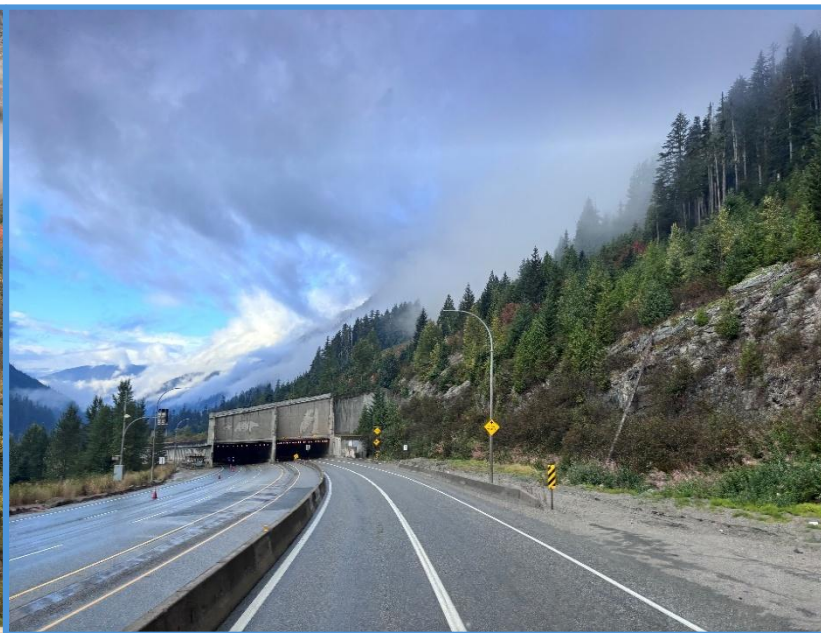




Tofino Trip Sept. 25-28, 2026
SD73 International Student Program



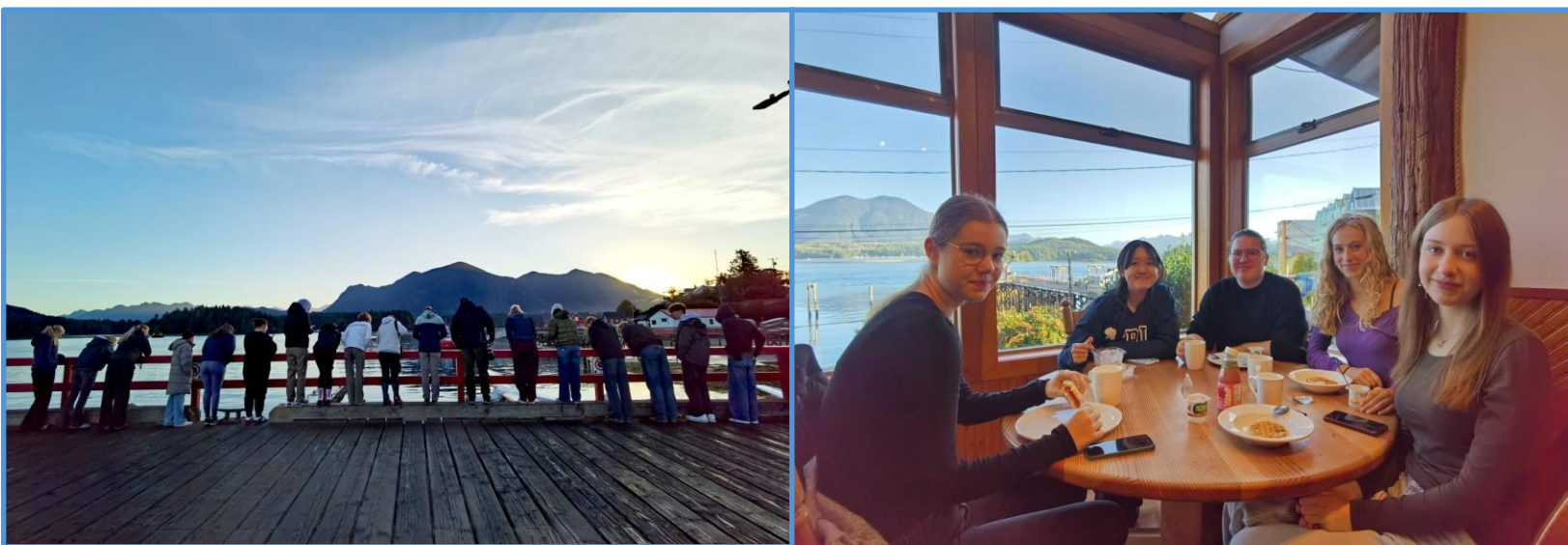
A group of students and three chaperones left Kamloops at 7:00AM on Sept. 25 and drove south down the Coquihalla Highway to Vancouver. We had our first washroom stop at Hope and then carried on to the Tsawwassen ferry terminal. After a brief 30 minute delay, we sailed across to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. The wind was very strong during our sailing. So much so that the top deck was closed to passengers. We were thankful that it wasn't cancelled. Despite the weather, most of the students stayed outside on a lower deck and we managed to see 5 Hump-backed Whales.

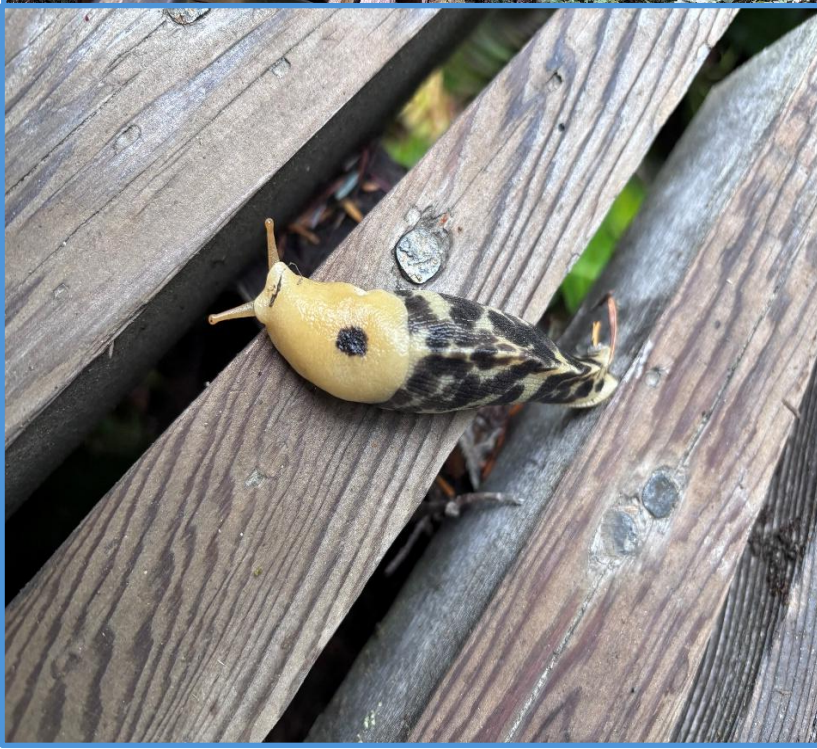


The drive from Nanaimo to Tofino takes just under 3 hours. We stopped in Port Alberni for a washroom break and grocery shopping at the Walmart. We then finished the rest of the drive to Tofino as the skies cleared. It was just getting dark as we checked into the hostel in Tofino and the students got settled in their rooms and prepared dinner in the shared kitchen.



The next morning, we had optional wildlife viewing on the dock time from roughly 7:00-8:30AM. We saw a family of 7 River Otters, Sea Stars, and a variety of other marine life. We then left our hostel at 9:00 and did both loops of the rainforest trail hike in Pacific Rim National Park. Students enjoyed seeing an old growth temperate rainforest and we posed with some of the giant red cedar trees there, many of them around 700 years old or older. All the hiking here is done on a boardwalk trail and visitors can learn about ancient temperate rain forests.





After lunch we left for our whale watch tour. We split up into three groups and boarded three different boats to spread out in the area to look for whales. It didn't take long to see 5-6 Gray Whales feeding in the area. In addition to the whales, we also saw Steller and California Sea Lions, Sea Otters, Harbour Seals, a Fried Egg Jellyfish, and several types of sea birds.

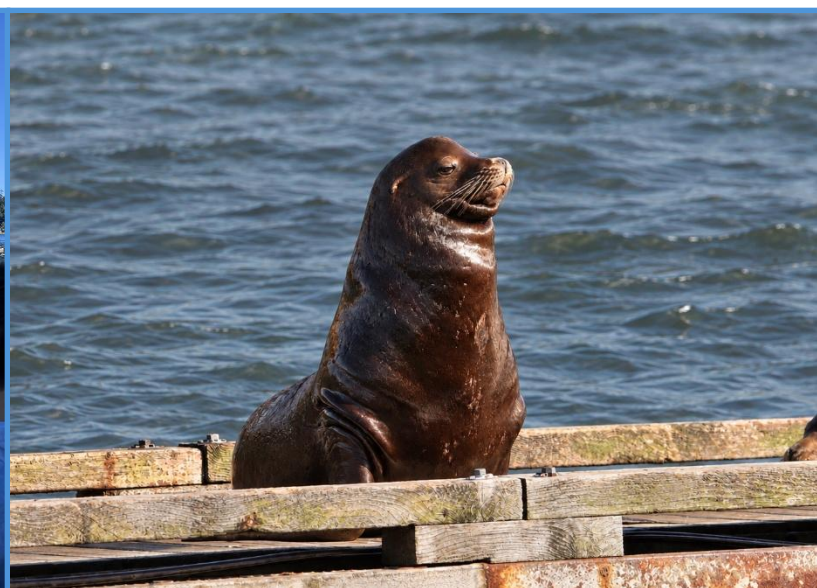




That night we had dinner and went to bed early in preparation for the next early morning bear watching tour. At 7:00AM we met at our bear watching tour location and again boarded the three boats. The Black Bears were a bit frustrating to find but we eventually saw two and then had great views of resting Harbour Seals, and a bald Eagle. We enjoyed beautiful weather again.



Following an early lunch, we drove south to Ucluelet and visited the aquarium there. Just outside the aquarium, a small group of California Sea Lions sat on one of the docks. The aquarium is very informative and highly recommended. It is also a catch and release aquarium. The species are caught locally, shown for a short time, and then released back to their locations.



After this, we drove to Long Beach and had 2 hours there playing sports, walking into the ocean, or relaxing in the sun to the sound of waves. We were able to see two more Gray Whales there through a spotting scope and took some photos of surfers with whales in the background. There are not too many places in the world where you can surf with whales!



We then drove to a different beach closer to Tofino where we climbed onto a headland with a great view of the ocean, did some tidal pooling, and then cooked some hot dog and smores over a fire as the sun set. It was gorgeous weather again 😊.







On the way home we stopped at the Goats on the Roof tourist trap in Coombs and the students had an hour to check out this place. The return ferry was on time and we enjoyed fantastic whale watching for most of the trip. We saw 3 Orcas (2 near Nanaimo and 1 near Horseshoe Bay) and a minimum of 9 Hump-backed Whales from the top deck. The rest of the drive back to Kamloops went according to plan with a washroom and food stop in Hope.

Students on this trip were from: Germany, Switzerland, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, and Belgium.

Trip Mammal List

Black Bear – 2	Harbour Seal – 17	Steller Sea Lion – 40	California Sea Lion – 10
Gray Whale – 8	Hump-backed Whale – 17	Orca – 3	
Sea Otter – 40	River Otter – 7	Mule Deer – 5	

Accommodations: Whalers Guesthouse

Whale and Bear Watching Tours: Remote Passages Marine Excursions

Favourite Moment:

1. Ines – Whale watching because I've never seen whales and it was really impressive and beautiful.
2. Saskia – Whale watching because it was very surreal to see such big and impressive whales.
3. Lucy – Seeing the whales because you only see them in movies and not real life. They were amazing and beautiful.
4. Luca – Both boat tours because of the combination of nature and animals. It was everything that I wanted to see.
5. Jose – Seeing the Orcas because it is one of my favourite animals.
6. Victor – Seeing the bears because I liked the vibe, landscape, and searching for the animals in nature.
7. Paul – Walking into the Pacific Ocean because I was never there before.
8. Jonas W – Going to the beach, playing football, and walking in the ocean because these things made me feel alive.
9. Ben – When we saw all the whales on the ferries and during the whale watching tour because I've never seen a whale before. It was fantastic to see them in the wild.
10. Anna P – Being at the beach and seeing Orcas and whales. It was my dream to see both.
11. Hanna – The whole beach day because we got to play football, walk into the ocean, cook hot dogs and smores, go tidal pooling, and watch the sunset.
12. Hannes – Whale watching because it was really cool to see the whales. It was my first time to see whales.
13. Theresa – Whale watching because the whales were so near and it was fun to sit in the front of the boat when we went so fast. It was stunning to see all the animals.
14. Stella – Whale watching because I've never seen a whale before and I also loved to see seals and otters. I loved to see the animals.
15. Anton – At the beach because we were all together and we saw so much wildlife there. We could really touch the sea stars and crabs. We were all together with our friends and had fun at the fire.
16. Haruki – Whale watching because it was my first time to see a whale in the wild.
17. Clara – Whale watching because we could see the tail and that was very cool.
18. Max – Whale watching because I liked the boat ride and seeing the Gray Whales.
19. Helene – Whale watching because I've never seen a whale and it was crazy how close I was to them. I also liked the boat ride.
20. Luna – Whale watching because I love sea animals and really appreciated seeing them.
21. Jakob – Being on the boat when we went so fast because it felt like a roller coaster.
22. Anna B – When we saw the whales because I've never seen them before and it was a great experience.
23. Jasmin – Seeing whales and orcas and the campfire because seeing whales was my dream and the campfire was fun and the food was good.
24. Emma – the first view of the whales and orcas because I've never seen either of them in real life before.
25. Lena – Whale watching because it was so impressive that there are so many kinds of animals in the sea by Tofino.
26. Theo – Seeing the Orca on the ferry because it is very impressive to see such a beautiful wild animal.
27. Marie – The walk in the rainforest because I love nature and it was really great seeing a rainforest and all the animals.
28. Josefine – Watching the sun rise on the dock and seeing the wildlife there because it was so quiet and you could only hear waves.
29. Amelie – Being on Long Beach because my friend and I climbed up a rock and yoga.

One Thing That I Learned:

1. Ines – Gray Whales do not jump because they are too heavy and their fins are too small.
2. Saskia – Black Bears can open muscles (shellfish) and eat pretty much everything.
3. Lucy – I thought Black Bears were much bigger than they actually are.
4. Luca – Sea Otters keep the population of Sea Urchins at their proper numbers.
5. Jose – That nature being unpredictable makes every moment more special.
6. Victor – The speed of whales during migration is about 7km/h so not as fast as I thought.
7. Paul – The forest around Tofino contains trees that are very old, some that are more than 700 years old.
8. Jonas W – You only live once, do this trip, you need to recognize that you should live your life as you want to.
9. Ben – That whales jump out of the water if they want to dive really deep in the water so they don't jump out of the water near the coast.
10. Anna P – Hump-backed whales are black with white on the bottom of their fins. Gray whales are gray with smooth backs.
11. Hanna – There are River Otters and Sea Otters. Sea Otters have very thick fur and spend their whole life in the water. River Otters often go out of the water and are smaller.
12. Whales – That whales migrate back to the same places to feed each year and remember where that is. I also did not know that the dorsal fin on orcas was so big.
13. Theresa – you need to have good eyes and patience to see whales from the ferry.
14. Stella – To be patient in waiting for the animals and how to cook pasta salad.
15. Anton – How big sea animals are in general. Such as Sea Lions, Orcas, and Gray Whales.
16. Haruki – I learned a few German words because I was staying in a room with people from Germany.
17. Clara – Grizzly Bears can hunt and kill Black Bears.
18. Max – How to prepare and cook my own food. We had burgers and scrambled eggs.
19. Helene – Sea Otters hold hands while they are sleeping so they do not drift away.
20. Luna – Orcas don't really like feeding on Sea Otters because of the density of their fur.
21. Jakob – Sea Otters keep a stone in their arm pit as a tool to break shellfish on and often keep it for a very long time.
22. Anna B – That Sea Otters have a stone, and they keep it for a long time.
23. Jasmin – Black Bears are very hard to spot because they camouflage with the rocks on the beach.
24. Emma – You don't have to go far or take special tour to see wildlife. You can even see it from the pier.
25. Lena – Getting up early for the sun rise is always worth it.
26. Theo – How many different kinds of animals live in the ocean. I had no idea how many there were, especially kinds of otter and whales.
27. Marie – How big Gray Whales are. They are 15 meters long. I also learned that they are not able to jump because they are too heavy.
28. Josefine – How important the protection of nature and wildlife is. Seeing the differences between old growth and new growth forests showed me how we ruin things.
29. Amelie – What Orcas look like.