

**PLEASE NOTE:** Due to increases in aircraft insurance premiums Air Canada have imposed an insurance tax. As a result of this, there is a slight increase in the Ex-London price of this trip. Please add £11.00 to the brochure price for each departure, this does not affect land only bookings.

#### INTRODUCTION

Where to start? Western Canada contains possibly the most spectacular scenery in North America, backed up by abundant wildlife, a well-documented history and some great cities. If you like an outdoor lifestyle, this is one of the foremost "outdoor" parts of the world. The problem is that British Columbia alone is about four times the size of Great Britain, so we have chosen the best bits while keeping the travelling to a minimum. Although this is not a walking holiday, there are many opportunities to walk on some fine trails, surrounded by 3000m. plus peaks, countless glaciers, stunning lakes and some huge waterfalls. Banff and Jasper are two of the Canadian Rockies most famous parks, but there are many other spectacular places such as Mount Robson National Park (containing the Rockies highest mountain) Glacier Icefields Parkway, Whistler village and Clayoquot Sound. With luck you will see moose, elk, deer, coyote, porcupine, black and grizzly bears, mountain goats, big horn sheep, dolphins, seals, and, most spectacular of all, grey, killer and (at the right time of year and if you are very lucky), humpback whales. The flora, especially on the earlier trips can be stunning in the high alpine meadows, and the bird life, though dominated by the abundant bald eagles near the coast, holds some surprises such as humming birds (the worlds most northerly species). The marine life is as abundant as anywhere on earth, with huge colonies of urchins and anemones and a fantastic array of star fish, including the amazing 24 armed "Sunstar" starfish.

Much of the interior was explored in the gold rush of the 1860's, though now the huge majority of the population live on the coast. Victoria is British Columbia's capital, and it maintains a decidedly "British" feel. Vancouver is by far the largest city, set spectacularly across a fjord and the mouth of the huge Fraser River, and bordered to the north by 1000m. peaks, that provides a fantastic view across the "Burrard Inlet", and the forest of Stanley Park, to the downtown high-rise. Vancouver is one of those few cities on earth where you can ski, have a beach barbecue, a walk in the rain forest and a night on the town all in the same day. There is a tremendous variety of restaurants, from fine fish cuisine to outstanding Asian food, and some great views to be had while dining. Food lovers will enjoy much of the trip, with plenty of opportunities to try some local salmon or beef. Even the camp food is varied and plentiful, culminating with a salmon bake on a beach!

Apart from the walking, there are many activities to be tried. Most are optional, but the more you try the more you will enjoy the trip. A couple of hours on horseback in the wilds of Central BC conjures up images of the gold rush days, while mountain biking on the custom made trails around Whistler village is the best way to see the surrounding countryside. White water rafting, canoeing on mountain lakes or even skiing on the glaciers provide a variety of adrenaline rushes. For many people, the highlight of the whole trip will be the overnight sea-kayak trip in Clayoquot Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Kayaking with highly trained guides in the sheltered waters that are heaving with sea-life is amazing on it's own. And, for the lucky few who will come across grey whales as they migrate north, it will be an experience never forgotten. There will also be time to take a whale watching trip in a custom made open top boat on which grey whales are virtually guaranteed and humpbacks often seen in late July and August.

#### TRIP PROFILE

The geology, natural history and scenery makes this part of Canada hugely attractive for the adventure traveller and this tour encompasses all these aspects, exploring the mountains, glaciers, ice-caps, forests, hot springs, wildlife and Vancouver Island. This itinerary is designed to give us an in-depth view of some of the most spectacular areas, while

avoiding spending days on end in a bus. We have kept the travelling to a minimum, as this is really 'outdoors' country. This is a very active trip, and although none of the excursions or optional activities are particularly demanding, a good level of stamina is useful if you want to undertake all of them! Please also note that if you take parting all the optional activities there may not be time to do all the major hikes outlines in the itinerary as well.

#### ITINERARY

From London	15 days	Sat to Sat
From Vancouver	14 days	Sat to Fri

*The entry in bold at the end of each day indicates the type of accommodation normally used.*

**Day 1** We depart London Heathrow to Vancouver and transfer to our hotel, where our guide will give us a short briefing about the trip over a beer. Those who have made their own flight arrangements will join us at the hotel in the afternoon or evening. **Hotel.**

**Day 2** We head east along the Fraser valley to Hope, the gateway to the British Columbia interior. Most people rushing inland now bypass the spectacular Fraser Canyon, historically renowned from its "gold rush" era, and more fool them. The spectacular "Hells Gate" gorge and the Thompson River Canyon slice through a landscape of 2-3000m peaks. We camp at a ranch near Kamloops where we have the option of a couple of hours on horseback. **Camp.**

**Day 3.** First stop of the day is at Mount Revelstoke National Park. Here you have the option to experience the bike ride of a lifetime. From the summit of Mt. Revelstoke we can ride 27 km down 1,500 vertical metres! Alternatively, go for a short, stiff walk in high alpine meadows whilst the others are biking. We will make a short stop in Glacier National Park, 135,000 hectares of snow-capped peaks, huge icefields and crashing waterfalls, to visit the Roger's Pass information centre. In the early evening we arrive at Beaverfoot lodge just outside Yoho National Park. **Camp.**

**Day 4** The native expression for "awe" and "wonder" is Yoho, and they should know. We will visit the glacier fed Emerald Lake and hike through the beautiful Yoho Valley to Takakkawa Falls, at 400m, the highest in the Canadian Rockies. We have the option to hire canoes on the lake or raft the Kicking Horse River. **Camp.**

**Day 5/6** Banff National Park, Alberta is one of the highlights of any visit to western Canada. We have an active two days with a hike from Moraine Lake to Sentinel Pass through the Valley of the Ten Peaks. We can canoe on Lake Louise, the classic picture postcard lake surrounded by glaciers and 3000m. plus peaks, take a dip at Sulphur Hot Springs, hire some bikes and visit Bow Falls. We will have time for tea at the Lake Louise hotel, walk through the Johnston Canyon and enjoy free time exploring Banff. **Camp**

**Day 7** One of the world's most spectacular road journeys, the Glacier Icefields Parkway, passing over 100 glaciers and countless sparkling lakes. We have the option of a walk or a ride in the "snowcoach" on the Athabasca Glacier and later we can take a short trek in the alpine meadows of Mount Edith Cavell, which will provide us with spectacular views of the Angel Wing Hanging glacier. The roadside verges are popular with bears grazing on the vegetation, and bighorn sheep are also often seen. **Camp.**

**Day 8** Exploring Jasper National Park and its environs. We can take the Whistler Tram and walk to the summit which provides fantastic views over the Canadian Rockies, or walk on the Sulphur Skyline trail and take a dip in Miette Hot Springs, the hottest in the Canadian Rockies. **Camp.**

**Day 9** We head west back into British Columbia, to Mount Robson (3954m.), the highest mountain in the Rockies and one of the most impressive sights in western Canada. We can follow the Berg Lake Trail 4.5kms to Kinney Lake for some spectacular views. We follow the old Cariboo trail through wild country to Clinton, opened in 1865 to supply the gold rush. **Camp.**

**Day 10** A busy day. Upon reaching the world famous ski-resort, Whistler, the options are endless: canoeing or kayaking on one of the local lakes;

mountain biking; bear spotting from a ski-lift; some serious coffee drinking; boutique shopping; or taking the gondola up into the alpine meadows of Whistler mountain for a hike. **Camp**

**Day 11** We board the ferry at Horseshoe Bay and cross the Georgia Strait to Vancouver Island. We land at Nanaimo and our first stop is the towering 70m high Douglas firs of Cathedral Grove. We continue west across the mountains to Tofino and the Pacific Rim National Park. We have the afternoon to explore the rain forest trails, wild sandy beaches, and to visit the Wickaninnish Nature house. In the evening we will have a salmon bake on the beach. **Camp.**

**Day 12** In the morning you can enjoy exploring the tiny fishing village of Tofino. Visit the native art galleries, drink a coffee with the local fisherman and take in the beauty of Clayoquot Sound, the back drop for Tofino. After lunch we embark on our overnight sea-kayaking expedition. After a short training session, we take to the waters of the sheltered Clayoquot Sound with our qualified guide (two if we have a full group) in our kayaks. You will normally have the choice of the sleeker one-man kayaks, or sharing the work in the more stable two-man kayaks. Designed for first time kayakers, this is not a tough trip, but a spectacular introduction to this fast growing past-time. We will paddle gently for 2-3 hours, hopefully sighting seals, sea lions, bald eagles and a variety of bird life, and perhaps even a bear or two! On the rocky shores, just below the waterline, we will see a huge collection of sea urchins, anemones, shellfish, crustaceans and spectacular starfish such as the huge sunstars that can grow as many as 24 arms. We make camp on a beach on the uninhabited Vargas Island and we will have time for a walk on the beach (there are no designated walking trails on Vargas Island). **Camp.**

**Day 13** We paddle back to Tofino and board our bus to head to Victoria. We stop to view the murals in the open-air gallery at Chemanius before reaching our hotel in the suburbs of Victoria. We have time to wander around this most British of North American cities and to sample the nightlife. **Hotel.**

**Day 14** A free morning, perhaps to visit the Royal British Columbia museum, with its fine displays on the history and nature of the region or to take an optional zodiac ride out into the waters of the Juan de Fuca straight to look for the beautiful killer whale (orca). Pods of killer whales travel through the waters close to Victoria feeding on the salmon and chances of encountering a pod in the summer months are about 90%. Seals, sea lions and other marine life can also be seen on the tour. For those not whale watching, there is also an option to visit the renowned Butchart Gardens before heading to the ferry port for the crossing back to the mainland. We have just a short drive to Vancouver airport for our flight home. (See "optional Vancouver extension" below, if you would like to stay longer).

**Day 15** Arrive London.

**Walking and cycling in the Rockies:** Exodus also has a 15-day walking tour and a 15-day cycling tour in Canada. See the 'Walking and Trekking' brochure, page 53 and ask for Trip Notes TAB, or see the 'Biking Adventures' brochure, page 11, and ask for Trip Notes MAR.

**Occasionally, as stated in our brochure, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons – climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best alternative arrangements possible that maintains the integrity of the original itinerary.**

**Optional Vancouver or Victoria Extension:** We have a limited time in these two cities as the focus of this trip is on the wilder aspects of British Columbia. However, if you would like to fly out early or return later than the group, we would be happy to change your flights to a date of your choice (subject to availability and a flight amendment fee of £25, if requested at the time you book your trip). We are happy to help with hotel bookings too, however we are not accommodation specialists. Vancouver hotels are often very full for much of the summer, so early booking is advised.

*NB: The information in these trip notes was correct at the time of issue. The most recent version is always sent with confirmation of all bookings. If it becomes necessary to update the information, a new version will be issued and sent to all clients with a confirmed reservation in accordance with the Exodus booking conditions.*

## WEATHER

With a latitude and maritime situation much like the UK, temperatures in the coastal region and mild summer temperatures average 22°C in Vancouver, but can reach as high as 30°C in the low lying interior. June and September are usually a bit cooler, and the coast can get rain at

anytime. The mountains have typical mountain weather, and sun, cloud, rain and even snow can all be experienced in a morning.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Flights from the UK

We use the scheduled services of Air Canada from London Heathrow Terminal 3. Estimated flight timings are given below (to within 30 minutes); these were correct at the time of printing but they cannot be confirmed until approx. 2 weeks before departure. Please note that airlines frequently change their routing, timings and type of aircraft used; those listed below may therefore be subject to changes beyond our control.

Depart	Time	Arrive	Time	Aircraft
Heathrow 3	1330	Vancouver	1535	Boeing 767
Vancouver	1800	Heathrow 3	1120+	Boeing 767

All times are local

### Regional Flights

Exodus can arrange flights from the majority of the UK's regional airports that are more flexible and convenient than if booked separately. Please contact our sales team for details.

Please note that if booking your regional flights other than with Exodus, you must allow a minimum connecting time (**in addition to the international check in time**) of one hour at Gatwick, and 1.5 hours at Heathrow; this is longer than the official minimum connecting time, but baggage handling at Heathrow is known to be subject to delays.

### Joining locally for 'land only' bookings.

If you wish to join the trip in the destination country you may do so. The local start point for this trip is Vancouver. Details of how to reach the start point are on the pre departure information, which is sent to you on booking. Land only prices are available from our sales team, our website or your agent.

### Airport Transfers

Airport transfers are included for those on group flights. Please note, however, that airport transfers are NOT included in the cost of the trip for those not traveling on the group's flights (even if Exodus have booked your flights, you will not receive a transfer unless it is on the dates and flights as outlined in the Trip Notes and brochure. Please note that the cost of a taxi is likely to be CAN\$40 should you decide to make your way independently.

### Passports and Visas

All nationalities (except US passport holders) require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

British, all other EC, Swiss, Australian and New Zealand passport holders do not require visas. South Africans need a visa, which must be obtained before departure. All other nationalities should enquire with their nearest Canadian High Commission.

Visa regulations can and do change without notice and if you are not a British passport holder please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

For information on how to obtain visas please call Travcour on 020 7223 5295 or visit their website: [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com)

### Vaccinations and Health

There are no statutory or recommended vaccination requirements.

Please consult your doctor or vaccination centre for up to date information.

### Accommodation

This is a participatory camping tour but we stay in good tourist class hotels in Vancouver and Victoria. When camping we usually use organised campsites with good facilities, and showers are available for a small fee (about £1). Spacious two-person tents with sewn-in groundsheets and separate flysheets are provided. We provide a dining tent with a table and campstools, and a gas lamp. All the accommodation is based on twin share.

## Food Included

The trip price covers all meals while camping. Food in Canada is of a high standard and comes in large quantities. This particularly applies when eating out in restaurants. The fish and beef are excellent.

While camping typical meals will be as follows: Breakfast: fresh fruit; yoghurt; porridge; muesli; bread; jam; tea/coffee. Lunch: bread and soup; cheese; tuna; biscuits. Evening meal: some combination of the following: meat, fish, pasta, beans, noodles, vegetables, and hot drinks. We will also have a few bars of chocolate, dried fruit, biscuits and some sweets to sustain us on the walks.

**Vegetarians:** As we do most of the cooking ourselves it is possible to cater for vegetarians but we cannot cater for several different diets for different clients. It is a good idea to take some of your own dietary substitutes with you if you have a specialist diet. Please tell us on booking if you have.

## Extra Expenses and Spending Money

For those meals that are not provided you should allow about CAN\$100. You should allow about £50 for snacks, drinks etc. During our trip there are many opportunities for optional activities, the following prices are all approximate:

Whale watching in Victoria,	CAN\$70
White water rafting	CAN\$45-85
Butchart Gardens	CAN\$14
Ice walk	CAN\$30-35
Canoe/mountain bike rentals	CAN\$25-35
Glacier flight	CAN\$170
Horse riding	CAN\$35-45

## Local Payment

There is a compulsory local payment of CAN\$235 payable to your leader on arrival. This covers a proportion of the operational costs, which are paid in cash; this may include any of the following: included meals, transport costs, entrance and guide fees and some accommodation.

## Group, Staff and Support

The group size will be between 6 and 12 participants and there is likely to be a mix of nationalities. An experienced local driver-guide leads our tours. While camping, members are expected to participate, including erecting and dismantling your own tent, and helping the leader with some kitchen duties and the preparation of meals. While kayaking we will be guided by 1-2 qualified instructor/guides.

## Transport

We use a comfortable 15-seat bus so there is plenty of room.

## Travelling

All the roads are paved. The longest driving days will be about 5-6 hours, spread over the whole day. We have kept travelling to a minimum.

## Essential Equipment and Clothing

2/3 seasons sleeping bag; sleeping mat; warm jacket; waterproofs; strong shoes or walking boots; daysack; swim wear.

A full list of clothing and equipment to take will be sent to you on booking but the above items are the most important.

## Responsible Tourism Policy

Tourism can be a real help to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive to protect their natural environment. Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism, covering everything from the way we plan and operate our trips to the practices of Exodus as a company. Exodus trips are designed to allow a high degree of economic benefit to the local communities; we buy local produce, eat local food and use local services, thus ensuring that as much money as possible is retained within the local economies and the host communities. With our responsible tourism policy we are continually reassessing our holidays, trying at all times to ensure that they are socially, economically and environmentally sound.

## Travel safety

We are a responsible tour operator and for us the safety of our clients and staff is of paramount importance. We would not run any holiday that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advise against travel for any reason, we will contact anyone who is booked to travel to discuss alternatives. We check on a very regular basis with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and with our staff on the ground, and we follow their advice very closely.

## IMPORTANT NOTE – PLEASE READ

*The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Where differences exist in the information between these Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes are the correct version and supersede the brochure. In remote destinations abnormal conditions can prevail at any time, and all adventurous holidays can therefore be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.*

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