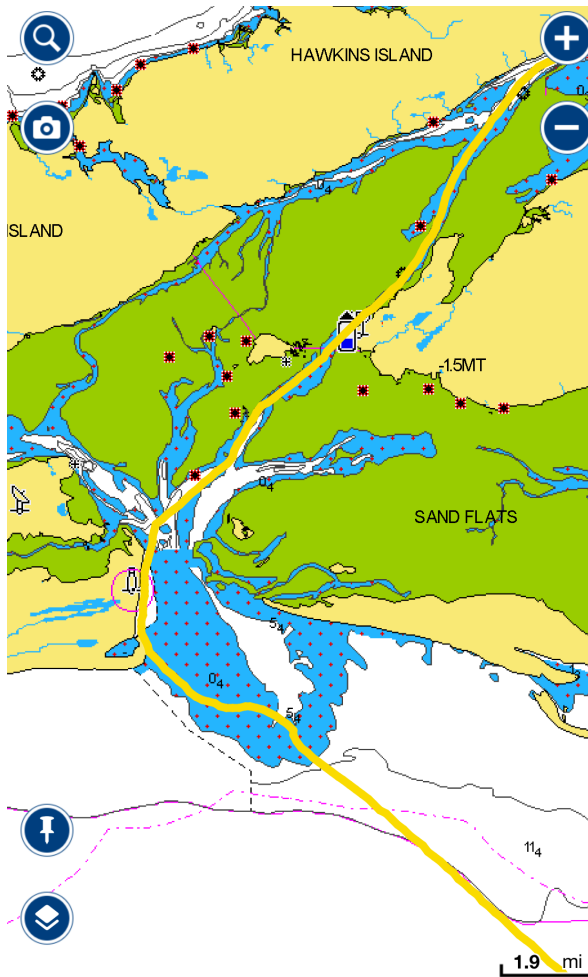


The Third Voyage of Lumina

Across the Gulf of Alaska

Post 5

By following the positions I had plotted the previous day of a couple of fishing vessels transiting the



Our route out through the Strawberry Channel, the Stick Channel does a sharp turn just where it says 04 and then heads over the Sand Flats. For the non sailors, the green bits are where you can walk at low tide!

Cordova Harbour. All but a handful of the bow picker jet powered salmon fishing boats had left the previous evening to be in place when the fishery opened up first thing on the Monday. As we set off down the channel there were plenty of buoys marking the early stages. As usual you had to be careful locating the next pair each time as it was would be easy to miss a buoy out and then cut across a shallow patch. It was dead calm and here the otters were particularly non plussed by a yacht creeping past at a sedate 5 knots, maybe because they are used to the aluminium skimmers doing 20 and making enough noise to wake their ancestors. On we went and eventually came to the divergence of the two routes with the "Stick Channel" taking a hard left to come out in the ocean after going behind some low sandy islets. A larger fishing boat, possibly a tender had by now caught up with us and took off down the stick channel. We stuck to our plan and continued on, even going over some white uncharted areas on the chart but never had less than 3.5m beneath our keel. As we got closer to the ocean you could see breakers from the Pacific swell on either side and up ahead a boat was following an erratic course. As we got closer they radioed us up to say they were surveying and pointed out to us where the deeper water was. Now out in the open ocean we set course for a headland on Kayak Island 50 miles away. This was to be the first of only two waypoints, the second at

Elfin Cove where we would make land would be a further 260 nautical miles further.

For the past hour or so we had been listening to someone's bad day playing out. One of the fishing boats, Twisted Metal had been taking on water and there were many radio calls from the coastguard. Unfortunately, as is often the case with such events, you can only hear one side of the conversation but it went on for several hours. I had thought the fishing fleet would all be inshore around the delta of the Copper River, however as we reached the headland of Kayak island one could see some larger ships on the AIS.

These are the tenders, they take the fish from the fisherman, weigh it and put it in their holds so the small boats can then go straight back out and continue fishing. Time is everything it seems and the small boats have a net, about the size of a dumpy bag in their hold so they just go up to the side of the tender, lift out the net and replace it with another and head straight back out.

Now from our vantage point all we could see were the tenders anchored in the lee of the island, the surprise came when all of a sudden in the gloom of midnight there were small boats all around, low in the water you could hardly see them. A quick change of course was needed and we dodged inside a rocky outcrop to cut inside the fleet which were stretched out far into the distance. Of course being fishing boats and of a size not required by law, they don't have AIS, or don't use it so their competitors supposedly don't know where they are, but they might as well do so because they are usually all together fighting for the best spot.

Escaping from the melee of the end of Kayak Island we set course for Cross Sound where we would enter the inside passage 260 miles ahead. After Kayak island we were motor sailing as the wind was light but come Thursday it would definitely not be on our side so we needed to keep the speed up. I think the wind was giving us about an extra knot and a half most of the time.

On watch the following morning there was a cruise ship gradually gaining on us from out at sea. Closer



and closer she got with the AIS telling me that we would be withing 0.5 miles in an hour. I waited and waited until they were about a couple of miles away before calling on the radio. A nice lady on the bridge came straight back and I asked if she was aware of us on her port bow up ahead. "Oh yes" she said and they miraculously changed course to give us a good mile of clearance!

All went well for the next 24hours with us taking turns at watch keeping every 4 hours then not long after I came on at 4am I got a dreaded alarm saying no rudder feedback and the auto pilot was taking offence and going on strike. After the usual turn it off and on routine still

It pays to have spares on the boat—out came the old brushes and in went the new. It is however not a particularly inviting space to spend your time in whilst at sea and I was glad to be done

no joy so I mustered courage and got Carol from her bed. She was remarkably mild which was quite remarkable considering she had been on watch from 12 till 4 and had only just got to sleep. So with the skipper on the wheel, I started diagnosing, first check connections to the rudder sensor as that was what it was telling me, it then became obvious that we were in fact seeing the rudder position however, despite the autopilot sending power to the hydraulic pump, nothing was happening. I had a good idea it was worn brushes on the motor as I had seen it talked about on the Boreal owners forum and knowing we had a spare set I thought it was worth a try as if I could change them at sea it would save us about 18 hours of hand steering, not a particularly enviable task.

Fortunately the sea was relatively calm and we put the Bimini up so both the helmsman and mechanic



Cape Spencer lighthouse greeted us as we made landfall from the Gulf of Alaska

would stay relatively dry as it had helpfully just started to rain. Out of the lazarette came the bicycles, shore cable, water pipe etc to make enough space for me to get back to my favourite place from the boatyard, the rudder assembly, where the hydraulics for the autopilot reside. Surprisingly for a yacht the motor is fairly easy to access and after a good deal of verbal I got the end off. The brushes did not look too worn from previous experiences with starter motors or grinders and they matched the new set I had dug out of the deep storage beneath the berths in the bow. Next came the fun part of compressing the brushes into their housings as you slide the end back on the motor, always fun, and easier done on a workbench than in a compartment in the stern of a yacht at sea. However, with the motor back together and after a quick test we were back in business, the whole saga had taken less than two hours.

Late in the evening of the third day we entered Dicks Arm, a narrow fjord like creek a few miles long and anchored at the head of it. We were now at the start of the Inside Passage so from here you can go all the way down to Seattle with only one place exposed to the open ocean. We spent the following morning ti-



Dicks Arm, a quiet sheltered anchorage .

dy up after the autopilot work and then later on Hauru came in, the NWP boat we had been with in Cordovia.

From Dicks Arm we went across the sound and down another relatively narrow channel, about a mile or so wide to a little village called Pelican. My book said it was the last Gum Boot town and proudly called themselves "Closest to the Fish" This was because they were the closest town to the fishing grounds and consequently in the old days had an advantage over other places. Oh, and it was called Pelican because that was the name of the vessel that the



Almost the whole of Pelican is built on pilings

had a number of drums thin of stainless cable with an electric motor to wind it in. On the cable were attachments where hooks with lures could be snapped on. One by one they went over to the fish plant to collect ice, which was apparently some of the best ice you could get. You might think that ice is ice but this is not the case! We were told you really need nice fine flakes rather than cubes or lumps as the latter marks the fish.

Pelican is what is described as a boardwalk town, all the buildings are on piles with a wooden boardwalk connecting them together. At one end there were a few

original settlers came on. These days, times are not so good as with the advent of the tender boats which buy fish from the fishermen out at sea and then deliver in bulk to the fish factories, the smaller fish processors have had a hard time so today there is just one in Pelican where in the past there were several. There were, however several fishing boats waiting for the local fishery to open up on the Monday. Here once again it was a different type of fishing, mainly for salmon as we had seen before but here it was using long lines out in the ocean. Each traditionally looking boat



buildings actually built on hard ground and I wondered if they were seen as a cut above the others or maybe it was the other way round. Our neighbours on the fishing boat returned with his ice and told us we really should visit Elfin Cove as that was where he was from and his wife ran the shop there. Being already on our route, as that was where we were going to meet Hauru and also Night Owl another NWP boat the next day. Rosie's Bar and Grill sounded very glamorous but probably hadn't changed much in the whole hundred years or so that the town had been founded, however we tried some beer and learned a bit more about how these places work now.



Rosies Bar and Grill, sounds more exciting than it was!

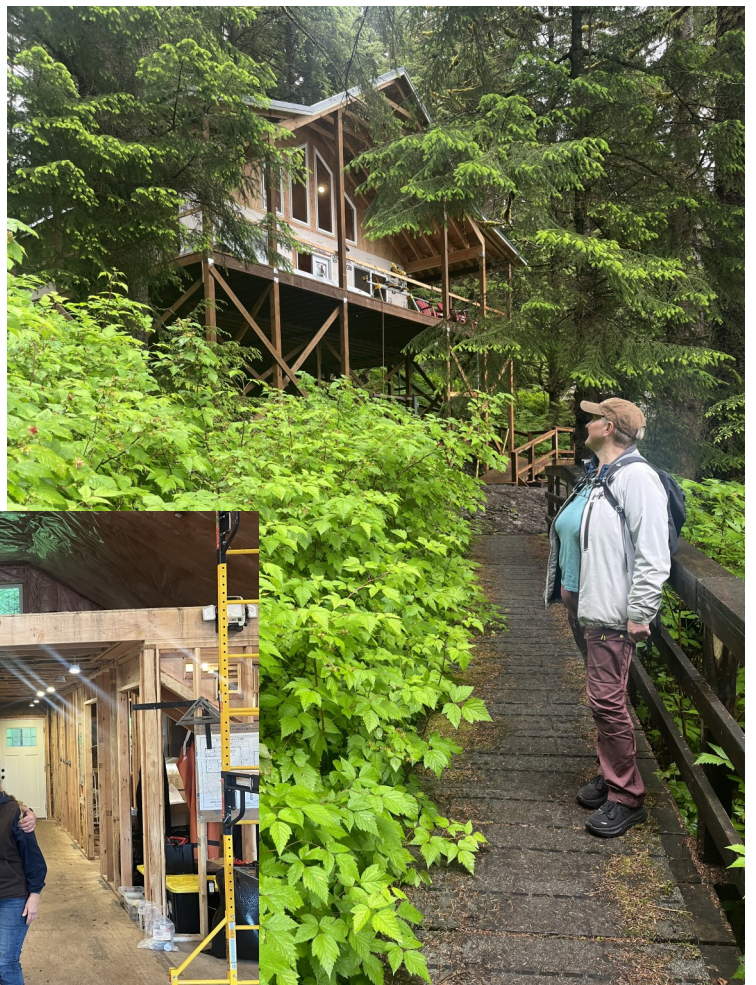
Elfin Cove sounds idyllic and indeed it is. A



Elfin Cove, a boardwalk village like Pelican but much more sheltered with a very narrow entrance.

boardwalk town again and like Pelican with a few fishing boats and fishing charter boats. We had heard in Pelican of the deviation between the old and new ways of making a living in such places, as the salmon fishing has declined the sport fishing industry has exploded. In Elfin there are three or four lodges each with several boats and their own landing pontoons. Each lodge seemed to be run like a small hotel and as you walk past them in the mornings there was the smell of laundry being done. In the pub we heard stories of how these operations get

larger, buying up properties to expand their accommodation and taking them away from traditional fishing people, much the same argument as in holiday areas of the UK, however, the same as at home, the seller can always sell for a lesser price to make it more affordable but, as in the holiday villages of the Lake District of Cornwall, most sellers will sell to the highest offer and so the argument goes on. It did look a pretty slick operation however with the boats arriving back in the evening, punters getting off and their catch being filleted and packed away to be frozen to be taken home or even be dispatched direct for them at the end of the week.



We took a walk to the end of the boardwalk and came upon a building project. The retirement project was from a couple who had a lodge in the cove but sold it to one of the larger fishing charter companies and were now building their dream retirement



What a fantastic project to be working on



home. What a fantastic project. They had just had a barge deliver three pallets of kitchen units and other stuff that morning.

That's it for now, we have our permit to get into the Glacier Bay National Park in a few days. It is heavily regulated with only a certain number of boats getting in each day so we will see how we get on.....

All the best

Tim and Carol on Lumina—do drop us a line if you want to hear about other things in the voyage or just to say hello.

[Website with all the old blogs](#)

