



Guest Handbook  
Gwaii Haanas Explorer  
Kayak Tours

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# WELCOME

Thank you for deciding to spend your vacation kayaking with us at Kingfisher Wilderness Adventures.

The purpose of this handbook is to inform you about what to expect on your trip, provide you with important pre-trip information, and assist you in planning your trip. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions that are not covered here.

## Pre-Trip Checklist:

- **Medical Forms:** please complete and return to Kingfisher Wilderness Adventures no later than one month before your trip's departure date. Please note any dietary restrictions on the [medical form](#).
- **Waiver:** please read and understand. Your guides have a copy for you to sign at the pre-trip meeting.
- Hotel reservations in Sandspit for before and after kayak trip.
- Trip clothing and personal items packed as per "What to Bring" checklist.
- Additional travel clothing packed for before and after kayak trip.
  - In case of flight or luggage delays, we recommend carrying essentials, such as medications, and one days kayak clothing in your carry-on bag.
- Trip cancellation insurance: purchase through your travel agent or other provider in case unforeseen events prevent you from going on your trip. While every policy is different most need to be purchased within days of booking your trip.
- Medical and travel insurance: purchase through your travel agent or other provider. Please ensure it includes wilderness activities and that it not only covers the cost of medical attention but also the cost of evacuation from a remote wilderness setting.

**What is not included on our tours:** Kingfisher does not provide transport from your home to Sandspit, nor do we provide airport transfers. Any meals outside the kayak portion of the tour are your responsibility. As noted above, travel insurance for accidents or emergency evacuation is not provided; we recommend you purchase a policy before leaving home. The trip price does not include guide gratuities; should you feel that the service was exemplary, it is always appreciated. We suggest 5–10% of the trip cost, based on the service and attention provided.

## IMPORTANT TIMES

**Day off arrival:** Arrive in Sandspit the day before your kayak tour. It is imperative that guests attend the pre-trip meeting and are ready for an early start the next morning. See details on how to get there and where to stay on the next page. Most guests will stay at Seaport B&B in Sandspit, where we hold rooms for Kingfisher guests. If you have not booked a room through us yet, you can contact the Kingfisher office to do so at a later time.

If you would like to bring alcoholic beverages on your tour, you are welcome to do so. It is recommended that purchases be made upon arrival. Alcoholic beverages can be purchased from Sandspit Super Valu located between the airport and the Seaport B&B. Please keep quantities limited due to space restrictions in the kayaks.

**The night before your kayak tour:** The night before your trip starts you meet your guides at 7:00pm at the offices of Moresby Explorers in Sandspit for a pre-trip orientation meeting. Moresby Explorers office is next to the Seaport B&B and less than a 10 minute ocean side walk from the Inn at Sandspit.

**The morning you leave on your kayak tour:** You will be picked up at your accommodations at approximately 7:30 AM (time to be confirmed at the pre-trip meeting) for transport by van for an approximate 1 hour drive to Moresby camp where we board our zodiac for the final leg into Gwaii Haanas. It is imperative that you have already checked out of your accommodations and had breakfast before 7:30 AM so not to miss your transportation.

**The day you return from your kayak tour:** We will return to Sandspit late in the afternoon on the last day of your trip. Please note that due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances it is possible we may arrive back later than planned. We arrive back too late to catch a plane or ferry. For this reason you should plan to stay in Sandspit the last night of the trip. Most guests get together for a no-host farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

# TRAVELLING TO SANDSPIT, HAIDA GWAI

Our Gwaii Haanas kayak tours depart from the community of Sandspit on Haida Gwaii (formerly called Queen Charlotte Islands).

Flights to Sandspit (YZP) from Vancouver depart from the main terminal of Vancouver International Airport (YVR) and are approximately 2 hours. These flights are operated by Air Canada Jazz. The Sandspit Airport is within a 15 minute walk of most local accommodations.

BC Ferries services Haida Gwaii from Prince Rupert to Skidegate on Haida Gwaii. The crossing is usually about 7 hours. Once arriving in Skidegate, another short ferry ride is necessary to reach Sandspit. The Sandspit ferry terminal is quite a distance out of town. Eagle Transit services the towns of Skidegate, Queen Charlotte and Sandspit and connects with the ferry arrivals and departures.

To get to Prince Rupert, you can drive, or alternatively use one of these options depending where you are travelling from. Note that all of these journeys will add a few days to your travel.

You can take the train with Via Rail from Jasper (with a stop in Prince George) to Prince Rupert. Jasper connects on to Vancouver and Edmonton by train.

BC Ferries runs an Inside Passage ferry between Port Hardy on Vancouver Island and Prince Rupert. To get to Port Hardy you can take the Tofino Bus from Nanaimo or Victoria on Vancouver Island, or from Vancouver.

Transportation	Website	Phone	Toll Free
Air Canada Jazz	<a href="http://www.aircanada.com">www.aircanada.com</a>	1-514-393-3333	1-888-247-2262
BC Ferries	<a href="http://www.bcferrries.com">www.bcferrries.com</a>	1-250-386-3431	1-888-223-3779
Eagle Transit	<a href="http://eagletransit.net">http://eagletransit.net</a>	1-250-559-4461	NA
Via Rail	<a href="http://www.viarail.ca">www.viarail.ca</a>	1-506-857-9830	1-888-842-7245
Tofino Bus	<a href="https://tofinobus.com/">https://tofinobus.com/</a>	1-250-725-2871	1-866-986-3466

## Recommended Sandspit Accommodations

Seaport B&B	<a href="http://www.moresbyexplorers.com">www.moresbyexplorers.com</a>	1-250-637-2215	1-800-806-7633
Bayview Garden B&B	<a href="http://www.bayviewgardenbandb.com">www.bayviewgardenbandb.com</a>	1-250-637-5749	1-866-306-6644
The Sandspit Inn	<a href="http://www.sandspitinn.com/">http://www.sandspitinn.com/</a>	1-250-637-5377	NA

## More Sandspit Accommodations

We highly recommend spending as much time on the islands before or after joining us kayaking in Gwaii Haanas as possible. Visit our [blog](#) for suggestions for things to do and places to stay and below we have compiled some of our favourites.

# WHAT TO BRING

The climate in Gwaii Haanas is typical of British Columbia's outer west coast - cool and wet virtually any time of the year. The best weather is usually between mid-June and mid-August. During July and August the average temp is about 15°C with an average daily minimum and maximum of 12°C and 17°C. For maximum enjoyment on your trip in all types of weather please bring the items listed below.

It is important that your clothing be made of **synthetic materials or wool** to retain their warmth when wet. Most synthetics also have the advantage of being quick drying. **Avoid cotton clothing** because they lack warmth if wet and take a very long time to dry. All of the items listed below need to fit into four dry bags (which we supply). If you have any questions on what you need to bring please feel free to contact us.

## **Sleeping bag** - fits into 20 litre dry bag

We supply sleeping bags, liners, and pillows to all guests but if you prefer to bring your own we recommend:

- A three season synthetic insulated bag

## **Clothing** - fits into 20 litre dry bag

To ensure your comfort in the event of wet and cold conditions, please bring everything listed below. Long underwear (synthetic or wool) may be considered a winter item, but it is common for guides to wear them. It can make a world of difference on a cool summer evening and can double as leggings under shorts during the day. A warm hat is also a great way to prevent heat loss. Proper layers will work wonderfully to ensure you warmth and happiness.

- 1 pairs of short
- 2 pair of pants
- 2 long sleeve shirts
- 2 short sleeve shirts
- 2 sweater or sweatshirt
- 4 to 7 pairs of socks
- 2 sets of long underwear
- 4 to 7 pairs of underwear
- 1 swimsuit
- 1 fleece jacket
- 1 baseball cap or sun hat
- 1 wool or fleece cap

## **Rain gear** - fits into 10 litre dry bag

We provide waterproof kayaking jackets but you still need rain gear for around camp. Rain gear does not need to be breathable but it should be waterproof - not water-repellent.

- 1 waterproof rain jacket with hood or rain hat
- 1 pair of waterproof rain pants

## **Personal items** - fits into 10 litre dry bag

- Toiletries
- Sun screen
- Sunglasses with a retainer
- Prescription eyeglasses or contacts
- Spare eyeglasses or contacts
- Wet Wipes
- Insect repellent
- Bug head net (optional)
- Medication
- Spare medication
- Synthetic camp towel
- Book
- Flashlight or headlamp and batteries
- Camera
- Extra digital storage and batteries

# WHAT TO BRING

**Footwear** – to be worn or packed loose.

- You need one pair of watersport shoes for paddling and one pair of closed shoes (or light hiking boots) to wear around camp.
- For your safety and protection, flip flops and open-toe sandals are not acceptable for our tours due to rocky and often slippery shorelines.
- We highly recommend proper watersport shoes such as Keens or Tevas, with straps and closed-toes, or running shoes/trainers that can get wet.
- Rubber boots can be difficult to pack, but some guests prefer these instead of wet shoes or sandals for kayaking. But, if you go too deep when entering or exiting your kayak the boots will be wet for the remainder of the trip. Some guests may prefer to wear rubber boots around camp or on the beach instead.

## **Optional Items to Bring**

- Wool or fleece gloves or mitts (if your hands easily get cold these are good to have for the evenings)
- Paddling or cycling gloves (we provide kayaking mitts for warmth, but if you are prone to blisters you may find cycling or paddling gloves to be beneficial).
- Farmer Jane/John wet suit to wear kayaking.

**Guests who wish to use personal gear such as PFDs, paddles, sleeping bags, etc must bring items to the pre-trip meeting to allow your guides to determine if they are suitable for your tour.**

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **Getting Your Feet Wet**

You will get your feet wet. Getting off the zodiac when arriving, you can expect to step into shin deep water. When getting in and out of kayaks you will need to step into water that may be as deep as your shins. Flip flop (thong) type sandals should not be worn as they are very unstable on slippery beaches. Water shoes or sandals must securely fasten to your feet.

### **Physical Fitness**

Most guests consider the physical exertion level needed on our Gwaii Haanas trips to be moderate. If you are not normally an active person or do not use your upper body much you may find a few weeks of light exercise before your trip will enhance your enjoyment. Swimming a few times a week for three to four weeks before your trip is a great way to get your kayaking muscles into shape.

### **Carrying Gear and Kayaks**

Each trip brings in supplies for the trip on the same zodiac as the guests. This includes all the guests' personal gear, sleeping bags, tents, plus all food and drinking water for the trip. Guests should be able to carry 20 to 35 pounds. However, we can accommodate most guests who have physical limitations. Please discuss these with us and disclose them on your medical form.

- Water canisters weigh 22 pounds and food boxes weigh up to 35 pounds.
- We ask all guests to help unload the zodiac and move supplies.
- Kayaks are kept above the high tide line on shore and must be carried up to 50 metres to and from the water each day.
- Single kayaks weigh about 60 pounds when empty. At least two people carry empty single kayaks.
- Double kayaks weigh about 100 pounds when empty. At least four people carry empty double kayaks.
- Kayaks are often moved with gear and supplies packed in them. Due to this additional weight at least four people will help move packed single kayaks and at least six people to move packed double kayaks.

### **Snacks and Water Bottles**

A variety of snack bars and individual water bottles are provided to all guests during the trip. We often stop for short snack and water breaks while kayaking. Guests are welcome to bring additional personal snacks and their own water bottles if they wish. Personal snacks are to be kept in your kayak (not in your tent) so that little critters do not chew into your personal belongings.

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Guests are welcome to purchase and bring wine, beer, or spirits on trips. It is recommended that purchases be made upon arrival. Alcoholic beverages can be purchased from Sandspit Super Valu located between the airport and the Seaport B&B. Please keep quantities limited due to space restrictions in the kayaks.

Please be advised that for safety reasons, alcohol may only be consumed after the completion of the days paddling. Guests are expected to be responsible when consuming alcohol. For the comfort and safety of all guests, drunkenness is not allowed. The use of illicit drugs is also prohibited.

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## **Camp Cleanliness**

To keep our camp sites clean and free of food (and food-like) odours, we have a few requests. We'd like all guests to remember that no food or drinks are to go to your tent area. In addition to no food, no scented items are to go to the tent areas. This includes soap, toothpaste, deodorant, and sunscreen. Your guides will instruct you on the appropriate storage of these items at the pre-trip meeting.

## **Hand Washing**

Good sanitary practices are extremely important and it all begins with frequent hand washing. Your guides will go over some basics on proper wilderness hand cleaning techniques both at the pre-trip meeting and at camp.

## **Hair and body washing**

Usually there is no lack of fresh water in Gwaii Haanas but due to the nomadic nature of our tours we do not provide solar showers (they very rarely warm thoroughly). Fresh water can be collected from streams and your guides will instruct the group in proper low impact methods to bathe. We provide biodegradable soap for your use. Some guests find "Wet Wipes" to be a satisfactory substitute.

## **Brushing Teeth**

To keep the camp clean and free of odours that may attract animals we ask that all teeth brushing is done on the beach below the high tide line. Spitting and rinsing is done right into the ocean.

## **Toilets**

Gwaii Haanas is a remote wilderness area and all users must practice low impact camping techniques. No toilet facilities exist within the park. The preferred method of human waste disposal in Gwaii Haanas is the "inter-tidal flush". However, depending upon the area different methods may be used which your guides will instruct in as necessary. All toilet paper is either burned or packed out. Each tour has a group toilet bag that includes toilet paper, hand sanitizer and zip lock bags for used paper and sanitary products.

## **Feminine hygiene products**

Wilderness travel can cause changes in menstrual cycles. Even if unexpected, we suggest that female guests bring a supply of feminine hygiene products for the trip. All sanitary products are packed out and zip lock bags are included in our toilet bag for disposal.



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Cell Phone Use

To maintain the natural setting during your tour, we ask that use of technology be restricted to your tents and not be used in communal areas of camp. We understand that many people use their cell phone cameras for their vacation photography. But again, we ask you to use your phone as little as possible. Better still, turn it off all together. You are on holiday.

Once you leave Sandspit, you will not have any cell or internet reception until your return.

### Photography

Photos are a great way to share and reminisce about your experiences with us. However, you have to be careful you don't spend your whole time looking through a view finder in the attempt to document everything or trying to get the "perfect" photo. When your time is spent this way you may miss a lot of the beauty and action that is all around you. Sometimes you just have to put the camera away and sit back and take it all in.

That being said, we recognize many guests will want to bring their cameras on their trip and this is completely fine. We often enjoy taking photos while we are kayaking too. Visit our [blog](#) to learn about [kayak photography](#), including pros and cons of different camera types, considerations needed on how to carry and store these cameras while kayaking, and details on charging your camera.

### Camera Batteries

We have no way to recharge camera batteries on our expedition style tours so it is important that you bring any additional batteries you may need. Check out our [blog](#) for suggestions for additional information on [power packs and batteries](#).

### Fishing

Our Gwaii Haanas tours are primarily wildlife and culturally based; however, opportunities may exist for kayak fishing. Visit our [blog](#) to learn more about [fishing during your kayak tour](#).

# PAPERWORK

## Waiver

In order to join the trip that you have booked, we require that you sign a waiver at your pre-trip meeting. A copy of the waiver is included with this handbook for your review. Please ensure you have read and understand the waiver prior to arriving at the meeting. Seek legal advice if you have any questions. If you do not sign the waiver at the pre-trip meeting we have no choice but to regard this as a last minute cancellation of your trip, with no notice, and consequently provide no refund.

Moresby Explorers who operates our water taxi shuttles requires guests to complete their waiver before boarding the water taxi in Sandspit.

## Parental Consent

A parental consent addendum to the waiver is required to be completed at the pre-trip meeting for all guests under the age of 19. If the child's parent or legal guardian is not accompanying them on the trip please contact us to discuss our further requirements.

## Medical form

Please complete the [on-line medical form](#) in full at least one month prior to your tour's departure date. As all our tours operate in wilderness settings, the more information we have in advance of the trip the better we can prepare. In the unlikely event of an emergency this form may be provided to outside medical attendants, so please ensure it is accurate. Please feel free to contact us with any questions regarding the medical form.

## Travel Medical Insurance

While unlikely, a medical evacuation plus any required medical attention can be expensive and all costs are the responsibility of the guest. For this reason we highly recommend purchasing adequate medical and travel insurance through your travel agent or other provider. You should ensure this covers you for wilderness activities, the cost of medical attention, and the cost of evacuation from a remote wilderness setting.

## Tetanus

Tetanus, also known as lockjaw, is a serious illness caused by tetanus bacteria. The bacteria live in soil, saliva, dust and manure. If you get tetanus there is usually a long course of treatment. The tetanus vaccine can prevent tetanus but its protection does not last forever. Adults should get a tetanus shot, or booster, every 10 years. Without a current tetanus shot, if you were to get cut on your trip (even a minor cut) we would require you to be evacuated from the trip at your own expense for medical care. With a current tetanus shot, if the cut is manageable in the field you would likely be able to continue the trip.

## Medication

Please include all prescription, non-prescription and homeopathic medications plus any vitamins or herbal supplements you may be taking. For medications that must be taken regularly please bring a second supply in a crush-proof and UV-proof container clearly marked with drug name, dose and instructions clearly labeled. Please have separate containers for each medication. Provide this second supply to your guide at the pre-trip meeting and for them to store it in a separate waterproof container just in case your main supply gets lost or destroyed.

Please note that we do not provide medications on our trips, even something as basic as aspirin or Tylenol.

# WILDLIFE VIEWING ETIQUETTE

One of the greatest attractions to our trips is the wide variety of wildlife we may encounter while paddling. Our guides are well versed in the areas we kayak and the habits of the local wildlife. But please keep in mind that wildlife is just that, wild, and we cannot guarantee any wildlife sightings.

When we do encounter wildlife we have some basic rules that must be followed to ensure that wildlife is not adversely affected by our presence. At your pre-trip meeting your guides will review our approach to wildlife viewing both on the water as well as on land.

We have listed below some of the animals we receive the most questions about as well as our approach to viewing and dealing with them. We may see many other animals and birds that are not listed below. The main goal when viewing any wildlife is not to disturb their normal activities. Your guides will instruct you to stay close together as a group when viewing any wildlife and will position the group appropriately to minimize any disturbance to the wildlife. Feeding of wild animals is strictly forbidden. There are provincial and federal laws that can result in fines and/or jail terms for feeding wildlife.

While kayaking, our approach to viewing marine mammals will vary depending upon their behaviour. Quite often we will form a tight group by "rafting" our kayaks together so that we do not form an obstacle course they need to maneuver. We may paddle alongside whales at a reasonable distance as they travel but we must be careful not to cross in front of them. Approaching too close or placing ourselves in their path may force them to change their route and normal behaviours.

## **Whales, dolphins and porpoises**

Humpback whales are frequently seen in the areas we paddle. We also occasionally sight Pacific White Sided dolphins and Harbour and Dall's porpoises. The main goal is not to disturb their normal activities and we do not approach any closer than 100 metres to travelling, feeding or resting cetaceans.

## **Orcas**

Orcas are not encountered as frequently in Gwaii Haanas as they are on our Vancouver Island (Johnstone Strait) kayak tours. The main goal when paddling with orcas is not to disturb their normal behaviour. To achieve this we do not approach any closer than 200 metres to travelling, feeding or resting orcas.

## **Seals and Sea lions**

Seals and sea lions pose another set of concerns that whales do not. We may often see seal and sea lions hauled out of the water on rocks. This is an important time for them to rest. The closest we should approach is 100 metres but if the animals seem agitated by our presence at greater distances we will give them even more room.

Visit our website for more info on [marine mammal viewing guidelines](#).

## **Bears**

Black bears are often seen during our Gwaii Haanas trips. When we see black bears it is usually from our kayaks as they forage for food along the tide line. When in our kayaks, we approach from downwind and come no closer than 100 metres, keeping noise to a minimum. If the bears become aware of our presence we immediately back away.

To ensure bears do not become habituated to kayakers and associate people and kayaks with food we must follow some basic procedures in camp. All food, trash and recyclables must be properly stored to minimize scent and access. No food, gum, toiletries or other scented items are to be taken into tents at any time. If leaving camp take a "buddy" and make lots of noise in the woods so as not to surprise an animal. Your guides cover basic precautions to be taken to avoid animal conflicts at your pre-trip meeting.

# REDUCING YOUR FOOTPRINT

We know that our guests share our love of the natural world. Here are some ways you can reduce your impact on the environment when you join one of our tours.

## Pack Eco-consciously

- Pack light, to reduce weight and therefore carbon emissions
- Take advantage of the fact that we provide kayaks, tents, bedding, and dry bags, rather than bringing your own, unless you will be using them on another segment of your trip
- Pack your own toiletries in reusable travel-sized containers rather than using the miniature toiletries supplied by hotels. Choose natural and biodegradable toiletries as much as you can.
- Although we do provide water bottles and mugs on tour, if you have room consider packing a travel mug, reusable water bottle, and shopping bag, to reduce your use of single-use items en route

## Before You Leave Home

- Set your water heater to low
- Turn off your air conditioning/heat or change your thermostat setting
- Turn off and unplug lights and electronics, as they can still use power when they are plugged in
- Turn off your ice maker
- Call to suspend your newspaper delivery

## Transportation

- Your travel carbon footprint varies greatly depending on how far you are travelling, how many people you are travelling with, and what form of transportation you use. To weigh out the most environmentally-friendly options, see [this chart](#) by The Union of Concerned Scientists.
- Travelling by bus is the greenest option
- When flying, choose to fly economy over first class and choose the most direct flight route
- If renting a car, choose the smallest, most fuel-efficient car as possible
- Use our [RideShare](#) page to carpool with other guests
- Consider purchasing carbon offsets for your transportation footprint. The David Suzuki Foundation provides a good [overview](#) of carbon offsetting. [Less](#) and [Offsetters](#) are two highly-ranked ([Gold Standard](#)-certified) organizations through which you can purchase offsets.

## Invasive Species

- To prevent the spread of invasive plants, please ensure your footwear and any personal camping gear you may be bringing has been cleaned of any mud and seeds.
- The use and transport of watercraft, including kayaks, can spread aquatic invasive species in coastal areas. If you are bringing your own kayak on one of our tours please inspect and clean your boat and ensure all bilge water is drained. If possible, rinse your boat and equipment that normally gets wet with hot tap water (greater than 50°C), or dry your boat and equipment in the sun for at least 5 days before transporting them to another body of water.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Before you join us this summer please visit and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter by clicking the icons below.



Many of our guests enjoy sharing their experiences, photos, and video on social media. To make it easier to share photos and videos from your kayak tour with your fellow guests add the hashtag [#KingfisherWildernessAdventures](#) to your social media posts.

Hashtags don't work as well on Facebook so tagging our page, Kingfisher Wilderness Adventures, on your posts also makes them easier to find. Here are directions for [tagging Facebook photos and videos](#).

## FEEDBACK

About two weeks after your kayak tour you will receive an email from us with a link to an online feedback form. While we love to hear what we do well, we also want to hear about areas that we may be able to improve. In the unlikely event something is really not right; please don't wait until after your tour to bring it to your guides' attention. It is too late to fix it for you at that point. Please let us know immediately and we will do our best to make things right. But please keep in mind, no matter how good your guides are they still can't control the weather and the wildlife.