

# DESOLATION SOUND EXPEDITION



## GUEST HANDBOOK



SPIRIT  
OF THE WEST  
ADVENTURES

# TOUR OVERVIEW

## KAYAK & ADVENTURE IN A PADDLER'S PARADISE

Tucked beneath the towering Coast Mountains of BC, Desolation Sound is an area of epic scenery, dramatic coastlines and beautiful campsites.

Beginning and ending in Squirrel Cove on Cortes Island, you'll paddle past West Redonda Island and into the heart of the Desolation Sound Marine Provincial Park. No two expeditions are the same, but most groups will spend at least a few nights on the Curme, Martin or Kinghorn Islands. Some groups will head north to Teakerne Arm or Roscoe Bay, while other groups will head south and camp on the Malaspina Peninsula or the Copeland Islands.



The Desolation Sound Expedition is for anyone looking for an adventure in a paddling paradise. While kayaking is a core part of this tour, it often isn't the sole focus of every day. Relaxing, swimming and exploring on foot are big components of this trip too. No prior paddling experience is required but due to the rocky landings and terrain, good mobility is required.

The area we share with you on this tour is the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Tla'amin, Homalco, and Klahoose nations. Learn more on the [Tla'amin](#), [Homalco](#), and [Klahoose](#) nation websites and the [First Peoples' Map of BC](#).

# KEY DETAILS

## OVERVIEW

**TRIP TYPE:** Loop expedition *(start and end at same place)*

**TRIP DURATION:** 5 days / 4 nights

**GROUP SIZE:** 10 guests, 2 guides

**WHEN WE GO:** June, July, early September

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

## MEETING TIME & PLACE

For the Desolation Sound Expedition, we launch our kayaks in Squirrel Cove on Cortes Island. There is the option to meet us in Squirrel Cove or carpool with us from Quadra Island.

**OPTION 1 (CARPOOL):** 8:00 am at the [Spirit of the West Adventures office](#) at 1313 Cramer Road, Heriot Bay (Quadra Island)

**OPTION 2 (SELF-DRIVE):** 10:15 am at the [Squirrel Cove Trading Post](#) (Cortes Island)

## RETURN TIME

On the final day of the tour, we typically return to Squirrel Cove on Cortes Island around 12-2 pm and the Spirit of the West base on Quadra Island around 5 pm.

*\*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, paddling & camping equipment (except for sleeping bag), all meals and snacks from lunch day 1 to a bagged lunch on the final day, 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 *(cash preferred)*



# WHAT TO EXPECT



## KAYAKING

We begin and end the Desolation Sound expedition in Squirrel Cove. Each day on the water, you can expect to be paddling for 4-6 hours and cover 6-8 nautical miles per day. You may encounter wind, currents, and crossings.

The shorelines in Desolation Sound plunge steeply into the ocean. There are very few beaches - landings are small, rocky and uneven underfoot. Some boat carries are steep and some landings require you to move quickly. Your guides will assist, but good mobility is required.



A fleet of good quality fibreglass kayaks will join your expedition. Typically, your group will have at least two double kayaks and the rest singles. Please be prepared to paddle different boats throughout your trip. Your group will be carrying everything you need in your kayaks, there is no support crew or resupply. For this reason, it is important to pack well and pack light. We will help you with this!

Our expeditions require everyone to work together as a team. Your assistance will be needed with loading, carrying and unloading kayaks as well as setting up and taking down camp. If you need help at anytime, please let us know.



## CAMPING

During your 4 nights in Desolation Sound, you can expect to stay at 2-4 different campsites. Desolation Sound is a marine provincial park. Most sites are well established, with pit toilets and built tent platforms. Your guides will make decisions about when and where to move camp based on weather and campsite availability. We practice **Leave No Trace** camping and encourage you to refresh yourself on the seven principles before arrival.

Handwashing stations will be set up at each lunch spot and campsite. Saltwater ocean dips can be used for bathing and we also often visit freshwater lakes. You can also bring a face cloth to use with a bit of fresh water or wipes (must be packed out).



Cell service is quite reliable in Desolation Sound, but you will not have access to electricity or charging stations throughout your trip. Please bring extra batteries or battery packs for phones and cameras.

## FOOD

All meals and snacks are included, from lunch day one to a bagged lunch on your final day. We 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

If you are carpooling to Cortes Island with us, meet us at 8:00 am at the Spirit of the West office on Quadra Island. If you are meeting us at the launch point on Cortes, arrive in Squirrel Cove by 10:15 am and park your car. Pay for parking (approx \$5 per day) in the General Store. Squirrel Cove is very small, so it'll be easy to find your guides when the rest of the group arrives.

We will work together to unload the kayaks from the trailer and your guides will demonstrate how to pack your gear for the expedition. After running through a safety briefing, your guides will provide a quick lunch before we launch.

With the Coast Mountains towering over you and shimmering water on all sides, that first afternoon will be a flurry of excitement.

After arriving at your first campsite and setting up your tent, your guides will serve some delicious appetizers and a hearty dinner. In the evening, you'll have some free time to relax, read, swim or just sit and enjoy the sunset.

## DAY 5

Enjoy your final morning on the water as you paddle back to Squirrel Cove. We typically land back in Squirrel Cove around noon and share a final lunch before packing up and loading the kayaks. We aim to catch the 3:55 pm ferry from Cortes to Quadra Island, getting us back on Quadra Island around 5pm.

## DAYS 2-4

Starting the day with a cup of steaming coffee or tea and some tasty breakfast, your guides will make a plan based on weather conditions and the group's desires. Maybe you'll go for a day paddle to explore Prideaux Haven, enjoy a short hike to a hidden freshwater lake for an afternoon swim, or perhaps you'll break camp and head off to discover another corner of Desolation Sound.

Throughout the day, your guides will share information about the region and the wildlife you may see. Along the way, we'll take a snack break and find a beach for a picnic lunch.

The route and campsites for every Desolation Sound Expedition is slightly different. Most groups spend at least two nights at one of the campsites, doing day trips without taking down camp, but other groups may change campsites each night of the trip. We love Desolation Sound for the endless possibilities for exploring. Your guides will assess the conditions and options to choose the best route for your group!





# PACKING FOR YOUR ADVENTURE

Upon arrival, your guides will provide you with waterproof dry bags to pack your clothing and personal items into. We typically provide three dry bags per person. Two of these dry bags (typically a 20L and 10L bag) will be for your personal items, like your clothes. Your sleeping bag and shoes will be packed separately. An additional 10L bag will be your lap bag, which you'll keep in your cockpit with you for anything you want easy access to when you are on the water. Your guides will help you pack when you arrive.

**Spirit of the West provides the following:** sleeping pad, inflatable pillow and pillowcase, tents, paddling equipment, lightweight camp chair, drybags, mini deckchart, and travel mug.

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

Desolation Sound experiences less tidal flow and currents than other regions of the BC coast, which makes the region known for its warm waters. During the summer months, water temperature can range from 15°C to 20°C. Tucked in a rainshadow, the area is also known for its milder weather, but please do be prepared for rain at any time. Typical daytime temperatures in June to September range from 20°C to 25°C. Overnight temperatures can drop as low as 10°C. Fleece and/or puffy jackets are recommended throughout the season.

# PRINTABLE PACKING LIST

Want more information?

**DETAILED 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, neoprene booties or sandals with straps. No flip flops.)*
- 1 x sun hat *(secure fitting in case of windy conditions)*
- A pair of sunglasses with a retainer strap

## 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
- 3 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: 3 season bag in a compression sack *(rentals available with advance notice)*
- Headlamp & spare batteries
- Personal toiletries *(ecofriendly/biodegradable)*
- Quick dry compact towel, face cloth & wipes
- Sunscreen, bug spray, & SPF lip balm
- Water bottle
- A few Ziplocs and garbage bags *(for extra waterproofing)*

## OPTIONAL

- Binoculars, camera & spare batteries
- Book, journal, cards or small games
- Battery bank
- Paddling gloves or pogies
- Buff or neck gaiter
- Waterproof phone case or water camera
- 1-2 x Carabiners
- Spare eye glasses & contact lenses
- Medication *(if flying, please pack necessary medication in your carry-on luggage)*
- 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 preferred - 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 Cortes or Quadra Island
- 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:

- [Adventures in Solitude](#) - Grant Lawrence
- [The Curve of Time](#) - M. Wylie Blanchet
- 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 your tour start

[GETTING HERE](#)

Directions on how to get to Cortes Island or Quadra Island

[INSURANCE](#)

More detail on why we strongly recommend travel insurance

[TERMS & CONDITIONS](#)

Our terms & conditions with full cancellation policy

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## Spirit of the West Adventures

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