

Ugak Island — Uguaq

PARAGUUTAKUN UGUAQ KITURTAARPET. – WE ALWAYS PASS UGAK ISLAND ON THE BOAT.



Photo: View east from Ugak Bay toward Ugak Island.

Ugak Island lies at the entrance to Ugak Bay, on the far eastern edge of Kodiak Island. Exposed to the open ocean, Ugak Island is small and mountainous. It is just 2.7 by 1.7 miles and yet rises to over three hundred feet above sea level. This creates a precipitous shoreline with few landing spots. Nonetheless, Ugak Island was once home to an Alutiiq village. In April of 1805, Russian trader Uri Lisianki visited a settlement with four sod houses on the island's northern coast, and in the 1930s anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička learned the location of this settlement in discussions with Kodiak residents.

What did people do on Ugak Island? It is likely that they visited in the spring and early summer, moving to Kodiak's outer coast to fish for cod and pollock and to hunt sea mammals. The waters southeast of Kodiak are a major migration route for whales moving through the Gulf of Alaska, and gray whales and humpback whales are known to swim through the channel between Ugak Island and Narrow Cape. From the island, hunters could have watched for these economically

valuable animals.

Ugak Island is also home to several sea mammal haul-outs. Harbor seals rest on the island's southeast coast, and Steller sea lions use the northern shore. The sea lion haul-out is typically used from late June to early October by about four hundred animals. Historic sources indicate that the residents of Eagle Harbor, an Alutiiq village in Ugak Bay's southern shore, visited the haul-out regularly to harvest sea lions for skins and sinew.