



Islands in the Wild

Sunshine Coast and Gulf Islands

Welcome to our “Islands in the Wild” cycle tour. This trip has been designed to help you get the most enjoyment out of your visit to the Canadian Southwest Coast: a place so full of beauty and natural splendour that it defies description – where every day brings fresh discoveries and renewed awe. Lush, evergreen rainforests, shimmering emerald sea, secluded bays, fjords, towering mountains with snow-capped peaks and the beautiful city of Vancouver are the backdrop for our island hopping adventure. Small ferries connect islands and coast across waterways and inlets. Witness the dramatic natural beauty and abundance of marine life while riding on peaceful roads or hiking to remote beaches. For one day we will embark on an introductory level sea kayak excursion to see the islands from a whole new perspective. After days filled with adventure and discovery you will be treated to cozy Bed & Breakfasts where you may relax in an ocean side hot tub and will enjoy excellent West Coast cuisine.

Cycling

We only take 12 guests on our scheduled departures. Small groups allow us maximum flexibility and the ability to support almost all levels of cyclists. For the most part you can ride entirely at your own pace. No matter if you are in for a leisurely ride or if you want to hammer, we can make the trip right for you. And please remember the mileage given in the itinerary below is the distance to get you from one lodge to the next. The means you can ride less and board the van or you can extend your rides significantly. Please be aware that riding along British Columbia’s Coast is never flat. This is the place where the mountains meet the sea. Please do expect lots of rolling terrain.

Professional Guide Services

Our guides are as impressive as the scenery. All of our leaders are passionate about their work and are delighted to pass on their skills. University and college graduates with strong backgrounds in natural history, geology and anthropology, they are knowledgeable in the local region and its folklore. Part chef, part naturalist, trained in wilderness first aid and professionally certified, our guides are eager to please and will ensure you have a memorable experience.

Equipment

A support van ensures comfort and safety throughout your trip. On board are snacks and refreshments, first aid, your baggage, and a driver who is never far away, ready to offer a lift, congratulations or words of encouragement. Our trailer is equipped with on board kitchen where we prepare delicious lunches and a variety of refreshments.

We utilize top quality 27-speed ‘Rocky Mountain Bicycles’. These hybrid bikes (cross between touring and mountain bike) are built in Canada and have a great reputation for performance, comfort and durability. These bikes are some of the lightest hybrid bikes on the market and perform exceptionally well. A carbon fork helps to bring the weight down and adds comfort by it’s vibration dampening qualities. They are equipped with water bottle, a waterproof front handlebar bag, and toe clips or bare pedals. Helmets are available free of charge. And, of course, mechanical support is always provided by our qualified guides.

Accommodations

Evenings will be spent in the warmth and security of a selection of the area's most charming waterfront lodges, resorts and B&B's. In each case, the properties have been selected because they reflect the tranquillity and beauty of the region, they are ideally situated and they have the intimacy of the resident proprietor we have befriended.

Climate

Winters on British Columbia's West Coast are usually very wet. But from May to the end of September we usually enjoy lots of sunshine and a very mild climate. The proximity of the ocean moderates the temperatures and it does spare this part of the country from extreme heat and cold. Statistically June and September are the driest month on BC's south Coast and the area we are visiting, the Sunshine Coast and Gulf Islands, receive the least rainfall of all coastal areas. So chances are very good for nice dry weather with temperatures anywhere between upper 60's /20C and low 80's/28C. However due to the closeness to the Pacific Ocean travellers should be prepared for a rainy day at any time of the year.

Safety and Responsibility

Cycling, hiking and sea kayaking, like everything else, are very safe and enjoyable sports if done properly and professionally. Safety is our utmost concern. Our trips are escorted by professional local guides and accompanied by a support vehicle in case of any emergencies. However, it is important that each trip participant realizes that there are some inherent risks these activities, as there are in many outdoor sports. Individuals must be responsible for their own actions and accountable for their own decisions. To acknowledge this assumption of risk, each tour member is required to read, understand and sign a liability release form. We will provide you with all the information you require in order to make your decision about joining us or taking part in any specific activity. We will support any decision made by participants to opt out of any activity that they are concerned about or feel is beyond their capabilities.

Personal Preparation

Cycling is the most effective way to train for a bicycle tour. The neck and shoulders as well as the seat can be a bit uncomfortable for the first few days of riding if you have not done some conditioning prior to arrival. A program of gradual training in a variety of aerobic sports like walking, swimming, running and cycling will ensure good conditioning. Most importantly, a spirit of adventure is essential.

2012 Departure Dates

June 17-22

Sept 10-15

Trips start and finish in Vancouver, British Columbia

2012 Prices

Trip Cost \$2,395 CAD

Single supplement \$550 CAD

Bike rental \$150 CAD

(Prices are subject to 6% HST)

Services Included

- 5 nights accommodation in spectacular lodges and B&B's
- All meals (5 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 4 dinners, refreshments)
Except 1 dinner: On Day 4 you will have the opportunity to sample local fare in Ganges on your own.
- Professional guide services for biking and hiking
- Sea kayak rental, introductory lesson, and guiding
- Support vehicle and luggage transport
- Ferry tickets

Reservations: 1-800-661-BIKE (2453) / e-mail: res@rockymountaincycle.com

Islands in the Wild Itinerary

Day One

After meeting at Canada Place on the Vancouver waterfront we shuttle to Horseshoe Bay, where we board the ferry and take a 45-minute ride across Howe Sound to the Sunshine Coast. In Gibsons, famous from the TV series "Beachcombers", we hop on our bikes and start our ride on the northernmost part of world famous Hwy 101, which takes us along the ocean and through evergreen forests toward Pender Harbour. In the evening we take a harbour ferry to a beautiful seaside restaurant.

Distance: up to 65 km / 40 miles.

Day Two

We start the day with a hike to Skookumchuck Narrows to witness one of the most powerful tidal rapids in the world or with a bike ride to Jervis Inlet. Afterwards we are treated to a 50-minute mini-cruise across this spectacular Fjord. On the following stretch of Hwy 101 we ride through some of the most pristine marine wilderness on the West Coast. We will settle into the historic, newly renovated Lund Hotel, our home for the next two nights, before we top off the day with a gourmet dinner at the Laughing Oyster restaurant.

Distance: up to 90 km / 55 miles, 2 hours hiking optional (depending on tides).

Day Three

Desolation Sound is famous for its coastal wilderness, warm waters and an abundance of marine wildlife. The best way to explore this area is by sea kayak. This will be our mode of transportation today. The kayak, dubbed the "bicycle of the ocean", will allow us to explore the coastline of Desolation Sound with its cliffs, beaches and coves from a totally new perspective. Kayaking is easy and beginner friendly. Our guides will help you get settled into your new mode of transportation. There is plenty of opportunity to sample the famous Malaspina Oysters right off the beach while kayaking.

6-7 hours kayak trip

Day Four

Another day, another cruise. This time it's 80 minutes across the Strait of Georgia toward Vancouver Island. With little luck we should encounter orcas or dolphins while aboard. On shore we shuttle to Crofton where we take another short ferry ride to Salt Spring Island, the largest of the Gulf Islands. The warm Japan current, the protection of encircling islands and the Olympic Mountain rain shadow, all contribute to a temperate Mediterranean microclimate – the best weather in Canada! Salt Spring is not only Canada's most famous artist haven, it was chosen as one of the best little art towns in North America. In the afternoon we cycle along the coastline around the northern part of this beautiful island, before settling into our lovely B&B. In the evening you have the opportunity to sample local fare on your own. Distance: 35 km / 22 miles.

Day Five

Today we cycle south on quiet winding roads toward Beaver Point in Ruckle Park. On our way, you may stop at one of more than 30 home studios (potters, painters, sculptors, candle makers etc.) that are hidden among the hills, farms and forests. After a delicious lunch with awesome ocean views at Beaver Point you have two options: You can hop on your bike again and take the coastal route back to Ganges or you join our guide for a little hike in Ruckle Park and take the shuttle afterwards.

Distance: 40-80k / 24-48 miles, optional hike

Day Six

Today we hike through some beautiful old growth forest to the highest point in the Gulf Islands. The view from 680-meters-high Mt. Wilcox is breathtaking and stretches as far as the Olympic peninsula and the Juan de Fuca Strait to the West and Vancouver and Mt. Baker to the East. After a mountaintop lunch we will return by van to Ganges where you will have some more time to explore artists studios. In the afternoon we will have to say goodbye to our Island paradise and return by ferry to Vancouver.

Arrival in Vancouver around 7.00 p.m.

Distance: 2 hour hike