

JOHNSTONE STRAIT ULTIMATE

GUEST HANDBOOK



SPIRIT
OF THE WEST
ADVENTURES

TOUR OVERVIEW



THE ULTIMATE COASTAL GETAWAY

With the perfect mix of comfort and adventure, our Johnstone Strait Ultimate tour has been favourite of Spirit of the West guests for over two decades. Our water taxi will transport you to our West Cracroft Island base camp for four days of relaxing and exploring. Paddle along nearby coastlines while learning about the area and wildlife from your guides. Back at camp, enjoy breathtaking views from the hot tub and relax in our covered lounge. The Ultimate base camp offers an incredible opportunity to relax and immerse yourself in the wild beauty of the BC coast.



WEST CRACROFT ISLAND BLISS

The Johnstone Strait Ultimate base camp on West Cracroft is a peaceful haven for relaxing and unwinding. Perfectly positioned with mountain views of northern Vancouver Island, you may catch a sweeping sunset or a wildlife sighting from the oceanfront hot tub. With roomy tents, beds, covered dining and lounge spaces, a hot tub, and outdoor heated showers, our base camp blends a remote wilderness experience with comfortable amenities.

The area we share with you on this tour is the traditional territory of the Kwakwaka'wakw people of the 'Namgis, Mamamlilikala, and Ławitsis nations. Learn more about the Kwakwaka'wakw people, land, and language on the [U'mista Cultural Centre's website](#) and the [First Peoples' Map of BC](#).

KEY DETAILS

OVERVIEW

TRIP TYPE: Base camp

TRIP DURATION: 4 days / 3 nights

GROUP SIZE: 12 guests, 3 guides & 1 camp staff

WHEN WE GO: June - September

[Click here for dates, prices, and more information](#)

MEETING DETAILS

MEETING LOCATION: [Alder Bay RV & Marina](#), Alder Bay, BC

DAY 1 MEETING TIME: 11:30 am

DAY 4 RETURN TIME: Between 2 - 2:30 pm *

PARKING DIRECTIONS: Please park near the boat ramp and look for the Spirit of the West meeting sign at the covered shelter on the pier leading to the dock. You are welcome to unload your luggage here. At your designated meeting time (11:30 am) your guides will meet you with a parking pass and further instructions.

**Due to the unpredictable nature of wilderness travel, return times cannot be guaranteed. Please plan transport and accommodation accordingly. If you do choose to book flights or ferries for your final day, we highly recommend covering those within your travel insurance policy.*

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

INCLUDED: Expert guides, daily kayaking excursions, paddling equipment, base camp accommodation, all meals and snacks from lunch day 1 to a bagged lunch on the final day, use of camp hot tub, return water taxi journey, park permits & land use permissions

NOT INCLUDED: Personal clothing, sleeping bag & rain gear (rentals available), transport to/from departure point, accommodation before & after the trip, travel insurance, guide team gratuity



WHAT TO EXPECT



KAYAKING

The paddling options from our base camp on West Cracroft are well suited to all levels of paddlers. Day trips can range in length from 4-6 hours on the water (arrival & departure days will be short paddling days). Your guides will choose a route each day based on weather conditions and the interests/abilities of the group. Please be aware that a minimum safety ratio of one guide to five guests must be maintained. When kayaking, we stay together as a group and move at the speed of the slowest paddler.

A fleet of good quality fibreglass kayaks are available for use. Guides will assign boats each morning, so please expect to rotate through a variety of single and double kayaks during your tour.

Depending on weather, there may be the option to do a 2-3 hour hike (paddle access only). We provide small backpacks, please have suitable footwear for walking.

Our tours require everyone to work together as a team. Your assistance will be required to help unload luggage from the water taxi, and with carrying kayaks up and down the beach. If you need help at anytime, please let us know.

CAMP

The Johnstone Strait Ultimate camp sits just outside normal cell service areas, so you can enjoy your time with us free from digital distractions. If you need to find a signal to check in, you can find service as you paddle. If needed, we can provide (very limited and spotty) wifi.

We have a limited supply of electricity through solar panels and a battery bank at camp. Everyone should be able to charge a camera battery at least once while on the trip and possibly more, but we recommend bringing your own personal battery bank to use throughout your tour to ensure you are able to charge your devices.

Please be aware that water is sourced from a stream, so shower length may need to be limited during summer dry periods.

Pacific coastal air is cool and moist. While some days are warm, once the sun goes down, the air temperature drops. Choose fabrics such as synthetic, wool, and fleece (which dry faster than cotton) and plan to bring extra layers in case clothing gets wet.

FOOD

All meals and snacks are included, from lunch on day one to a bagged lunch on your final day. We source local, fresh produce wherever possible and aim to serve healthy, hearty and delicious food. We are happy to accommodate many dietary restrictions with advance notice (please let us know 60 days in advance of tour start date; some dietary needs are subject to an additional fee). Learn more on our [Food Page](#).

EXAMPLE ITINERARY

This example itinerary is flexible and may be adapted based on weather and group ability.

DAY 1

Once you have arrived at Alder Bay Resort & Marina, park near the boat ramp and look for the Spirit of the West meeting sign. Unload your gear near the sign and wait for a Spirit of the West team member who will meet you at the 11:30 am meeting time with further instructions.

After a quick safety briefing, you'll jump aboard our water taxi for a scenic 40 minute boat journey across the Johnstone Strait.

Upon arrival at West Cracroft Island, your guides will serve lunch before an orientation of camp. After the orientation, you'll have the opportunity to settle into your tent.

Following this, the group will meet on the beach for a kayak orientation, before heading off for a late afternoon paddle.

Delicious appetizers will be ready and waiting for when you get ashore. Spend the rest of your evening relaxing, enjoying dinner and taking in the incredible scenery that surrounds you.

DAYS 2-3

Steaming coffee and tea will be available for when you're ready to start your day. Enjoy a hearty breakfast before getting ready to go paddling. We will explore the expansive southern shoreline of West Cracroft Island, bringing a picnic lunch with us. We plan to be back to camp by mid-afternoon for time to relax and unwind before dinner. You are also welcome to stay at camp for a full day of relaxation.

Wind and weather permitting, there may be the option for a paddle-access-only hike to Eagle Eye lookout, a platform used for observation by whale researchers.

DAY 4

Savour a tasty breakfast and your final moments on the water during an early morning paddle. The water taxi arrives at camp around 1 pm to bring you back to Alder Bay. You can expect to be back at your vehicle by 2 - 2:30 pm.





PACKING FOR YOUR ADVENTURE

As we are traveling by water taxi, you are welcome to pack in a duffel bag, backpack, suitcase (or a combination of these!) Please be prepared that you will be required to carry your own luggage along boardwalks to the water taxi and along uneven trails to your tent.

Spirit of the West provides the following: safari-style tents with cozy beds (*bedding not provided, please bring your own sleeping bag*), pillow, a towel, shower gel, shampoo and conditioner, paddling equipment, waterproof drybags, small backpack for optional hike, travel mug, camp binoculars and plenty of comfy places to sit.

Spirit of the West does **not** provide a sleeping bag or raingear (rentals are available if ordered in advance, please contact us at least 30 days before your tour to rent).

THE GOLDEN RULES OF WILDERNESS CLOTHING

- Synthetic, wool & fleece are preferred for kayaking as they stay warm, even when wet.
- Dress in layers! Plan to have options to adjust for warmer or cooler weather.
- Be sure to check that your raingear is waterproof before arriving.
- Athletic gear you already own is often very suitable for kayaking. Ski base layers, yoga pants, hiking pants & running shirts are great options.
- Please note that in our coastal environment, wet clothing is unlikely to dry. Assume that once something is wet, it will stay wet or at least damp for the remainder of the trip, please plan accordingly.

WEATHER

The cool, nutrient dense waters of the northeast coast of Vancouver Island attract salmon, orcas, eagles, humpbacks, and other wildlife. These colder waters and ocean breezes make the region cool, even during the summer months. Typical daytime temperatures in June to September sit at around 19°C. Overnight temperatures can drop as low as 10°C. The shoulder season is cooler (June and September) and fleece and/or puffy jackets are recommended throughout the season, even in August. Early morning fog is common, and if winds are forecasted, they typically build throughout the day. Rainfall can occur anytime, even in the peak of summer. Please keep this in mind while packing!

PRINTABLE PACKING LIST

To print only this page, select page 7 from the print dialog box that pops up when you press "Print".

CLOTHING FOR PADDLING

- A full set of rain gear - jacket & pants
(rentals available with advance notice)
- 2 x long-sleeved synthetic shirts
- 1 x long-sleeved fleece or mid-weight layer
- 1 x quick-dry or synthetic pants
- A pair of water shoes *(Gumboots, crocs, neoprene booties or sandals with straps. No flip flops.)*
- 1 x sun hat
- A pair of sunglasses

CLOTHING FOR CAMP

- 2 x shirts
- 1 x fleece or sweatshirt
- 1 x camp pants *(yoga pants or synthetic/quick dry)*
- 2 x long underwear or base layers *(keep 1 pair for sleeping)*
- 1 x pair of shorts
- 4 x warm socks
- Underwear *(a mix of cotton and synthetic)*
- 1 x bathing suit
- 1 x toque/beanie
- A pair of camp shoes *(runners, light hikers, sturdy sandals)*

OTHER ITEMS

- Sleeping bag *(rentals available with advance notice)*
- Personal toiletries *(ecofriendly/biodegradable)*
- Sunscreen & bug spray
- Headlamp
- Hand sanitizer and mask
- Water bottle

OPTIONAL

- Camera & spare batteries
- Book and/or journal
- Cards or small camp games
- Binoculars
- Phone charger
- Paddling gloves
- Buff/neck gaiter
- Spare eye glasses & contact lenses
- Medication *(if flying, please pack necessary medication in your carry-on luggage)*
- Your favourite carbonated or alcoholic beverages *(we have a no alcohol on the water policy, please refrain from consuming alcohol until we are done kayaking for the day)*
- Guide team gratuity *(cash or credit card - there is a 3% transaction surcharge on credit card gratuities)*

PLANNING CHECKLIST

- Read our **Terms and Conditions**
- Pay deposit to confirm your reservation
- Provide details for other members of your group through the links in your confirmation email
- Inform Spirit of the West about any dietary or medical requirements (at least 60 days in advance)
- Purchase **Travel Insurance**
- If needed, request rain gear rentals from Spirit of the West
- Organize **Transportation** to/from Alder Bay
- Book Your Accommodation** for the night before & after your trip
- Complete all Spirit of the West paperwork through the blue 'Complete Guest Details' button on your invoice or links in your confirmation email
- 60 days before the tour, final payment is due (automatically charged to card on file)
- Update us with any dietary changes or rental requests at least 30 days before tour start date
- Get excited for the adventure!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To fully immerse yourself in the environment, we highly encourage you to learn about the local ecology and First Nations culture. Here are some great resources to help you get started:

- [Listening to Whales: What the Orcas Have Taught Us](#) - Alexandra Morton
- [Cedar: Tree of Life to the Northwest Coast](#) - Hilary Stewart
- Our blog on [responsible wildlife viewing](#) and our suggestions of ways to [minimize the impact of your travel](#)

[MORE RECOMMENDED RESOURCES](#)

QUICK LINK BUTTONS

[TOUR PAGE](#)

A tour overview including gallery, itinerary, FAQ and reviews

[FAQ](#)

Commonly asked questions about our tours

[ACCOMMODATION](#)

A list of accommodation options close to Alder Bay

[GETTING HERE](#)

Directions on how to get to Alder Bay

[INSURANCE](#)

More detail on why we strongly recommend travel insurance

[TERMS & CONDITIONS](#)

Our terms & conditions with full cancellation policy

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