

SOARING SPIRITS

Rediscovery International Training Program
August 21-31, 2010

OVERVIEW



The Rediscovery International Foundation is offering a unique training program at its new Soaring Spirits Camp located on the legendary Skeena River. Surrounded by majestic mountains towering to nearly 3,000 meters, and with five million wild salmon swimming past its shores, eagles soaring overhead and white ‘Spirit Bears’ grazing in nearby meadows - this is a setting that will surely inspire.

The 10-day training package has four goals: 1) to teach camp skills necessary to running healthy and safe wilderness adventure camps, 2) to offer hands-on instruction in sustainable living through organic gardening, composting, and wind/solar renewable energy technologies, 3) to teach natural history interpretation techniques in a wide range of settings for camp naturalists and the growing ecotourism industry, and 4) to offer immersion educational experiences in four distinct First Nation cultures – the Wet’suwet’en, Gitksan, Nisga’a and Tsimshian.

Soaring Spirits’ facilities are as inspired as the location. Large canvas wall tents with beautiful Northwest Coast house frontal designs, serve as camp accommodation. A beautiful post-and-beam dining hall, overlooking Frog Mountain, will be the warm and cozy site for wonderful meals featuring wild salmon, berries, mushrooms and endless bounty from the camp’s large organic garden. A Council Fire site will become the gathering place for wonderful evenings around the ceremonial fire where native Elders and Chiefs will share legends and time-honored teachings from the land.

This 11-day training program is perfect for community leaders wanting to start-up a camp, and Rediscovery camp staff looking to expand their horizons and hone their skills. But it is open to everyone – teachers, students, youth workers, scout leaders ... anyone with a love of the outdoors, an interest in human and natural history and need to rediscover that place that says you’re truly alive!

ITINERARY

SAT/AUG. 21

- Our adventure begins in Smithers, B.C. which is easily accessible by car, bus, train or flights from Vancouver (or points East). Our 10:30 am pick up locations will be Smithers Airport and the lobby of Hudson Bay Lodge in downtown Smithers.
- Participants will be immersed in adventure learning right from the start. Within minutes of arriving we will drive up Hudson Bay Mountain to enjoy a picnic lunch and climb through gorgeous meadows of wildflowers while learning about alpine ecosystems. Marmots, ptarmigan and grey jays are easily spotted here, while wolves, mountain goats and grizzlies are resident but more elusive.



- We next study glacial melt where two beautiful waterfalls pour down from Hudson Bay Mountain. Both snowmelt and glacial melt are critical in maintaining water levels for salmon production in rivers and all the life that depends on that resource.

- Nearby at Moricetown, we will witness Wet'suwet'en fishing techniques that have been in practice since the retreat of the great Ice Age. We will also visit the community's informative cultural centre overlooking Morice Falls.



- An hour drive later, we arrive at the Soaring Spirits Camp on the banks of the Skeena River and get assigned to our beautifully designed canvas wall tents prior to group bonding activities, a delicious welcome feast and opening Council Fire session.



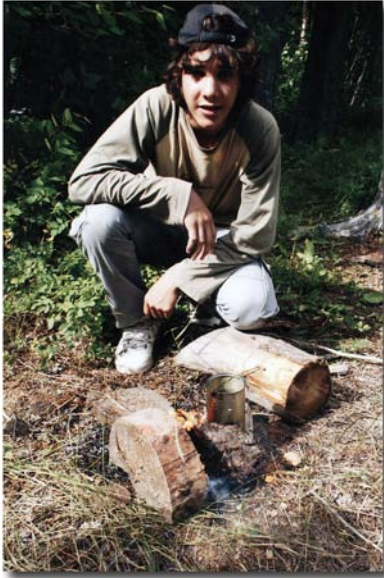


- Overnight: Soaring Spirits Camp



SUN/AUG. 22

- For early risers, sunrise over the Skeena River is a sight not to be missed when the hanging glaciers of the Seven Sisters Mountains turn red with the rising sun.
- A “Morning Circle Greeting” will be followed by a hearty breakfast and a few camp chores before formal sessions begin this day.



- Rediscovery Camp Health & Safety Standards will be the focus our morning session as we have a hands-on look at proper camp set up.



- After lunch we will hike to nearby Boulder Creek for bush skill lessons in fire building and emergency shelter construction. Here too we will discuss procedures and consider locations for conducting safe Rediscovery camp ‘Solos’.
- There will be time in the late afternoon to fish for salmon or take a dip in a quiet slough of the Skeena River before returning to camp for dinner.



- Following our evening clean up chores, we will enjoy Rediscovery games before gathering around the Council Fire for an evening of songs and local legends.
- Overnight: Soaring Spirits Camp



MON/AUG. 23

- Right after breakfast and camp chores we will have a session on preparation for day hikes and expeditions prior to setting off with a picnic lunch on a hike up the Coyote Creek Trail into the new Seven Sisters Provincial Park Reserve.



- This is a lovely hike through a towering cedar and hemlock forest carpeted with mossy forest floor. The trail follows a pristine mountain stream part of the way and passes a Shangri-La-like sub alpine lake that is perfect for swimming, before reaching a huge glacial moraine surrounded by granite summits.



- Direction finding using map and compass will be an important component of the hike as will plant identification as mushrooms and berries abound.
- Along the way we will stop to study wildlife signs and tracks - moose, deer, mountain goat, black and grizzly bear, mink, marten, wolverine, weasel, coyote, wolf, rabbit, grouse and other animals that claim this region as their territory.



- Back in camp we will have lessons in Thai therapeutic massage to relieve any sore shoulder, neck, back or leg discomfort from our hike.
- A great dinner will be followed by Rediscovery games and a night of “Feather Sharing” around the Council Fire.



- Overnight: Soaring Spirits Camp

TUE/AUG. 24



- This is another great day for adventure as we rise early and enjoy a big breakfast before setting off to paddle a traditional Northwest Coast canoe down the legendary Ksan (Skeena) – the “River of Mists”.

- We will travel by bus (30 min.) to Seeley Lake for a practice run on the calm waters of the lake before challenging the swift flow of the Skeena. This lovely little lake figures prominently in Gitksan legends and is the home of the mythical ‘Water Grizzly’ - a cherished crest of certain clans.
- Next we drive a short distance to Hagawilt Canyon and cross the Bulkley River on one of the world’s highest suspension bridges. We launch our canoe from Ksan, a re-created Gitksan village that offers a fascinating glimpse into life in days prior to European contact.



- After exploring the many longhouses and Ksan’s excellent museum, we will have a safety briefing at the riverbank before embarking on our canoe voyage.





- The canoe journey from Ksan to Kitwanga, along the ancestral highway of the Gitksan and Tsimshian, will offer vivid insights into a time when this was the principal mode of travel in these parts.
- A picnic lunch will be enjoyed on a gravel bar along the way, and there will be excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing along shore.
- Lessons in river hydrology and terminology - chutes, haystacks, back eddies, and sweepers – will become familiar terms to all by the end of the voyage.
- The canoe journey will end in Kitwanga where there will be an opportunity to learn the stories depicted on ancestral totem poles that line the river and visit village smokehouses filled with the summer's bounty of salmon, before returning a short distance to camp.
- Hereditary Gitksan chiefs will honor the group with their presence at a traditional Gitksan dinner feast this night, and share teachings around the Council Fire to close out an amazing day.
- Overnight: Soaring Spirits Camp

WED/AUG. 25

- Our last day in camp will be a relaxing one before we set off on our 4-day study safari. After breakfast and camp chores we will study edible, medicinal and poisonous plants of the interior forest, and learn acclimatization exercises that allow for a more intimate understanding of forest relationships.





- After lunch back at camp, we will spend the afternoon hours fishing for salmon and learning the time-honored native methods for smoking and jarring our catch. Hopefully, some of our bounty will find its way to the dinner table.



- There will be time for Rediscovery games in the evening and possibly a relaxing Thai massage before Council Fire.
- Overnight: Soaring Spirits Camp

THUR/AUG 26

- Today we begin our exciting 5-day study safari to explore the stunning landscape features and living ecosystems of the region, as well as to experience two more indigenous cultures – the Nisga’a and Tsimshian.
- Right after breakfast, we board a bus for the 2-hour drive north to Hyder Alaska to learn about grizzlies and glaciers at one of the best viewing locations in the world. Along the way, we’ll have a short stop in Kitwankool to view the world’s oldest and most intricately carved totems poles.



- The drive through the Coast Mountain Range from Meziadin Lake to Stewart, B.C. is one of the most scenic drives in the world. At one point Bear Glacier sweeps down from a huge ice field almost to the edge of the highway.



- Arriving in the small town of Stewart, B.C. at the head of Portland Canal – the international boundary separating Canada from Alaska - we will set up our camp for two nights in a beautiful forest beside a creek and just a short stroll from the estuary. A large covered dining-area, flush toilets and hot showers make this community campground more than ideal for our stay.

- After camp is set up and lunch is served, we will cross the US border to the virtual ghost town of Hyder, Alaska. Once a boomtown during the Gold Rush days, Hyder is now a sleepy, off-the beaten-path settlement that holds true to its pioneer spirit more than many other coastal Alaskan towns.
- Our destination is not the town itself, but rather Fish Creek where an elevated cedar boardwalk allows for safe and intimate viewing of grizzly bears, black bears, wolves and bald eagles preying on the world's largest chum salmon.



- There's no end to the excitement here with salmon jostling for spawning positions, bears plunging for their prey or scrapping one another for a fish hole. Beaver, mergansers, gulls and a host of songbirds add to the non-stop action.
- Returning to our camp by evening we will enjoy a hearty meal, hot showers and share tales of our day's adventures around a campfire.
- Overnight: Stewart Estuary Campground

FRI/AUG. 27

- Today we step back in time to see a remnant of the great ice sheet that covered B.C. and most of Canada in the Pleistocene Era.
- After grubbing up on a big breakfast, we will pack a picnic lunch and set off on the hour-long drive to Salmon Glacier. Along the way we will make our second stop at Fish Creek. Early morning is one of the best viewing times of the day here and it is not uncommon to see big bruins battling for feeding territory first thing in the morning.



- Salmon Glacier is part of the fifth largest ice field in all of Canada, and provides excellent opportunities for studying classic glacial features: crevasses, lateral and terminal moraines, nunataks, etc.



- Hiking to the very toe of the glacier for a picnic lunch we may encounter barren ground grizzlies grazing peacefully on the rich alpine vegetation. We will also have first hand lessons in glacial retreat resulting from global warming.



- Returning to camp in the late afternoon, we can stop one last time to watch for grizzlies, eagles, wolves, beaver, mergansers and gulls feeding at Fish Creek.
- Everyone helps prepare dinner this evening as we cook up a classic Alaskan stew with bannock, wild berry cobbler for dessert and Labrador tea.
- Overnight: Hyder, Alaska Estuary Camp

SAT/AUG. 28

- Today we grub up, break camp and travel to the beautiful Nass Valley, home of the Nisga'a Nation.
- Our route takes us back through Stewart, B.C. and past Meziadin Lake where we can stop for a swim if the water feels inviting.
- At Cranberry Junction we head west to the Pacific following the legendary "Grease Trail" used in ancient times by the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan peoples to transport the rich oil of the oolichan fish hundreds of kilometers inland from the coast.
- This 55km back road is also a good place to spot the rare 'Spirit Bear' – a genetic variation of the black bear that has a white or slightly reddish coat, but is not an albino as was first thought.



- Lunch will be served in Gitwansilk beside a suspension bridge over the Nass River. We will hike through the forest here to view a fish wheel that demonstrates one of the most ingenious native technologies for procuring salmon.

- Continuing on to the Pacific Coast, towering forests, steep mountains and the Nass River estuary dominate the landscape. As we approach the coast we should see bald eagles in abundance and possibly coastal brown bears feeding on tidal grasses.



- The isolated Nisga'a village of Gincolith is our destination for the day. We will set up camp near the ocean and have an opportunity to meet the warm and friendly residents in their traditional feast house by the sea.
- Overnight: Gincolith Village Camp

SUN/AUG. 29

- Gincolith is a lovely seaside hamlet for an ocean-side stroll before breakfast. Eagles and ravens are found in great abundance here and August is the best month to find molted feathers.



- After breakfast we will have time to explore the old growth temperate forest nearby our camp and learn about the nitrogen-15 transfer of nutrients from sea to forest through salmon spawning. We may also have an opportunity to visit the village fish hatchery and fish for salmon entering the Gincolith River.



- When the tides are favorable, we head out to sea today with local fishermen to harvest dungeness crab, halibut, ling cod, snapper and salmon from these bountiful northern waters. Eagles, orcas, humpback whales, seals, sea lions and coastal brown bears are frequently sighted here.

- Preparing our days catch for a seafood feast will offer many lessons in native food-cleaning techniques and cooking styles.

- Our final night on the Pacific Coast will be marked by a feast of foods we have gathered and prepared from the surrounding land and sea – a true testimony to the bounty and pristine nature of this great land.
- Overnight: Gincolith Village Camp

MON/AUG. 30



- We pack up camp after breakfast and return to our Soaring Spirits base camp on the Skeena River this day. As we drive back through the beautiful Nass Valley we will witness the massive lava flow that buried three Nisga'a villages here in the last century.

- Nisga'a Lava Beds Memorial Provincial Park is as much a monument to those that lost their lives in this disaster, as it is a testimony to Canada's most recent volcanic eruption. We will take time to visit the fascinating interpretive centre and hike trails through the lava beds that bring this cataclysmic event fully to life.
- It's a 2-hour drive from Gincolith to Terrace where we will stop for lunch before visiting Kitselas Canyon, a National Historic Site that tells the story of 5,000 years of continuous occupation by the Tsimshian peoples.
- There is a haunting presence of ancient ancestors in this canyon. Tsimshian history and culture is powerfully conveyed here through the ancient village sites, carvings on rocks in the river and the new longhouses that chronicle the old ways.



- A 45-minute drive puts us back at our original Soaring Spirits base camp for a closing feast and a wonderful closing ceremony that celebrates the passage of our remarkable journey together.

- Overnight: Soaring Spirits Camp

TUE/AUG. 31

- Breakfast and a closing "Medicine Wheel" ceremony will mark the close of camp this morning before we return to Smithers for the journey home.

COST/PERSON: (Smithers –Smithers, B.C.) \$1,700 Cad

WHAT TO BRING:

Clothing:

- 1 waterproof rain jacket (with hood) & pants
- 1 wool sweater or fleece
- 1 wool watch cap (toque)
- 1 pair of gloves
- 1 pair comfortable hiking boots
- 1 cotton sweatshirt
- 2 long-sleeve cotton shirts
- 3 cotton t-shirts
- 2 pair long trousers
- 2 pair shorts
- 4-5 pair of socks & underwear
- swim suit
- 1 pair of broken-in hiking boots
- 1 pair of runners
- 1 pair of sandals or water togs

Supplies:

- wash kit: (tooth brush & paste, soap, shampoo, comb, nail clippers, deodorant)
- 1 medium sized back pack
- 1 small day pack
- 1 sleeping bag & pad
- 1 pocket knife
- 1 water bottle
- personal medication & basic first aid kit
- sunglasses & prescription glasses (including extra pair)
- sun hat with visor
- camera with lots of film or high digital chip capacity
- binoculars (for better wildlife viewing)
- flash light (torch)

And a great spirit of fun and adventure!