



SKILS

Great Bear Rainforest

Program Description



This is an expedition style program that is designed for the intermediate to advanced paddler who wishes to explore very remote wild locations while receiving quality instruction and feedback along the way. The Great Bear Rainforest is the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world. You will be paddling and camping amongst giant sitka spruce trees, 1000 year old red cedars and western hemlocks.

The waters teem with whales, otters, dolphins and sea lions while wolves, black bears, grizzly bears and eagles roam in the lush forests. This beautifully raw, rugged coast offers jaw dropping scenery and a rich First Nations culture. The only access along much of our route is by float plane or boat so you'll experience solitude and truly get off the beaten track. We plan to explore some of the remotest and most beautiful offshore islands such as the Goose Island Group. We will not see much human presence along our journey for a pure wilderness experience.

Traveling through the remote and wild Great Bear Rainforest you will push your skills while exploring the surf beaches and rocky points of this beautiful ocean playground. On day 1 of the expedition, you will start from Port Hardy where you will take the ferry to Bella Bella. From Bella Bella you will be paddling to Port Hardy. This adventure is 19 days long.

With our committed instructors you will take full advantage of this wild place while also having the opportunity to hone your skills. We will delve into topics from expedition management to technical paddling skills that will help to make an already confident paddler a more competent mariner. Whether you have received training through Paddle Canada or another organization, or are a motivated paddler with practical experience, this program will allow you to apply and polish your existing skills while deepening your understanding of their tactical applications.

Paperwork Checklist

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

- ✓ Great Bear Rainforest Challenge Information Package – please review
- ❑ SKILS Waiver
- ❑ SKILS Medical Form

Program Overview

Prerequisites

Interested candidates should have extensive (over 50 days) previous sea kayaking experience and have experience in dynamic waters. Some expedition experience is required. You must be able to paddle at a speed of 3 knots for up to 6 hours per day. If you can not maintain this speed for up to 6 hours this program is not for you. If you do not meet these prerequisites, and are still interested in this challenging program, we may be able to provide you with some training beforehand. We will be camping for an extended period of time which means this program is intense as well as mentally and physically demanding.

Program Outline

Following is a general outline for the Great Bear Rainforest Challenge Expedition.

Depending on weather, group needs, and conditions, the schedule will change. This advanced expedition has an open itinerary to ensure flexibility

The program will incorporate workshops, food harvesting sessions, travel and exploration as the location and conditions dictate.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Day 0			Meet the group at 1945 at the Port Hardy BC Ferry terminal to load gear/kayaks and early check-in
Day 1	0730am Ferry Departure from Port Hardy to Bella Bella. Be at the Ferry Terminal at 0530am	Arrival in Bella Bella at 1250 Paddle to campsite Group Safety & Packing	Late arrival and camp setup
Day 2-Day 18	Travel through the beautiful Great Bear Rainforest. Weather permitting, we hope to travel mostly on the exposed West coast of the stunning offshore islands, lingering in the most beautiful and special places. We will have 1 food resupply which we can collect from Dawsons Landing, or have delivered to us by boat.		
Day 19	Travel to Port Hardy	<u>Arrival in Port Hardy</u>	

Our Classroom

The coastline stretching from the Bella Bella to Port Hardy will be our classroom. These stretches of coastline are very remote and offer a diversity of surf beaches, rocky coastline and exposed waters. There are endless places to explore as we build our skills to become more competent mariners. Not to be overlooked is the opportunity to see terrestrial and aquatic wildlife on a grand scale as we paddle on the edge of Pacific North West.



Maps illustrating the proposed route for the Great Bear Rainforest Challenge. The route may vary depending on weather conditions or human factors.

Participation

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, if you want to catch fish, harvest berries or plants to eat, 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.



Program Safety

Ocean kayaking and camping are not without risk. Certain sea kayaking rules 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 will use in the event of an emergency, at the beginning of our time together.

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 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 2 experienced instructors lead any group with more than 4 participants.

Program Logistics

Accommodation

You will need to make your own accommodation arrangements in Port Hardy for the night before the program starts and optionally after the program finishes. Port Hardy is a popular tourist destination, so make certain you reserve your accommodation well in advance. There is camping south of Port Hardy at Quatse River Regional Park and Campground (<http://www.quatsecampground.com>), as well as a number of marina resorts and motels in Port Hardy.

Transportation

You are responsible for transportation to and from Port Hardy, which is the starting location of the tour. Once in Port Hardy, we will carry the kayaks and the equipment on to the ferry. SKILS will pay for this. **You will need an official Government issued piece of photo ID identify to board the ferry.** Prior to the program we will organize carpooling among participants. Participants are responsible for the cost of parking their vehicle in Port Hardy. BC Ferry and some private companies provide affordable long term parking rental options. You can either park your car at the ferry terminal or if you want to leave your vehicle in town there is a shuttle bus from the town of Port Hardy to the ferry terminal around 0500am every morning. The fare is \$8 at the moment of the writing. Ask your accommodation provider to arrange a pick up. There is also a bus pick up when the ferry returns.

Vancouver Island is easily accessed by air, ferry, and bus. Air Canada WestJet, Pacific Coastal and other local airlines offer regularly scheduled flights, including to Port Hardy. 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, Port Hardy can be accessed by car or the Tofino Bus.

Following is a list of links to help you plan your transportation. Port Hardy has an airport that is only served by Pacific Coastal airlines. Be aware that this airport can be fogbound often during the summer so you should make contingency plans against being affected negatively.

- **Air Canada**
 - 1.888.247.2262 (in North America)
 - www.aircanada.com
- **WestJet**
 - 1.888.WESTJET (1.888.937.8538)
 - www.westjet.com
- **Pacific Coastal**
 - (604) 663-2872
 - www.pacificcoastal.com **Washington State Ferries**
 - 206.464.6400
 - www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries
- **BC Ferries**
 - 1.888.BCFERRY (1.888.223.3779) from anywhere in North America
 - 1.250.386.3431 from outside North America
 - www.bcferrries.com
- **M.V. Coho Ferry**
 - 360.457.4491
 - www.cohoferry.com
- **Vancouver Island Connector**
 - 1.866.986.3466
 - www.viconnector.com

Meals

We are looking forward to surprise you with our gourmet food. SKILS will provide nutritious meals each day, beginning with breakfast 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 frequently harvest fresh fish, berries and plants on our trip for some tasty meals.

What SKILS Will Provide

The cost of the program includes highly experienced and certified instructors, ferry transport from Port Hardy to Bella Bella, and camping and Park fees. You can rent a kayak, kayaking equipment and camping equipment from SKILS using this link: <https://skils.ca/rentals/>

Cooking Gear

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

Safety Gear

- First aid equipment
- VHF Marine Radio
- Repair Kit
- Signaling flares

Food and Water

- Drinking water in portable containers
- Nutritious meals and snacks

Drybags

We will provide each participant with one 20 liter and one 5 liter drybags in order to protect your gear and clothing.

What You Need to Bring

Following is a list of gear that you will need on the program. Most items are required, however, an * indicates the item is optional.

Paddling Gear

- Sea kayak (at least 17 feet long)
- Paddle
- Sprayskirt
- PFD (Personal Flotation Device)
- Whistle
- Hand pump
- Tow line or throw line (buoyant heaving line at least 15 meters in length)
- Paddle float
 - *Spare paddle
 - *Sponge for drying out hatches
- Please do not bring a helmet.



If you are providing your own kayak and paddling gear for your program, your sea kayak must meet the following requirements: (1) it is suitable for open sea conditions; (2) it has positive buoyancy when capsized; (3) it is able to adequately carry gear as required for the program; (4) it has perimeter lines; and (5) it is at least 17 feet long. Please note: recreational kayaks that do not meet the above requirements are not suitable for our program. If you have questions about the suitability of your kayak, please contact us. We have many suitable kayaks in our fleet and will be happy to match you up with an appropriate kayak for this program if you are concerned about the suitability of your own craft.

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

- Small compact Tent
- Sleeping bag – 3 season bag with synthetic insulation
- Sleeping mat
- *Tarp with thin cord for your tent
- *Pillow case

Toiletries

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

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

The 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 designed for outdoor use 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
- Storm Cag is optional but recommended

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

Feet

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

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

If you need to rent gear such as kayaks, kayaking gear, tents, sleeping bags, or sleeping pads, you can make arrangements with SKILS; please visit <https://skils.ca/rentals/>

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. All your front hatches will be dedicated to group food and gear. You will also have a 10 litres water bladder inside your cockpit. The rear hatches of your kayak will be dedicated to your personal 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. We will provide you one 5 and one 20 litre drybag on the first morning of your trip. Let us know if you need more dry bags.

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 or IKEA 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 note that you will require a current tetanus shot (a tetanus shot is valid for 10 years). This is very important, as tetanus is a naturally occurring bacterium 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 medical conditions 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. We recommend that you get out kayaking several times prior to your program. 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 Great Bear Rainforest Challenge. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact us. We look forward to playing on the water with you!