

Tatshenshini - Alsek

Journey Through the Ice Age



THE TRIP:

- 10 days / 9 nights;
- 9 nights camping
- 1 night hotel before and 1 night after trip in Whitehorse (not included)

START / FINISH

- Whitehorse, Yukon

2011 DEPARTURE DATES:

- July 15 – July 24
- July 28 - August 6

2011 PRICE:

- \$4800 CDN + HST

INCLUSIONS:

- Expert certified river guides.
- State-of-the-art expedition equipment including an all-season tent (shared between 2 guests), sleeping bag, Thermarest air mattress, safety equipment and waterproof bags for your personal belongings.
- All on-trip meals and beverages, including a selection of vintage wines, spirits, local and imported beers, nonalcoholic drinks and fresh water.
- All necessary park permits and entrance fees.
- Detailed maps, fieldscope, and a library of regional books.
- All transfers between Whitehorse, YT and the river.

ITINERARY

ARRIVAL DAY

You will need to be in Whitehorse the evening before the rafting begins. The dates indicated in the left column are “river days” and represent day one in this itinerary. Upon your arrival in Whitehorse, we will rendezvous at a hotel in Whitehorse where you will meet the guides and all the other travelers. Waivers will be signed and any lingering paperwork will be completed. You will receive your special dry bags for packing your personal belongings. We will also have a briefing on gear, clothing and the river itself.

DAY ONE – 12 MILES OF RAFTING

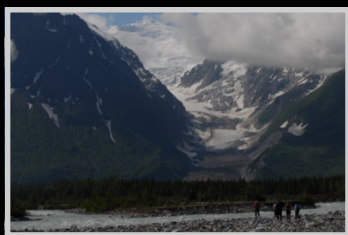
After breakfast in Whitehorse, we depart at 9:00am for the 3-hour drive to the river ‘put-in’ at Dalton Post. Our drive from Whitehorse takes us north on the Alaska Highway to Haines Junction, then west along Haines Road to the Dalton Post turnoff. Before heading down to the put in, we have to make a short deviation down to the Haines Alaska border station to clear customs. Once at the old abandoned trading post of Dalton Post, we’ll meet the other guides, load the rafts and leave civilization behind. Our time on the river is short with Rainbow camp just under an hour down stream where we’ll enjoy cocktails and hors d’oeuvres as we set camp and settle in. We will enjoy a sumptuous dinner, the first of many, before we collect around the campfire under a star-filled sky.

DAY TWO, THREE, & FOUR – 21 MILES OF RAFTING

We typically begin each day with coffee and tea, followed by a hot breakfast that may feature West Coast Eggs Benny. Breakfast Burritos or perhaps Texas French toast. Fresh fruit salad, granola and yoghurt are always available. In short, you will not go hungry! Once camp has been broken and the boats packed and prepared we’ll head downstream (usually between 9:30 and 10am). Today, Day Two, 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. Camp is likely at a great gravel bar where animal tracks are constant evidence to the wilderness we’re in. During day three we meander quietly through Quiet Canyon, the Oxbows, and past Bear Bite Creek, while enjoying the panoramic mountain vistas. Keep a keen eye out for moose, trumpeter swans and bald eagles, which are often spotted here. Tonight we camp at the mouth of Sediments Creek where we’ll spend two nights. This campsite is the start point for our first alpine hiking opportunity and on Day Four we split up into groups for hiking and exploring - or you can just relax at camp enjoying the majesty of the surroundings.

DAY FIVE & SIX – 45 MILES OF RAFTING

We’ll continue down the Tat stopping for lunch at O’Connor Creek. Every day the scenery becomes more spectacular as the mountains rise to 8,000 feet and glaciers hang from mountainsides. The river valley will continue to widen as we reach our camp just above the confluence with the Alsek River. Here there are great hiking opportunities along the river terraces where wildflowers carpet the ground. The mighty Alsek River joins us from the north as we travel through the braided channels. The river seems to narrow as the mountains reach for the sky. A 360° look reveals over 20 glaciers as we near our camp at Walker Glacier.



RAPID FACTS:

TOTAL RAFTING DISTANCE:

- 102 miles

ELEVATION AT PUT-IN:

- 1850 feet above sea level

ELEVATION AT TAKE-OUT:

- Sea level

ELEVATION CHANGE:

- 1850 feet

WHITEWATER:

- 1 Day Class 3
- 6 Days Class 1 & 2

OTHER DETAILS

- 3 Layover Days
- Must bring passport
- Largest protected area on the planet

You'll marvel at the crevasses as we hike onto the massive moraines. Around the campfire tonight, we'll enjoy some fine scotch with ten-thousand year-old ice collected from the glacier earlier in the day.

DAYS SEVEN, EIGHT, & NINE – 24 MILES OF RAFTING

Cutting through the Barbazon Range, we'll pass the massive Novatak Glacier, which is the tip of the largest ice field on the planet outside of the polar regions. To the south, 15,600-foot Mount Fairweather, the 4th highest mountain on the continent, will dwarf our very existence. In the afternoon, we'll paddle out amongst the ship-sized icebergs and watch as giant, 100-foot chunks of ice calve off the glacier with a thunderous roar. Our view from camp is one of the most spectacular anywhere on earth. Tonight, we'll camp on the spit of land that separates the Alsek River from Alsek Lake, a 5km-long lake located at the bottom of the massive Alsek Glacier. Depending on weather and timing, we may have the opportunity for a layover day at Alsek Lake—with time to paddle amongst the icebergs, hike or just relax and enjoy the incredible vista from camp.

DAY TEN – BACK TO CIVILIZATION

After breaking camp for the last time, we'll float the last few miles down to the airstrip at Dry Bay, Alaska on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Here, we'll collapse the rafts and board our plane for the spectacular flight over the mountains back to Whitehorse. Once back in civilization, it's off to the hotel for a well-deserved hot shower. Tonight, we'll get together for our farewell dinner, raise our glasses for a last toast to the Tatshenshini and start planning our next adventure together.

DEPARTURE DAY – HOMEWARD BOUND

After breakfast today the hotel can arrange a shuttle to the Whitehorse Airport to get you there for your flight back home. Flights to Vancouver depart Whitehorse early morning (approx. 8am) and mid-afternoon (approx. 3pm).

WHY THE TATSHENSHINI – ALSEK RIVER?

The Tatshenshini River, rated one of the world's top ten most 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 Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska to drain into the Pacific Ocean at Dry Bay. Just recently, this special river valley was designated a provincial park and has also achieved UNESCO World Heritage status, thus 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 on the Tatshenshini River. Here, man is humbled by the sheer mythic proportions of the landscape. The broad rivers and vast valleys were made for Titans to roam and explore; the towering mountains could perhaps serve as their thrones.

THE WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITAT

The valley of the Tatshenshini is a fantastic area for viewing wildlife such as grizzly and black bear, moose, Dall's sheep, mountain goats and wolves. Indigenous species also include coyote, lynx, marten and red fox. Feeding on the spawning 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; gulls and arctic terns may be seen as well. During our hikes 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. 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.



LEVEL OF ACTIVITY

Rafting

Of the 10 river days we spend seven of them rafting, and the other three “laying over” in camp. We spend three to four hours on the water on rafting days, mostly on class I or II rapids – a gentle, bobbing current. We will encounter a stretch of class III rapids on the second day only.

Hiking

We walk daily near our campsites exploring the local flora and fauna, or stopping on the river to check out points of interest. On layover days there are longer optional hikes, some of them quite serious scrambles, into the alpine tundra zone. A guide accompanies you at all times. A highlight is the glacier hike where we walk on a live glacier.

INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR RAPID CLASS

CLASS I:	Easy. Moving water with ripples and small waves
CLASS II:	Novice. Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels
CLASS III:	Intermediate. Some maneuvering required, large waves may be present
CLASS IV:	Advanced. Powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling
CLASS V:	Expert terrain
CLASS VI:	Extreme!

WEATHER

In July, we experience the north’s incredible, long hours of daylight. July and August are the driest times of the year, so be prepared for the best weather the region has to offer. There’s no guarantee against a few days of overcast weather or rain - the mountain weather environment is best described as highly variable.

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

Skeena Valley Expeditions is committed to the preservation of wilderness habitats. Our trips are therefore designed to promote an understanding of this unique region’s delicate ecosystems while preserving their natural integrity. We take a low-impact, self-contained, leave-no-traces approach, carrying in what we need and carrying out all garbage and human waste. After enjoying such incredible natural beauty, we want to know that we’ve left the environment unspoiled for a future generation of explorers.



Skeena Valley Expeditions

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