

JOHNSTONE STRAIT EXPEDITION

GUEST HANDBOOK



SPIRIT
OF THE WEST
ADVENTURES

TOUR OVERVIEW

EXPLORE THE BEAUTIFUL JOHNSTONE STRAIT BY KAYAK

The Johnstone Strait Expedition is a perfect entry point into the world of kayak expeditions and a great option for those looking for a shorter adventure. Spend all four days of this tour in the dramatic landscapes of the Johnstone Strait and Blackfish Sound: regions known for their diverse and rich ecosystems. Days are spent paddling along the sweeping shorelines of northeastern Vancouver Island, camping amongst towering cedar trees, and keeping an eye on the horizon for the distinct blows of whales or other wildlife.



THE ROUTE

The Johnstone Strait region has endless areas to explore and the route for each expedition is slightly different. Your trip might be based primarily in the Johnstone Strait - visiting Blinkhorn Peninsula, the Robson Bight Ecological Reserve and learning about the Northern resident orcas. Or maybe you'll circumnavigate Hanson Island, kayaking through Blackney Passage and looking out for porpoises between the Plumper Islands. Or quite possibly, your group will head to Blackfish Sound, and camp on the islands that fringe the Broughton Archipelago. Each route is unique and special!

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: Expedition

GROUP SIZE: 10 guests & 2 guides

TRIP DURATION: 4 days / 3 nights

WHEN WE GO: July & August

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

MEETING DETAILS

MEETING LOCATION: Bauza Cove, BC (park at the top of the hill in Bauza Cove)

DAY 1 MEETING TIME: 11:30 am

DAY 4 RETURN TIME: Between 11 am - noon *

DIRECTIONS: From Island Hwy/BC-19, turn onto Beaver Cove Road. You will see a Spirit of the West sign at the turn off for Alder Bay. Do not follow this sign. Instead, continue to Bauza Cove. Before you arrive at Telegraph Cove, turn right onto the gravel road above the hotel. Take the second left turn through the open gate. While Google Maps doesn't show the last road, it's there!

Park at the first pad on the left at the top of the hill. At 11:30 am, your guides will meet you and direct you to the free parking area.

**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 your 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



WHAT TO EXPECT



KAYAKING

On this expedition, we start and end at Bauza Cove, paddling through the Johnstone Strait and Blackfish Sound. We typically move camp every night. Each day on the water, you can expect to be paddling for 4-6 hours and cover 6-8 nautical miles per day (arrival & departure days will be shorter paddling days). You may encounter wind, currents, and crossings.

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

There are a number of different campsites throughout the area. Typically groups spend at least night of your tour at an established Spirit of the West base camp site on Hanson Island, which has a rustic camp kitchen area, built tent platforms and a pit toilet. Most other sites you visit will have designated camping areas and pit toilets. Your guides will also bring a portable toilet system. 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).

Cell service is fairly reliable in the Johnstone Strait and Blackfish 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.

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 on 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

Drive into Bauza Cove and park at the top of the hill. At 11:30 am, your guides will meet you and direct you to the free parking area.

Once the group has gathered, the guides will pass out your drybags and demonstrate how to pack your gear for the expedition. After preparing the boats, we will go through a safety briefing and eat lunch before launching into the Johnstone Strait to begin the adventure.

After an afternoon of paddling, we'll land at our first campsite, unload our kayaks, and set up camp. Your guides will serve some delicious appetizers and cook a hearty dinner for the group.

Spend the evening relaxing, reading or chatting with new friends as you watch the sun dip below the horizon.

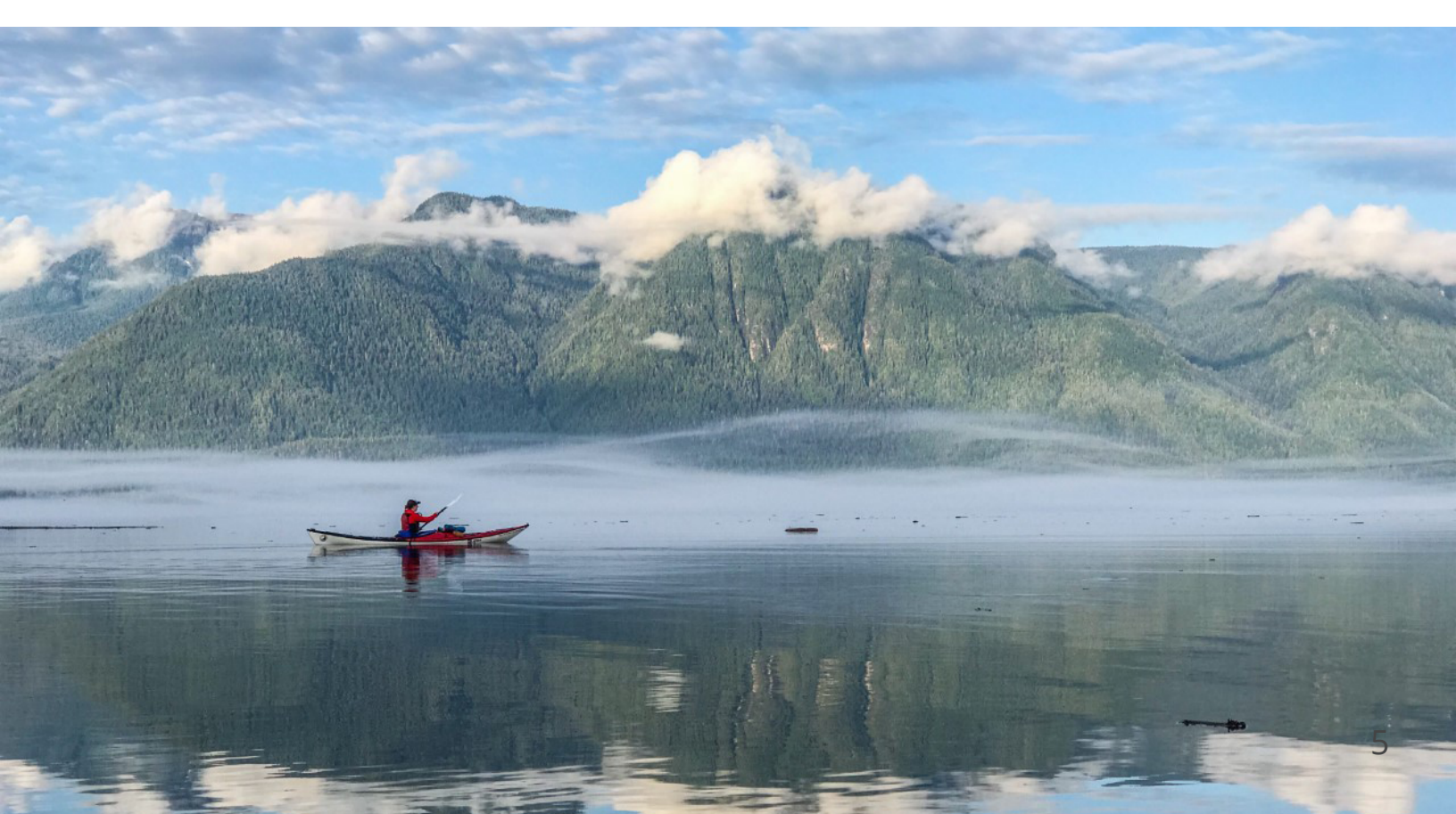
DAYS 2-3

Each day, your guides will make a plan based on weather conditions and the group's desires. After a hearty breakfast, you'll pack up camp and head off to explore a new area. Along the way, your guides will share information about the region and the wildlife you may see. We'll find a beach for a snack break and picnic lunch.

We aim to be at our next campsite by mid-afternoon each day. When we arrive, we will unload and set up camp. After dinner, you will have time to unwind and enjoy your surroundings.

DAY 4

Enjoy the last few hours on the water as you paddle back to Bauza Cove, aiming to arrive around 11:30 am. After unloading the kayaks and eating a simple lunch, most guests leave around 1 pm.





PACKING FOR YOUR ADVENTURE

Upon arrival in Bauza Cove, 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 deckchair, 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

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 *(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
- ☐ 2 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
- ☐ Buff or neck gaiter
- ☐ Book, journal, cards or small games
- ☐ Battery bank
- ☐ Paddling gloves or pogies
- ☐ 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 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 Bauza Cove
- ☐ **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 Bauza Cove

[GETTING HERE](#)

Directions on how to get to Bauza Cove

[INSURANCE](#)

More detail on why we strongly recommend travel insurance

[TERMS & CONDITIONS](#)

Our terms & conditions with full cancellation policy

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