Canadian border; US and Canadian citizens must carry a passport and ship ID. All other nationalities must have a valid passport, visa and ship ID.

Friday, July 19 | Glacier Bay | Arrive: 7:00 AM Depart: 5:00 PM

6am we were met with thick fog at the head of Glacier Bay. 8am the Glacier Bay Park Rangers predicted the fog should start lifting in half an hour. I went out on the bow at 8.30am, the fog had lifted a bit, it was FREEZING. Within 20 minutes I had seen six mountain goats and six sea otters. Later we saw Arctic Terns - which the Park Ranger had never seen here before. If you prefer to stay in your stateroom, you can put your tv on the Front Bow Camera channel and you'll hear the narration from the Park Rangers that is broadcast onto the front bow.

At Margerie Glacier, *Westerdam* turns eight times so people on both sides of the ship (and rear staterooms) all get a great view. When cruising down Glacier Bay the wind factor makes it freezing, once we'd stopped, it was not as cold and also it's very sheltered in the bay.

There are lots of activities on this day, such as meet the Glacier Bay Park Rangers, Pea Soup served on Deck 3, 'The Wonders of Glacier Bay National Park' talk by the Park Ranger on The Mainstage, to name a few.

I really saw the benefits of having a verandah on this

itinerary when we were cruising Glacier Bay. Apart from being able to cosy up with a blanket on your verandah watching the amazing scenery. A priceless moment was sitting quietly on it and hearing the movement of Margerie Glacier - slight cracking and popping sounds as trapped air within the glacier gets displaced.

There is so much open deck space on Holland America Line ships, you really don't have to worry about not getting a good view.

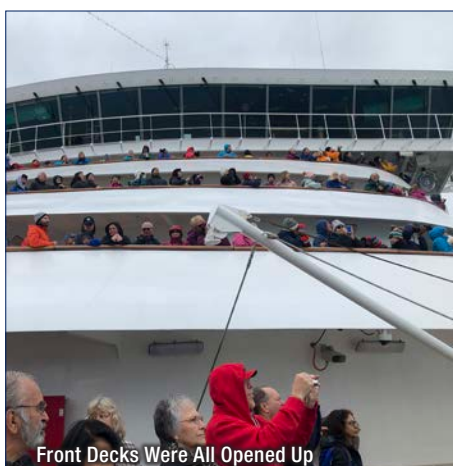
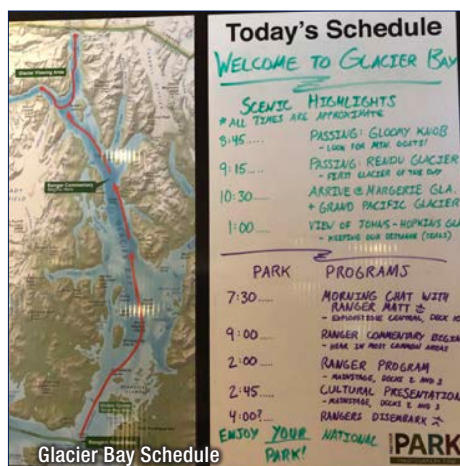
Did you know: Glacier Bay is 65 miles long.

A fjord used to be a glacier that's receded.

Of the 100,000 glaciers in Alaska, only 50 are tidewater glaciers, all the others are alpine and valley glaciers.

We entered the Fjords at 6am and exited 6pm, the Glacier Bay Park rangers were with us all day!

The second Gala night was held this night. The menu in the Dining Room was Surf and turf - which meant lobster!! We also took part in Trivia which was held in Billboard Onboard. After dinner we enjoyed The Mainstage performance, 'Off the Charts'.



Front Decks Were All Opened Up



Margerie Glacier

Saturday, July 20 | At Sea

There is a talk at 8am that goes over the arrangements for the land portion. The main point was to take only one suitcase to Denali (it gets trucked separately) and label the other with a luggage tag you're provided 'Meet Me In Anchorage'. This is a great feature of the Land+Sea programme, as it means you don't have to take all your evening wear etc with you on the land journey.

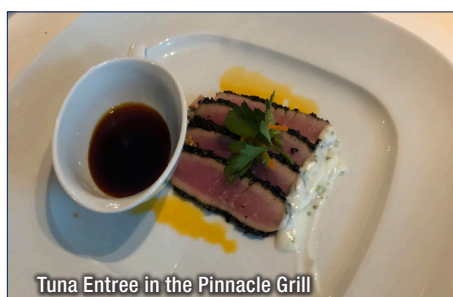
I attended an EXC Talk: 'Pacific Giants: Iconic Whales of the Northwest' held in The Mainstage. It was packed! The talk was given by the Cruise Director and was excellent.

Did you know: Humpback whales sing!! There are two types of Orcas (Killer Whales): Transient and Resident. They look very similar, however Transients eat marine mammals, and Residents eat fish.

Tonights dinner was booked in the Pinnacle Grill and was absolutely exceptional. We topped off the evening with a session at Billboard Onboard, needless to say, the musicians were extremely talented and entertaining.



EXC Talk - The Mainstage



Tuna Entree in the Pinnacle Grill



Billboard Onboard

Sunday, July 21 | Seward (Anchorage), Alaska, US | Arrive: 4:30 AM

Disembarkation was seamless: Land Journey guests met in the Main Lounge and were sent to their bus when it was ready. No queues! We left at 7am, for a 5pm arrival at McKinley Chalet Resort, with regular stops every two hours.

Seward: 3,000 residents, however it gets really popular in summer for camping and hiking. The beautiful mountain ranges still had snow on them.

Anchorage: 320,000 residents. There are a lot of company headquarters in Anchorage, along with a Military base. Average cost US\$36,500 for a family home, medium Income US\$60,000. There is NO income tax in Alaska and Anchorage does not have a sales tax. 289 Moose were hit on the highway in the last year, they have signs along the motorway updating the moose-road toll. The sun doesn't go below 18 degrees on the horizon, 19 hours of daylight... means you probably won't get to see Northern Lights here in the summer!

Did you know: 400 forest fires in Alaska are caused by lightening strikes per year!

The motor coach stops for lunch in Wasilla at the Settlers Bay Lodge. Five buses arrived at the same time as us, some were heading north, some south. The driver said he's seen 20 buses here before, there was seven today! We arrived at 11.45 and had an hour to have lunch, beverages etc and a wander around. This meal is included in the Land+Sea Journey fare. I was so impressed with the cleanliness of the place, it was well set up and tastefully decorated. Most importantly, the food was excellent - buffet style, make-your-own sandwich and salads, along with drinks and cookies. There was an array of cheeses and meats, salad ingredients and dressings to make your

sandwich, plus a pasta, green and potato salads. Most impressive of all, was that even though five buses had arrived at the same time we only had to queue behind a couple of people for the buffet and got an awesome table on the deck, in the sunshine with stunning views!

After a fairly busy cruise itinerary, the long bus ride to Denali was actually very pleasant and relaxing. We stopped every two hours, saw beautiful Alaskan scenery, as well as forest fire remnants, earthquake damaged land, glacier-fed lakes and towns enroute. The coach was very comfortable, with complimentary water, muesli bars and cookies. Other Land+Sea Journeys may spend a night in Anchorage, our hosts chose this D6 (Direct to Denali) itinerary for the maximum time in Denali, mindful that some of us were time-poor.

About two hours from our destination we rounded a bend on the highway and looming in the distance, in all its majestic beauty, was Denali (Mt McKinley)! It was a stunning day and we could see the snow capped peaks from this far away! On a clear day you can see it from Anchorage!

Mt McKinley or Denali? The name of the highest mountain in North America became a subject of dispute in 1975, when the Alaska Legislature asked the U.S. Government to officially change its name from Mount McKinley to Denali. The name Denali is based on the Koyukon name of the mountain, Deenaalee ("the high one").

Our third stop - another 15 minute break - was at a Veterans Memorial, there were good views of Denali and moving plaques and odes to the different services, as well as people who served and helped the country in some way eg helicopter rescues.



Settlers Bay Lodge



McKinley Chalet Resort



Room in Canyon Lodge

Just prior to arriving at the McKinley Chalet Resort, a representative boarded and provided everyone with an envelope containing various information, including our room numbers. The bus driver drove us around the resort dropping everyone off at their accommodation. At 7pm it was 24 degrees! Right across the road from the resort is a row of lovely shops and eateries. Great shops and fantastic food options, including an organic café, a Subway and a hot dog place that people travel for miles to eat at (they serve reindeer hot dogs!).

McKinley Chalet Resort was rebuilt in 2016. Our room, in a complex called 'Canyon Lodge' was lovely. It was spacious, nicely decorated, comfortable beds, huge bathroom and only a half a minute walk from Denali Square, where the resorts' restaurant and shops are. A laundromat is situated on level 2 of Canyon Lodge.

Monday, July 22 | Denali National Park, Alaska

An absolutely stunning, hot day! Our air-conditioned motorcoach is new and very comfortable with bucket seats and seat belts. There are eight screens that flip down, the driver will train a camera on wildlife and you can watch it on these screens. It's a very clear picture and often you wouldn't have been able to see the animal without this camera. The driver requests you yell out 'Stop' if you see wildlife. The first 15 miles is asphalt, beyond this only buses are allowed, and it then turns to a gravel road. Hundreds of fires are burning in Alaska at the moment, a couple of weeks ago the mountains were covered in a haze.

Around 75 buses come into the park at this time of the year, the first one enters around 5.30am and last one will exit the park at 11pm. Maintenance crew check the road every morning, and graders will smooth it out. There are private lodges six hours into the park (guests can fly in).

Denali National Park and Preserve is over 6 million acres, the 3rd largest national park in the U.S.A. All the trees in the Boreal are Spruce, they aren't very big, but are up to 400 years old! Their stunted growth is due to the dry, desert-like environment, and it's dark and cold for most of the year.

The bears in Denali National Park also don't grow very big and most of them are a blonde colour. Unlike larger coastal bears that have a huge protein/salmon intake, bears in Denali are primarily vegetarian. They have long, sharp claws for digging for roots after their hibernation and there's no greenery around. They'll then move onto berries, eating up to 200,000 berries/day. There are around 300 – 350 Grizzly bears in the 6 million acre park.

You won't see Bald Eagles in Denali as they are fish eaters and nest in large trees, the park doesn't have either.



The treeless area is the 'tundra' – about 3000ft in elevation, it's very windy and only foliage grows.

The bus driver commentates ALL day. It's a fabulous tour! There are toilet stops every two hours, as well as a couple of scenic stops, and a 20 minute stop on the way back. At the last stop you are given a very nice 50-page A5 souvenir book. The video footage is recorded and available for purchase. I would recommend sitting near the front to middle of the coach to get a better view. Often we came across animals coming down the road towards the coach, the people at the front would get a good view before it veered off the road. Plus getting off the coach can take a while if you're at the back!

Wildlife Count:

Moose: 7 Caribou: 11
Red Fox: 1 Dall Sheep: 2
Brown / Grizzly Bear: 10
Gyr Falcon (largest North American Falcon): 1

Did you know: Caribou are smaller than moose, and both males and females grow antlers.



Description of the Excursion:

TUNDRA WILDERNESS TOUR

PORT: Denali EXCURSION TYPE: Sightseeing
DURATION: 8 Hours ACTIVITY LEVEL: Light
COST: Included in all Double & Triple Denali Journeys
INCLUDES: Snack Box (Lunch Box Available for Purchase)

ABOUT THE EXCURSION:

Alaska's Denali National Park is where beauty is untamed and majestic animals roam their wide-open habitat as they have for millennia. On a Tundra Wilderness Tour, included in all Holland America Line two- and three-night Denali stays, travel deep into the heart of Denali for the adventure of a lifetime. This comfortable, comprehensive and fully narrated, six- to eight-hour excursion takes you 62 miles into

the Park's unspoiled wilderness, for up-close views of Mt. Denali. It offers your best chance to see Alaska's marquee animals—grizzlies, caribou, Dall sheep, moose and wolves—in a setting of incomparable grandeur.

Travel 62 miles into the wild heart of Denali National Park for the best possible views of Mt. Denali, abundant flora and fauna, and a host of magnificent vistas.

This is your best chance to capture thrilling images of Alaska's Big Five—grizzlies, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves and moose—foraging freely in their magnificent habitat.

Every Tundra Wilderness Tour is designed to provide a comfortable way to explore Denali. It includes narration provided by a knowledgeable driver/guide and features large screens so you won't miss a thing.

Tuesday, July 23 | Denali National Park, Alaska

McKinley Explorer® Luxury Domed Railcar to Anchorage, Alaska, US - Another stunning day.

You are required to put your suitcase outside your room at 7am (it is transported separately to the hotel in Anchorage), then there's time to get coffee / breakfast before heading to the motorcoach at 8.40am, that will take you to the McKinley Explorer depot, situated in Denali National Park.

The McKinley Explorer® Luxury Domed Railcar is a two-storied glass-domed railcar. The top level is seating and each carriage has its own guide and a bar. Downstairs is the dining area, bathrooms, a sitting room and access onto the carriage viewing platforms. You have a set seat number, but can walk around the train at free will and out onto the viewing platforms at any time. The railcar is gorgeous! The seats are very comfortable and the glass roof is fantastic - the top part is slightly tinted, providing shade from the sun. The train is cashless (they accept all major credit/debit cards), you set up a tab for the day at the bar, and downstairs is pay as you go for the meals. The menus are great - the snack menu has really good options, and the lunch one is excellent! Settling the tab was very easy, it was great service all round.

The journey takes 8.5 hours, the guide is lovely and stays in your carriage for the entire trip. As the journey begins in Denali National Park, you travel through some of the most pristine, untouched areas of the region. At one point we saw the very top of Denali, it was 75 miles away. We also saw a brand new Salmon run, the fish were thick in the river, and just out of the Pacific Ocean, as they hadn't changed colour yet, they were still black.

As we neared Talkeetna it began to rain, the locals were very happy, as it was sorely needed for the forest fires. The wildlife love it too, it's nice and cooling for them. Shortly after it began raining we started seeing a whole lot of moose!

In the afternoon, a representative comes around and asks if you want to book any excursions in Anchorage. One that came highly recommended is the Anchorage Trolley Tour - a bus ride that goes takes in the historic and scenic sights of Anchorage - it's approximately one hour and leaves regularly throughout the day.

The first three carriages of the train belong to Holland America Line, then two smaller ones at the back are Princess Cruises. It is a really lovely, relaxing train ride.

You're given documentation and explanations about the transfer to the hotel etc, it's very thorough and again, you don't have to worry about a thing. Transfer from train to hotel was by coach and again a representative came onboard and explained the process. The transfer to the Westmark Hotel took about five minutes.

Our room at the Westmark was large, clean, had a coffee machine, iron, desk and the ability to be adjoining. The front desk staff were very helpful, we gave them our flight details and they booked us on the appropriate airport transfer... easy.

We had dinner at the Glacier Brewhouse, it's directly across the road from the Westmark, and the service and food was excellent. Even though the restaurant is huge, I would recommend booking as it's very popular.
<https://www.glacierbrewhouse.com/menu/>



Wednesday, July 24 | Anchorage, Alaska, US

The transfer to Anchorage Airport from the Westmark hotel can be pre-booked or added for US\$20. Transfers leave every hour, and as I said, the hotel staff will advise you as to which time to leave. Our transfer was at 12:00. We were to put our bags out at 11am and the hotel collected them to load onto our bus.

Check out is 11am. You don't need to check out or produce a credit card as it's all part of the Land+Sea Journey.

Anchorage airport is huge, this is due in part to the Freight industry. A lot of companies elect to send freight over the Arctic Circle to Anchorage, then onto the lower 48, rather than around the world which is more expensive. It also boasts the largest float plane airport too.

Allow plenty of time to get through customs. Our United plane didn't have a tv, but had a wifi option so you could watch movies on your device. The flight took 4hrs 10mins to get to San Francisco, and because we had booked the flights through AirNZ, our bags were checked right through to Auckland.

Final Thoughts...

I would highly recommend taking a Land+Sea Journey, it was incredible to see the interior of Alaska as well as the coast. The Holland America Line programmes are so well organised, the pre-arranged land transport and accommodation combined with an amazing cruise makes for such an awesome trip, you literally have nothing to worry about. And the figures prove it, 1,100 out of the 1,900 passengers onboard *Westerdam* were taking a Land+Sea Journey.

The service onboard *Westerdam* was impeccable, from the dining staff to the laundry service and our steward, who provided thoughtful extra touches, such as putting a blanket on each of our verandah deck chairs the day we cruised Glacier Bay. Every Detail, Every Day for the Best Service at Sea - 100% true.

The food onboard *Westerdam* was exceptional, I can't speak highly enough of it, even the Lido Market food was at an incredibly high standard, it was fresh, hot, and had a lot of options.

I highly recommend doing shore excursions to really experience each port, and a good idea is to build it into your holiday budget. The excursions are very well organised and the drivers, guides and specialists are so knowledgeable, their narratives are very interesting and informative. I also suggest pre-booking these so you don't miss out on the popular ones.

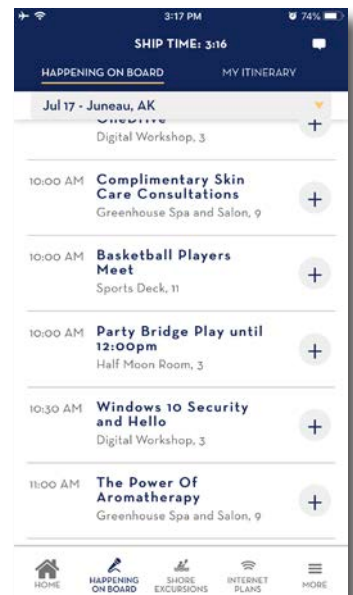
A great feature of the Land+Sea Journey is one of your bags will be sent to meet you at the hotel at the end of your Land journey. Regardless of whether your cruise is before or after the land portion, you can put all your fancy clothes, shoes, bags etc in one suitcase and not have to cart it around with you, it will then be transferred again to your hotel /ship post the land journey.

The Navigator app is absolutely invaluable. You can do so much on it, including starring your favourite activities and it will remind you 15 minutes prior. You can keep an eye on your onboard account, and message/chat with fellow passengers. Best of all, you don't need to purchase any wi-fi packages to use it.

Cruising Glacier Bay made me realise the benefits of booking a verandah stateroom.

I purchased a Quench Beverage Package, which was awesome. It covers most non-alcoholic drinks, and best of all, it included specialty coffees and bottles of water. I had at least two cappuccinos and several bottles of Evian water every day, so the cost of US\$144.48pp was well worth it.

I definitely recommend purchasing a laundry package, it saves having to pack so much, and is an excellent, efficient service.



Everywhere we stayed (PanPacific, *Westerdam*, McKinley Chalet Resort, Westmark) all had USB chargers.

Save your souvenir shopping till you get to Anchorage as it's much cheaper – unless you want to get something specific to the area eg Denali National Park and Preserve.

All the tour guides were extremely good at their job, from the boat excursions to the motorcoach and train journeys, the crew were very knowledgeable, friendly, knew their stuff and nothing was a problem. I couldn't fault them and they made the tours really enjoyable.

The food throughout the journey was outstanding, onboard *Westerdam*, at McKinley Chalet Resort, and on the McKinley Explorer® Domed Railcar, absolutely superb.

There is no other place on Earth like Alaska! I now understand why it is our top-selling destination.

Learn more about *Westerdam*, Alaska and Land + Sea Journeys:

Westerdam - https://www.hollandamerica.com/en_US/cruise-ships/ms-westerdam/5.html

We Are Alaska - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHQoJiwqgl4>

Land + Sea Journeys - https://www.hollandamerica.com/en_US/cruise-destinations/alaska-land-sea-journeys.html