



Guest Handbook

Gwaii Haanas Explorer

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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:

- For the latest information on travel to Canada including any federal requirements and restrictions, please visit the [Government of Canada's Travel and Tourism page](#).
- Trip Cancellation and Interruption insurance: purchase through your travel agent or another 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 Travel insurance: purchase through your travel agent or another 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.
- Accommodation reservations in Sandspit for the nights before and after your kayak tour. Accommodation in Sandspit is very limited, so book well in advance. We recommend booking at one of the following accommodations:
 - [Seaport B&B](#) - generally the most convenient and closest to the airport
 - [Bayview Garden B&B](#)
 - [Hekate's Retreat](#) - save 10% with promo code: kingfisher
- Transportation to Sandspit: Flights from Vancouver to Sandspit with Air Canada, or Ferry reservations with BC Ferries from Port Hardy or Prince Rupert to Skidegate.
- [Participant Detail Form](#): **IMPORTANT! Please complete it online by May 1st.** Please note any dietary restrictions on the [Participant Detail Form](#) as we do our meal planning in advance. Some dietary restrictions incur an extra charge.
- [Waiver](#); please read and understand. You will sign the waiver at the pre-trip meeting.
- Moresby Explorers [Waiver](#) (transportation) partner: please read and understand. You will sign the waiver at the pre-trip meeting.
- Trip clothing and personal items packed as per the "What to Bring" checklist.
- Additional travel clothing packed for before and after the 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.

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. There is a pre-arranged dinner at [Raincoast Breads](#) on the last night of the tour, included in your tour cost. As noted above, travel insurance for cancellations, 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 your experience and care were exemplary, it is always appreciated. You can tip your guides individually or just tip one of them to share with the other. For the guide team, we suggest \$25-\$50 per day per guest (\$200 to \$400 for an eight-day trip), based on the service and attention provided. You can tip your guides directly with cash or by credit card at our office or online.

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. 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 Supervalu store hours can change without notice, however, this is their posted operating hours- Sundays -10-4 pm, 9:30-6 pm all other days.

The night before your kayak tour: The night before your trip starts you meet your guides at 7:00 pm 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 oceanside 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 as 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, 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 on the last night of the trip. There is a special dinner pre-arranged at [Raincoast Breads](#) on your last night in Sandspit which is included in your tour cost.

TRAVELLING TO SANDSPIT, HAIDA GWAI

Our Gwaii Haanas kayak tours depart from the community of Sandspit on Haida Gwaii.

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. 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 ferry arrivals and departures. They require a reservation.

To get to Prince Rupert, you can drive, or alternatively use one of these options depending on 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, AB, (with a stop in Prince George) to Prince Rupert. Jasper connects to Vancouver and Edmonton, AB, by train.

BC Ferries runs an Inside Passage ferry between Port Hardy on northern Vancouver Island and Prince Rupert on the north coast of British Columbia. To get to Port Hardy you have to drive from Nanaimo if you are taking the ferry from Vancouver.

Transportation	Website	Phone	Toll Free
Air Canada	www.aircanada.com	1-514-393-3333	1-888-247-2262
BC Ferries	www.bcferrries.com	1-250-386-3431	1-888-223-3779
Eagle Transit	www.eagletransit.net	1-250-559-4461	NA
Via Rail	www.viarail.ca	1-506-857-9830	1-888-842-7245

Accommodations

Seaport B&B	www.seaportbb.com	1-250-637-2215	1-800-806-7633
Bayview Garden B&B	www.bayviewgarden.ca	1-250-637-5749	1-866-306-6644

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 favorites.

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. We travel in a rainforest and so damp conditions are consistent. Clothing rarely dries fully - unless in sunlight. **Avoid cotton clothing** because they lack warmth if wet and takes 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 about 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 and sleeping mats/pads (thermorest type) 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

• 1 pair of short	• 2 sets of long underwear
• 3 to 5 pairs of socks (more for longer tours)	• 4 to 6 pairs of underwear (more for longer tours)
• 2 long sleeve shirts	• 1 swimsuit
• 2 short sleeve shirts	• 1 fleece jacket
• 1 sweater or sweatshirt	• 1 baseball cap or sun hat
• 2 pairs of pants	• 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	• Medication
• Sunscreen	• Spare medication
• Sunglasses with a retainer	• Insect repellent
• Prescription eyeglasses or contacts	• Book
• Spare eyeglasses or contacts	• Flashlight or headlamp and batteries
• Wet Wipes	• Camera & Binoculars
• Sanitary Products	• Extra digital storage and batteries

Footwear – to be worn or packed loose.

- You need one pair of watersport shoes for paddling and one pair of closed shoes – running shoes (or light hiking boots) to wear around camp. The camp shoes will be packed loose in the kayaks, not the dry bags we provide.
- For your safety and protection, flip flops and open 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, or running shoes/trainers that can get wet.
- Rubber boots can be difficult to pack but have proven to be a good choice for some of our guests. 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.

Optional Items to Bring

- Wool or fleece gloves or mitts (if your hands easily get cold these are good to have for the evenings)
- Small towel in case swimming is one of the activities.
- 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 wetsuit to wear kayaking- this item is good for those who get cold easily but is not completely necessary if you bring lots of layers.
- If you own and regularly wear a dry suit, feel free to bring this item to wear. Though it is nice to have, it is not a requirement. Many guests do not own one and find they are happy to wear good base layers along with the paddling jackets that we provide.

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

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

Physical Fitness / Mobility / Balance

Most guests rate the physical exertion level needed, from moderate to high. If you are not normally a moderately active person or do not use your upper body much you may find a few weeks of moderate exercise before your trip will enhance your enjoyment. Upper body training, a few times a week, for 6 to 8 weeks before your trip is a great way to get your kayaking muscles into shape. You need to have the strength and mobility to get in and out of your kayak with little to no assistance – other than someone stabilizing your kayak for you. Independent mobility is required to exit and board the zodiac and good balance to move about onshore as the terrain is often uneven.

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, and 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 the supplies 75 to 100 feet to the camp.
- Kayaks are stored at the camp and must be carried up to 75 feet to and from the water each day.
- Single kayaks weigh about 60 pounds when empty. At least two people carry single kayaks.
- Double kayaks weigh 80 to 100 pounds when empty. At least four people carry 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 a 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 not to be kept 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 Supervalu located between the airport and the Seaport B&B. Please keep quantities limited due to space restrictions in the kayaks. *Supervalu store hours can vary from what is posted here- however, this is their posted operating hours- Sundays -10-4 pm and 9:30-6 pm all other days.

Note: 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 camps 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.

Hand Washing

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

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

No toilet facilities exist within this area. The preferred method of human waste disposal is the "inter-tidal flush". However, depending upon the area different methods may be used which your guides will instruct 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.

Sanitary products

Wilderness travel can cause changes in menstrual cycles. So, even if unexpected, we suggest that guests bring a supply of sanitary 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

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

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. Ringers should be silenced so as not to disturb the enjoyment of others in this wilderness setting. Better still, turn it off all together. You are on holiday.

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 viewfinder in an 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 the 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.

Drones are not permitted in Gwaii Haanas.

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 Explorer tours are primarily wildlife viewing focused; however, limited opportunities may exist for kayak fishing. Our 5-Day Central Gwaii Haanas Explorer has very limited opportunities, due to the protected areas we travel in on this tour. Visit our blog to learn more about [fishing during your kayak tour](#).

Gratuities

While gratuities are not required, they are appreciated. You can tip your guides individually or just tip one of them to share with the other. For the guide team, we suggest \$25-\$50 per day per guest (\$200 to \$400 for eight-day trips), based on the service and attention provided. You can tip your guides directly with cash or by credit card at our office or online.

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 operate our zodiac shuttles, require guests to complete their [waiver](#) before departing Sandspit.

Participant Detail Form

IMPORTANT Please complete the [Participant Detail Form](#) in full **before May 1st**. This form is separate and more detailed than the form attached to our booking page. 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 participant detail 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 another 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 on the participant detail form. For medications that must be taken regularly and cannot be missed, 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, not 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, the habits of the local wildlife, and they regularly communicate with other kayakers, whale watchers, and researchers to improve our wildlife viewing possibilities. 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 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 instruct you to stay close together as a group when viewing any wildlife and 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 orcas and other marine mammals varies depending on their behavior. Quite often we 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 orcas 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 behaviors.

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 meters 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 behavior. To achieve this we do not approach any closer than 200 meters 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 seals 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 meters but if the animals seem agitated by our presence at greater distances, we will give them even more room.

WILDLIFE VIEWING ETIQUETTE

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

Black Bears

Black bears are often seen during our Gwaii Haanas trips. When we do see black bears, it is usually from our kayaks as they forage for food along the shoreline. When in our kayaks we approach from downwind and come no closer than 100 meters, 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 when 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. Your guides cover basic precautions to be taken to avoid animal conflicts at your pre-trip meeting. *There are no wolves, cougars, or grizzly bears in Haida Gwaii.

SOCIAL MEDIA

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



Many of our guests enjoy sharing their experiences, photos, and videos on social media. To make it easier to share photos and videos from your kayak tour with your fellow guests and mention @KayakWithWhales 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.

FEEDBACK

About one to 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 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.

REDUCE 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.

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, they can still use power when they are plugged in
- Turn off your ice maker.
- Call to suspend your newspaper delivery.

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.
- 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.
- Pack your own toiletries in reusable travel-sized containers rather than using the miniature toiletries supplied by hotels.

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.
- 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.
- 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.