West Coast Trail, BC

May 20 – 31, 2014

Round trip transportation to the trail, group equipment, park fees and permits, two nights in hotels, camping fees, all backcountry meals and final dinner in Victoria $875

Trip Overview

Originally established as an escape route for stranded sailors, the Canadian section of the West Coast Trail is a playground of rope ladders, bridges, and wooden walkways suspended over marshes and coastal inlets. For this expedition, participants will have to work as a group to cross rivers in human powered trams, pass gear up high rope ladders, and pass by a series of obstacles as you make your way north. Time on the trail will be split between walking along the rugged coastline and through lush, temperate rainforests. Continually ranking as a top outdoor destination, there is no uninteresting section on this trip—the West Coast Trail is every kid’s fantasy, and for ten days it will be your reality.

Whales, eagles, seals, and sea lions basking in the sun are all common sights from the exposed section of trail, and encounters with the elusive cougar or wolf are possible as well. The large mammals, tidal pools full of mollusks and fish, and old growth temperate rainforest make this one of the best locations in the world to experience the wildness of nature and to study this one of a kind ecosystem—a topic that will be closely examined both before and during this trip.

General Schedule of Trip

Your trip starts on May 20th after landing in beautiful Victoria where the group will rest the night in a hotel after finalizing our packing. The next morning we will board a bus to Port Renfrew and the trailhead. From May 21st through the 25th we will tackle the more rigorous southern half of the trail. The next four days follow more leisurely terrain toward the northern end, where we will board a bus on the 30th for Victoria, a victory dinner, and much-needed showers in our hotel. On May 31st the group will fly home or continue traveling independently.

Ecology

Old growth forests are some of the most bio-diverse, productive, and important ecosystems on the planet. The temperate rainforests of British Columbia’s coast are no exception, harboring 19 endangered species and making up a quarter of all coastal old growth rainforests in the world. According to recent species richness mapping studies, coastal BC may have the greatest species diversity of any ecosystem in North America.

Rated as one of the world’s premier hiking destinations, this trail began as an evacuation route for one of the most dangerous trade channels in the world. Known as the Graveyard of the Pacific, the shore from BC to Washington State claimed over 2000 ships and hundreds of lives during the fur trade. Bear witness to this wild coastline as you travel by road from Victoria to Port Renfrew then hike north to Bamfield.
Transportation
You are responsible for your own flights to and from Victoria. Once in Victoria, we will provide round trip transportation to the trailheads of the West Coast Trail. All other travel will be human powered and off road. A valid passport expiring no sooner than January of 2015 is required for participation.

Preparation
Due to the strenuous nature of this trail, participants must be physically able to climb high ladders and cover varied, difficult terrain.

Participants should be prepared for a physically challenging environment, which includes cold temperatures, natural hazards, and long days of movement. Exercising 3-5 days a week and walking with a 30 pound pack are great ways to prepare for this expedition. The level of fitness required for this trip is moderately high due to the difficult terrain.

Accommodations/Meals
We will provide breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day we are in the field, and you will learn how to cook delicious backcountry meals on a backpacking stove. Participants are on their own for any meals while in Victoria with the exception of a final dinner.

Other than the hotel at the opening and close of the trip we will spend each night in tents along the West Coast Trail. Our campsite locations will often be planned around permanent bear boxes, but we may also carry bear proof canisters for additional freedom. Fees, permits, and gear are provided by GRAB and included in the expedition’s cost.

Weather
The weather can be variable during this time of year in British Columbia, but expect to see temperatures ranging from 40 to 65 degrees. We are going to be hiking along the coast line and through the rainforest, so expect periods of rain and wind.