

# Connecting Generations in the GREAT LAND

By Kristen Boatright

*An avid traveler and her preteen nephew find common ground in Alaska on a Holland America Line cruise.*

Strapped into a tandem kayak, my nephew and I paddled through the chilly waters of Mendenhall Lake, gliding past the bright blue-and-white glacier that shares its name. He gasped excitedly as a humpback whale flipped its tail visibly in the distance. It was the third day of our July adventure together — but our first on land in Alaska — and we realized then that we were far from home and eager for what was to come.

## A WORLD AWAY

My then-11-year-old nephew is a Southerner used to warm weather — and he's a self-proclaimed "indoor kid." Like most kids his age, he loves his computer, his Xbox and YouTube. But, like me, he's also fascinated with travel. He dreams of seeing other places and of having his own experiences. Alaska and its vast wilderness teeming with wildlife — not to mention icy lakes and chilly temperatures — is a world away from what he's used to and ripe for exploring. I was delighted to whisk him away, leaving behind the smartphone, video games and computer.



Kayaking in Alaska



Breaching humpback whale in Alaska

*In the Inside Passage, you just may spot some of the 49th state's impressive wildlife from the decks: bald eagles flying through the trees along the shoreline; orca and humpback whales swimming in the waters alongside the ship.*



Mendenhall Glacier, Alaska





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On board with a National Park Service ranger

#### AWE-INSPIRING ALASKA

Holland America Line's Alaska voyages depart from both Seattle and Vancouver, and we set out on a seven-day voyage aboard *Nieuw Amsterdam*. On our first full day, we sailed through the protected waterways of Southeast Alaska's Inside Passage to reach Juneau. Sea days in

Alaska are different from those on other routes, simply for the unfettered views of nature all around you. In the Inside Passage, you just may spot some of the 49th state's impressive wildlife from the decks: bald eagles flying through the trees along the shoreline; orca and humpback whales

swimming in the waters alongside the ship. Our other ports of call were Skagway — famous for its role in the 1897 Gold Rush and as the gateway to the scenic White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad — and Ketchikan — home to the Great Alaskan Lumberjack Show and the Salmon Capital of the World.

#### SCENIC GLACIER BAY

Within the 65-mile system through a 1,500-foot-deep fjord, *Nieuw Amsterdam* arrived at the Margerie and Grand Pacific tidewater glaciers — the two massive wonders towering in Glacier Bay. It's nature on its own terms, undeniably impressive with wildlife and rivers of ice that calve thunderously into sparkling blue waters. Spending up to 10 hours cruising this scenic area is sheer magic, and guests benefit from the insights of National Park Service rangers who board the ship. Engaging and entertaining, the rangers hosted presentations about the park and special kids' activities, fostering a healthy sense of discovery. They also answered any and all questions about this remote and impressive natural wonder.

#### ALL ON BOARD

My nephew and I bonded nightly over the gourmet food — sushi at Tamarind, pasta at Canaletto or (his favorite) steak at the Pinnacle Grill — before he'd head off to hang with kids his age. Club HAL® has activities for kids from ages 3 to 17, including video game competitions and team sports challenges, and in those cases I did ease up on my "no video games" rule. After all, it left me to enjoy some adult time

with friends closer to my own age, like an evening of sampling craft beers with the Alaskan Brewing Co. I came away with a deeper understanding of why this style of Alaska voyage — on a robust ship packed with plenty of amenities — is so ideal for multigenerational families.

#### MORE ADVENTURES AWAIT

I knew our vacation was a success when my indoor-loving nephew began planning our next outdoor vacation before our return flight touched the ground. We still reminisce about our discoveries in Alaska, from the all-you-can-eat crab feast to our kayaking excursions and the train ride up White Pass. In fact, I can thank each and every part of our trip for contributing to my young nephew's growing sense of adventure that is right on par with mine.

*Born and raised in New Orleans, Kristen Boatright is an avid traveler and multimedia journalist. She has been on staff for outlets such as Bloomberg Television and NY1.*

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