



**Black Feather**  
*the wilderness adventure company*

## *Your First Step ...*

*Your First Step* should answer most of your questions about Black Feather, our policies and procedures ...

### *Skill Levels*

Skill development, physical condition, experience and attitude are the main components of your self-evaluation. We have had enthusiastic novices develop their skills throughout spring clinics and participate successfully in summer intermediate trips. Advanced (Skill Level 3) trips are appropriate for seasoned outdoors people who are at home in the wilderness environment. For canoeing and sea kayaking trips, you should be comfortable around the water and for all hiking trips you should be fit and capable of carrying a minimum of 20- 30 kg (45 - 60lb), 10 to 12 kilometers a day.

Please note that the pace of each trip is determined by the group and the rate of the slowest individual dictates this pace. Our trips are divided into three categories to assist you in identifying those trips suited to your ability:

**Level 1** Trips with this rating offer the beginner an opportunity to learn the foundation skills of canoeing, kayaking and wilderness living. The pace of each program is geared to make the experience enjoyable and safe for the novice. No experience is necessary.

**Level 2** These trips are designed to build on your foundation of skills and expand your experience level. Qualified guides offer coaching and assistance. You should have some previous outdoor experience and be prepared to increase your skill level, with help from the guides, as the trip goes on. Level 2 includes some very extensive trips.

**Level 3** These extended trips offer opportunities for you to gain valuable experience under guidance. The pace and environment can be very challenging and applicants should be fit and active. Some of these wilderness expeditions involve travel into areas of extreme isolation. Specific skills may be required. These would be inappropriate expeditions for the novice.

If you have any question as to your suitability to participate in a particular trip, please contact the Black Feather office.

## *Your First Step ...*

*Page 1 - Can I do this trip?*

*Page 2 - What do I need to know before signing up for a Black Feather trip?*

*Page 3 - How do I get to the start of a trip?*

*Page 4 - What's it like on a Black Feather trip?*

*Page 5 - Do I need a bunch of special stuff?*

# *Your First Step ...*

## *Payment*

Our prices are quoted in Canadian dollars. A deposit of 25% of the trip fees is required to hold any position. The balance of trip fees is due 60 days before departure. Cash, Visa, MC or cheques payable to Black Feather - The Wilderness Adventure Company should accompany your signed application form. Non-Canadian participants concerned about currency exchange rates will find credit card rates very fair and simple.

## *Goods & Service Tax*

Our trips and weekends (in Canada) are subject to the 7% GST. This is added to the cost of the trip - it is not included in the quoted prices. GST is due with each payment. Non-Canadian residents may apply for a partial (usually 50%) refund. A form is available from our office. Trips outside Canada are exempt from the GST.

## *Cancellation Policy*

Black Feather - The Wilderness Adventure Company has the following Cancellation Policy:

1. There is a \$100 administration charge applied to any cancellation.
2. The balance of your payment (to date) will be refunded for any cancellation up to 61 days prior to departure.
3. For notice given:
  - a) from 43 - 60 days we retain 25% of the fee
  - b) from 29 - 42 days we retain 50% of the fee
  - c) from 15 - 28 days we retain 75% of the fee
  - d) from 0 - 14 days we retain 100% of the fee.

We reserve the right to cancel any trip with 14 days notice, if registration is below 50% capacity (4 participants or less). In such cases, we will attempt to accommodate you on another trip with similar dates and demands. Should we have to cancel a your application, a full refund will be made.

## *Evacuation*

Should illness or safety necessitate the evacuation of one or more participants, or should a participant choose to leave a trip early for any reason, all evacuation expenses will be paid by the individual(s) involved. No refund will be paid to a participant who does not complete a trip for any reason.

## *Cancellation Insurance*

We strongly recommend that you consider purchasing Trip Package / Cancellation Insurance for longer trips. It must be purchased at the time of registration. Please call for a quote. Every year, one or two participants must cancel or leave their trip because they or their travel partner are ill, they suffer a loss

in the family, they are required for a sudden important business meeting or some other crisis occurs. Relatively inexpensive insurance may cover your financial loss.

## *Liability (Please read carefully)*

Black Feather/The Wilderness Adventure Company's trips are operated solely by Black Feather Wilderness Adventures, Ltd. Black Feather/The Wilderness Adventure Company has never had any sort of serious accident since its inception in 1971.

We carry liability insurance; however, we do NOT assume liability or any loss or damage to person or property in travelling to the location of the trip or during or after participation in it, for any reason whatsoever, including negligence on the part of Black Feather/The Wilderness Adventure Company, or any of its directors, officers, agents or employees. Black Feather / The Wilderness Adventure Company endeavours to use the best available equipment and follows standard safety procedures.

In view of the element of risk involved in any adventure activity, we recommend that you obtain whatever personal insurance you feel is appropriate for your circumstances. Prior to participation in any trip or program, you will be required to sign our standard liability release included as part of the application.

## *Charter Travel / Wilderness Travel*

Many trips involve contracting with small boat operators, transport companies and small airlines flying such planes as Beavers, Cessnas and Otters in and out of our chosen wilderness. We contract with the most reliable companies available, well in advance. However, it is the nature of the business that when variables such as weather, pilot judgement, medical or fire emergency, mechanical breakdown or a host of other conditions dictate that our chosen charter time is altered, we sit tight and wait. This is part of the trip experience and Black Feather takes no responsibility for this lost time.

All our trip itineraries allow a percentage of time to make up such delays at the cost of leisure time.

## *Changes to the Itinerary*

A trip information package including a planned itinerary is available for each trip. We reserve the right to change itineraries if forced to do so by circumstances beyond our control (water levels, forest fires, ice conditions, etc.), or in the interests of the group. You should expect some changes. Any additional expenses due to changed departures/itineraries /extra charters due to weather, medical or other items beyond our control shall be borne by the customer.

# *On Your Way ...*

## *Getting to the Meeting Point*

The rendezvous is named in your specific itinerary. You will want to arrange your transportation to this point as soon as possible, particularly if you are flying, to ensure that you can take advantage of the best rates. Please contact the Black Feather office to confirm your trip's departure prior to booking any non-refundable tickets. Following are some details to assist you.

### **Commercial Airlines**

Most participants purchase tickets on-line with one of the discount airlines or through their travel agent.

Please refer to your itinerary for the correct arrival and departure dates. If you have extra time you may wish to allow for a layover day either before or after your trip. Please send a copy of your completed travel itinerary to the Black Feather office so that we/your guide is aware of your travel plans.

### **Optional Air Packages**

For some northern trips we arrange a discount group rate for the flight to the trip rendezvous from the closest major airport with one of the airlines. Contact our office for the discount rate and instructions on how to purchase these tickets directly from the airline.



### **Aeroplan / Travelling on Points**

First Air & Canadian North serve many northern communities where our trips begin. They are Aeroplan Partners and many participants are able to fly on 'points' to the trip rendezvous.

### **Northern Travel**

Northern conditions pose huge challenges to the airlines and for this reason you may be required to exercise patience and humour during the northern leg of your journey. If you are delayed for any reason, don't worry. Contact our office at the

first opportunity and leave a message regarding the nature of your situation. We will make every attempt to help you remedy the situation to ensure that when you do arrive your adventure continues without a hitch. Many participants plan to arrive at the rendezvous a day early to avoid missing their trip.

### **Private vehicles**

Many of our destinations are accessible by car and most have locations where you can park for the duration of the trip. Any parking fees are your responsibility.

## *Rendezvous Time*

Your trip's specific itinerary will designate the arrival time. Your guides will be busy finalizing details until that time. If you arrive early, feel free to let the guides know, but please leave them free to complete their tasks. Most of their work is of a nature that is best handled by them alone and will ensure that you have a great trip.

## *Accommodation on Route*

Your itinerary may necessitate booking a hotel room either before or after the trip. You will be sent a 'hotel list' with a listing of local hotels and B & B's. The trip cost does not include any hotel accommodation unless specified in the itinerary and trip information package for your particular trip.

## *Northern Time*

Most of our participants have made their holiday plans well in advance and carefully scheduled other activities around them. We take the same care in making our logistical arrangements. However, your northern trip is to and beyond the fringes of civilization. Arrangements are much more fluid in the far north and rarely work out exactly as planned. This is part of the adventure.

Events that cause a deviation in our schedule are likely to arise. When this occurs, we will inform you as soon as we can and outline the options. We have to be aware that safe wilderness travel by plane, boat, vehicle, canoe or komatiq is very dependent on prevailing local conditions and local people.

If the conditions are such that we cannot proceed safely, we have to 'sit tight and wait' or determine an alternative. Fortunately major changes are rare, but if they do occur we would appreciate your patience and co-operation.

Black Feather has an excellent reputation and exemplary record for operating safe, enjoyable and successful wilderness adventures and we know that you will understand when circumstances cause a change in plans.

# *On Your Trip ...*

## *Expectations*

We would like to help make your Black Feather adventure a most rewarding and memorable experience. We endeavour to help each individual achieve some of their personal expectations along with contributing to the overall group goals. Each destination has unique beauty and challenges. It has been chosen carefully to represent a particular geographic location, natural features, activity or skill level. Of course, each trip places different demands on the participants. You can go over your specific information package to determine the experience and skill level required. If you have any questions or concerns about the suitability of the trip for you, please contact the Black Feather office and we would be happy to discuss it with you.

## *Daily Routine*

The trip pace is determined by the distance, goals for each day, weather and interesting 'sights' to be seen. Each morning we will review the anticipated route and upcoming highlights. Often the route is flexible so that we can take advantage of special, unanticipated happenings such as unique wildlife sightings.

We offer a 'co-operative' type of camping experience. We welcome you to participate in any in-camp chores and routines. Most people enjoy occasionally helping out with cooking or clean up ... that is often a time when events of the day are laughed about, stories told and exploits recounted! We do ask that you help out by setting up your tent and a few other small camp tasks. If at any time you are puzzled about the routine, please ask one of the guides - they are very approachable and would rather clarify your question than have you wondering. The morning starts out with early risers getting the coffee on, then when everyone is up breakfast is eaten, camp is struck and we get ready for departure. This process usually takes between 2 and 3 hours.

Each day's travel varies between 4 and 7 hours, depending on the location of the next camp and the energy of the group. We will always have 'breaks' with snacks as well as a lunch stop. Arriving at our campsite, we set up camp and then have time for some exploring, relaxing or photographing. We ask that any short hikes are done with the permission of the guides, and for safety sake are done with the company of at least one other person. Dinner is always a highlight - homemade pizza, pasta, fondue are all part of the menu. Evenings are usually unstructured ... campfires, hikes and local interpretation may take place.

Occasionally we will have a lay-over day. These days will allow us to spend more time in one location to go exploring. Usually the guides will arrange a day hike to a unique spot or great view. Of course, you can choose to just relax around camp and read a book, too!

## *Group Philosophy*

A Black Feather trip is a cooperative endeavour. Our philosophy is to enjoy exploring unique wilderness and in doing so, to learn outdoor skills, more about the environment, each other and ourselves. Your guides will provide instruction, coaching and leadership, and yet will allow opportunities for each person to pursue individual goals and interests. Your responsibilities to the group will include participating in a variety of aspects of camp life during the trip and contributing energy and enthusiasm to the group's common goals.

## *Tenting Arrangements*

Black Feather uses high quality expedition tents. We plan on two people per tent. If you wish to tent alone (or if you are a known snorer and feel that you should have a tent to yourself), please contact us prior to the trip. If it is possible on your trip, we will arrange to have a single tent available for a \$35.00/week charge. If you wish to bring your own tent, please indicate this. On any Northwest Territory, Nunavut, Yukon or Greenland trip, your tent must be an expedition quality dome tent, with adequate guy lines to secure it in high winds.

## *Mosquitos & other Bugs*

Insect populations vary according to location, weather and time of year. We make every attempt to camp in 'bug-free' locations, however, in many cases they are unavoidable. We recommend being prepared with bug repellent, a bug hat and your best protection - a bug jacket.

## *Your Guides*

Your Black Feather guide is an integral part of the trip. Each is highly qualified in all aspects of the wilderness ... they are expert whitewater canoeists, kayakers and hikers. They bring a wealth of information and knowledge to share. Conscientious and safe, they are also fun, friendly and approachable. They are patient instructors and great cooks!

As the trip's safety and success depends on their judgement, we ask that your respect and support their decisions.

## *Isolation and Other Groups*

Although many of our routes are seldom travelled, there are instances where we will encounter other travellers. We do our best to minimize conflicting schedules to maintain a wilderness experience for all.

## *Minimum Impact*

Black Feather endeavours to travel carefully in our fragile

## On Your Trip ...

wilderness. We will insist on strict environmental practices to ensure a continued quality of wilderness for future travellers and to protect our natural environment. Procedures for sanitation, garbage and clean up will all be explained by your guides on the first day of the trip. There will be 'Wilderness Guidelines' in your trip package which you should review.

### Menu

Black Feather's menu is quite famous ... it is innovative, nutritious and delicious. The nature of the trip will affect a menu - see the specific trip description for details.

Regular (lacto-ovo) vegetarians can be accommodated at no extra cost. Food allergies and dietary restrictions (peanuts, nuts, gluten and lactose intolerance) will require that the participant bring appropriate substitutions to the menu and will have an additional \$25.00 per person surcharge to cover the costs incurred for extra pots, fuel and materials to supplement the regular menu. If you have allergies, you must contact the Black Feather office when you register to discuss your needs and to receive a copy of the menu plan for your trip.

### Alcohol

Our menu does not include alcoholic beverages, with the exception of wine with the first night's meal (except backpacking - it's too heavy). You are welcome to bring some of your own and most participants do. Please transfer it into unbreakable containers prior to departure.



### Do I Tip My Guide?

There is no obligation to tip your guides but many participants do. We are often asked what is an appropriate amount. In the past, participants who provide a gratuity for their guides have each tipped in the range of \$5 - \$12 per day. The guides share the gratuity although some people prefer to offer a separate amount to each guide.

## Comments on Gear ...

You will receive a clothing and equipment list for your adventure. You will find that you already have much of what you need but here are a few thoughts that will make your trip more enjoyable.

### Waterproofing

All canoeing and sea kayaking trips demand extra attention to thorough waterproofing of your personal gear. It's great when you know your stuff is dry. You will need a tested 'system' for waterproofing. Some options are:

- waterproof 'dry bags' with sealable, roll-down tops
- watertight 'barrel-packs' - great for canoe trips only
- nylon stuff sacks lined with at least 2 plastic bags ( note: this is not the preferred arrangement as leakage is common but it may be an economical option for a short trip )

For backpacking trips, you should have waterproof sacks inside your backpack to hold your sleeping bag and extra clothing.

### Foul Weather Clothing

The importance of good rain jacket and pants cannot be over-emphasized. What you need is a hooded rainsuit made of either a quality laminate (Gore-Tex) or a coated nylon fabric. Bring warm, synthetic fleece (known as 'polar tech, capilene or fleece') to wear underneath. Fleece comes in different thicknesses: lightweight, midweight and expedition weight. Depending on the 'nordicity' of your trip, you can judge which you need.

Quick dry fabrics are what you want. Cotton and demin are **inappropriate and uncomfortable** in wet, cold environments, and can be dangerous. Please leave your jeans at home! Check your detailed equipment list for further details!

### Travel Clothing

City clothes and extra 'stuff' can be left at our rendezvous location on most trips. Please keep this at a minimum, and leave valuables at home.

## Got more questions?

Contact the Black Feather Office:

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