

National Geographic Country

Written by

Wednesday, 18 August 2004 00:00



Across the Georgia Strait from here lies an island called [Mitlenatch](#) , an island studied by the [National Geographic Society](#)

. It is a bird sanctuary as well as a haven for the hundreds of seals and sea lions that inhabit this part of the world and it was an island we wanted to see close up.

We rented a boat from here, Salmon Point Resort, and set out on the mirror-like strait for Mitlenatch, roughly six miles from here. Somehow, it doesn't look that far away but it took us over 25 minutes to get there. The water was so calm, it was hard to fathom that we are on the ocean and I kept thinking about how our waterskiing offspring would have loved it. As we approached the island we could hear the birds before we could actually see them however, by the huge, "white-washed" rocks, it was evident that it was home to thousands of cormorants, seagulls and others. Once we got closer we could see the birds clearly as well as dozens of seals sunbathing on the lower rocks. Slowly we circumnavigated the entire island, (which was much larger than it seems from Salmon Point) and at every nook and cranny we could see both seals and sea lions basking in the sun. Not being that knowledgeable, at first we were unable to tell the difference between them but as we circled the island, their differences became more apparent. The seals seemed shy and as we approached them, they would slip into the water just in case we got too close, so that they could get away easily. They were black, dark brown and some even blonde in colour. The sea lions were grey and spotted, huge, lazy and almost daring in their observation of us. They totally ignored us and seemed completely indifferent to our presence, evidence that they were confident of their power and their size.

On our trek back to the resort, we encountered many of the birds, (which I wish we were familiar with so I could name them) and briefly caught site of either dolphins or perhaps a whale scout, but they (it) submerged under the water before we could be sure. The Strait of Georgia remained calm as did the day and we thoroughly enjoyed our visit over to the craggy island.