

west coast trail



trip highlights

- Hike through BC's temperate rainforest and spectacular coastal beauty
- Cross suspension bridges, ladders, shelf walks and cable crossings
- Explore cliffs, coves, creeks, caves, caverns and remote beach camping
- Spot whales, sea lions, eagles, bears and other wildlife along the shoreline
- Carry a lighter load with our mid-hike drop
- Navigate tidal crossings, campgrounds and route with our expert local guide



Trip Duration	9 days	Trip Code: WCA
Grade	Moderate to Challenging	
Activities	Trekking with a full pack	
Summary	8 days backpacking, 8 nights camping	

welcome to Great Canadian Trails

Thank you for your interest in our West Coast Trail trip. With a small population compared to its vast size, Canada's wilderness is immense, wild, and largely untouched; an endless natural playground with countless opportunities for outdoor adventure. And, with history and character unique to each region, Canadian culture is a rich mosaic of customs. With Great Canadian Trails, experience charming communities and changing landscapes on foot or by bike, paddle along dramatic shorelines, or hike rugged trails with the support of our expert local teams. If you enjoy a physical challenge in the great Canadian wilderness or prefer a more leisurely pace, we're here to provide all you need so that you can enjoy your active holiday to the fullest. From the grand mountains of the West to the impressive Great Lakes and jovial Maritime culture of the East, not to mention the unimaginable scale of the remote North, there is no shortage of beauty and wonder awaiting the active traveller. We invite you to discover all of Canada's treasures from coast to coast to coast.

why travel with Great Canadian Trails?

We are Canadian, our team is highly-experienced, and our understanding of the land means carefully-crafted hiking and cycling holidays that offer the active traveller an immersive and truly authentic experience. Our unique selection of itineraries draws upon some of the country's most inspiring landscapes, incredible networks of trails, and stunning national parks while showcasing communities along the way. Our wide range of accommodations include our selection of friendly bed & breakfasts, charming inns, perfectly-located hotels, and quiet cottages or cabins. Our drivers are local, professional, and full of information which they are eager to share as they take you to the trailheads and move your luggage ahead to the next overnight stay. We provide you with sectional maps, an emergency hotline, and a customized route booklet with detailed local information and the inside scoop on where to eat, visit, and explore each day. Each itinerary has been tried and tested with every detail accounted for, so that all you need to do is spend the day exploring at your own pace, to your heart's content. By travelling with Great Canadian Trails you are also making a positive impact, since most of our trips include a donation to the local non-profit organization who builds and maintains the trail. This helps others get out and experience Canada's natural wonders.



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This trip is based on twin or multi-share accommodation, such as mountain huts or cabins. A single supplement is not available due to lodging/campsite restrictions. On backpacking trips, sharing tents also allow us to keep the shared weight to a minimum.

trip dates

2026	14 Jun - 22 Jun
	28 Jun - 06 Jul
	14 Jul - 22 Jul
	28 Jul - 05 Aug
	12 Aug - 20 Aug
	26 Aug - 03 Sep

important notes

Note: - Dates are approximate and can change based on Parks Canada permit availability. Typically we are able to secure the date but in some instances the date may shift slightly. Dates will be confirmed early 2026

fast facts

Countries Visited:
Canada

Visas:
Please check visa requirements with your reservations consultant*

Vaccinations:
Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

Leader:
Expert local leader

Advice for people with limited mobility
This trip is not suitable for people with limited mobility.

responsible travel

The natural environments that you'll travel through are fragile and the cultures and traditions precious. It is our responsibility as visitors to minimise the impact of our presence, protect what is precious and where we can leave a positive impact.

trip grading

Moderate to Challenging

the trip

There's a reason Vancouver Island's rugged West Coast Trail is renowned as one of the world's very best hikes. An undeniable physical challenge matched by stunning Pacific coastal wilderness, and an adventure that delivers plenty of highlights: gaze at luminous marine life in mirror-clear tidal pools; swim beneath invigorating cascades; encounter an outdoor adult playground with intimidating creek ladders, suspension bridges and self-powered cable cars; cook beneath the stars over driftwood campfires, and pitch tents in truly gorgeous locations. Our route traces the Graveyard of the Pacific, where dozens of ships have been wrecked. You'll encounter their relics too, along with abandoned indigenous settlements, fishing communities, and picturesque lighthouses. Spot wolf prints or breaching whales as you cross vast sandy beaches, under the gaze of bald eagles soaring overhead. Discover massive old-growth forest, the character of each campsite, and your physical prowess as you complete this trail of a lifetime.

at a glance

DAY 1	PICK-UP FROM NANAIMO AND OVERNIGHT CAMP IN PORT RENFREW
DAY 2	HIKE GORDON RIVER TO THRASHER COVE (APPROX. 7HRS - 6KM/3.7MI)
DAY 3	THRASHER COVE TO CAMPER BAY (APPROX. 7HRS - 8KM/5MI)
DAY 4	CAMPER BAY TO WALBRAN CREEK (APPROX. 9HRS - 9.5KM/5.9MI)
DAY 5	WALBRAN CREEKS TO THE CRIBS (APPROX. 5HRS - 10.5KM/6.5MI)
DAY 6	THE CRIBS TO TSUQADRA (APPROX. 6-8HRS - 12KM/7.5MI)
DAY 7	TSUQADRA TO KLANAWA VIA TSUSIAT FALLS (APPROX. 4-6HRS - 9KM/5.6MI)
DAY 8	KLANAWA TO MICHIGAN CREEK (APPROX. 4-6HRS - 11KM/6.8MI)
DAY 9	MICHIGAN CREEK TO PACHEÑA BAY (APPROX. 4HRS - 12KM/7.5MI). RETURN TO NANAIMO.

additional deposits required

In addition to the \$500 Great Canadian Trails deposit, a C\$200 (or equivalent currency) is due at time of booking to cover trail permits. Your trail permit is included in your tour cost and has already been obtained by Great Canadian Trails.

IMPORTANT: In 2018, Parks Canada has added a requirement to all users of the West Coast Trail to obtain a 'Park Pass' in addition to the trail permit. This is absolutely mandatory and must be obtained by all group members. A letter with instructions on how to obtain this pass is included with your pre-departure package. If you have not received this letter with your pre-departure package, please inquire with your agent.

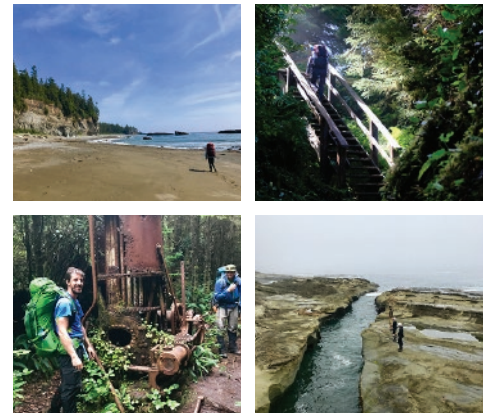
what's included

- Certified guides with Wilderness First Aid
- 8 nights camping
- 8 breakfasts, 7 lunches & 7 dinners
- Food drop to reduce pack weight
- National Park fees and permits (valued at approx C\$200pp)
- Top of the line tent
- Group camping equipment including all cooking gear, tarps, and meal preparation
- Emergency communications & group first aid kit
- Transportation as listed in itinerary



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The full pack and often unstable terrain give this trip a 'challenging' factor on an otherwise 'moderate' trek, but anyone undertaking a full pack trek should be aware of the physical and mental demands involved. These are designed for experienced adventurers who are seeking a challenge. The trek will involve off trail hiking, unstable footing, ladders, creek/river crossings, rough terrain, and long hiking days. All while carrying your own gear in a full pack. This trek is intended for experienced hikers only. We recommend that people begin their fitness preparation immediately upon booking. Solid work outs that are aerobic (hill walking, jogging, swimming, biking or gym work) of up to one hour each day is a guide to a routine training program. The best preparation is hiking with a full pack, involving relatively steep ascents and descents. If you can be as fit and prepared as possible, you will enjoy the trip so much more.

Please note that this trip involves a little participation. For example: putting up/taking down tents, washing up your own dishes, and potentially filtering your own water (made super easy with our MSR filters).

adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. When hiking, expect rugged terrain with plenty of dirt, roots and rocks. In wet conditions, trails can be muddy and slippery, potentially raising the level of difficulty of your trip. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise. If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with our trained staff.

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 Pick-up from Nanaimo and overnight camp in Port Renfrew

After being picked up by your courteous guide team in Nanaimo, we drive to Port Renfrew, where we sleep tonight. Following registration at the trailhead office, we install our campsite on the beach. Get to know your hiking companions as we discuss logistics for the trail ahead.

meals: NIL

DAY 2 Hike Gordon River to Thrasher Cove (Approx. 7hrs – 6km/3.7mi)

After breakfast, get ready for the beginning of an exciting hiking trip on the West Coast Trail. The day starts around 8:00 a.m. with a transfer by boat across the Gordon River to the trailhead. As we negotiate our first series of ladders, hiking amidst forest, creeks, and waterfalls, the challenging terrain (elevation gain +/- 180m/590ft) makes the short distance to Thrasher Cove longer to navigate. Our campsite is located at a small cove with excellent views of Port San Juan and Port Renfrew across the water.

Please note that given the challenging nature of the hike for the next three days, the campsite locations are provided as a guideline only. It's subject to change based on different factors such as group ability and weather.

meals: B,L,D

DAY 3 Thrasher Cove to Camper Bay (Approx. 7hrs – 8km/5mi)

If the tide is in our favour, we'll leave the forest and hike along the bank to Owen Point. This section, only accessible at low tide, features sandstone bluffs, caves and caverns, moonscape rock formations and eroded surge channels. The beach hike is shorter than the trail and with better views, but it is characterized by huge boulders, so make sure to watch your step. We eventually leave the shelf because of impassable headlands and sample the beauty and denseness of a west coast old-growth forest to Camper Bay. We set up our campsite by a creek, flanked by magnificent sandstone bluffs.

meals: B,L,D

DAY 4 Camper Bay to Walbran Creek (Approx. 9hrs – 9.5km/5.9mi)

By now, you're ready for the trail's most rugged sections, and the challenges that make the West Coast Trail so notorious. Camper Bay to Walbran may not be far in the distance, but soaks up the most time of any other section. Today, we will encounter a series of eight large wooden ladders that need to be climbed across creeks and cliffs, taking us deeper into the embrace of the rainforest. This is the adult jungle gym portion of the trail and continues to the trail end. From Cullite Creeks, we continue along the boardwalk over the wet bog. Your guide will point out interesting fauna, including stunted cousins of hemlock, spruce, cedar, and a species of carnivorous plant. Our campground at Walbran Creek lies adjacent to a fantastic swimming hole.

meals: B,L,D

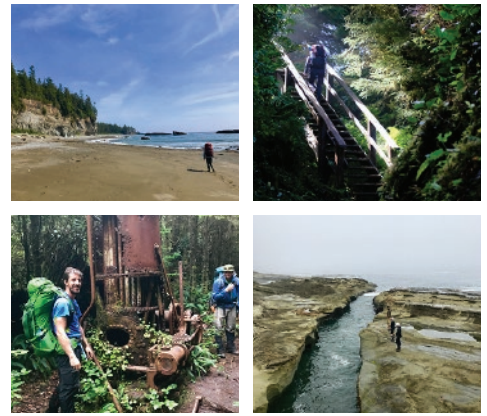
DAY 5 Walbran Creeks to The Cribs (Approx. 5hrs – 10.5km/6.5mi)

Leaving behind the most challenging section of the trail, today will be a shorter day hiking primarily on the beach. Your guide will be happy to recall many tales from past visits as we arrive at a special spot, once known as Chez Monique. This legendary trail haven and food shack recently closed with the passing of Monique and her husband Peter but holds plenty of memories for locals and travellers alike. A short walk takes us to the Carmanah Point Lighthouse for a visit to the station. Perched on top of the cliffs, marvel at the magnificent view and be on the lookout for resident sea lions, often spotted on the rocks below. We set up camp at The Cribs, a natural breakwater formed by volcanic rock, with colourful tidal pools to explore.

meals: B,L,D

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important note

These trip notes represent the most current information for this itinerary, and may supersede any information in the current brochure, including but not limited to the itinerary and price. The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.

DAY 6 The Cribs to Tsuqadra (Approx. 6-8hrs – 12km/7.5mi)

The morning tide will determine if we hike the beach or follow the trail as it edges along steep cliffs. It's an enjoyable walk on hard packed sand, with imposing cliffs and some of the most varied sandstone rock formations. We descend near the Cheewhat River to a beautiful sandy beach. After crossing the Cheewhat River, we re-enter the rainforest and carry on to Nitinaht Narrows. The family operated "Crab Shack" here has been in operation for about 40 years and there is fresh seafood for purchase. After lunch we pick up our mid-hike food drop for the last part of the trip, before crossing the Narrows. The Narrows must be crossed by boat with the assistance of the local First Nations. The segment to Tsuqadra Beach is particularly spectacular.

meals: B,L,D

DAY 7 Tsuqadra to Klanawa via Tsusiat Falls (Approx. 4-6hrs – 9km/5.6mi)

We break camp via the forest and stop at the remnants of a Didadaht Warrior village from the turn of the century. Old lodge poles continue to stand in tribute to the memory of these historic coastal inhabitants. After this we reach the Hole in the Wall; a wave-worn hole cut into the rock at Tsusiat Point. Just up the beach is Tsusiat Falls, the perfect location for lunch and a refreshing swim. From the falls, we hike to the Klanawa River and one last cable car crossing, before reaching our camp for the night.

meals: B,L,D

DAY 8 Klanawa to Michigan Creek (Approx. 4-6hrs – 11km/6.8mi)

Today we follow the beach to Trestle Creek, where we re-enter the forest. Along the shoal, we'll see where the SS Valencia ran aground in 1906, the catalyst for the trail's creation inside today's Pacific Rim National Park. From here, we cross two suspension bridges and our last ladder and emerge from the coastal rainforest at Tsocowis Creek, home to the first of three Guardian Cabins where members of the local First Nations live while maintaining the trail. It's a 4km/2.4mi hike along the beach to our campsite at Michigan Creek.

meals: B,L,D

DAY 9 Michigan Creek to Pachena Bay (Approx. 4hrs – 12km/7.5mi). Return to Nanaimo.

Today is our last day on the trail, and it's on the easiest portion of the trail. We remain immersed in the coastal rainforest on an old supply road until arriving at Pachena Bay. This is the end of your hike on the West Coast Trail. From here, we drive to Port Alberni for lunch before hitting the road to Nanaimo where we say our goodbyes to the team. Service ends after a transfer to Nanaimo.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

suggested extensions

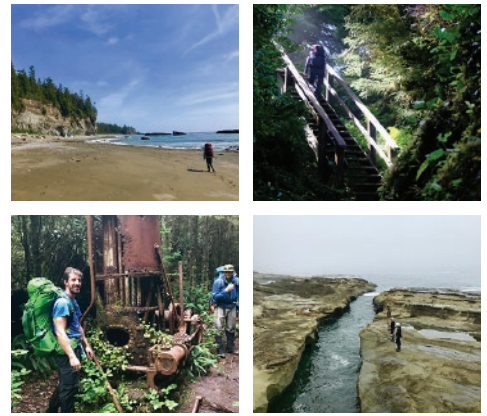
- Tofino Coastal Explorer
- Canadian Rockies Adventure
- Mountains of Western Canada on Foot
- Grizzly Bear Nature Adventure

joining instructions

You must book your own accommodations and make your own way the night before the start of your tour in Nanaimo. Your guide will contact you one day prior to your trip with details of your pick-up time in Nanaimo on the first day of the tour, at which point you will need to inform them of your pre-tour hotel location.

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country information

Canada's West Coast Trail is located in British Columbia's Pacific Rim National Park - A thin strip of land that extends for 150km along the west coast of southern Vancouver Island. The trail was first laid out in 1890 as a telegraph line but after the passenger ship S.S. Valencia crashed in 1906 leaving 126 passengers and crew to perish due to a lack of access for on-shore rescuers, a new use for the trail was apparent. Between 1907 and 1912, it was converted into a life-saving trail along Vancouver Island's 'Graveyard of the Pacific' for shipwrecked sailors to reach coastal communities. With improvements in marine technology, the trail was eventually revived in the 1960's as a rugged hiking trail through temperate rainforest, rocky headlands, and hard-packed beaches. Intended for experienced back pacers only, it has become one of the world's best hiking trails.

climate

While wilderness weather patterns are always hard to predict, generally the West Coast Trail does not see week-long rain storms in the summer that are quite common in the winter season. However, it can rain at any time, as the trail is situated in the middle of the Temperate Rainforest zone, and mornings may be foggy. August can often experience prolonged sea fog, occasionally leaving the view obscured but no rain falling from above. Daytime temperatures can be variable, ranging from about 21C - 24C (70F - 75F). Evenings are cool with temperatures near 10C (55F).

a typical day

Each day, each group, each guide may influence itinerary details but the following will give you an idea of daily timing. We have outlined our probable campsites based on a scenario where circumstances, i.e. weather and group ability, warrant a slow pace. It may, however, be such, that we will cover greater distances than initially budgeted for. Regardless of which campsites are selected, the overall experience will not be affected by our pace. The trek will involve off trail hiking, creek/river crossings, rough terrain, and long hiking days. All while carrying your own gear in a full pack. Physical and mental preparation for your trek cannot be highlighted enough. Come open minded and ready for a wonderful experience whatever the weather, whoever the group, whatever your preconceived ideas. Your guides will be working to enhance your trek and maximize your safety. Each day on the trail will start with a hot drink call from your guides. They will then prepare breakfast, whilst you get ready for the day and pack up all your equipment. After breakfast the guides will finish their last minute packing and then set off for the day's walk. Each day is different but usually the morning walk is 3-4 hours in duration with numerous snack, photo and water breaks along the way. A leisurely lunch is served which provides the chance to put your feet up, take photos, or simply enjoy the magnificent scenery around you. The afternoon walk is sometimes shorter than the morning walk getting us to camp with plenty of daylight and time for exploring, relaxing or just enjoying a welcome hot drink and a chat. A hot dinner is served with time to tell a few stories and hear a brief on the following day's activities before heading off for the night's rest. Your guides will not expect any assistance but will appreciate it if you have the energy to help collect drinking water when arriving at camp, wash up the lunch dishes in readiness for the evening meal etc.

*Note that daily hiking times listed in this itinerary take into account all breaks, including 1hr for lunch.

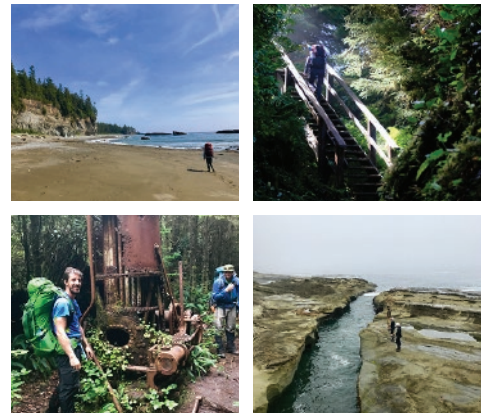
dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance of your departure, we are able to cater to vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance (ideally, months prior to your trip/ at time of booking) to determine whether we can cater to such dietary requirements on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or



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alternatives may be more expensive or unavailable. There may be times when those with special requirements may need to provide their own food. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

equipment provided

Included for your use is a 3-4 season, high quality 2 person tent (twin share) which provides each occupant with a personal access door and vestibule for individual use. Brands that are most commonly used are Mountain Hardware and MSR. The tents have been tried and tested to withstand all weather conditions that may be encountered during the adventure, each weighing between 2.0 and 2.5 kg and this weight is shared equally by each occupant.

pre and post tour accommodation

You should plan to arrive in Nanaimo or Courtenay (Comox Valley) at least one day before your tour. If you make your own travel arrangements please advise your travel consultant or travel agent at least 14 days prior to departure.

Pre-tour accommodation is NOT included in your tour price. The tour begins on day 1 with an early pick-up from your pre-tour accommodations.

We strongly advise against booking flights to depart on the final day of the tour. Please let us know if you need advice or assistance with post-tour accommodation.

what you carry

For your expedition you will need to carry all equipment in a full trekking backpack that is 60-80 litres in capacity. This will need to include the following items:

- Sleeping bag
- Inflatable sleeping mat
- Portion of the shared tent (two people per tent)
- Portion of the group's food (6-10 lbs/2.5-4.5 kg)
- Water (2L), layers of clothing, all personal items that you have decided to bring along

Our guides carry most of the group equipment such as pots/pans, stoves, tarps, major first aid kit, repair kit, fuel, kitchen set, bear spray, communication devices. You may be asked to help with an item.

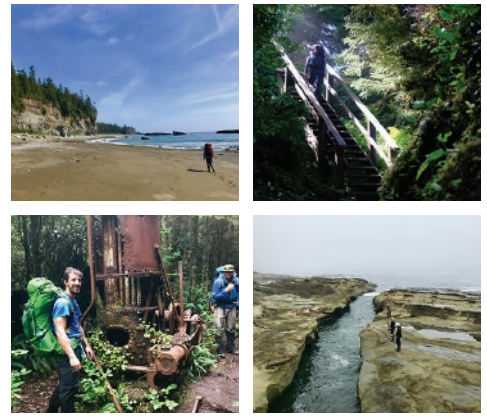
Depending on the quantity of personal gear and toiletries the average pack weight will be between 30 - 40lbs (approx 14-18 kg).

equipment required

A detailed gear list will be provided upon booking, along with optional equipment rental forms. Important items include a sleeping bag rated 0 to -7 (Celsius) and sleeping mat, waterproof hiking boots and gaiters, camp dishes (bowl, mug, spoon), 60-80L backpack with waterproof cover.

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getting there

BY AIR

The nearest airport is Nanaimo Airport (YCD, <https://www.comoxairport.com/>). Air Canada and Westjet both fly to this airport. From here, you can either take a shuttle or taxi to your accommodations (see <https://www.nanaimoairport.com/passenger/transportation/> for information).

BY FERRY/BOAT

If you choose to take the ferry from Vancouver to Nanaimo's Departure Bay terminal, we require that you do so the day prior the trip and book pre-tour accommodations in Nanaimo. Taking the ferry from Vancouver on the start day of the trip is NOT feasible as missing the correct ferry will result in missing the trip.

special visa requirements

All international visitors will require proper documentation to enter Canada. Most nationalities require either a tourist visa or an ETA. Detailed information will be provided upon booking.

non exclusive trips

Non Exclusive

what's not included

- Travel to point of origin (Nanaimo) and return.
- Accommodation before or after the trek
- Items of a personal nature- alcoholic beverages, car parking etc
- Meals other than those listed in the itinerary
- Sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and backpacks (available for rent)
- Park Pass (approx C\$40pp) or Parks Canada Discovery Pass (approx C\$70pp). Must be purchased directly with Parks Canada. Instructions will be provided upon booking.
- Tips and gratuities
- Travel insurance
- Applicable taxes of 5% for bookings made in North America

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social networking

Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GreatCanadianTrails>, on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/@GreatCanTrails> and on Instagram at <https://instagram.com/GreatCanadianTrails>

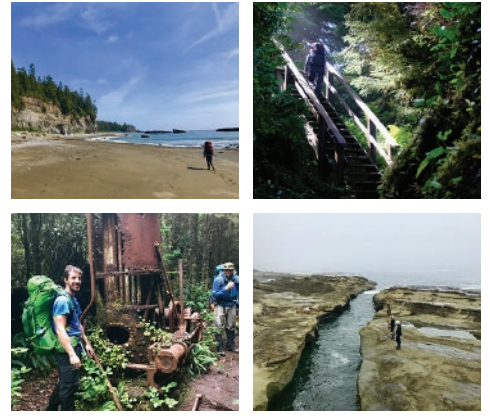
trip availability

If this trip seems right for you then we encourage you to book now. There are many reasons why you may not be able to join your desired departure and limited space on our small group departures is just one of them. Our self-guided holidays visit small communities with limited accommodations, and we can only guarantee rooms once we've booked and confirmed with each property. For this reason, we can only confirm availability of tour once bookings have been received. The demand is increasing each year making it difficult to join a trip last minute. To ensure we can confirm your adventure of a lifetime we ask that you check trip availability with our team at your earliest convenience.



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how to book

To book a Great Canadian Trails trip, you will need to complete a booking form and pay a non refundable deposit which you can do by using our online booking function. We can also help you with any additional arrangements that you require, such as pre or post trip accommodation in conjunction with the main Great Canadian Trails trip.