



Program Information Package

Clayoquot Instructional Tour

Program Description

Our Clayoquot Instructional Tour aims to help you gain confidence paddling in the magnificent waters of Clayoquot Sound. We combine a relaxing tour atmosphere with the opportunity to learn key kayaking skills in an educational paddling adventure.

Clayoquot Sound was designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2000—and for good reason: this area exemplifies the beautiful, wild, West Coast of BC, with an abundance of whales, sea otters, eagles, sea stars, and other natural wonders. Kayaking is the best way, and one of the only ways, to visit this area. Long, wide, sandy beaches dominate the exposed coastline, while further back from the water's edge, old growth forests and mountainous terrain fill the vistas.

To help you prepare for our time together, we have created this course package to be used as a skills and equipment checklist. There is a lot of information included, so be sure to review all the pages.



Paperwork Checklist

Please use the following checklist to ensure you have received and reviewed all the required documentation prior to the program start date:

- ✓ Clayoquot Instructional Tour Program Document – please review
- ❑ SKILS Waiver – please review and sign in the presence of your instructor
- ❑ SKILS Medical Form – please bring a completed copy to your program
- ❑ Policy and Procedures Document – please review

Program Overview

From our kayak launch site, we will head out on a 5-day (4-night) kayak camping trip into Clayoquot Sound. During the program, we are keen to help you improve your kayaking and outdoor skills. The incredible environment of the area is an ideal classroom and a wonderful setting for a tour. Depending on the itinerary and weather of the day, we spend between 3-6 hours on the water daily with plenty of time for snacks and rest stops.

We provide kayaks, paddling equipment, guides, and food. We use high quality fiberglass and polyethylene single kayaks made by top manufacturers. Our safety-conscious guides are among the most highly trained and versatile on the coast; they are enthusiastic instructors, creative cooks, and great companions.



Who Should Take This Course

This tour is appropriate for experienced kayakers who are interested in learning new skills and gaining experience at paddling in the waters of the West Coast of BC. It is best suited to experienced sea kayakers with basic rescue skills and kayaking strokes. Specifically, you should be able to brace and control your direction without the aid of a rudder. You will be paddling in single kayaks, and should be able to paddle at a speed of 2-3 nautical miles per hour (a relaxed pace for most paddlers). In addition, participants should have previously received instruction on how to correctly capsize a kayak and be rescued. For your safety and enjoyment, and for the safety and enjoyment of others in the program, please enter the program with the prerequisite knowledge, skill, and experience. If you are unsure about your level of experience, please give us a call. This program is for ages 16 and up.

Program Details

Meet your guide(s) and other participants in Tofino, BC, at 8:30 am. Please attempt to arrive 10 – 15 minutes early for your tour in case you encounter delays. We will meet at the kayak launch beside the town dock in Tofino. The town dock is located at the base of First Street, and the kayak launch is located to the left of the town dock. Short-term parking is available at the kayak launch to enable you to unload your gear. At the time of writing, long-term overnight parking is available for free in a gravel parking lot next to the police station in town. You are responsible for the logistics of parking your vehicle for the duration of the tour. We cannot be responsible for damage to or loss of your personal items, so please ensure valuables are stored securely.

As our course begins early in the morning, please arrange overnight accommodation in or near Tofino for the night before. Information on accommodation is provided within this document. Your kayak and all associated paddling gear will be available for you at the launch site.

At our launch site, you will be given a portion of the group equipment, food, and water to carry in your kayak and instructions on how to pack your boat efficiently. When all participants are ready, we will launch for an enjoyable paddle to our first campsite in Vargas Island Marine Park in Clayoquot Sound (itinerary may change due to weather conditions). On the second day, we will enjoy a wonderful day-paddle from our base camp to explore the beautiful scenery of this region, and develop our paddling skills while we are at it. On the third day, we will move camp to enjoy different scenery and paddling conditions. Again, we will base camp at our new location to enable us to paddle on the fourth day with empty kayaks. We will explore the surrounding area and further develop our kayaking skills.



The incredible environment of the area is an ideal classroom; we will take the opportunity to introduce you to the local natural and cultural history. There will be plenty of the time to take photos or relax on the beach.

On the fifth and final day of the course, expect to return to Tofino by 4:30 pm. We caution you that due to unsafe weather conditions or other reasons, our return may be delayed. As such, please do not organize tight connections or other time-sensitive travel plans for the evening of your return or the following day; rather, enjoy a relaxing evening in Tofino or a nearby area. Consider purchasing cancellation and trip interruption insurance for any flight tickets if you are arriving from out-of-town. We have had trip delays in the past, and we cannot compromise group safety for flights.

Packing and unpacking the boats, carrying them to and from the beach, and setting up and breaking camp will be a group effort. The old adage ‘many hands make light work’ holds true as always. There will also be lots of rest and relaxation time. If you’re handy around the kitchen, or would like to learn about cooking on trip, help chopping vegetables and other such preparation for our meals will always be welcome. As well, pitching in to help with cleanup after meals is greatly appreciated. We find that if everyone chips in a little with some of the chores, the tour is more enjoyable and eventful for all, as the guides have more time to do what they do best—guide! That means more time to explore and more time to take in the scenery.

After the trip, please share your memories and photographs with us—we’d love to hear from you.

Program Safety

Ocean kayaking and camping are not without risk. Certain rules of sea kayaking and camping techniques must be agreed to and observed by all members of the tour to maximize the safety and enjoyment of all participants and minimize our impact on the ecosystem. We will discuss these rules, why they are necessary, and what contingency plans we would use in the event of an emergency.

The Elements

The weather is variable at all times on the West coast; during the expedition we can expect sun, rain and wind in varying amounts. Please come prepared. The water temperature varies from 9 degrees Celsius to 17 degrees Celsius. Bring warm clothing and immersion gear. Rubber boots and a good rain jacket and pants are highly recommended.

Your Instructors

SKILS staff members are industry leaders and professionals with extensive guiding and instructional experience and certification. For profiles on each of our staff members, please visit our website at www.skils.ca

Ratios and Group Size

Our minimum group size is 3 participants and 1 instructor; our maximum group size is 8 participants and 2 instructors. For your safety and enjoyment, we ensure that groups with more than 4 participants are led by two experienced guides.

Program Logistics

Accommodation

You will need to make your own accommodation arrangements in Tofino for the night before the course starts (and optionally after the course finishes). Tofino is a popular tourist destination, so make certain you reserve your accommodation well in advance. The following links can help you find accommodation in the Tofino area:

- Tofino Chamber of Commerce www.tofinochamber.org
- Pacific Rim Visitor Information Centre www.pacificrimvisitor.ca
- Bella Pacifica Campground: www.bellapacifica.com
- Paddler's Inn: www.tofinopaddlersinn.com

Getting to and from the course

You are responsible for transportation to and from the starting location of the tour. Vancouver Island is easily accessed by air, ferry, and bus. Air Canada and WestJet offer regularly scheduled flights. BC Ferries offers ferry service from Canadian departure locations, while Washington State Ferries and the M.V. Coho offer ferry services from American departure locations. Once on Vancouver Island, Tofino can be accessed by car or the Tofino Bus (a link for the Tofino Bus is found below):

- Air Canada
1-888-247-2262 (in North America)
www.aircanada.com
- WestJet
1-888-WESTJET (1-888-937-8538)
www.westjet.com
- BC Ferries
1-888-BC FERRY (1-888-223-3779)
from anywhere in North America
(250) 386-3431 from outside North America
www.bcferries.com
- Washington State Ferries
(206) 464-6400
www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries
- M.V. Coho Ferry
(360) 457-4491
www.cohoferry.com
- Pacific Coast Line (Bus)
1-800-661-1725
www.pacificcoach.com
- Tofino Bus
1-866-986-3466
www.tofinobus.com

Meals

SKILS will provide the meals each day, beginning with lunch on the first day of your trip and finishing with lunch on the final day. Our meals are specially designed to be delicious, nutritious, and transported with us in our kayaks with minimal refrigeration. We will gladly try to accommodate any dietary requirements or allergies; just let us know at least two weeks in advance of the tour.

What SKILS provides for your program

The following is a list of gear that you will need on the course. Most items are required, however, an * indicates items are optional.

Paddling Gear

- Sea kayak
- Paddle
- Sprayskirt
- PFD (Personal Flotation Device): Canadian Coast Guard approved
- Whistle
- Hand pump
- Tow line or throw-line (buoyant heaving line at least 15 meters in length)
- Paddle float
- Spare paddle (optional)
- Sponge (optional): for drying out hatches

*If you would like to provide your own kayak and paddling gear for your program, your sea kayak must meet the following requirements: (1) is suitable for open sea conditions; (2) has positive buoyancy when capsized; (3) is able to adequately carry gear as required for the program; and (4) has perimeter lines. Please note: recreational kayaks that do not meet the above requirements are not suitable for our programs. If you have questions about the suitability of your kayak, please contact us.

Safety Gear

- First aid equipment
- VHF Marine Radio
- Signaling flares

Cooking Gear

- Large group tarp
- Stoves
- Fuel
- Lighter
- Pots and pans
- Cooking utensils
- Cutting boards
- Cups
- Bowls
- Plates
- Cutlery
- Washing basins
- Pot scrubbers
- Dishwashing soap

Food and Water

- Drinking water in portable containers
- Nutritious meals and snacks

What you need to bring for your program

Camping Gear - If you are paddling with friends you may choose to share a tent

- Tent
- Sleeping bag – 3 season bag with synthetic insulation
- Sleeping mat
- *Tarp with thin cord
- *Pillow case

Toiletries

- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Sunscreen and lip balm with high SPF protection (30 +)
- *Biodegradable soap
- Camp towel
- Toilet paper
- * Pads and/or Tampon

Immersion Clothing

- Wet suit and paddling jacket or dry suit. You will be paddling in this gear for extended periods of time, so make sure it fits well.
- Neoprene booties or other immersion footwear
- Paddling gloves or poggies

Personal Clothing - following is a guideline to assist with your packing; feel free to bring more or less as you feel necessary. Please avoid cotton as it keeps you cold when it's wet. Please wear clothing designated for outdoor wear and made from Merino wool, silk or synthetic materials such as Capilene, polyester, polypropylene, or nylon.

Torso

- Rain Jacket
- 1-2 fleece or wool sweaters/jackets
- 2 pair long jane/john tops
- 1-2 t-shirts
- 1 wind breaker

Legs

- Rain Pants
- 1-2 pair pants – At least one should be made of nylon
- 1 pair fleece or wool pants
- 1 pair long john/jane bottoms
- 1 pair shorts
- *Bathing suit

Feet

- 2-3 pair warm sock made with synthetics and/or wool
- *2 pair liner socks – Polypropylene or wool are common materials
- 1 pair camp shoes – Sneakers work well
- *1 pair rubber boots
- 1 pair sport sandals or shoes that can get wet.

Head

- 2 wool or fleece caps
- 1 Brimmed hat or baseball cap

Hands

- 1 pair of fleece or wool gloves
- *cycling gloves for paddling to prevent blisters

Miscellaneous Gear

- Headlamp or Flashlight with extra batteries
- Notebook with pencils and/or pens
- Water bottle
- *camera
- Pocket Knife
- Sunglasses with good UV protection with retriever strap
- *Small personal first aid kit
- Insect repellent
- *Moist towelettes for a quick cleanup
- *Good Book
- *Binoculars
- *Earplugs for light sleepers
- *Games such as Frisbee or cards
- Small day pack or fanny pack for carrying camera, water bottle, etc. on short hikes.
- Spare garbage bags and zip locks
- *Bathing suit

If you need to rent gear such as tents, sleeping bags, or sleeping pads, you can make arrangements with SKILS; please contact our office at info@skils.ca.

Packing your gear

You will need to waterproof at least your clothing and sleeping bag. Depending on how watertight your kayak is, you can pack the rest of your gear loose or in zip locks inside nylon stuff sacks. Here are two packing methods that work well. In fact, we usually use a combination of the two when we pack. Remember to leave room for group gear.

Dry Bag Method

Dry Bags are especially designed for paddle sports and are available at most sporting goods stores. Depending on the closure system they do not always keep all the water out. Test them in the shower before the trip. You will need two 20 litre bags for your sleeping bag and bulky clothing and 2 or 3 10 to 15 litre bags for your other clothing and gear.

Stuff Sack with Garbage Bag Liner Method

This is the tried and true method of years gone by. Line a stuff sack with a garbage bag. Pack as normal. Squeeze the air out before twisting the garbage bag top. Don't tie the garbage bag or use twist ties. Simply tuck the twisted end down into the stuff sack before drawing the top closed. This technique is reliable but not durable, so make sure you bring extra bags with you. You can improve the durability of this system by adding a 2nd stuff sack into the garbage bag creating a plastic sandwich. This method takes up less room than dry bags and makes the kayak easier to pack.



A couple of final packing pointers....

- It is easier to pack your kayak with many smaller bags than a few larger ones
- A large duffel bag is useful for transporting all your small bags to and from your kayak
- A large Tupperware/Rubbermaid is good for storing wet gear in your car

Medication

Please fill out and return the attached medical form and waiver no later than 14 days prior to the program start date. We will need this information to help us plan for the program.

Please note that you will require a **current tetanus shot** (less than 10 years old). This is very important, as tetanus is a naturally occurring bacteria that lives in the soil. If you do not have up-to-date tetanus inoculation, you may contract tetanus through a scratch or cut, and require immediate evacuation. A simple tetanus shot, easily accessible at most medical facilities, removes the risk of contracting tetanus.

Please be sure to let us know of any limitations of which we should be aware. Please duplicate and separate the quantities of any medications you will need during your program, and give your duplicated medications to your instructor, who will carry them. This will provide an additional source of medications should the primary set become wet, damaged, or lost. If you are prone to any health disturbances, e.g., easily infected cuts or severe migraines, please remember to bring any preventive medications. If you have any questions about medications, contact your doctor.

Swell or wind waves can be encountered on the ocean. If seasickness is of concern to you, your doctor or pharmacist may be able to recommend medication to help. Also, anti-nausea (drug-free) Gravol Ginger, candied ginger as well as wristbands work well for many people. Please note that seasickness occurs only rarely in sea kayaking. Be sure to let us know if you anticipate that seasickness will be a problem for you.

Preparing for Your Program

Kayaking requires some upper body strength and endurance. If you are lacking this, it is rarely a problem as we don't paddle huge distances, and usually folks get by quite well with only occasional minor muscle aches. However, if you feel you could use some upper body conditioning before your trip, exercising with light weights can be quite helpful. Concentrate mainly on shoulder strengthening exercises, focusing on endurance rather than strength.

Thank you for enrolling in our Clayoquot Instructional Tour. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact us at info@skills.ca. We look forward to paddling and exploring with you!