

Cultural Journey - Western Canada

**Meet First Nation People
Blackfoot, Osoyoos, Shuswap, Burrard...**

From the prairies of Alberta to the Pacific Coast, from the Reserves to the cities, from tradition to modernity, First Nation cultures are incredibly diverse. Identities and lifestyles are complex, fluid, ever evolving and fascinating. This trip takes you to some of the most beautiful areas of Alberta and British Columbia where you meet people from various First Nations, discover their traditional and modern lifestyles, sleep in tipis, paddle in old-style cedar canoes and receive spiritual teachings.

16 days/15 nights Culture - Adventure Tour (Independent Travellers and Groups)

Days1-3

The People of the Great Plains - Siksika Nation

We arrive in Calgary where we spend 2 nights. We visit the superb Glenbow Museum with its fascinating Native collections before meeting our First Nation hosts.

Our cultural journey starts with the Siksika Nation whose land on the banks of the Bow River is like an oasis in the vast Albertan prairie.

Together with the Blood and the Peigan, the Siksika Nation forms the large Blackfoot Confederacy, based on a common language and on strong traditions. Still today, the Siksika Nation comes together each year to celebrate Okan (the Sun Dance), the sacred bundle and the pipes. The Elders pass on the culture to the younger generations through their example and school education.

Sleeping in tipis, exploring the Reserve, its cultural and historical sites, meeting Elders, discovering traditions and the modern lifestyle and visiting the new Blackfoot Crossing Interpretive Centre give a comprehensive insight into the life and history of the Siksika people.

Days 4 – 6

Shared Spirits – Kootenays

We continue our journey along historic trade routes to the western side of the Rocky Mountains. We spend the next 3 days in a secluded Wilderness Centre close to Kootenay National Park.

Sequoyah, a Cherokee-Choctaw medicine man and/or other Elders teach their ways of life and introduce their visitors to the beliefs of their people in this quiet mountain environment. This "Shared Spirits" program is intended as an intercultural bridge between the old culture of their ancestors, which was inspired by nature and the new life style of today's world.

Practicing wilderness activities, learning about the importance of crafts and medicinal plants in daily life, about the role of drums, pipes and singing in ceremonies, discussions around the campfire at night with the talking stick, are all experiences that will stay with us forever.



Days 7 – 9

The Okanagan Valley – Osoyoos Nk'Mip

We leave the Rocky Mountains through the picturesque Columbia Valley, in the lovely Kootenay forests, and cross several lakes by ferry before reaching the fertile Okanagan Valley with its many orchards. Our trip takes us to the Osoyoos people in Nk'Mip, in the south of the valley on the border with the United States. Nk'Mip belongs to the

Osoyoos who are the largest of the Okanagan Nations. We lodge at Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa on the Reserve. We visit the Nk'Mip Desert & Heritage Center and learn about the traditional way of life in the desert. A wine tour is a good idea and there is a public golf course and a spa.



Days 10 - 12

Sqwlax & Secwepmenc First Nation

Impressed by the economic success of the Osoyoos in Nk'Mip we say goodbye and head north along the shores of Okanagan Lake past well maintained vineyards and fruit plantations to the Shuswap Lake. Our host is the Little Shuswap Indian Band who will host us in its Quaaout Lodge directly situated on the lake shore. We meet Elder Ernie Philip, a spiritual leader and a traditional dancer, and Barbara Callihoe, an artisan and an instructor. The programs offered vary according to the season. They could include arts and crafts (moccasin making) or Medicine Wheel and Talking Circle teachings and in the fall, perhaps an excursion to see the salmon run.

The location of the Lodge at this lake is very unique and invites you to relax and to enjoy. And for those who prefer active vacation, there are horses, canoes and paddle boats on site.

Days 13 - 15

Vancouver, the metropolis on the Pacific Burrard Inlet band or Tsleil-Wauthuth Nation

The last stage of our Western Canada culture trip takes us from the Shuswap Lake to the Pacific Coast. Our next destination is Vancouver, the most beautiful city in North America.

Although we focus on this attractive metropolis, we spare time for a visit with a tribe of the Northwest Coast Indians. With their traditional canoes we paddle through the inlets in the Pacific Ocean, and we listen to their stories and legends of the past. We will find out that the Northwest Coast Indians living on and by the water live a very different culture, compared with the groups we met in the interior and on the Plains during our journey.

The canoe program in the inlets is led by Takaya Tours, the first Indian eco-tourism business in British Columbia. It is stunning that this traditional Indian canoe program can be offered in the direct vicinity of the modern metropole of Vancouver. The work of local Indians in today's civilization is the peaceful interplay between "Red and White", a cultural experience of particular importance.

INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

**Price per person based on double occupancy
From CAD 4,220 + 5 % GST**

Included:

- Rental car, all-inclusive insurance, unlimited kilometres
- 2 nights in Calgary (Ramada or similar)
- 1 night Siksika (shared accommodation in tipis)
- 3 nights each Kootenay (teepee), Nk'Mip, Quaaout and Vancouver
- All meals on Siksika Reserve and Kootenay, breakfasts in Vancouver
- Activities as mentioned

GROUPS

Dates 2010:

July 30 - August 14

September 10 - 25

**Price per person based on double occupancy
CAD 5,820 + 5 % GST (July Departure)
CAD 5,585 + 5 % GST (Sept. Departure)**

Included:

- Transport by van
- Driver / guide
- All breakfasts, 4 lunches, 8 dinners
- Accommodation as per independent travellers
- Activities as per independent travelers

Not included - Independent travellers & Groups:

- Flight to and from Canada
- Meals & beverages not mentioned in itinerary
- Gratuities for guides
- Optional activities
- Rental Car One-Way-fee (independent travellers)
- 5% GST tax



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