



KENAI PENINSULA *DISCOVERED*

ADVENTURE AND SOLITUDE FOUND IN THIS STUNNING CRUISER'S PLAYGROUND

Reaching south out of Resurrection Bay past the Rugged Islands, a large easterly swell rolls from our port side, and a dense, rainy fog envelops jagged Aialik Cape to the southwest. The glorious weather we basked in days before near Seward is but a fleeting memory, as a strong gale has been whipping the Gulf of Alaska into a frenzy ever since. Our true welcoming party to the Kenai fjords, then, is a washing machine ride around the cape — a rip-off-the-bandaïd sort of sail that opens our eyes, turns our stomachs just enough, and makes us say, "Hello again, ocean."

The ominous cape we're transiting deserves the wide berth we give it. Rain pours off my hood while I steer through the 10-plus foot swell and mixed up waves reverberating off the rocky headland. To be sure, it's proving to be a sporty rounding that is invigorating and exciting in an odd way that only a sailor can appreciate. Fortunately, it's a short ride to salvation. Once we tuck around the eastern side of this narrow peninsula into Aialik Bay, our crew finds calm seas and what will turn into two weeks of truly remote cruising on the Kenai Peninsula. The payoff is worth it.

GETTING HERE

Three days prior, our family (with Jill's mom Donna in tow) departed Seward back into the cruising life. We'd hit the pause button less than two years earlier for Jill to work and for us to complete some necessary projects on our beloved floating home. In that time, we worked on various upgrades — large and small — to [REDACTED] but immersing ourselves in the community and making wonderful friends and memories was the real reward.

Now, ready for another summer of cruising in Alaska before sailing south for warmer climes, our first goal is to [REDACTED]

spend two weeks hopping down the Kenai Peninsula's many fjords, islands, bays, and coves. Simultaneously serene and rugged, a stunning landscape full of glaciers, tall mountain peaks, and thick forests promises an unforgettable adventure after breaking free from civilization and turning west into the wilds of Kenai Fjords National Park and beyond.

Each stop along the way will provide new and impressive vantage points from which to experience this seldom cruised region of Alaska.

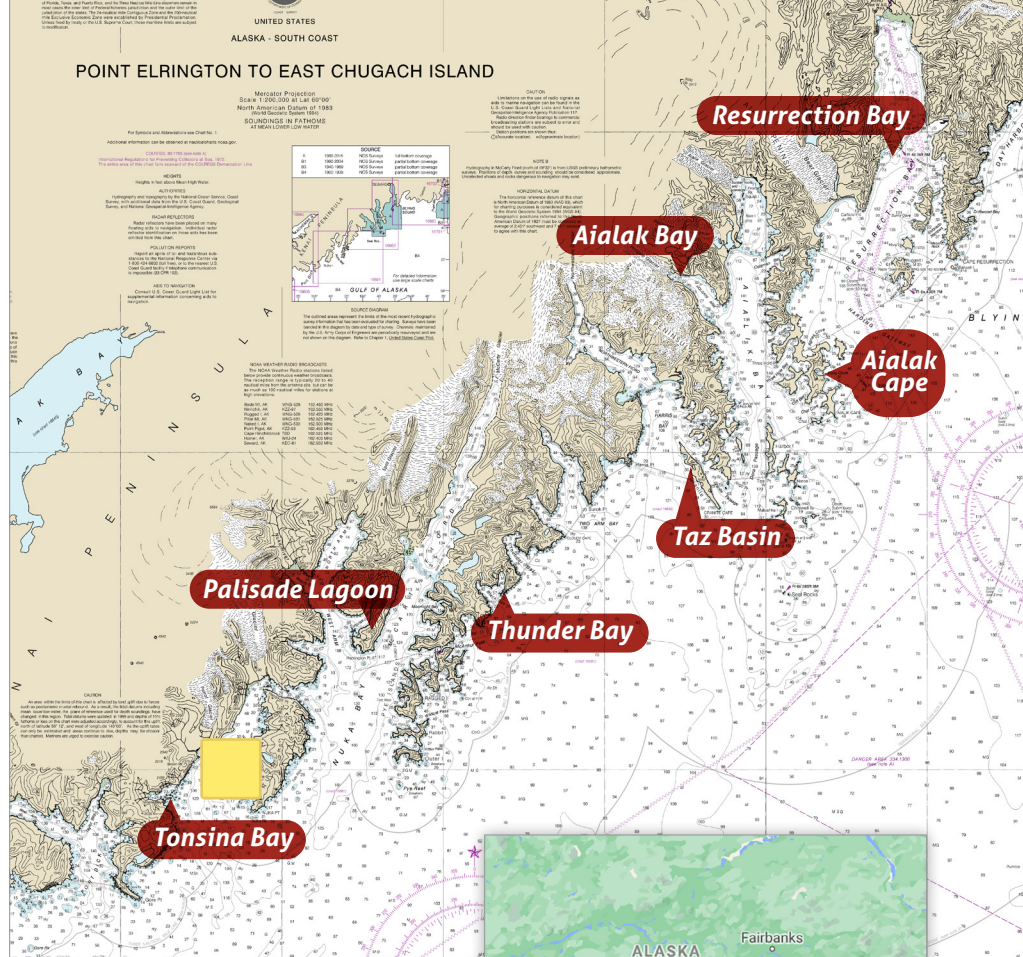
AIALAK BAY BEGINNINGS

Perched in [REDACTED] companionway staring across a glassy cove, a scene unfolds before me that seems surreal. A waterfall plummets from a verdant forest and tumbles into the sea. Clouds swirl and dance between mountaintops, and a heavy mist reminds me that indeed, we are cruising in a temperate rainforest — just in case I wasn't fully aware.

After rounding Aialak Cape (*pronounced I-al-ick*), the feeling of wilderness is palpable, in many ways on par with our time spent in Glacier Bay National Park two summers before. No cell service and virtually no VHF connection ushers in an intense sense of solitude and creates the need for self-sufficiency all cruisers strive for.

Though nearly devoid of people, the bay is teeming with life. We dust off our field guides and identify a variety of seabirds, sea stars, urchins, and anemones. Bald eagles and gulls soar overhead, pairs of black oystercatchers chatter at us, seals and otters play in anchorages; and, much to our surprise, we even come across a lone wolverine trundling along a beach.

From our first anchorage in Three Hole Bay, we motorsail northward to Coleman Bay and then Abra Cove. Though Aialak Bay is named as such, it is actually a glacial fjord; one of several that make up Kenai Fjords National Park. Moving farther north into the bay, we stare in awe at steep mountains rising from a deep sea. Razor-sharp ridge lines and impressively twisted coves and valleys make up the eastern and western shores where hanging glaciers reside in cirques and three huge glaciers creep seaward down self-made valleys like fingers of ice:



Some of the highlights of [REDACTED] voyage between Resurrection Bay and Tonsina Bay.

Holgate, Aialik, and Pederson. The former two are tidewater glaciers, meaning they terminate in the bay and we watch as they do just that, calving with a thunderous roar into the water. Motoring carefully between bits of ice, we dip a net in to collect our fair share for the cooler and cocktails before anchoring with a stunning view of both Aialik and Pederson glaciers looming in the distance.

Along with the natural beauty, plentiful wildlife, and sporadic spots of sunshine that highlight our first few days, our crew is also respecting the last spring low pressure system sweeping in from the notoriously unsettled Gulf of Alaska. Reminiscent of winter cruising in the Salish Sea, the rain and wind that comes with this deep low makes moving from one anchorage to another difficult at times, and prolonged heavy downpours keep us boat-bound more than we like. It's the end of May, and our crew is ready for a bigger taste of summer — any day now, we tell ourselves while watching the barometer drop yet again. Such is life



Seldom visited by cruising sailboats, Kenai Fjords National Park is a truly wild destination.

aboard a cruising sailboat in Alaska, but our weather fortunes will soon change.

UNFORGETTABLE TAZ BASIN

From my position atop a large, round granite boulder, sweeping views of the Gulf of Alaska and rugged Kenai

Peninsula coast seemingly stretch on forever. Turning the opposite direction to the east, the scene is quite different. [REDACTED] sits on a still pane of dark water in the corner of a nearly enclosed cove called Taz Basin (*Editor's Note: see cover for an image of Taz Basin*). Behind her, rock walls and thousand-foot mountain peaks tower skyward, leading my eyes from sea level to the tops of tall waterfalls. From here, it's easy to understand why this distinctive anchorage on aptly named Granite Island earned a locals nickname of "Hole-in-the-wall", and is rightly referred to as "...one of the most scenic and secluded small boat anchorages on the outer coast."

Surely, Taz Basin deserves all the

praise it gets from those who are fortunate enough to nestle amongst its hallowed walls. But getting in or out of the anchorage is not entirely carefree. Prominently marking the very narrow entrance to the basin is a big flat rock smack in the middle of the channel that takes caution to slide past. Once we're in, though, we take a deep relaxing breath and marvel at our surroundings.

With the anchor set, we head out by dinghy to take in stunning views of the cliffs and waterfalls. Being such a steep-walled cove, there aren't many places to stretch our legs ashore but we scramble over the big boulders on the small peninsula that makes up the northern flank of the entrance.

Standing here gazing out to sea in awe, ruminating over that narrow entrance, and then shifting focus back into the basin at [REDACTED] resting comfortably, is truly unforgettable.

Above the boat, low clouds spill over the rocks and trees, and the fine mist we've had all morning finally ends. It's a sign. Hours later, the grey skies slowly get brighter, patches of blue appear, and before we know it the cove is being gloriously bathed in sunshine. Finally, our patience with the weather has paid off and a taste of summer is upon us.

Like sailors possessed, we fling open hatches, shed wet layers, hang foul weather gear to dry, and I happily watch the battery level rise while our solar panels soak in the sun. Soon, I'm off barefoot on our SUP, paddling to waterfalls, and around the infamous rock that guards the entrance to the cove. The vibrant rays make it feel like we're in an entirely different place.

GEMS OF THE KENAI

Looking up into the cockpit at Jill, Porter and Magnus, the morning sun bursts over lofty mountains, fills [REDACTED] with warmth and light, and spills out into Thunder Bay. When the clouds finally broke in Taz Basin the day before, it kicked off a staggeringly good stretch of weather and our Kenai Peninsula playground is now ripe for adventure. We oblige accordingly.

Working our way southwest past and through the deep fjords, we seemingly live every day in a dreamworld of sunshine and light breezes. This is what we'd been waiting for — summer cruising at its finest. In Thunder Bay, our crew takes to shore, exploring the numerous beaches and roasting s'mores over an evening campfire. We shower in a glacier-fed waterfall and are constantly inspired by the connection between mountains, glaciers, and the sea.

From Thunder Bay, we continue westward to Midnight Cove and then Palisade Lagoon. Another narrow entrance, reminiscent of Taz Basin, greets us at the lagoon and once we're in, a breathtaking cathedral of peaks, forests, and waterfalls engulfs us on nearly all sides.

Our cruising guide mentions the remains of an old gold mine being a



[REDACTED] enjoys a solid breeze and sunny skies while sailing in Kenai Fjords National Park.

relatively easy one mile hike up the river at the lagoon's head, and we quickly set off to find it. Removing layers while walking deeper into the woods, it's like stepping into a completely different time and place. Sure enough, we come upon the nearly 90-year-old mining claim that is strewn with old equipment and dilapidated buildings. Looking through the remnants, it's hard to grasp exactly what life would have been like in this isolated slice of Alaskan wilderness. Yet, we've gotten enough of a taste of solitude here to know that, like cruising, living in this place probably had some intense highs and lows.

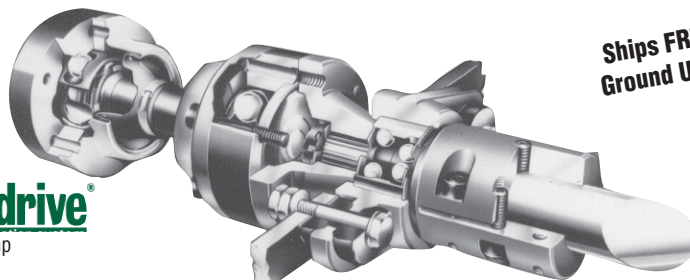
TONSINA BAY FINALE

At about this time, our minds start to drift towards civilization and a planned stop 120-miles south at Kodiak Island to meet up with other cruising buddies, get provisions, and top up on fuel and water. To make the crossing in favorable conditions, we hole up in Tonsina Bay at the southern end of the peninsula for two days and nights and wait for the right weather window to hop out into the Gulf of Alaska.

A perfect place to end our time on the Kenai since departing Seward two weeks ago, we find a dazzling sand beach to kick our shoes off and play in the sunshine. On one of my daily paddleboard adventures, I'm treated to a small pod of orca swimming past me through the cove, and in the evening our family watches a black bear forage the shoreline for a meal from the safety of the foredeck. Unreal.

Moments like these, and many more, make the stormy start to our voyage seem like a lifetime ago. There's a bittersweet sentiment to the end of our time cruising the peninsula. We'd sailed past this area two years ago not knowing at the time that we'd hit the pause button in Seward. And as we put Tonsina Bay over our shoulders and sail south, it's with a fond, "See you next time!" not, "Goodbye". Only the very best cruising destinations leave us with this unmistakable feeling — and the Kenai Peninsula surely has. ①

VIBRATION?



**Ships FREE
Ground UPS!**

**INSTALL
aquadrive®**
5hp – 2000hp

Business or Pleasure, AquaDrive will make your boat smoother, quieter and vibration free.

The **AquaDrive** system solves a problem nearly a century old; the fact that marine engines are installed on soft engine mounts and attached almost rigidly to the propeller shaft.

The very logic of AquaDrive is inescapable. An engine that is vibrating

on soft mounts needs total freedom of movement from its propshaft if noise and vibration are not to be transmitted to the hull. The AquaDrive provides just this freedom of movement. Tests proved that the AquaDrive with its softer engine mountings can reduce vibration by 95% and structure borne noise by 50% or more. For information, call Drivelines NW today.



"A-Northwest Legend for Over 25 Years"

311 S. Brandon St, Seattle, WA 98108 • (206) 622-8760
Visit Our Web Site: www.aquadrive.net

"Fantastic and knowledgeable people to work with."

-Nigel Barron, CSR Marine



Rigging & Spars

Yacht Rigging & Spar Shop

Quality Swaging, Furlers

Masts, Spars, Spreaders

Wire & Rod Rigging, Running Rigging

Lifelines, Chainplates, Electrical

info@porttandrigging.com

360-385-6330

Port Townsend Boat Haven

Island Marina - Sailboat Moorage



Sauvie Island, Portland OR

Large Sailboat & Side Tie Moorage

- 45' Slips, 50' End Tie, Side Ties
- Park-like Setting | Picnic Area
- Slip-side Storage Shed
- Easy Access - Hwy 30

tel: 503.954.4451

www.island-marina.com

