

INSIDE PASSAGES

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BASIC ORIENTATION MATERIAL

ALASKA Trip Dates:

July 19 – 25, 2010 (Open Trip)

July 30 – August 5,

August 9 – 16, 2010

Dear Inside Passages Participant,

Welcome to the 2010 Inside Passages Alaska season!

As your Head Guide, I am pleased to welcome you as part of this summer's Inside Passages Alaska adventure. This letter, and the attached material, is designed to give you the information you will need to prepare for the trip, and to make your travel plans to and from Petersburg, Alaska. Some of these preparations are logistical, and some involve the spirit and intention of our journey together. Both are equally important. Please read this material carefully, and keep it on file for reference as the time for your trip nears.

If you have not already done so, **please send in a deposit of \$300** to the above address. Forms can be downloaded from the Inside Passages Web site (www.insidepassages.com) - click on "AK Registration & Planning"). Medical and release forms can also be downloaded from there, and should be mailed in with deposits.

Spots on these trips will be secured on a first come, first serve basis as the deposits are received. Please note also that **the balance of trip fees is due by June 1, 2010.**

The following information is included in this letter:

- 1. Introduction of trip leaders**
- 2. Travel Planning to Petersburg**
- 3. Retreat Location, and clarification of trip elements**
- 4. Notes about the Tongass Region, and about Petersburg, Alaska**
- 5. Equipment list**
- 6. Recommended reading list**

1. TRIP LEADERS

KURT HOELTING founded Inside Passages in 1994, and serves as its Director. He has a diverse background that is ideally suited for this blend of wilderness journey and contemplative practice. A wilderness guide for fifteen years, he is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and has practiced Zen meditation for 25 years. Kurt spent three decades as a commercial fisherman in Southeast Alaska, and has an extensive knowledge of the terrain. When not guiding trips in Alaska, Kurt is a meditation teacher and writer living on Whidbey Island in Puget Sound.

In 2008 Kurt spent a year living car free within walking distance of his home in Puget Sound. His “year in circumference” was motivated by concerns about climate change, and his book about the year, entitled “The Circumference of Home”, is due out in April, 2010, by Da Capo Press.

EMI MORGAN is our Assistant Guide and cook. She received an MBA in Sustainable Business from the Bainbridge Graduate Institute after earning her BA in Environmental Education from Huxley College. She then worked as a kayak guide in the San Juan Islands and Costa Rica, and currently works as Outreach Director for Ebey’s Landing National Historic Preserve. She brings exceptional skill and enthusiasm to her work, and we look forward to having her on the team.

RABBI RACHEL COWAN & RABBI YAEL LEVY will join Kurt on Trip 2, sponsored by the Institute for Jewish Spirituality.

Rachel is the Executive Director of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. She was named by Newsweek Magazine in 2007 as one of the 50 leading rabbis in the United States, and was featured in the PBS series The Jewish Americans. From 1990-2003 Rachel was Program Director for Jewish Life and Values at the Nathan Cummings Foundation. She lives in New York City.

Yael was ordained as Reconstructionist Rabbi in 1995 and serves Congregation Mishkan Shalom in Philadelphia, PA. In her current position as the” Rabbinic Director of Spiritual Development” Yael leads mindfulness retreats and contemplative Shabbat services. She also works as a spiritual director at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Yael has worked with the Institute for Jewish Spirituality co-leading mindfulness kayak retreats with Inside Passages and has begun leading mindfulness retreats in the deserts of the southwest. She lives in Philadelphia.

RICK JACKSON will join Kurt as co-leader on Trip 3: August 9-15. Rick co-founded the Center for Courage & Renewal in 1997 with his wife Marcy and Parker Palmer. The Center nurtures personal and professional integrity and the courage to act on it. Rick consults and speaks with non-profit organizations and foundations on a range of topics, including sustaining the identity and integrity of teachers and leaders, the role of youth in culture, supporting community leaders, and fostering strategies for long-term social change.

2. TRAVEL PLANNING AND ARRIVAL LOGISTICS

Participants are responsible for their own travel arrangements and costs to and from Petersburg, Alaska, and any lodging expenses outside the specific dates of our trip. The retreat formally in the morning of the first day listed on your retreat dates, when you will be transported to Keene Channel Lodge by boat from Petersburg. An arrival logistics letter with more information will be sent prior to your arrival in Alaska.

If possible, it is recommended that you arrive in Petersburg a day ahead of the scheduled retreat, booking a room in the Scandia House in Petersburg. This will allow you to recover from jet lag, and to enjoy a gentler ramp into your Alaskan adventure. The Scandia House is located conveniently on Main Street in Petersburg, and has a courtesy van from the airport. They can be reached toll free at 800-722-5006, or by email at: info@scandiahousehotel.com. Please let us know your travel itinerary and lodging plans (if any) once you have made them.

Booking your flights: There are two flights daily from Seattle that connect into Petersburg on Alaska Airlines. This would also be your extension flight from other airlines originating in other parts of the country. All flights to Petersburg connect through Seattle on Alaska Airlines.

Flight Option 1: (AM) Alaska Airlines Flight #65 departs Seattle daily around 7:30 AM, and arrives in Petersburg around 11:00 AM, stopping in Ketchikan and Wrangell along the way. You need to arrive, at the latest, on this flight on the morning of the day your retreat begins.

Flight Option 2: (PM) The later flight departs Seattle mid-day (either Flight 59 or 75 to Juneau) connecting into Petersburg on Alaska Flight 64, which arrives in Petersburg at 6:00 PM. If you book this flight, you will need to arrive in Petersburg at least the evening before the first day of your retreat.

If you are not originating in Seattle, most participants will need to either spend the night before the trip in Seattle, in order to connect with the **early flight into Petersburg on the opening day of your retreat, or book through to Petersburg on the PM flight the day before your retreat begins. If you have to spend a night in transit anyway, we recommend spending that extra night in Petersburg rather than Seattle, so that you have that extra time in Alaska. (see info above about Scandia House room bookings.)**

Again, please book your incoming flight to Petersburg no later than the first day of listed on your retreat date. You will be met at the airport (or Scandia House if you are in town ahead of time), and transported by van and skiff to the Keene Channel Lodge. You can book your return flight on either the AM or PM flight on the last day of your trip date, though most choose to leave on the AM flight for an earlier arrival in Seattle, and more possibilities for connecting flights. Again, any additional nights in Petersburg are at your own expense, though if you have the luxury of that time, it can be a wonderful transition back to your regular routine.

Alaska Airlines also has direct flights to Seattle from Boston, Newark and Washington, D.C. (Reagan International) with good connections through to Petersburg. These non-stop flights to Seattle with early morning departure, make it possible to complete the trip in one day from the East Coast. If you are traveling on Alaska Airlines, their toll free number is 1-800-426-0333. Otherwise your travel agent will need to tie in your itinerary with Alaska Airlines.

*** Note that advance fare tickets to Petersburg in the summer tend to disappear by spring, so you should book early if possible.**

3. RETREAT LOCATION

Inside Passages retreats are now based out of the Keene Channel Lodge on the Wrangell Narrows, a secluded former sport-fishing lodge located fourteen miles south of Petersburg at the junction of Beecher Pass and the Wrangell Narrows. Keene Channel is five miles from the nearest road, with access by boat and float plane only. The combination of seclusion and ease of access makes it an ideal launching pad for explorations of the surrounding islands and waterways.

The lodge provides an excellent setting for day and overnight kayak trips in sheltered waters, and offers rustic but comfortable accommodations. Retreats will begin and end at the lodge, and will include a two-night kayak camping trip during the heart of the retreat into nearby Duncan Canal.

The forests and waters around Keene Channel are home to many species of wildlife, including wolf, black bear and Sitka black tail deer. The local waters harbor plentiful salmon and halibut, seals, porpoises and Stellar sea lions. The nearby Wrangell Narrows form an important link on the Inside Passage shipping route from Puget Sound to Southeast Alaska.

RETREAT ELEMENTS

Meditation: The opportunity to explore mindfulness meditation practice in a wilderness setting offers a superb chance to experience *presence*, both inner and outer, through a variety of contemplative disciplines.

Kurt will guide you daily in the practice of sitting and walking meditation, and well as Qi gong movement meditation. His co-leaders are also skilled contemplative leaders. These practices are designed to cultivate an inner spaciousness that can more fully open us to the power of place, and to the depth of our connections to each other and to our own "inner habitat". We will be spending about an hour morning and evening in sitting, walking and movement meditation. We will also spend portions of our kayaking time in silence. Instruction will be provided in both the "why" and "how" of basic meditation

practice. No experience in meditation is necessary. But participants should come with an understanding that this is an essential part of our shared experience.

Sea Kayaking: Prior experience in sea kayaking is not required, but is encouraged. You will receive ample instruction, and the skills involved in basic sea kayaking are easy for most novices to master. We use comfortable, stable double kayaks, and make an effort to pair less experienced paddlers with partners who are stronger or have more experience. Both Emi and Kurt are experienced guides, and place a premium on safety, and on staying within the comfort level of participants. Unlike many wilderness trips, our emphasis will not be on pressing physical limits, but on enjoying the experience of being on the water as a dimension of contemplative practice. What is most important is your openness to stretch your skill level in each component of the experience. You will need to be in generally good physical condition, with no major injuries or medical issues that might compromise your ability to be in a kayak up to four hours a day. Our trip location offers a wide array of exceptional options for paddling.

We encourage you to use this trip as motivation to increase your physical conditioning prior to the trip. It will be at times strenuous, and both you and the group will benefit from whatever efforts you can make ahead of time to bolster your basic physical strength and conditioning.

Wilderness Living: Your stay in Alaska will include a wilderness camping experience. If you have not spent time in a wilderness environment, part of your “practice” will be learning to live with a lack of accustomed comforts and conveniences. Weather is a big factor in Southeast Alaska, and we will likely see a wide range of weather conditions. Staying on top of weather related concerns will require focused attention. It is a very helpful practice on these trips to put aside our usual preferences for one kind of weather over another. There is incredible beauty in all aspects of the weather in Southeast Alaska, but it is up to us to attune ourselves to that beauty, and to stay tuned to the changing weather so that we can enjoy it in reasonable comfort. The attached equipment list will tell you what you need to bring. We will provide an orientation to “Leave No Trace” guidelines when you arrive at the lodge, and an introduction to the habits of some of our wildlife neighbors.

Media Fast: You will also need to be aware that opportunities for communication with the outside world will be extremely limited during our time in the trip location. Please do not plan to conduct business during the retreats. There is no internet access and cell phone coverage is very spotty. One of the great values of these retreats is the opportunity to take a “media fast”, during which we can return to a more balanced relationship with our communication technologies, and a more direct connection to the world around us. There will be opportunities for emergency communication through cell phone and VHF radio, but we will otherwise be "off the grid" during your retreat experience.

4. A BIT ABOUT SOUTHEAST ALASKA, PETERSBURG, AND THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST

Your trip with Inside Passages will take you to the heart of a unique and increasingly rare coastal wilderness in Alaska's Panhandle region, otherwise known as the Alexander Archipelago, or more commonly, Southeast Alaska. This amazing region is unlike any other in the world. It contains the 17 million acre Tongass National Forest, easily the largest in our National Forest System, with some of the last intact old growth temperate rainforest left on the planet. Stretching from Dixon Entrance to Icy Bay, this tapestry of islands, fiords and glaciated mountains contains over 15,000 miles of coastline, more than the entire contiguous United States combined. Because of the remote and rugged nature of the region, much of it remains essentially wild in character right down to tidewater. The Tongass region is also home to the world's largest concentrations of bald eagles and brown bear (note: there are no brown bear in the area of our trip, only the smaller black bear), and harbors healthy populations of wolf, salmon, orca, and many other free roaming wild species that are endangered or extinct in the lower 48 states.

Your trip will begin and end in Petersburg, a thriving fishing community on Mitkof Island, at the junction of Frederick Sound and the Wrangell Narrows. Petersburg offers a spectacular view of the Coast Range and close proximity to the impressive LeConte Glacier, the southern most glacier in North America to terminate at tidewater (hence generating icebergs). For those who arrive early, there are numerous sightseeing, whale-watching, kayaking and charter fishing opportunities available out of Petersburg. Viking Travel is a good source of information on those options. They can be reached toll free at 1-(800) 327-2571.

Because of its remoteness and rugged terrain, the Tongass has only recently come to national attention as a place coveted by development and conservation interests alike. Since the 1960's it has become the focal point of intensive logging and mining activity on the one hand, and forest preservation efforts on the other. Until 1980, not a single one of its 17 million acres were protected under Wilderness Designation. Since that time it has been at the epicenter of debate over ancient forest protection. Our trip will give us a direct experience of the world's greatest remaining temperate rain forest ecology.

INSIDE PASSAGES EQUIPMENT LIST

Notes about equipment: We will need to travel as light, while still covering the basics for staying warm and dry. In particular, be sure to **have waterproof rain gear, and high ankle rubber boots (fishing or gardening boots, usually about 16" high)**. If you do not already have adequate rain gear or boots, you can buy them in Petersburg, because they have a better selection there, and it is a bulky item to pack. **Tents are provided by Inside Passages**, so you will not need to bring your own tent. **Polar fleece pants, jacket and underwear are light, warm and very efficient in wet weather.** Polypropylene or fleece long underwear works well in wet conditions. **Wool also works well** because it keeps you warm even when it is wet. **Apart from your travel clothing, cotton is undesirable**, especially against the body, because it accelerates the loss of body heat by holding water or sweat against the skin. We may have a few extra "dry bags" to lend if you come up short, but it is best for you to have your own, as spelled out on the equipment list. Dry bags can also be purchased in Petersburg.

Weather in July and August is generally warm and sporadically sunny (temperature in the 50's and 60's during the day, and 40's at night). It can also be very wet, breezy and cool. Please take care to have all the essentials from the list.

EQUIPMENT LIST: The following is a recommended list of items you should plan to bring to Alaska;

Sleeping bag with stuff sack (can be used also as a meditation cushion for meditation)

Line stuff sack with large plastic sack to keep bag dry during camping trip.

Sleeping pad (preferably inflatable, to double as pad for meditation)

Rain gear - waterproof jacket & pants, preferably rip-stop nylon or better!

(Raingear can also be purchased in Petersburg.)

Waterproof boots (16 inches high - Can be purchased in Petersburg)

Sandals or "paddle-boots" for kayaks and for walking on tidal flats or shallows are recommended.

(Clothing Note: Cotton clothing is a poor choice in wet, cool conditions.

Emphasize fleece, wool & polypropylene.)

Pants - 1 pair polar fleece, 1 pair nylon pants

Shorts - 1 pair

Long Johns - 1 pair, polypropylene or fleece

Shirt - 1 fleece under layer

Shirt - 1 fleece overlayer

Wool sweater - 1 warm, optional (Wool stays warm even when wet, but can be heavy and hard to dry once it is wet).

Jacket - Polar fleece recommended (wool acceptable)

Underwear - several pair

T-Shirts (cotton okay for sunny weather)

Socks - 2 pair wool or poly heavy

Socks - 2 pair lightweight

Hats - 1 billed cap for sun, 1 warm hat to cover ears

Gloves - 1 pair lightweight wool or fleece

Washcloth or small towel for camping trip

Sunglasses

Sunscreen, lip balm & insect repellent

Personal hygiene kit (First Aid kit will be available in general supplies)

Matches or Bic lighter

Small flashlight, pocket knife & whistle

Quart Water bottle

Cup (Plastic or metal) for hot drinks while camping

(For camping) two plastic or metal bowls, spoon, fork, and large cloth napkin

Small binoculars & camera (optional)

Additional Note: Consider taking a “media fast” during our time at the lodge, including taking a break from reading books. The printed word can separate us from this rare opportunity to connect directly with the place.

6. RECOMMENDED READING BEFORE THE TRIP

Philosophical and Spiritual Foundations for the Trip

The Circumference of Home Optional, by Kurt Hoelting (due out in April, 2010)

The Practice of the Wild, by Gary Snyder (A classic of nature philosophy)

Wherever You Go, There You Are, by Jon Kabat-Zinn (A great general introduction to Mindfulness Meditation)

The Spell of the Sensuous, by David Abram (An excellent book on nature and perception)

Background on Southeast Alaska:

The Island Within, by Richard Nelson (An enthralling account of life on a Southeast Alaskan island)

The Nature Of Southeast Alaska, by O’Clair, Armstrong and Carstensen

If you have questions, please email us at: insidepa@whidbey.com, or call (360) 579-1498. We look forward to being with you this summer in Alaska!

Warm regards,

Kurt Hoelting, Director
Inside Passages Project