

## **SPirit WALKER - CENTRE-BASED WALKING & ACTIVITY HOLIDAYS**

8-days / 7-night walking, rafting and First Nation spiritual and wilderness experience



Traditional native or First Nation North American culture and the rich history in the Canadian Rocky Mountains are inseparable in the wonderful natural wilderness of this region of Canada. This unique program has been created to give you a multi-activity adventure that will include hiking, exploring and river rafting intertwined with the opportunity to experience the wilderness through native eyes.

Our Wilderness Center is remote and in the heart of the Canadian Rockies between Kootenay and Banff National Parks. The Kootenay / Yoho National Parks were highlighted in the *National Geographic Traveler* magazine and ranked second in the world as 'Best Rated Places' to visit for destination stewardship categories such as authenticity, cultural quality, pollution and tourism management. They also applauded its "Good, marked trail system", "Outstanding visitor management", it is an awe-inspiring destination in summer.

Mostly based in comfortable cabin accommodation, there are two days of wilderness hiking designed for you to experience first-hand the majesty of the forests, sub-alpine meadows, ridgelines and marshes of the traditional wilderness.

To help with the traditional interpretation of the spiritual connection with this wilderness two days are spent in inter-cultural sharing experiences with a North American First Nations elder. This could include nature or medicine walks; nature awareness or traditional teachings; traditional earth and wilderness skills; and traditional campfire gatherings with camaraderie, stories, and music. The early ancestors of the Kootenay River valley and surrounding areas also become our spiritual guides this week as you explore the very essence of the Canadian Rocky Mountains and beyond.

**Departs:** Regular departures on demand from June to September (subject to minimum numbers)

**Includes:** Services of certified tour guides and experienced non-elder facilitators; all non-traditional activity costs; group gear and supplies; wet/rain gear for the river; river and trailhead transportation all taxes and necessary permits. Plus five nights Wilderness Center cabin accommodation, based on double occupancy and two-nights camping.

All meals are included in our rates and freshly prepared. You will dine on wonderfully authentic and unique home cooked meals with healthy, organic products, wild meats such as Buffalo and Elk, fresh fruits and salads, whole grain breads and pastries. Served buffet style, all meals include non-alcoholic drinks, second helpings, and mouth-watering desserts. Lunches are either at the lodge or a picnic for the trail. Vegetarian and other special diet meals are available with advanced notice.

**Not included:** Traditional activities with an elder are by offering or donation only, and are not included in tour cost. Transfer to and from Banff or Calgary airport pick-ups – available at extra cost

**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations**



### **Suggested itinerary:**

**Day 1:** Arrive at Cross River Wilderness Centre by 5.00pm. After preliminary introductions with staff, facilitators, and First Nations elder, a hot evening meal is served in the lodge. After dinner, we will formally gather with the rest of the group to outline the backpacking trip and the week's experiences ahead.

**Day 2:** After an early breakfast, we pack for our two-night backpacking base camp adventure and finish our final preparations before heading out to the trailhead (approximately a 45-minute drive). Here we will have an on-location safety talk and begin the hike at a slow pace up to a high sub-alpine mountain pass and ridge line. We follow a river through dense forest, avalanche slopes, sub-alpine marsh and meadow eco-systems. Once up to the pass, we will set up our base camp adjacent to a nearby river or lake. The pass itself is a very historic pass in the Rocky Mountains, and will present great opportunities for some good storytelling. Walking distance: 5km to 6km - elevation gain 600m.

**Day 3:** Today presents us with one of the benefits of base camping — out-trip choices. After breakfast, we will pack up some small daypacks and head out to probably one of two places. Depending on group circumstances, we can either continue along the ridgeline to another sub-alpine lake, which will also allow us to reach above tree line, with moderate physical or mental exertion; or we can challenge ourselves with a somewhat steep climb up a scree slope, well above tree line, to a high alpine mountain shoulder overlooking the entire region. There is no wrong choice; both offer great views and experiences, as well as possible opportunities for wildlife viewing and nature-based activities. Lunch will be taken on the trail and we aim to be back at base camp by around 4.30pm. Walking distance: 3km to 5 km - elevation gain 200m to 500m.

**Day 4:** After breakfast and packing up, we enjoy a morning stroll and exploration around the surrounding alpine ridges. We will aim to return to the trailhead by 3.00p.m at the very latest so that we have time to wash-up before a delicious, home-cooked dinner back at Cross River. The evening is yours to relax at the Wilderness Center, whether alone with a book, around the campfire, or in the outdoor wood-fired hot tub.

**Day 5:** After breakfast, we spend a day on a river-rafting trip on the Kootenay River. Depending on time of year, the waters may range from Class 2 to 3+, with some short sections of low Class 4 rapids in June. The surrounding cliffs, characteristic waterfalls, and good stories along the way make this trip a fun and unique way to enjoy the mountains. We aim to be back at Cross River by 5.00pm, just in time to wash up before dinner.

**Day 6-7:** On these two days we spend our time around the Wilderness Center or the surrounding landscape, participating in various inter-cultural sharing with a North American First Nations elder. Possible experiences could include nature or medicine walks; nature awareness or inter-cultural sharing activities based on traditional teachings, earth and wilderness skills; traditional campfire gatherings with stories, and music.

All experiences will introduce you to an important nature and community-based way of life. The days evolve out of the relationships that occur so there is no set schedule, and the experiences end up being unique to each person. We cannot say how it will all turn out; it always turns out exactly how it is supposed to, for everyone to powerfully get out of it exactly what they are meant to.

**Day 8:** After one final breakfast together we part ways, until next time.

Centre-based walking holidays are available across Canada, the USA, UK and Europe – ask us for details:

### **Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations**

- Call toll free on 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: [info@outdoortravel.com.au](mailto:info@outdoortravel.com.au)
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright, VIC 3741, Australia