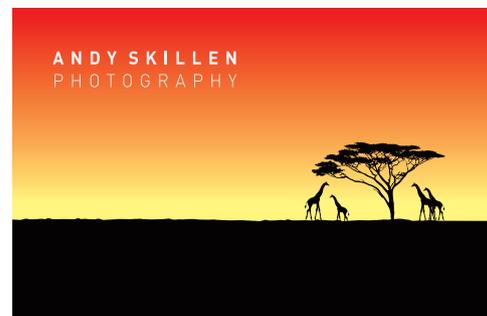


## The Grizzlies of Kodiak: up close and personal

An unique, exclusive, six person photographic experience to the remote bear habitat of Alaska's Kodiak Island with Andy Skillen.

**2-9 September 2018**

**GBP6,595; US\$8,350 (per person based on double occupancy)**



## Questions and Answers...

### What gear should I bring? (apart from the camera!)

It is best to plan on having layers of clothing. The temperature typically ranges from 0-10 degrees C in the spring and fall, and 5-20 degrees C in the summer (July and August) with dynamic weather changes being the norm year round. You can expect it be windy and wet for at least part of your stay. You should plan for times when you are doing some mild hiking as well as long periods of standing or sitting while watching bears. An outer layer of breathable, waterproof pants, jacket, and hat is ideal. Light gloves are great for keeping the bugs at bay and in the fall, thicker gloves kill the chill. Long sleeve shirts and pants are necessary – regardless how warm it may get, shorts are never appropriate in this environment. It is also important to have comfortable waterproof walking boots. While you are back at camp, plan on wearing casual, comfortable clothes and shoes.

Guests are encouraged to bring their own waterproof boots and raingear. The Kodiak Brown Bear Center does provide boots and raingear for those unable to bring these items. Because of weight restrictions on the floatplane – 22kg/50lb per person – **I would advise taking advantage of the boots on offer at the lodge and saving on weight.**

### What will the food be like?

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served family style in the lodge. The lodge's lead cook is famous for her Alaskan fare which highlights locally caught salmon and halibut with fresh vegetables as well as her creative and decadent desserts. Most entrees are traditional American foods that usually include beef, chicken, pork, vegetables, potatoes or rice, and bread. The lodge strives to accommodate any dietary restrictions you may have, but please be aware and remember that there is only have one cook and we are a long, long way from the nearest grocery store!

**If you have dietary restrictions required by a medical condition or concern, please let me know at the time of booking, so that the lodge can do its best to plan and prepare accordingly.**

### Are there bugs?

Throughout the summer and fall while in the field bear viewing you can expect plentiful whitesock biting flies and biting gnats (no-see-ums). There are some mosquitoes but not nearly in the numbers as the whitesocks and no-see-ums. Their tenacity and abundance vary with wind and other weather conditions and by September when we will be traveling, they will have started to die back to some degree. The more wind we have the less bugs we have. Insect pests are much less numerous around the lodge.

**It is recommended that you have insect repellent (DEET-based) and a head-net can be an useful addition to the packing as a back-up.**

### "I've never been in a floatplane...help!"

The lodge can only be accessed by a scenic 45 minute float plane from Kodiak city. The planes we use to access are two of the most reliable and venerable workhorses in Alaska aviation – the Dehavilland Beaver and the Cessna 206. The bush pilots are identical twin brothers who were born and raised in the Kodiak aviation community. They are very experienced and seasoned pilots with an intimate knowledge of Kodiak's

constantly changing weather patterns. The interiors of the planes are similar in size to an 8-passenger van, so it's probably smaller than what you are used to, but the views are spectacular. You have to climb a small ladder about 4' (1m) to get into the plane from its float. Both planes are certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and carry survival, floatation, and emergency survival gear.

**Guests are limited to 50 lbs (22 kg) per person on the floatplane. If you have more than that, the air taxi service provides a secure place for you to store it in Kodiak city.**

## **What happens if we are weathered-in?**

Safety is the primary consideration, so if weather conditions are not flyable your travel may be delayed. If weather prevents you from getting into Kodiak or the lodge, the latter's Kodiak staff will assist you in finding lodging. The lodge does not cover expenses due to weather delays, and as such you should ensure your insurance covers such eventualities. You may wish to arrive in Kodiak the day before, or if arriving in the morning of your transfer to the lodge, then we would need you to get the first flight out of Anchorage on that day to cover for any possible hold-ups with the weather.

At the end of the trip, if weather delays out-bound travel from the lodge then the good news is that you can stay on for as long as is needed at no extra charge...you will simply be the lodge's guest! However, you should plan your insurance to cover any such onward impact on your travel. You are advised to schedule your outbound flight for late afternoon/early evening back to Anchorage, or alternatively, take off any pressure and stay one night in Kodiak.

## **Will I definitely see bears?**

Bears live in the immediate vicinity of the lodge year round. The best time to see them is when they are attracted to the shores of Karluk Lake to pursue the red (sockeye) salmon that spawn in the tributaries and along the shore. This is typically from mid-August to mid-October. The whole Karluk basin, where we are based, has one of the highest concentrations of bears on Kodiak Island. It also has a lot of places for the bears to hide. The number of bears you will see during your trip is dependent of a variety of factors including the time of year, the strength of the salmon run, and the size of the berry crop. During the peak season (mid-August to mid-October) you may see dozens of bears, some of which may come very close!

Of course we all know that wildlife viewing in a natural setting like this is never a guaranteed endeavour. However, because we are located on Camp Island in the middle of Karluk Lake and we have **exclusive & proprietary** access to over 112,000 acres (45,000 ha) that are privately owned and historically known to contain the highest concentrations of bears on the island, your chances of seeing bears are excellent. The lodge also has very experienced staff that have intimate knowledge of the bears' habits and who will guide us to the best locations to see bears.

## **Tell me about the viewing...**

Our primary ways of getting to where we can watch bears are by our 30' catamaran boat and short hikes. All trips are guided and there are 4 levels of difficulty that are on offer:

**Level 1** – Little to no walking. Bears can sometimes be watched by spotting scope from the deck of your cabin or the lodge or they may be walking around the campus itself. The usual way of viewing at this level is from the comfort of our catamaran. Every couple days or so we will slowly cruise the shore of the lake and find bears either on the shore or on the hillsides. Plan on having a good telephoto lens to capture images of bears during these trips, but you can be guaranteed to be warm and dry and have plenty of good coffee during your trip.

**Level 2** – Short - 1/2 mile hike (~1 km) over open and level ground with uneven trails. Sitting or standing for a couple hours along bear feeding areas. This is our most common technique as we take a short boat ride to Thumb River and walk to the edge of the river to watch bears catching salmon. The best time for this is from mid-August through late September. Bears are observed at both close and far distances.

**Level 3** – Medium – approximately 2 km) over level but brushy and uneven trails and sitting or standing for a couple hours or more along bear feeding areas. In the late fall bears congregate on at the outlet of Karluk Lake and along upper Karluk River. To get there we take a 30 minute boat ride from the lodge and spend the day hiking and watching. We have a 12'x40' Pan Abode Cedar cabin nearby, so there is an opportunity to take a break to have lunch, warm up and rest if we want. Bears are observed at both close and far distances.

**Level 4** – Long - Walking up to several miles over undeveloped bear trails in moderate terrain and observing bears and other wildlife opportunistically. These may be trips to O'Malley River or up a ridgeline near camp. Because these trips are more involved and require more oversight by the guides, it might not always be possible based on the group. However, we will have the flexibility to tailor our viewing so that we maximize our opportunities.

### **Is it safe?**

While any excursion into wilderness Alaska has inherent risks, the lodge has done its utmost to assure your safety. The pilots are experienced locals and their aircraft are inspected regularly by the FAA. The boats and captains are USCG certified, comfortable, seaworthy and equipped with survival equipment. Lodge facilities are designed and maintained with comfort and safety in mind. When you are out in the field with the guides they carry communications, first aid equipment and they are armed with pepper spray and appropriate firearms. The most important and effective weapon in the field is our guide's knowledge of bears and their environment. By their nature, Kodiak bears are potentially dangerous but they are mostly docile creatures. There has only been one person killed by a bear on Kodiak in the past 90 years. There are people hurt by bears occasionally (about once every other year), but almost all of those involve hunters or bears being startled. The highly trained and experienced guides coupled with our bear viewing protocol and bear etiquette procedures have been specially designed to ensure your safety and have a safe and memorable experience.

### **Tell me about the region...**

The entire northern half of Karluk Lake and all of the lands adjacent to the Karluk River representing approximately 112,000 acres (45,000 ha) are owned and managed by Koniag Native Corporation, the parent company of the lodge. There are no roads or private cabins on these lands, no jet skis or water skiers. When you are a guest, you have exclusive and proprietary access to those lands so you can enjoy the bears in their natural setting with minimal human interference. The lodge campus is literally located on a remote island within the remote island of Kodiak. Koniag's lands are surrounded by the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, and the only neighbours are Refuge managers and researchers who occasionally fly into their administrative cabins adjacent to the lodge area. I have purposely limited this trip size to 6 persons so myself and guides can provide you with a personal, high quality bear viewing experience like no other. Your high quality private cabin offers all the amenities and comforts of home. You can choose to stay in communication with the outside world or insulate yourself from it altogether during your stay.

Everyone on the lodge staff was either born or raised on Kodiak, or has decades of experience on the Kodiak archipelago. All have an intimate knowledge of the island, its plants, animals, history and its unique Native Alutiiq culture and they have a strong desire and passion to share that knowledge with you. This knowledge assures your visit will be safe, fulfilling and memorable by providing you with a rare and unique opportunity to glimpse into the world as the legendary Kodiak Brown Bear sees it.

The Karluk basin is the ancestral home of the native Alutiiq people and the place where direct relatives for many of our staff lived and gathered from the land for the past 7,000 years. It is also a place where the Kodiak bears can continue living in an untarnished environment as they have for millennia. We feel this place is sacred and deserves our utmost respect and care. Koniag Native Corporation's core values require

that we be good stewards of this important resource. Consequently, we do everything we can to minimize adverse impacts on the land and on the animals. When we are in the field we strive to follow the same trails and stay quiet and in groups so that we do not startle bears.

**We will not “push” bears just for a better look or photo. We will leave an area just as quietly as we entered it. An old Alutiiq saying teaches us that “if you respect the bear, the bear will respect you”.**