

by Dave Hustvedt

There is only one kayak rental in the Park, Glacier Bay Sea Kayaks. They weren't able to talk to us seriously about reserving kayaks

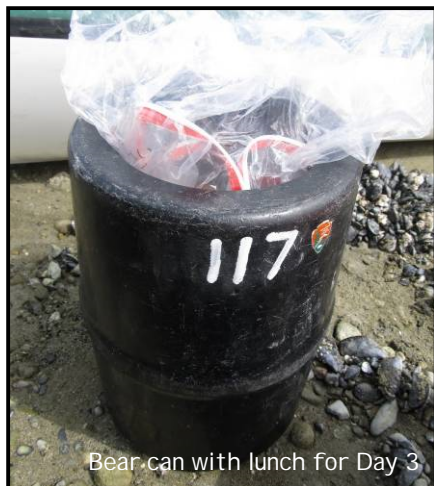
There are almost no guide books specifically for kayaking in Glacier Bay. Some books describe kayaking up the inland passage from Seattle to Glacier Bay, but are not really useful for planning a trip. The only guide that gave details that we needed was *Adventure Kayaking — Trips in Glacier Bay* by Don Skillman. At that, it is somewhat out of date. Overall we spent about four months planning the trip—getting navigation charts, studying tide tables, buying needed gear, laying out an itinerary, planning menus, packaging food, and practicing self rescue techniques in pool sessions.

FLOAT PLAN: We decided to paddle up the eastern arm of the bay called Muir Inlet. This side of the bay is more sheltered and has shorter open water crossings than the western arm (three miles wide versus more than seven miles). We decided that June would be best month; it tends to be the driest though not the warmest. We would be dropped by a tour boat at the mouth of the inlet, paddle five days, and be picked by the boat at the same spot. Initially, we planned to paddle all the way up to Muir Glacier at the end of the inlet, but decided not to after talking to a group of paddlers being picked up as we were being dropped off.



EQUIPMENT: In addition to the normal minimalist kayak camping equipment we took a rainproof/bugproof tent (REI's Half Dome 2 was ideal for this trip), a compass, a GPS loaded with detailed maps, appropriate sections of the Glacier Bay nautical chart double laminated, Brian Hunter's SPOT so we could email our fussbudget adult children or call for help, a 12' Kelty tarp and

poles, a VHF nautical radio (it floats!), wet suits, waterproof paddling gloves, mosquito face guards and Outdoor Research hats with ear flaps. No flashlights are needed in June.



Bear can with lunch for Day 3.

FOOD: We planned for 3,000 calories per day per person and packed breakfast, lunch, and dinner food in bags marked with calorie counts.

Dinners were freeze-dried meals with cheese added (from big Costco blocks). We tested all the freeze-dried entrees to make sure we liked them before they were added to the menu. Lunches were nuts, tuna fish, and dried fruit. Breakfasts were oatmeal with dried fruit added. Chocolate almond butter was put into squeeze tubes. The Park Service provides plastic bear-proof containers for food and trash; we used four of them.

WASTE: Unlike river travel here in the West, all human waste is deposited between the high and low tide lines with toilet paper being burned. The only thing we packed out was trash. All meals were eaten below the high tide line to avoid leaving food smells to attract bears. Food was stored in the bear-proof containers away from the tent.



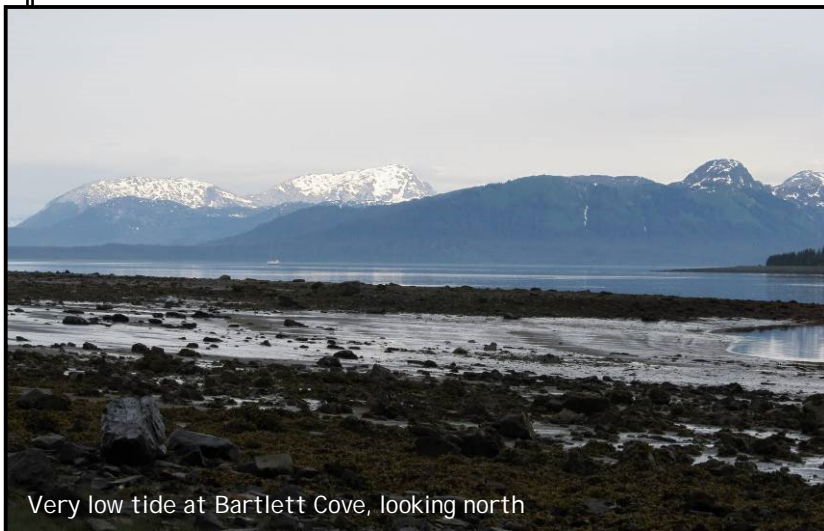
WILDLIFE: We saw whales, seals, otters, porpoises, oyster catchers (imagine a crow with a carrot for a beak walking around at the campsite) and eagles in abundance. None of our campsites were bothered by bears and we never saw any bear sign except in Bartlett Cove. Bear spray is an option but you have to buy it in Gustavus since the airlines won't accept industrial strength spray in checked luggage. In any event, I have used bear spray against a charging bear and found it worthless; the bear didn't stop and I was blinded. On this trip I decided to bring a .44 revolver in my checked luggage.

TIDES: There are two tides every day. During the time we were in the bay, the tides were about 25 feet from low to high, and the highest high tide was late at night. The tent and all equipment had to be above the high tide line

or be gone in the morning. That meant unloading and loading the kayaks every day and hauling them up and down the beach. The tides also made for currents as much as six knots, though in the Muir Inlet itself the currents were never more than two knots. As always, the tides determined when to paddle in order to go with the flow.

THE ITINERARY

DAY 1: Fly to Seattle, Juneau, and Gustavus. Alaska Air flies a 737 for the short hop from Juneau to Gustavus that ends with an exciting landing on Gustavus's short runway—think of an aircraft carrier with trees. A ten-mile ride to Bartlett Cove with a stop for stove gas at the general store. Set up camp and get permits and a back-country briefing.



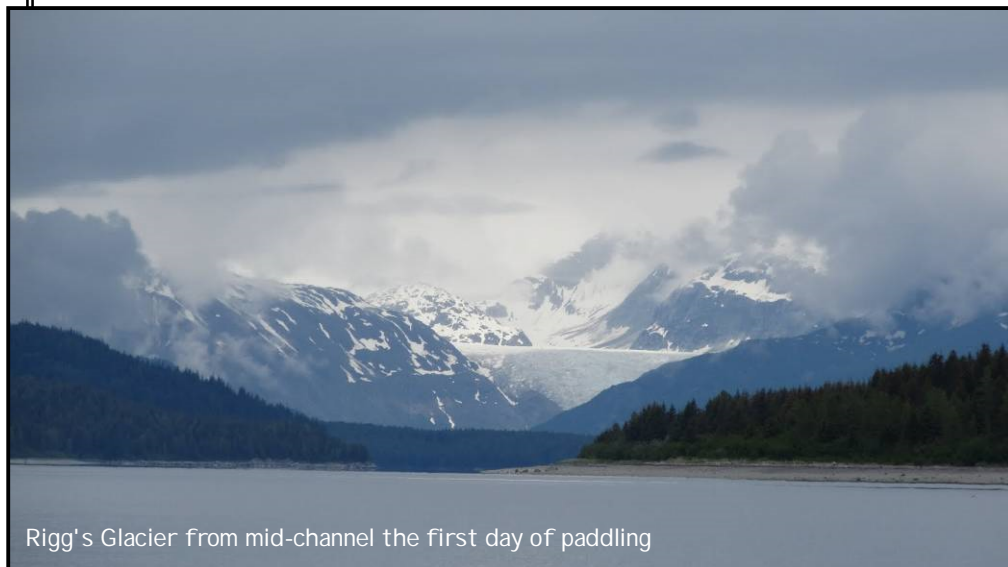
Very low tide at Bartlett Cove, looking north

DAY 2: Shake-down paddle in Bartlett Cove and load boats on the small tour boat for an early morning departure.



Castaway with gear on Sebree Island

DAY 3: Pack-up and load our gear on the boat for the twenty-mile trip to Muir inlet. Unneeded gear is left in a small shed. After an hour tour, the boat drops us at Sebree Island. The people on the boat watch with disbelief, and grave doubts about our survival, as our gear and kayaks are unloaded. As the boat leaves and all is quiet, I think that they might be right. We load the kayaks and paddle nine miles to our first camp at Mt. Wright.



Rigg's Glacier from mid-channel the first day of paddling

DAY 4: We leave early to catch the rising tide to carry us into Adams Inlet. The depths shown on our chart are wrong; the land is rising about an inch a year and the bay that we had planned to stop in is too shallow to enter. We wait for the tide to ebb and paddle back down the inlet for a campsite. A 13-mile day. Two water bags are carried away by the high tide that night when I forget to drag them above the high tide mark.



Bergy bit in Muir Inlet

DAY 5: We leave on a rising tide and cross Muir Inlet and head north. Small ice blocks (bergy bits) start to show up as we head up the inlet to Hunter Cove and camp. A twelve-mile day with a three-mile open water crossing.



Rocky beach at Hunter Cove



McBride Glacier from the west side of Muir Inlet

DAY 6: We leave very early to catch the falling tide and head back south to Sebree Island. The water is perfectly smooth and reflects the 5,000' peaks around us. We camp on the east side of the island away from the drop point on the west side.



Heading back to Sebree Island

DAY 7: We have a late breakfast and paddle around the island and into the west branch of the bay, then back to camp. The traverse around the island is fairly exposed and provides some excitement with wind-driven waves.

DAY 8: We break camp and load the kayaks to paddle around the island for our 9:00 am pickup. We meet another couple at the pickup point—the first people in several days. We load the gear and kayaks on the tour boat and get to enjoy a ride around the rest of Glacier Bay's western arm to view the large calving glaciers. There seems to be more wildlife in the western arm; bears, sheep, and otters are common. Camp back at Bartlett Cove.



DAY 9: The flight to Juneau is late in the day so we spend time hiking around and see our only close-up bear as he ambles along the beach near the Park headquarters. In the town of Juneau a cable car goes up the hill. We thought the cable was squeaking until we realized it was the flock of eagles in the trees.



Lou Ann and Dave on the boat back to Bartlett Cove

EDITOR'S NOTE: Next year the Hustvedts plan to paddle the Beardslee Islands which are just north of Bartlett Cove but offer interesting wildlife viewing and challenging navigation. Dave says going with some other paddlers from Colorado would make for a great trip.

Here is a link to the pictures from this trip; they're all wonderful and each has an informative caption:
<https://picasaweb.google.com/lahustvedt/GlacierBay2011?feat=email#>