



Welcome to R.O.A.M.'s
TATSHENSHINI-ALSEK RIVER EXPEDITION
Journey through the Ice Age

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 1986 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. Our Tatshenshini trips utilize rafts as a vehicle of access into one of the world's most incredible wilderness settings. ROAM Director, George Wendt, first rafted the Tatshenshini in 1977 and Brian has operated regularly on the Tats since the late eighties. When not out on the water, Brian is the Managing Director of ROAM from our 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 19th 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.

Professional Guides 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 to the highest provincial level, our guides 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 to allow participants to just soak 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

August and September are the driest months of the year so be prepared for the best weather the North has to offer. We will still experience the North's long hours of daylight but these departures may also witness the dramatic northern lights. There is no guarantee against a few days of overcast weather so be prepared for occasional showers or even a dusting of snow.

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.

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 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. A high level of fitness is not a prerequisite for participation as our trips can be as relaxing or challenging, as you like; however, regular exercise before any outdoor experience will certainly add to your enjoyment. All participants will be required to complete a medical questionnaire prior to departure.

Ecological Sentiment

We are committed to the preservation of North America'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 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 and 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 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 non-refundable so we recommend purchasing trip cancellation insurance at the time of deposit. Trips begin and end in Whitehorse, Yukon.

What's Included?

- Professional guide services
- All meals from Lunch Day 1 through Dinner Day 11
- Vintage wines, liqueurs, imported and micro brew beer in camp
- Expedition equipment, including 2-person shared tent, sleeping bag & mattress, personal flotation device and dry bags

- Transfers and air charter from the river back to Whitehorse
- All park fees and necessary permits

What's Not Included?

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

Tatshenshini - Alsek Sample Itinerary

Day Zero

Today is your arrival day in Whitehorse. At 8:00 PM we'll meet 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 will depart at 9:00 AM for the 2 1/2 hour drive to the put-in at Dalton Post. From Whitehorse we'll head North on the Alaska Highway to Haines Junction and then west along the Haines Road to the Dalton Post turn off. At this old abandoned trading post, we'll meet the other guides, load the rafts and leave civilization behind us. This first day, we will 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. That night, we'll set up camp at Silver Creek.

Day Two and Three

The river will slow down a little as we float through this incredible valley. Upon entering B.C., the river meanders through lush landscape and is home to a variety of birds, moose and beaver. The mountains to the southwest will seem to get larger as we pass the river terraces, all the while 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 will 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 will get more spectacular; mountains rise to 8,000 feet; glaciers hang from every mountainside. The river valley will continue 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 the braided channels. The river will seem 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'll marvel at the crevasses and hike onto the massive moraines. Later, around the campfire, we'll enjoy some fine scotch with 10,000-year-old ice collected from the glacier earlier in the day.

Day Eight

Cutting through the Brabazon Range, we'll 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, will dwarf our very existence. Tonight, we'll 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. In the afternoon, we will paddle out to the edge of the glacier and watch as giant, 100-foot pieces of the ice calve off with a thunderous roar and form icebergs in the lake. Our view from camp is one of the most spectacular anywhere on earth.

Day Nine and 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 makes for an exhilarating morning and fantastic photographic opportunities. After breaking camp on Day 10, we'll float the last miles down to the airstrip at Dry Bay on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Here, we'll disembark, collapse the rafts and board the plane for the spectacular flight over the mountains back to Whitehorse. Once back in civilization, it's off to the hotel and a well deserved hot shower. Tonight, we'll all get together for a last toast to the Tatshenshini and plan our next adventure together.

Day Eleven

Depart for home at your leisure.

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 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 to join O.A.R.S. in making your entire travel experience environmentally friendly and 100% carbon neutral.

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