

Thorne Bay, AK
A Gem of a Cruising Stop
55° 41' 01.88" N, 132° 31' 21.71" W

Val and I would like to share some information about an often overlooked cruising stop along the Inside Passage, particularly attractive for boating groups. We think you'll find it a welcoming and peaceful diversion from the usual cruise ship stops.

In 2015, we joined a group of about 12 boats (IPBA) on their once-every-five-years cruise to Alaska. The group had many stops along the way with selected social activities at each. Val and I were responsible for coordinating moorage and activities at Thorne Bay on Prince of Wales Island in Alaska. Over the months before our Seattle departure, we were in regular e-mail contact with Wayne Benner, town administrator and jack of all trades for this population 500 community, arranging moorage and gathering info on facilities and services available for our group. We spent two days at this stop on the group's route from Ketchikan to Wrangell. It was one of the highlights of the entire trip.

Thorne Bay is a gem of a cruising stop tucked in quietly and comfortably along the west shore of Clarence Strait and probably overlooked for the more well-known anchorage at Meyers Chuck 11 miles away on the east shore. Both are about 40 miles up the strait from Ketchikan at about the point where a decision is made whether to take the direct route to Petersburg or the route to Wrangell.

The water at the entrance to Thorne Bay is a fishing hot spot, and the bay just off the marina has plenty of crab for everyone. The setting is serene and peaceful. The community (and visiting boaters) will find a well-stocked grocery store and hardware, a library, a café, a tackle and marine supply shop, a liquor store, fuel and propane and float plane service connecting nearby cities. Fisherman and fisherwomen will find a handy fish cleaning station on the dock.

Most notable about this village is the friendliness of its people. Everyone seemed especially pleased to have our group select their marina for one of the stops on our cruise. Harbormaster, Shane Nyquest, confided they do not get that many boating groups stopping at the marina but are anxious to attract more. His friendly attentiveness to guest boaters should go a long way toward achieving that goal. Ample space for larger craft as well as power and water are available on the well-constructed docks. If you have a group of boats planning a stop here, and they have notice you are coming, do not be surprised if you are welcomed by the town folks with a barbecue or pot luck at the top of the marina ramp. We were. There you will find a covered activity area that can accommodate group meals and social functions.

So, if you are continuing beyond Ketchikan on your Alaska cruise, don't hesitate to give Thorne Bay a try. You are sure to be pleasantly surprised. You can contact Harbormaster Shane Nyquest at 907-965-4138 or harbormaster@thornebay-ak.gov or the City Administrator, Wayne Benner, at 907-828-3380 or administrator@thornebay-ak.gov to reserve moorage or get further information.

Following is an excerpt from our album, *Alaska Passage*, that describes our stop at Thorne Bay, including pictures. If you have questions or would like more info, contact us at robertwatson6@comcast.net.

Thorne Bay
June 27 - 28



While we have been awed by the beautiful scenery, wildlife and navigation challenges so far, one of the true highlights of our Alaska trip is sure to be our group's visit to Thorne Bay. It will be difficult for anything to top the welcome and friendliness shown to us by the residents of this small village about 40 miles up Clarence Strait from Ketchikan.

Val and Bob were responsible to coordinate the group activities at this stop, and we had been communicating with the town manager, Wayne Benner (pictured left), to understand what our options were. Thorne Bay has a population of around 500. The village is located on Prince of Wales Island and connected to civilization (if and when they want to be) only by boat and float plane. They get occasional cruising boats in the marina, but rarely groups of any size, and the whole town knew we were there and glad to have us. Shane, the dock master, bent over backwards to get all our boats in together and with access to power available. He was continuously available to help us with anything we needed. What customer service!

On Saturday there was a "Top of the Dock" shindig at the marina with about 200 people present at one time or another between 1500 and 1800 hours. Although they have these get-togethers periodically, it seemed that this one was planned with our group's arrival in mind. The town itself paid for BBQ of hot dogs, hamburgers, smoked salmon and halibut. Many towns folk brought side dishes and desserts. The restaurant provided a variety of pizzas. It was quite a spread followed by entertainment from an 8 year old darling of a singer (and song writer, to boot) and her dad on guitar and ukulele. They kept the onlookers spellbound and singing along. It seemed that nearly everyone introduced themselves and welcomed us. A lot of new friendships were formed in that short period.

On Sunday morning, Sue, the manager of the 24 seat restaurant operated by and for the benefit of the local (and only) school, opened for our group to have breakfast, even though they are not open on Sundays. On Sunday evening, we sponsored a marine trivia contest at the activity deck followed by a potluck dinner and announcements of the previous race results and trivia contest winners.

Everything one could need was a short walk from the marina – the town hall, clinic, library, restaurant, a small but well-stocked grocery store (which received float plane deliveries of goods from the Juneau Costco every two weeks) tackle shop (these people are big on fishing and we saw a lot of halibut and salmon on the fish cleaning table, and the crabbing in the bay is awesome), post office, and liquor store. As you walked the few streets in town, every passing motorist would wave. People would step out of their houses and yards to chat with us. They asked about our cruise and admired us for it, and they couldn't wait to talk about Thorne Bay and why they loved it there. Some offered to have us in for coffee; some would offer small gifts; but all would offer any help we might need. And they were sincerely looking forward to many of us stopping there again on our way back. We certainly will.



Dockmaster, Shane

Thorne Bay



TOP OF THE DOCK PARTY
Saturday, June 27 from 3 to 6 pm.

Come down to the harbor and join old and new friends for an early summer get-together. All community members and visitors are invited to come and share some food and conversation.

The menu will include hot dogs, hamburgers and fish. If you have access to a kitchen, bring a dish to share. Paper plates, napkins and utensils will also be provided. Bring your own refreshments and an appetite. There is no charge.



Thorne Bay on Return Trip
Fundraising Pig Roast for Fire and EMT

