

GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST EXPEDITION

GUEST HANDBOOK



SPIRIT
OF THE WEST
ADVENTURES

TOUR OVERVIEW



One of the last great stretches of wilderness: the Great Bear Rainforest is the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world. The misty forests, rugged coastlines and windswept beaches are sure to take your breath away.

Beginning in the Heiltsuk community of Bella Bella, we'll head south through the Hakai Conservancy, the largest marine protected area on the BC coast, exploring 50 nautical miles of islets and inlets on your way to Calvert Island. Paddling through kelp forests and remote stretches of the inside passage, glide past ancient forests and camp on sandy beaches under the stars.



Our Great Bear Rainforest Expedition is the most challenging kayak tour we offer. This 8 day trip involves outer coast paddling and exposed crossings. Some days may see us paddling in swell and winds. Because of the dynamic environment, remote location and longer days on the water, we require that all participants on this tour have previous outdoor experience. Contact us to chat about if this tour is a good fit for you.

The area we share with you on this tour is the traditional territory of the Heiltsuk nation. Learn more about the Kwakwaka'wakw people, land, and language on the [Heiltsuk Nation's website](#) and the [First Peoples' Map of BC](#).

KEY DETAILS

OVERVIEW

TRIP TYPE: Expedition

GROUP SIZE: 10 guests, 2 guides

TRIP DURATION: 8 days / 7 nights

WHEN WE GO: late June - August

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

MEETING DETAILS

DEPARTURE POINT: Denny Island off the coast of Bella Bella, BC

DAY 1 MEETING TIME: 9 am at the Shearwater Resort Dock on Denny Island.

DAY 8 RETURN TIME: around 3 pm *

**Due to the unpredictable nature of wilderness travel, return times cannot be guaranteed. Please plan transport and accommodation so you arriving the day before and leaving the day after your tour.*

PRE-TRIP MEETING: 6 pm at the Shearwater Resort the evening before the tour begins (Day 0)

Please note, Shearwater Resort is on Denny Island, a short Seabus ride from Bella Bella. The Seabus departs regularly from the government dock at the waterfront in Bella Bella and charges a fare of \$10 cash.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

INCLUDED: Expert guides, paddling & camping equipment (except for sleeping bag), all meals and snacks from lunch day 1 to a lunch on the final day, water taxi transport, 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

On this expedition we usually travel north to south, paddling among the Tribal, Admiralty, McMullin, and McNaughton Island groups. Each day on the water, we typically paddle for 5-7 hours and cover 8-12 nautical miles per day. You may encounter wind, swell, currents and technical landings.

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

All sites are remote wilderness campsites without built infrastructure or established facilities.

Your guides will carry a portable toilet that will be placed in a private area at each backcountry sites. We practice **Leave No Trace** camping and encourage you to refresh yourself on the seven principles before arrival.

There is limited access to fresh water on this route. Handwashing stations will be set up at each lunch spot and campsite. Saltwater ocean dips can be used for bathing (be prepared for cold water!) You can also bring a face cloth to use with a bit of fresh water or wipes (must be packed out).

Upon leaving Bella Bella, we will be off-grid for the remainder of the expedition. There will be no wifi, cell service or charging stations. Please bring extra batteries or battery packs for phones and cameras. Your guides will have satellite communication devices in case of emergencies.

Pacific coastal air is cool and moist. While some days are warm, once the sun goes down, the air temperature drops. Please pack clothing accordingly.



FOOD

All meals and snacks are included, from lunch day one to a 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. On this expedition, we typically move camp between 5-7 times during the 8 days of paddling.

DAY 0

Travel to Bella Bella by air or sea. Find up-to-date transport options and recommendations on our [**Getting Here page**](#).

Meet your guides at 6 pm at the Shearwater Resort Fisherman's Bar & Grill on Denny Island for a pre-trip welcome meeting. You'll meet the rest of your group, receive your waterproof drybags for packing and have the chance to ask any last minute questions.

At the pre-trip meeting, your guides will let you know the specific meeting time and details for the next day.

DAY 1

We will start the first day around 9 am at the Shearwater Resort Dock to meet our water taxi. After being transported to Bella Bella, we will receive an introduction to the area and the Heiltsuk First Nation with a local cultural interpreter.

Around noon, we will depart on our water taxi to shuttle out to our first campsite. Once there, your group will sort out gear and prepare for your adventure, beginning with an orientation to the kayaks, gear, and safety procedures. When everyone is comfortable with their boats, we'll head out for our first paddle of the expedition.

** For the first day, please wear your camp clothes and footwear that can get wet for the beach.*

DAYS 2-7

After a delicious breakfast cooked by your multi-talented guides, you'll tear down camp and pack up to depart. With a careful assessment of the weather and tides, your guides will determine the best route for the day.

We usually travel north to south, paddling among the Tribal, Admiralty, McMullin, and McNaughton Island groups, as well as the remote Goose Islands if the weather allows. In the southeast, we'll enter the islands and beaches of the Hakai Conservancy and we may traverse Hakai Passage and Kildidit Sound. Each day, lunch will be enjoyed at a beach en-route, and we will arrive at a new campsite in time for some time relaxing and enjoying a hearty dinner before a good night of sleep.

DAY 8

Savor your last moments on the water with a final morning paddle.

Around 10 am, you'll meet our water taxi at your end destination, which will transport the group and all the gear, back to your start point in Bella Bella.

You can expect to be back by around 3pm, but we do request that you avoid booking onward travel for that day, just in case delays are encountered.





PACKING FOR YOUR ADVENTURE

At your pre-trip meeting the day before your tour, 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 (220 cm paddles, Nimbus Kiska and Werner Baja), 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

Our 8 days in the Great Bear Rainforest typically involve a mix of weather including rain, fog, and sun! The abundance of moisture and cooler temperatures on land, plus the ocean's cold water upwelling, create the perfect environments for flora and fauna to flourish. The average daily temperature is 17°C/ 62°F and the nightly temperatures are around 10°C/ 50°F. The sea surface temperature sits at around 12°C / 54°F. It rains quite regularly in the area throughout the summer, so please be prepared with well waterproofed rain gear. It can be a good idea to have one rain jacket for when on the water and a second for at camp (rentals available with advance notice).

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: 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
- ☐ Hand sanitizer and mask
- ☐ Water bottle
- ☐ A few Ziplocs and garbage bags *(for extra waterproofing)*
- ☐ Cash for Shearwater SeaBus *(\$10 one way)*
- ☐ Extra snacks / food for before and after tour
(breakfast options at Shearwater may be limited)

OPTIONAL

- ☐ Binoculars, camera & spare batteries
- ☐ Book, journal, cards or small games
- ☐ Phone charging battery bank
- ☐ Paddling gloves
- ☐ Spare eye glasses & contact lenses
- ☐ Medication *(if flying, please pack necessary medication in your carry-on luggage)*
- ☐ Carbonated or alcoholic beverages
- ☐ Guide team gratuity *(cash or credit card - there is a 3% transaction surcharge on credit card gratuities)*

PLANNING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read our **Terms and Conditions** and 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 Bella Bella (most guests fly to Bella Bella, there is also a ferry option from Port Hardy on Vancouver Island)
- ☐ **Book Your Accommodation** for the night before & after your trip (options are limited, most guests stay at Shearwater Resort. Rooms can book up fast, so reserve your room early!)
- ☐ 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:

- [Great Bear Rainforest](#) - Ian McAllister, Karen McAllister, Cameron Young
- [Staying the Course, Staying Alive: Coastal First Nations](#) - Frank & Kathy Brown
- [British Columbia: A Natural History](#) - Cannings & Cannings
- 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 options, accommodation fills fast, please book in advance

[GETTING HERE](#)

Directions on how to get to Denny Island, most guests fly

[INSURANCE](#)

More detail on why we strongly recommend travel insurance

[TERMS & CONDITIONS](#)

Our terms & conditions with full cancellation policy

[BOOK NOW](#)

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