



## *Tatshenshini River–Alaska* **ITINERARY**

**MEETING PLACE:** High Country Inn, Whitehorse, Yukon  
**MEETING TIME:** 8 PM, the night before your trip  
**RETURN TIME:** Approximately 6 PM  
**RIVER RATING:** Class II-III  
**RIVER MILES:** 120  
**PUT-IN:** Dalton Post, Yukon, Canada (Tatshenshini River)  
**TAKE-OUT:** Dry Bay, Alaska (Alsek River)  
**AGE LIMIT:** Minimum age is 13  
**TRIP LENGTH:** 11 days

### **Getting Started**

Welcome to the Tatshenshini-Alsek River Expedition: an unforgettable river trip through North America's largest wilderness area. To fully enjoy this adventure, please take the time to familiarize yourself with the information provided. We want to be with you every step of the way in your expedition preparations so please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns.

### **Notes from the River**

*A letter from Brian McCutcheon*

The Tatshenshini-Alsek River and its forested slopes are green thread in a sea of mountains. Its watershed extends across the Yukon, British Columbia and Alaska and is an integral part of the world's largest wilderness area. Each day as we float deeper into the wilderness the mountains get higher and higher.

Our rafts serve as the path of least resistance as we forge into territory perceived as impenetrable. Traveling down the Tatshenshini is also a celebration of one of the most significant conservation efforts in modern day America. A traditional trading route for the Southern Tutchone and Tlingit peoples, this corridor is now preserved for generations to come.

Generation is an apt word for the Tatshenshini-Alsek expedition. In 1991, I was fortunate enough to be a part of a grandmother-mother-daughter trip of a lifetime. This was the first time any of their family had camped and was part of a grieving process from losing their husband/dad/grandfather. It struck such sentiment with me, as I had funded my first trip to the Tatshenshini with an inheritance from my grandfather – my grandmother was later delighted when I sent her a photo album full of glaciers, icebergs and even wolves, in her late husband's dedication.

So for me, the Tatshenshini is a home to a legacy of lives lived. It is about relationships with each other through time and with mountainous wilderness of wolves, sheep, mountain goats, moose, black bear, grizzly and rare glacial blue bears that await.

*Brian McCutcheon founded Rivers & Oceans in 1985. In 2000 the company name changed to R.O.A.M. which is an acronym for Rivers, Oceans & Mountains, as the addition of "mountains" better reflects the topography of the regions we visit. In 2002 R.O.A.M. joined forces with longtime friend and operational partner George Wendt and his company O.A.R.S. In partnership with O.A.R.S., we are now able to offer our travelers unprecedented access to some of the most pristine wilderness environments in the world. Together R.O.A.M and O.A.R.S. offer more than 75 unique adventures on over 35 rivers and coastlines of the world. When not out on the water, Brian is the Managing Director of R.O.A.M. from our field offices in Nelson, British Columbia.*

### **Why the Tatshenshini - Alsek?**

The Tatshenshini River, rated as one of the world's top five scenic rivers, drains the northwest corner of B.C. and the southwest corner of the Yukon Territory. The river joins the Alsek River just before the Alaska border and continues through the top of the Alaska panhandle to drain into the Pacific Ocean at Dry Bay. This special river valley has been designated as a Provincial Park and achieved World Heritage status, protecting it for generations to come. Shakespeare's assertion that "Man is the measure of all things" could not have been made by anyone who has spent time in Alaska and the Yukon. In this land, man is humbled by the sheer mythic proportions of the landscape. The rivers and the vastness of space were made for Titans to roam and explore; the towering mountains were merely their thrones.

### **The Terrain**

Our journey will take us through alpine tundra, towering mountains with massive glaciers that often reach into the river and finally out onto the narrow coastal plain. This is a primeval land of the grizzly, the raven and the eagle: wilderness in its purest form. It has always been difficult to visit this remote corner of the world and settlements are few and very far between. The trappers and prospectors who came through in previous centuries endured extreme hardship to travel in the area -many did not survive the harshness. But "The Spell of the Yukon" has always been there and even today, Alaska and the Yukon have a place in the psyche of every adventurous North American.

This trip offers you a way to get completely away from civilization. On the river you will see no cars, no bridges, no wires. You will not hear a telephone or a television. A fax machine will seem as far away as it did 20 years ago. But if you ever thought of this part of the world as empty, a few days on the Tatshenshini will change that impression. Distances between things may be great but the abundance of life that manages to make the most of the short summer and long days will constantly surprise you and you will see why this region has become the largest international wilderness area in the world.

### **The Rivers**

The Tatshenshini drops 1950 feet from Dalton Post, Yukon to Dry Bay, Alaska and the whitewater section lasts approximately 45 minutes with a maximum gradient of 50 feet per mile. The river itself is characterized as Class III but is misleading because of its remoteness. The upper Tat runs highest in June with the spring snowmelt yet the Alsek peaks in early July because of melting glaciers. The hotter the weather, the longer the high water will hold, leaving medium to moderate levels for September.

### **Cultural Notes**

Our put in point at Dalton Post is known to the First Nations as Sha'washe, which hosted one of the region's largest fishing communities. The Tatshenshini River (called the Alsach before the white man's arrival) was also a travel route for the Southern Tutchone and Klingit peoples. The Southern Tutchone used to travel over 100 miles on foot to harvest the rivers' plentiful salmon.

Traditionally the fish were gaffed, caught in fish wheels or v-shaped fish traps, split cleaned and dried on racks. Outsiders did not enter the area until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The recently signed Yukon Land Claim Agreement recognizes the historic and cultural importance of the Tatshenshini to the Champagne and Aisik First Nations. This historic agreement enables the aboriginal peoples to develop a management plan to preserve and protect the region.

### **Wildlife and Flora**

The valley of the Tatshenshini is a fantastic area for viewing wildlife. Wildlife sightings have included grizzly and black bear, moose, Dall sheep, mountain goat and wolf. Indigenous species also include coyote, lynx, marten and red fox. On the open country we are quite likely to see beaver, arctic ground squirrel and hoary marmot. Feeding on the salmon are many breeding pairs of bald eagles. The occasional golden eagle can also be seen soaring over the canyons of the upper Tat. A variety of hawks and the rare peregrine falcon also call this river valley home. Canada geese and the fish eating merganser are found along the river; while gulls and arctic terns are often seen as well.

While hiking we may come across ptarmigan and many varieties of songbirds. The giant spring or king salmon, coho, sockeye and chum salmon all spawn in the Tatshenshini and its tributaries while rainbow trout and char populate the upper river. Occasionally mosquitoes may be encountered but they are an infrequent annoyance later in the season. The mountain slopes are forested with hemlock, fir and spruce. Balsam, poplar, and cottonwood are found on the alluvial fans and river terraces, while wildflowers such as dwarf fireweed and cinquefoil grace the river's edge. The alpine meadows are covered with wildflowers such as moss campion and spotted saxifrage.

### **Fishing**

The Tatshenshini-Alsek is one of the North's most prolific salmon habitats and commercial fisheries. It has massive sockeye salmon runs and is a spawning ground for spring and coho salmon. However, because of the glacial run-off from the world's largest non-polar ice fields, the fishing is not great. If you plan on staying in the Yukon before or after your expedition, there are a number of wonderful char, grayling and trout fisheries in the region. We suggest you bring a rod with a case and the smallest of tackle boxes with the appropriate lures or flies.

## **Tatshenshini - Alsek Sample Itinerary**

### **Day Zero**

Today is your arrival day in Whitehorse. We'll meet at 8:00 PM in the hotel lobby of the **High Country Inn** to go over any last minute details and prepare for our morning departure for the river.

### **Day One**

We depart in the early morning for the 2 1/2 hour drive to the put-in at Dalton Post. From Whitehorse we head north and west on the Alaska Highway to Haines Junction, where we'll take a short break. We continue south along the Haines Road and stop at the U.S. border, crossing back into Canada before arriving at Dalton Post. At this old abandoned trading post, we'll meet the other guides, load the rafts and leave civilization behind us. This first day we run a number of lively Class III rapids through the gorge, then emerge a few hours later into a wide open valley to see our first views of the mountains with their hanging glaciers. Tonight we'll set up camp at Silver Creek.

### **Day Two and Three**

The river slows down as we float through this incredible valley. Entering British Columbia, we meander through lush landscape and the home of a variety of birds, moose and beaver. The mountains to the southwest seem to get larger as we pass the river terraces, keeping a watchful eye out for the elusive blue bear, grizzly, mountain goat and wolf. Various tributaries double the size of the river and every turn produces a fantastic panoramic view. We spend two days stationed near Sediments Creek where we can hike and explore the alpine region's most diverse ecosystem.

### **Day Four and Five**

We'll continue down the Tat and stop for lunch at O'Connor Creek. Every day the scenery becomes more spectacular; mountains rise to 8,000 feet and glaciers hang from every mountainside. The river valley continues to widen as we reach our camp near the confluence with the Alsek River. Here there are great hiking opportunities along the river terraces where wildflowers carpet the ground.

### **Day Six and Seven**

We join the mighty Alsek River flowing from the North as we travel through braided channels. The river seems to narrow as the mountains reach for the sky. A 360-degree look will reveal over 50 glaciers as we near our camp at Walker Glacier. We marvel at the crevasses and hike onto the massive moraines. Later, around the campfire, we'll enjoy a beverage with 10,000-year-old ice, collected from the glacier earlier in the day.

### **Day Eight and Nine**

Cutting through the Brabazon Range, we pass the massive Novatak Glacier which is the tip of one of the largest ice fields outside of the polar regions. To the south, 15,300-foot Mount Fairweather, the fourth highest mountain on the continent, dwarfs our very existence. At the end of day nine, we camp on the spit that separates the Alsek

River from Alsek Lake, a five kilometer lake located at the bottom of the massive Alsek Glacier. Our view is one of the most spectacular anywhere on earth.

### **Day Ten**

Today we'll float through the icebergs in Alsek Lake as we make our way south of the Gateway Knob. Cruising in and out of the ice is exhilarating and provides fantastic photographic opportunities as giant pieces of ice calve off the glacier with a thunderous roar. We camp again tonight on the lake.

### **Day Eleven**

After breaking camp, we'll float the last miles down to the airstrip at Dry Bay on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Here we disembark, collapse the rafts and board the plane for a spectacular flight over the mountains and back to Whitehorse. Once back in civilization, it's off to the hotel and a well deserved hot shower. Tonight, we can get together for a last toast to the Tatshenshini and plan our next adventure together before we head for home tomorrow.

### **What's Included?**

- Skilled professional guide service
- 10 nights catered camping
- All meals from lunch day 1 through lunch day 11
- Vintage wines, liqueurs, imported and micro brew beer in camp
- Expedition equipment, including 2-person shared tent, sleeping bag & pad, personal flotation device and dry bags
- Transfer from Whitehorse to the river and flight from the river back to Whitehorse
- All park fees and necessary permits

### **What's Not Included?**

- Transportation to and from Whitehorse
- Pre- and post-trip accommodations and meals
- Insurance of any kind, including travel and **mandatory** medical and evacuation insurance
- Fishing gear and license
- Items of a personal nature and equipment (an equipment list will be provided)
- Gratuities

### **Why O.A.R.S.?**

O.A.R.S. has been in business since 1969 and that is no accident. Great trips on some of the world's best rivers, coastlines and mountains are the recipe for this success. Always focused on our clients and their vacations, it is our genuine—if not biased—belief that river trips and wilderness vacations are extremely valuable life experiences. That said, we have committed ourselves over the years to providing the best trips available, always with an eye on improvement. Here are a few things we believe set our trips apart:

### **EXPERIENCE**

- In 1969, O.A.R.S. became the first exclusively oar-powered rafting outfitter to offer river trips through the Grand Canyon. The immediate success of these trips inspired founder and president George Wendt to expand his business into the largest and most geographically diverse rafting, sea kayaking, and multi-sport company in North America.

Since then, the family-owned and operated company has shared in the world's waterways with more than 450,000 guests. With more than 75 itineraries on over 25 rivers and coastlines worldwide, four decades of experience in the industry, and some staff members who have been with the company since nearly the beginning, O.A.R.S. is routinely recognized for serving up some of the "Best Trips on the Planet," and for setting the standard for top-notch guides, expertise and superior customer service.

## **STAFF**

- Our employees are the single most complimented component of our organization and the number one reason over 60% of O.A.R.S. travelers return for additional trips or are referred by past guests each year. Our reliable, responsible and experienced guides are some of the best anywhere. All are qualified in CPR and First Aid; many have earned credentials in Wilderness First Responder, swift water rescue and Leave No Trace. They are friendly, open, and approachable, and they want to share and learn along with you. Their vast experience and knowledge of not just the river, but also the entire region, virtually guarantees an in-depth adventure and that your questions will be answered. So that our guests can take the best advantage of our guides' skills and personalities, we maintain the best average guide-to-guest ratio in the business: only four guests for every guide.

The heart and soul of O.A.R.S—from the president and founder to the more than 300 dedicated guides and employees on our team—is that we are all genuinely invested in every passenger, every trip and every lifetime memory.

## **MEALS**

- The meals we serve are hearty and sumptuous, complete with fresh fruits and vegetables throughout your entire journey. Our menu features great camp cooking in a wilderness atmosphere. Wake up to pancakes, omelets, or eggs cooked to order, complemented by bacon or sausage, juice, and plenty of fresh-brewed coffee, tea and cocoa. Sate your appetite at lunch with a delicious spread of cold cuts and cheese on assorted breads, hummus and veggies in soft pitas, or tasty taco salad wraps. At the dinner table, our guides' cooking skills truly shine. You may snack on hors d'oeuvres while waiting for fresh green salads, vegetables, pasta, rice and the main course: steak, grilled salmon, Baja tacos, sizzling fajitas or perhaps a delicious Dutch oven lasagna. Vegetarian options are available if you tell us of your preference ahead of time. And, if you can find room, there will almost always be something for dessert. Expect to eat as well—or better—than you do at home, without having to do any of the work.

## **EQUIPMENT**

- Our boats and equipment are top-of-the-line and rigorously maintained. Rest assured knowing that we use only the best and most reliable. All river-related gear is included and we offer many accessories to ensure your comfort on dry land as well. To give your camp by the river most of the comforts of home we provide sturdy tents, warm sleeping bags and thick sleeping pads. Please check with your adventure consultant or refer to your trip planner for details regarding what will be included on your trip.

## **ECOTOURISM**

- For nearly four decades O.A.R.S. has been a leader in sustainable tourism. Our goal isn't simply to be one of the most environmentally responsible tour operators in the world, but to continually raise the bar and challenge other companies to raise their standards as well. From escorting congressional staffers, eco-celebrities, and politicians on the waterways of the Western U.S. to establishing a model business for ecotourism operators in Fiji, O.A.R.S. is professionally committed to the cultural and environmental well-being of the places we visit. Most of our trips are inherently low carbon-emitting and our main operations office in Angels Camp, California, and our warehouse and office in Flagstaff, Arizona, run on 100% solar energy. Through partnerships with environmental organizations such as the Grand Canyon Conservation Fund, Idaho Rivers United, Alaska Wilderness League, American Whitewater, The International Ecotourism Society and Leave No Trace, O.A.R.S. is committed to reducing our impact on the natural world. We actively support awareness, deeper appreciation and the preservation of rivers and wild places.

## **How do I get to Whitehorse?**

- Whitehorse, Yukon is the meeting location for your Tatshenshini trip. Unless you have pre-trip plans elsewhere in the Yukon or Alaska, you will probably want to fly into Whitehorse via Vancouver. Your flight reservations should be made as far ahead of time as possible. Please contact your travel agent, favorite online booking site or the airline of your choice as soon as you have decided on travel dates in order to avoid last-minute inconveniences.

- The Whitehorse airport is an approximate ten-minute taxi ride from the city. We have a block of rooms set aside for our travelers at the **High Country Inn**. (1-800-554-4471)

### A Few Important Details

#### **Reservations and Deposits**

- An \$800/person non-refundable deposit is required at the time of reservation. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

#### **Cancellations and Refunds**

- If you find it necessary to cancel your trip, please notify us as soon as possible. All payments are non-refundable and we regret we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, we strongly urge our participants to investigate trip insurance (see Insurance).
- If you transfer from one trip to another within the same season, there is a \$50/person charge up until 90 days before the trip. Transfers made after this time will be treated as cancellations.

#### **Medical**

- Under most circumstances, if you are of an adventurous spirit and in reasonably good health, you should have no problem enjoying this trip. People with medical conditions, including pregnancy, should have a physician's approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

#### **Insurance**

- Although every effort is made to insure a safe trip for all, **we require that you purchase medical evacuation insurance to participate in this expedition.** Call Travel Insurance Services at 800-937-1387 or visit their website at <http://www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635> for inexpensive options that cover this requirement. We also strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your belongings, and your vacation through the purchase of a short-term traveler's policy. A trip cancellation policy covers your non-refundable payments in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip at the last minute due to illness or injury, as well as including the coverage required above. Trip participants should realize that in the event of illness or injury on a river trip, evacuation could be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. Personal belongings and cameras are carried entirely at the owner's risk, and we accept no responsibility for lost, damaged, delayed, or stolen property.

#### **Acknowledgement of Risk**

- Everyone is required to sign an Acknowledgement of Risk form before the trip, acknowledging awareness that some risks are associated with the trip. Safety is of the utmost concern on our trips. However, due to the nature of the activities, a condition of your participation is that you will sign this form and return it to our office before the trip begins. Anyone who refuses to sign the form will not be allowed to participate, and consistent with R.O.A.M. cancellation policy, there will be no refund of the trip fees at that time.

#### **Responsibility – An Important Notice**

- R.O.A.M., Inc./ROAM Adventures Inc. and cooperating agencies act only in the capacity of agent for the participants in all matters relating to transportation and/or all other related travel services, and assume no responsibility however caused for injury, loss or damage to person or property in connection with any service, including but not limited to that resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, civil disturbances, government restrictions or regulations, and discrepancies or change in transit over which it has no control. Reasonable changes in itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well being of the participants, including cancellation due to water fluctuation, insufficient bookings (this trip requires a minimum of 6 guests), and other factors. There is risk in whitewater rafting, particularly during high-water conditions. Rafts, dories and kayaks do capsize. You could be swept overboard. Your guide will make every attempt to assist, but you must be strong and agile enough to "self-help" and "float-it-out" without further endangering yourself or others. We reserve the right not to accept passengers weighing more than 260 pounds or with a waist/chest size exceeding 56 inches. We may decide, at any time, to exclude any person or group for any reason we feel is related to the safety of our trips. We are experienced at accommodating people with various disabilities. Please give us an opportunity to make you feel welcome. We need to discuss any special requirements ahead of time. On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

### Contact Information:

- For more information on this or any of our over 75 rafting, sea kayaking or multi-sport adventures, please call 1-800-346-6277 in the USA or Canada or 1-209-736-4677 if outside the USA or Canada or email us at [info@oars.com](mailto:info@oars.com) and one of our knowledgeable adventure consultants will be happy to help you.