Amazing Summer Music Cruise to Barkley Sound

Brady's Beach near Bamfield

By Shaun Peck

In 2011 we cruised from Victoria to the West Coast of Vancouver Island and spent a week at Bamfield, in Barkley Sound attending the festival concerts of "Music by the Sea."

Barkley Sound is a favorite cruising ground for West Coast boaters. This beautiful sound is not like any other on the British Columbia coast on either side of Vancouver Island. It is about 20 miles wide and 10 to 15 miles long. It has hundreds of islands, islets and rocks. In the center of the sound are the Broken Group of islands, known as the Pacific Rim National Park. There are many safe anchorages in the Sound and within the Park, some with challenging passes into them.

Several Cruising Guides are available – one of my favorites is the out of print (but can be obtained through used booksellers) *"Cruising Guide to the West Coast of Vancouver Island"* by Don Watmough (1993). This book has some spectacular aerial photographs. Other guides available are *"Vancouver Islands West Coast"* by Don Douglass,

"Dreamspeaker Volume 6 – the West Coast of Vancouver Island," by Anne and Laurence Yeadon-Jones and the annually updated *"Waggoner Cruising Guide 2012,"* which gives essential information.

A favorite anchorage is Effingham Bay with its hike through to the south side of Effingham Island where there is a sandy beach and a large midden. Off Wouwer Island there is a fair weather anchorage but the attraction there is a large colony of sea lions. The Pinkerton Islands provide some of the most cozy and protected anchorages in the sound. There are however, within the sound numerous anchorages with names like Turtle Bay, Nettle Island, Jaques Island, Jarvis Island, Hand Island. For all of them you need to watch your depth sounder, the chart and the height of the tide. *Polyandra* has anchored several times in Dodger Channel, between Diana Island and Haines Island, either to obtain protection from a strong W or SW wind or for the first anchorage after a passage up Juan de Fuca. The southerly entrance is only navigable at near high tide.

Getting to the West Coast of Vancouver Island can be a bit of a challenge. US boats need to clear Canada Customs in Victoria or at another reporting station. For all boats there is the 60+ NM passage down the Juan de Fuca Strait. For racers who have competed in the Swiftsure and other races there will be no surprises. What tends to happen in the summer months is strong westerly winds get established in the afternoon and it is not uncommon to get a 30KN Westerly blowing at Race Rocks.

There are, however, ways of avoiding these strong winds except when you want a great following wind coming back from Barkley Sound. I have several times set out from the Victoria area in the afternoon, then anchored (carefully to avoid cables) in Pedder Bay for supper and a sleep and then rounding Race Rocks in the early hours at a time that enables one to get the greatest benefit from the ebb tide. Another way of breaking the trip is to anchor in Sooke Basin. There is an entrance that has to be navigated carefully with leading marks but an excellent anchorage inside Wiffin Spit. Another stopping point is Port Renfew

The Rix Centre for Ocean Discoveries features a scallop-shell shaped roof which flares out to the Pacific Ocean with a sheer wall of glass. Superb acoustics and the spectacular view of the west coast of Vancouver Island's mystic, bold Pacific right behind the performers, make this truly an inspiring music venue. Photo by Al Kay.

Above: Mark Destrube - Violin

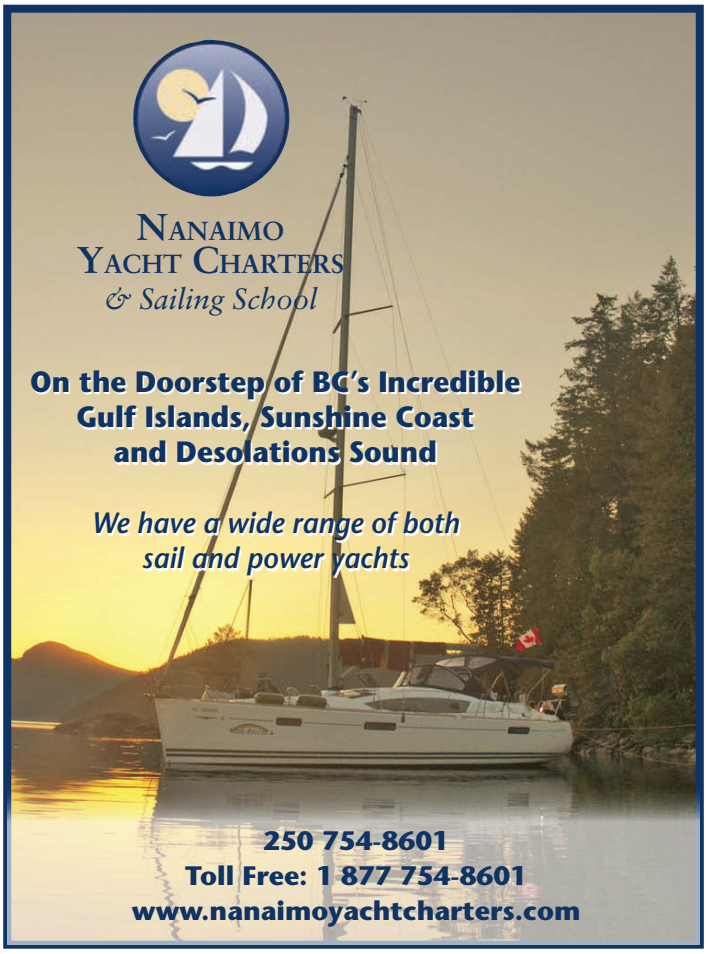
Left: Jazz from Phil Dwyer on saxophone and Bill Coor on guitar. Photos by Al Kay.

but you may find yourself in a rolly anchorage, depending on the wind and the condition of the swell that enters the inlet.

Bamfield has essential supplies – a small grocery store, some marine supplies and fuel. Anchorages include just west of the eastern shore public dock and further up the inlet and nearby Grappler Inlet.

Music by the Sea will be in its seventh year in 2012. The program of early and modern music is a clever mix and blend of classical and jazz, performed by an exceptionally accomplished international company of two dozen professional musicians. Music lovers can see more at: Music by the Sea www.musicbythesea.ca/

What makes the music very enjoyable is the magnificent auditorium where it is held. This striking facility, with its scalloped roof and superb acoustics for music, overlooking the



Shaun Peck has owned his Whitby 42-foot ketch, "Polyandra," for 20 years and has cruised extensively in the Pacific Northwest. "Polyandra" has twice voyaged to Southeast Alaska and once to Hawaii and back in 2005.

Bamfield Inlet, is part of the Rix Centre for Ocean Discoveries and has become a stand-out landmark on the coast.

The first and last concerts begin with a call and response between a distant rowboat and the shore, with Coast Guard sirens and cannons as part of the orchestrated script! Then follows some of the most sublime performances from world class artists, highlighted by the unlikely idea that this is all happening in such a far outpost.

In 2012 the event is being held from July 7th – 15th. For any sailors cruising in Barkley Sound this summer, the BC Bluewater Cruising association is sponsoring two informal rendezvous, the first at 5pm on Saturday July 7th before the first concert and the second at 5 pm on the 15th July prior to the last concert of the festival.

www.bluewatercruising.org/
Music by the Sea at Bamfield
www.musicbythesea.ca/

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