

TASEKO AND CHILCOTIN RIVERS

EXPERIENCE BRITISH COLUMBIA'S BEST
WHITewater, MOUNTAINS, AND DESERTS



National Geographic Adventure
2009 Best Adventure Travel
Companies On Earth

A FABULOUS JOURNEY THAT INVOLVES GENTLE
FLAT WATER FLOATING, THRILLING WHITewater
AND SUPERB HIKING IN CANADA'S SERENGETI!
DAVE PROTHERO PHOTO

TRIP DETAILS

223 kilometres with an
elevation drop of 860 metres.

*Through the course of our journey
we will be on the territory of the
Tsilhqot'in Nation.*

SKILL LEVEL

Beginner – *The guides navigate
with oars & paddling by
participants is optional for those
who want more activity!*

RENDEZVOUS POINT

Williams Lake, British
Columbia

DURATION

7 Days

TRIP TYPE

Raft

YOUR TRIP

Experience British Columbia's forgotten wilderness! With the very best of BC on offer this raft journey's many wonders include alpine scenery, desert badlands, towering canyons, ancient and active First Nation's culture, wildlife and whitewater – this journey has it all! – Experience magic of the grasslands, a serengeti- like landscape as diverse and ecologically rich.

Extensive whitewater and rapids ensure each day is varied and active. Join us on this unbelievable wilderness journey, travelling 250 kilometres (155 miles) by river through the best of British Columbia.

Travel through the incredibly varied, dramatic landscapes this trip has to offer, from forests and grasslands, to

hoodoos and sand dunes, to towering rock walls and canyons. Rich in cultural history, and present day use, the rivers in this area are of vital importance to the remote First Nations communities that rely on them for subsistence fishing.

Wildlife viewing opportunities abound on this 8-day expedition – watch bear, moose, California Bighorn sheep, eagles and other rare raptors, and occasionally, pelicans and sandhill cranes, as the river carries us downstream at its ever-changing pace.

ITINERARY

DAY 0 – WELCOME TO WILLIAMS LAKE

This is the first date listed for your trip. You'll arrive in Williams Lake, BC. This is a small town in the

interior of BC, founded during the mid-1800's gold rush, and built on the ranching and timber industries.

Increasingly, it is becoming known for its impressive network of mountain bike trails, challenging rock climbing routes, and high-end custom log home construction. The pre-trip meeting will take place at the Ramada Hotel at 7 pm. Your trip leader will review some of the final details of the trip before we head off the next morning.

DAY 1 – NEMIAH VALLEY AND TASEKO RIVER

Your charter bus will arrive at 8:00 am and we will load up for a scenic 3-hour drive. Beginning low in the Fraser Valley, we will then travel high up onto the Chilcotin Plateau. As we drive through several of the First Nation communities who are part of the Tsilhqot'in Nation – meaning “People of the Blue Water”, we will get our first glimpse of the rich cultural history of this area. Immediately surrounded by evidence of First People, we will travel past pit houses and traditional resource harvesting infrastructure.

The Coast Mountains will rise in the distance, seeming to hold the sky aloft on their glacial clad shoulders.

Birds of prey will circle above while wild horses and moose range through the douglas fir. We will suddenly glimpse towering *Ts'il'los*, a sacred Mountain that marks the source of the Taseko River as we enter the river valley. The Taseko demarks the traditional territories of the Xeni Gwet'in and Yunesit'in First Nations.

To the present day, this area provides for the Tsilhqot'in. Their rich culture is sustained in part through fishing, hunting, and the collection of medicinal plants. The area on the west side of the Taseko River was the subject of the 2014 Land Title decision, which established land title for the Tsilhqot'in and is also home to the Chilcotin Wild Horse Sanctuary. After a delicious lunch, our rafting journey will begin as we push off from shore into the milky white waters of the Taseko River. After a few hours of a relaxing afternoon float into the wilderness, we will make our first camp amongst ancient old growth Douglas Firs and vibrant green wolf lichen!

(Breakfast not included on day 1)

DAY 2 – TASEKO CANYONS AND CHILKO-TASEKO JUNCTION

After a tasty breakfast put together by our talented guides, we will pack

up for a stunning day on the water. Floating through deep incisions in lava flows, we begin our journey into the canyon complex of the Chilcotin watershed. We will splash through many exciting rapids including Taseko Falls and many unnamed features. After an action packed day of whitewater, we will camp just above the junction of the Taseko and Chilko Rivers. If weather permits we will take a short hike to a high point gaining perspective on this grand landscape and the life it sustains.

DAY 3 – THE CHILKO TO THE CHILCOTIN RIVER – THE HEADWATERS MEET, GRASSLANDS AND MIGRATORY BIRDS

Within moments of putting on the water we will witness the mixing of headwaters as we make our way past the stunning Chilko-Taseko junction. Here the blue waters of the Chilko River flow in from the west and our rafts will ride the contrast of the waters at the confluence.

We are now on the Chilko River. Our morning continues with some excitement as we thread the “Gap” – a very narrow bedrock chute in the Chilko River. We will pause at a traditional fishing spot, where we will take a moment to discuss the “dip-net” fishing technique. Along the banks of the river we can enjoy



GLACIAL WATER CONTRASTS WITH A VIBRANT DESERT ECOSYSTEM ON THE LOWER CHILCOTIN RIVER. DAVE PROTHERO PHOTO



the vibrant leaves of dogbane, a source of weavable fibre and a trade good that allows many First Nations to create incredible technologies.

A few miles later the Chilcotin River joins the Chilko and we begin our journey on the Chilcotin River. As we float past the large rock bluffs of Bull Canyon and into the traditional territory of the Tl'etinqox First Nation, we will keep watch for mule deer and black bears and learn some of the strong oral histories of the region.

If we are fortunate we may witness flocks of birds on the water and in the sky, geese, ducks, sandhill cranes or even American White Pelicans preparing for their migration south. There are a few species that show their adaptability by also inhabiting the dry semi-deserts of the interior along the Chilcotin and Fraser Rivers. Some of these versatile creatures include bald eagles, black bears, grizzly bears and cougars. We will make camp in the heartland of the Chilcotin ranching community. While the plains appear to be simple grasslands, this area is part of the most bio-diverse region of British Columbia and inspires comparisons to Africa's grand landscapes.

DAY 4 – HANCEVILLE CANYON & BIG CREEK

As the river valley narrows, we will descend into Hanceville canyon, with its towering basalt rock faces! As we negotiate the canyon, we'll pass a traditional fishing site – we may have the chance to give a passing wave to local First Nation fishers harvesting with dip nets.

Afterward we will race through fun roller coaster rapids named “the Goosenecks” in Hanceville Canyon. We'll see bald and golden eagles and keep our eyes peeled for black bears and California Bighorn sheep. In the afternoon we'll set up camp at the confluence of the Chilcotin River and Big Creek, the heart of Big Creek Ecological Preserve.

DAY 5 – LAY OVER AT BIG CREEK.

This is your day! Sleep in, swim, join your guides on a hike up “the Dome” or wander through the grasslands and wonder at the resiliency and vibrancy of the ecology. Of course, sitting creekside and taking in the wonders of the wilderness is always an option! With a full day to prepare you never know what delights your guides might cook up for you!

DAY 6 – FARWELL CANYON, SAND DUNES AND HOODOOS

As soon as we push our boats from shore, we enter the exciting standing waves of mile-long Big Creek Rapid. Through the morning the scenery changes again: desert hoodoos, fewer trees, open sagebrush and cactus country.

The air is noticeably drier and warmer here, and the smells of the sagebrush and sweetgrasses enchant the senses.

Before lunch we pass the intricately dovetailed log buildings of an abandoned pioneer ranch. Prepare to have your breath taken away as we enter the iconic Farwell Canyon, with its towering hoodoos and beautiful sand dunes, the largest in BC!

Farwell was the site of a Chilcotin village and is the location of an annual First Nations salmon fishery. Pictographs are still visible on the rocks. The rock paintings are still preserved in the dry, desert-like climate. Images include Salmon, Bighorn Sheep and deer.

At lunch we will take some extra time to hike high up a ridge into the towering hoodoos which make up the left bank of the river, or if you would



REVEL IN THE NIGHT SKY AROUND A CAMPFIRE OF FRAGRANT JUNIPER. DAVE PROTHERO PHOTO

rather, relax on the sandy beach with your toes in the cool water! Camp tonight is amongst old growth Douglas Fir just above the last canyon of the Chilcotin River, with easy walks or hikes in all directions!

Here in the dry, clear interior of B.C., the night skies are spectacular, made more wonderful by the occasional appearance of the northern lights. It's a great spot to wander away from the glow of the campfire and identify the constellations and see the full glory of the Milky Way.

DAY 7 – BIG JOHN'S CANYON AND THE FRASER RIVER

On our final morning we enter Big John Canyon – the deepest canyon on the Chilcotin River. It's a roller coaster ride, and one of the whitewater highlights of the trip.

Often it's possible to see salmon bunched up in the surging eddies along the cliff walls resting before spurting up the next part of the rapids.

As we exit the canyon the turquoise waters of the Chilcotin are quickly swallowed by the massive flow of the silty Fraser River which commonly runs 10 times the maximum flow of the Colorado River (over 2000 cubic meters a second!).

Once on the big river we can put up our feet and take in the new scenery while feeling ever so small in our new surroundings.

On our final float, the land on the west side of the river is the Gang Ranch, once the largest ranch by area in North America! We will take our rafts out of the river at Churn Creek protected area and load the bus for an incredible drive back to Williams Lake where our journey together comes to an end!

Please note: The above is a tentative itinerary and has been designed with much thought to capitalize on the most scenic and exciting parts of the river, while making time on other sections. Your guides will adjust the schedule to make the best use of river and weather conditions.

Meals and pre- and post-trip accommodation in Williams Lake and Vancouver are your responsibility – the cost is not included in the trip fee. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks are included from the Day 1 lunch until the final river lunch on day seven. Please note, any other meals off the river are your responsibility. Any other meals off the river are your responsibility.

SUGGESTED READING

Your guides will carry a small reference library which include field reference books. Following are some books for winter reading:

1. Plant Technology of BC
2. Spirit in the Grass: Chris Harris

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