



*Welcome to R.O.A.M.'S*  
**CHILKO - CHILCOTIN - FRASER**  
**A Week of Wildwater Rafting in British Columbia**

**Getting Started**

Welcome to the Chilko-Chilcotin-Fraser River expedition: an unforgettable river trip through some of British Columbia's most distinct and remarkable landscapes. 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*

We start our Chilko-Chilcotin-Fraser expedition by zooming off on one of the most spectacular plane rides on earth. It is a wake-up call for most city folk, entering this landscape of ice, freckled with towering serrated ridges and dramatic glacial lakes. The 55-mile stretch of Chilko Lake is translucent and azure-like, on a par with the waters of the South Pacific. But do not be fooled. Combined with this pristine ambience is the superfluity of whitewater, all fast and splashy. And it is exactly this combination of serene and bustling water that makes this expedition so incredible.

Priorities change during our time here. Most folks discard diets, fashion accessories, would-be sophistication and poise. A hot shower overlooking a moose pond takes on unbelievable decadence. Dining by the riverside while California bighorn sheep entertain by precipice jumping becomes something utterly divine. Cell phones and fax machines seem a thing of the past. The sun soothes our backs by day and sets over teal waters turning blood red, then intense violet by night. The surreal hoodoo sculptures become more dreamlike amid the midnight howls of wolves.

The Chilcotin is a land of legends, steeped with gold rush heritage, million acre homesteads, and North America's best stretch of commercially navigable whitewater. Yet, contrary to popular belief, our guests are not experienced adventurers. Our participants, who come from all walks of professional life, find it easy to check out of civilization in Chilcotin country—it's checking back in that's so tough. This is one trip that leaves footprints with you forever.

*Brian McCutcheon founded Rivers & Oceans in 1985 and has been operating rafting and kayaking trips in British Columbia since the late eighties. In 2000, we changed to Rivers Oceans And Mountains as the addition of "mountains" better reflects the topography of the regions we visit. The new company, R.O.A.M., offers lodge and camping based adventures into the Chilcotin. When not out on the water, Brian is the Managing Director of R.O.A.M. from our offices in Nelson, British Columbia.*

### **Why The Chilko – Chilcotin - Fraser?**

This journey of discovery is one of the most ecologically diverse and personally satisfying expeditions found anywhere. We'll fly over the towering mountains and massive glaciers of the Coast Range in a chartered aircraft. After an evening at the beautiful wilderness of Chilko Lake, we'll float 130 miles through the crystal clear, turquoise water of this incredible desert river, dropping over 3000 vertical feet. The Chilko-Chilcotin-Fraser is considered a Class IV river system with a number of extended drops. On the last day of our expedition we'll fly back crossing over the 2000-foot canyons of the lower Fraser and the lakes and mountains of the southern Coast Range. Experiencing such a variety of phenomenal scenery has made guests claim that this seven-day trip has been the best of their lives.

### **The Terrain**

Our trip begins at the north end of Ts'yl-os Provincial Park. Established in 1994, Ts'yl-os (pronounced sigh loss) is 233,240 hectares in the Chilcotin Ranges of the Coast Mountains. Although Chilko Lake is the centerpiece of the park, it is just one of many incredible natural features. Though there is much to explore in the region, it is rugged and un-serviced leaving its visitors up to their own devices. This is where we fit in.

The Chilcotin River flows near Nazko Lakes Provincial Park and Stum Lake Provincial Park. Both were recently expanded to protect wildlife habitat and BC's only colony of nesting white pelicans, respectively. Upstream from the confluence of the Chilcotin and Big Creek, lies the new 660 hectares of rolling grassy plateau protected in Big Creek Provincial Park.

As rafters drift the lower Chilcotin and Fraser, they will see stocky California bighorns peering down from the cliff tops. Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park was established to protect the world's largest non-migratory bighorn sheep herd. This is the heart of Chilcotin country, where steep escarpments rise from the river to horizontal plains, separated by vertical cliffs. These ancient lava beds were formed when massive flows of molten rock oozed from the earth, and spread and cooled, in step-like plateaus. Hoodoos, eroded by wind and rain, are the most prominent landforms. Our trip culminates at Churn Creek Canyon which is yet another new Provincial Park. Spanning more than 244 square kilometers, rare sagebrush and grasslands are preserved for our pleasure.

### **The Rivers**

Participants are continually overwhelmed by the excitement and beauty of this natural corridor. The Chilko flows into the Chilcotin, which flows into the mighty Fraser making this free flowing waterway perfect to raft from May through September. When compared to busy rivers south of the border this circuitous system is considered a wilderness waterway. The dramatically different sections of river offer a diversity of scenery, wildlife and roller coaster rapids that will keep you grinning from start to finish. Obviously the Province of British Columbia agrees with us—as they have established more than 17 new parks in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region.

### **Cultural Notes**

To aboriginal people of the Nemaiah Valley, Ts'yl-os is much more than a provincial park. Ts'yl-os was a man, or at least he used to be long ago, and like any man he had his moods. Given his towering height of 3,061 meters (Mount Tatlow on a map), it is wise to respect him and especially not to point at him. His presence can be so dominating that when occasional bad weather hits the valley, the 250 native residents wonder if it is a message from their spiritual protector.

For the isolated Nemaiah First Nation, their agreement on the park represents an important, but tentative first step toward reconciliation with the outside world. It is this world that led to the so-called Chilcotin Indian War of 1864 and the subsequent deaths of many. Today, that historic uprising against the white intrusion on to Chilcotin Lands continues to color the native's psyche and the park's future.

The silty confluence of the Chilcotin and Fraser was also a major territorial boundary. The Ts'ilhqot'in people of the Athapaskan language group, held a territory on the Northwest side of the confluence where the Junction Sheep Range is located. Small bands of natives traveled the Chilcotin watershed, hunting and gathering food. During salmon runs, these bands would come together at the mouth of the Chilcotin.

### **Professional Guide Services**

Our river guides are as impressive as the scenery and passionate about their work. Seasoned professionals, they are delighted to pass on their knowledge and skills. As university and college graduates, they have strong backgrounds in natural history, geology and anthropology. They also have knowledge of the local region and its folklore. Part chef, part naturalist, trained in wilderness first aid and professionally certified, our leaders are eager to please and will ensure you have a memorable experience.

### **Equipment**

We utilize state-of-the-art self-bailing rafts. The rafts have been designed with center mount oar rigs and allow participants the option of paddling or just soaking up the views. For those unfamiliar with self-bailing boats, the benefits are revolutionary. As water enters the boat, it collects on the inflated floor then drains out through grommet holes along each side.

### **Ecotourism**

For nearly four decades O.A.R.S. has been a leader in ecotourism. 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. Through partnerships with environmental organizations such as Grand Canyon Trust, Idaho Rivers United, Alaska Wilderness League, American Whitewater, The International Ecotourism Society, Leave No Trace and *NativeEnergy* Travel Offsets, O.A.R.S. is committed to reducing our impact on the natural world and actively supports awareness, deeper appreciation and preservation of rivers and wild places.

### **Weather**

The Chilcotin is one of the driest areas in Canada. Rainfall during July and August averages less than a few inches per month. Temperatures can reach the mid 90s (F) during the day and drop to the mid 50s during the night. Convection showers are not uncommon near the Coast Ranges. Late August and September trips have slightly cooler temperatures but better wildlife viewing as the sockeye salmon run attracts bears in incredible numbers.

### **Wildlife and Flora**

The Chilcotin is home to the largest herd of California bighorn sheep in the world. During the rut, the big spiraled horned rams will charge at combined speeds of 50 miles per hour and butt heads 30-40 times a day, an exhausting, and often fatal fight for sexual supremacy. Another fleet footed hunter in the region is the cougar. Like other predators, cougars will prey on the weak or young. But in the Chilcotin, three quarters of all the sheep killed are adult rams. Biologists believe the large horns used in the rut, impede the rams' peripheral and rear vision. More times than not, however, cougars are harassed to leave their kill because of the persistent coyotes. Some coyotes become the cougar's lunch, but the big cats are more likely to look to other sheep, moose or deer. Fortunately for the cougars, all are in abundance.

This area is also the home of black bear, grizzly and wolf. Bear population's slurp down the abundant rose hip and berries in the aspen groves. August and September departures are virtually guaranteed

sightings because the bears are feeding on the plentiful salmon runs. Beaver, river otter and mink can also be seen along the riverbank. We have counted over 30 species of birds on this trip. They include bald and golden eagles, peregrine falcons and many species of hawks. Canada geese, great blue herons, sage grouse, Lewis woodpeckers and many varieties of songbirds are also present. This diverse environment is also home to seven different bat species such as the western-footed Myotis and Townsend's big-eared bats.

The upper Chilko is covered with lodgepole pine and Douglas fir. As we drop in elevation the trees become sparse. Large open grasslands interspersed with cottonwood and ponderosa pine is dominant in this dry climate. Sagebrush and prickly pear cactus cover parts of the desert on the lower Chilcotin and the canyons of the Fraser. In the desert, insects are comparatively rare. A few mosquitoes may be present, but they will be of little concern. The largest airborne bugs are butterflies, more than 40 species. Each is associated with a specific plant, and many have exotic names like painted lady, aster checkerspot, woodland skipper, and white admiral.

### **Fishing**

The Chilko is a truly world class fishing river. For the fly fisherman there are plenty of rainbow trout and dolly varden. It also has the third largest sockeye salmon run in the province (over 2 million return annually) and is a spawning ground for spring and coho salmon as well as steelhead. Our trip spends an afternoon, and evening exploring at Chilko Lake. Here you can fish the river or lake. We suggest you bring a rod with case and the smallest of tackle boxes with the appropriate lures or flies. If you only plan to fish at Chilko Lake, rods can be arranged with advanced notice. People wishing to fish will need to purchase a license upon arrival.

### **Personal Preparation**

No previous river experience is required. Your guides will give you an orientation to safe rafting and expedition practices on the first day and teach you all the basic skills that you'll require to safely enjoy the trip. Our prime consideration is to provide you with a trip that is as safe and comfortable as possible while still maintaining the integrity of a wilderness experience. Activities are always more fun when you are physically fit so try to exercise regularly prior to your trip. All participants will be required to complete a medical questionnaire prior to departure.

### **Ecological Sentiment**

We are committed to the preservation of British Columbia's wilderness habitat. Our excursions are designed to promote an understanding of the delicate ecosystems that make our province unique while preserving their fundamental integrity. We ask participants to share our concern for the environment by practicing low impact touring in this sensitive area. ROAM operates on a "no trace" policy meaning we travel in a self-contained manner, carrying in what we require and carrying out all garbage and human waste. We believe the survival of the natural environment and the wildlife it supports depends on establishing an economy beyond simple resource harvesting. Our goal is to immerse our clients in BC's vast natural beauty that, in turn, supports eco-tourism as a viable, economic choice.

### **Safety and Personal Responsibility**

Expedition rafting, like everything else, is a very safe and enjoyable sport if done properly and professionally. Safety is our utmost concern and a satellite phone will be carried in case of any emergencies. It is important however, that each expedition member realize that there are inherent risks involved in river rafting, as there are in many other outdoor activities. Individuals must be responsible for their own actions and accountable for their own decisions. To acknowledge this assumption of risk, each expedition member is required to read, understand and sign an acknowledgement of risk release form. We will provide you with all the information you require to make your decision about joining us or

taking part in any specific activity. We will support any decision made by expedition members to opt out of any activity that they are concerned about or feel is beyond their capabilities.

### **Registration**

Due to the small group size and limited departure dates, we encourage participants to book as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. In order to confirm your space on the trip, we only require a \$500 non-refundable deposit. Upon receipt of deposit, we will send you a letter of confirmation, pre-departure information, equipment list, medical questionnaire and a liability release form. The latter two items should be returned to our office with the balance of payment due 90 days prior to departure. All payments are nonrefundable so we recommend purchasing trip cancellation insurance at the time of deposit. Trips begin and end in Vancouver, British Columbia.

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

- Round trip air charter from Vancouver to Chilko Lake
- Professional guide service
- All meals from dinner Day 1 through lunch Day 7
- Vintage wines, liqueurs, imported and micro brew beer in camp
- Expedition equipment, including 2-person shared tent, sleep kit, personal flotation device, wetsuit, spray jacket and dry bags
- All park fees and necessary permits

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

- Accommodations in Vancouver
- Fishing gear and license
- Items of a personal nature and equipment outlined in personal equipment list
- Gratuities

## **Chilko-Chilcotin-Fraser Sample Itinerary**

### **Day One (Sunday):**

We meet for our 11:00 AM flight to Chilko Lake.

**Important Note for Those Arriving at Vancouver International Airport on Day One:** *It is essential to arrive a minimum of two hours before our 11:00AM flight.* You need to allow enough time for possible flight delays, time to clear customs, and time to transfer from the Vancouver International Airport terminal to a private charter plane terminal called the **Million Air Terminal**.

Please make sure your gear is packed in soft luggage as this will allow for easy storage and transfer into the chartered aircraft. As soon as everyone's gear is stowed, we will board our chartered plane for the incredible flight over the mountains and glaciers to Chilko Lake. Here at the headwaters, we will meet our guides to go over last-minute details and issue expedition equipment.

### **Day Two (Monday):**

After a hearty breakfast, we will head to the boats, go through the safety procedures for the trip and teach any "would be" paddlers the basics. The swift currents and gentle rapids will carry more than 25 miles to our camp, located in a beautiful meadow along the riverbank and surrounded by lodge pole pines. Upon arrival we'll go through the camping procedures and then enjoy the first of many delightful meals in the wilderness. There will be plenty of time for a leisurely walk, fishing for rainbow trout and dolly varden, or simply watch the bald eagles from the river bank.

**Day Three:** After breakfast, it's on to the rafts. You will quickly notice that the pace of the river has increased. Today we descend through Lava Canyon and challenge the longest, continuous rapids of the trip. Heart stopping hydraulics and towering, standing waves cascade for more than 14 miles through deep and narrow lava gorges, makes for some non-stop excitement. It is no surprise Lava Canyon has become world famous among whitewater enthusiasts. Depending on the trip, we will choose a secluded riverside camp just above or below where the river doubles in size as the turquoise Taseko River joins the Chilko. At camp, a delightful evening under the stars and celebration is in order after a fun filled day of adventure.

**Day Four:**

After a leisurely breakfast, we run the "Gap"—a 20-foot wide chute that carries us into the Chilcotin River. The river valley opens as we emerge on the Chilcotin Plateau. Birdlife abounds and our casual float is a welcome reprieve after Day Three's excitement. This will be a great day for trying the oars and everyone will be encouraged to give it a try. Arriving relatively early into camp, there will be time for swimming or plain old loafing around. Try your hand at some fishing or sit and watch the sunset on the metamorphic rocks across the valley.

**Day Five:**

An early departure will set the stage for an action packed day. In the morning, we will enjoy some friendly Class II and III rapids before arriving at our lunch site at an ancient Indian fishing spot deep in the 1500 ft. canyons. This stop offers outstanding hiking, swimming and for the more adventurous, cliff jumping into the refreshing waters of the Chilcotin. After lunch we can ride the Goose Neck Rapids while golden eagles soar high above us. Tonight, we'll camp at the confluence of Big Creek. Here there will be plenty of time to hike up Dome Mountain for an incredible view or fish for rainbow in Big Creek. If you feel less active, you'll be able to wander with your camera through this beautiful valley or simply relax with a good book.

**Day Six:**

After a leisurely morning enjoying this spectacular camping area, we will break camp and immediately enter the Big Creek rapids. Lots of fun splashy rapids and accelerating current keep the pace up as we whirl past towering hoodoos and dramatic canyons. Today adventures are capped with a wild ride through Farwell Canyon as we eventually enter California bighorn sheep country. Tonight's camp features a sandy beach and plenty of space to spread out in the Chilcotin grasslands. Aptly named Sheep Camp, we can spot California Big Horns from the river's edge.

**Day Seven (Saturday):**

After another delicious breakfast, we will drift further down the Chilcotin and in short time challenge Big John Canyon. This stretch of the Chilcotin features countless massive wave trains that roller coaster for miles in a rushing chorus down deep desert canyons only to dissipate into the mighty volume of the Fraser River. In this country, there will be plenty of photo opportunities for the camera buff. The rolling badlands, the towering waves and the massive granite canyons provide a dramatic backdrop to the whitewater experience. After a peaceful float down the mighty Fraser, we'll arrive at the take-out point, historic Gang Ranch. Here we'll board our vehicles for the shuttle to meet up with our chartered plane for the spectacular ride back. The flight is incredible as we negotiate desert canyons and cut through the glacier capped mountains of the Coast Range, past Whistler Mountain, and eventually reaching the Pacific. Weather permitting, we plan to arrive back at the air terminal by 6:00 PM, but recommend participants plan to overnight in Vancouver.

## **A Few Important Details**

### **Reservations and Deposits**

- A \$500/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 cancellations are not refundable.* We regret we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, **we strongly urge you to investigate trip insurance** (see Insurance).
- If you transfer from one trip to another, 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 an R.O.A.M. trip. People with heart trouble and pregnant women should have their physician's approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

### **Insurance**

- Although every effort is made to ensure a safe trip for all, **we require that you purchase medical emergency evacuation insurance** and 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. Trip participants should realize that in the event of illness or injury, 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./R.O.A.M. 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 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. 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. 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 us at **1-800-346-6277** or email us at [info@oars.com](mailto:info@oars.com) and one of our knowledgeable Adventure Consultants will be happy to help you.

*Did you know that travel related activities account for about 1/3 of the greenhouse gas emissions worldwide? Visit [www.oars.com/CarbonNeutral](http://www.oars.com/CarbonNeutral) to join O.A.R.S. in making your entire travel experience environmentally friendly and 100% carbon neutral.*

© 2008 R.O.A.M., Inc./R.O.A.M. Adventures, Inc. 5/30/08 SF