



**NATURE TOURS**  
OF YUKON 

## CHILKOOT TRAIL

### Hiker's Preparation Guide

#### 1 | PRIOR TO PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Please assess your skills and physical fitness level. Do not over estimate your abilities on this challenging hike.

#### 2 | WHAT TO EXPECT

The Chilkoot Trail is isolated, strenuous, physically challenging and potentially hazardous. The trail is also extremely rewarding, providing hikers with spectacular scenery within a unique historical setting.

The Chilkoot Trail traverses rocky, very steep and sometimes snow covered terrain. The trail can be rough with deep mud, standing water, unstable boulders, slick rocks and roots making footing difficult.

The portion of the hike from the Scales over Chilkoot Pass is a route not a trail. While the route is marked, extreme weather conditions can complicate route finding. "Crossing the Pass" is the most demanding day. It often takes 12 hours to travel from Sheep Camp to Happy Camp, a distance of only 12.7 km (7.9 miles). Some hikers are challenged by vertigo or by balancing on unstable slippery snow and rocks, as they carry a heavy pack and body weight up to and down from the Pass.

Snowfields between the Scales and Happy Camp persist throughout the summer months. Be prepared to camp on snow at Happy Camp until late June/early July.

Mountain weather is highly unpredictable and can change quickly. Regardless of season, hikers can expect wet, cold, windy and/or white-out conditions; severe rain or snow storms are possible even in the middle of summer.

#### 3 | WHO SHOULD HIKE THE TRAIL?

The Chilkoot should only be attempted by persons who are physically fit and experienced in hiking and backpacking. It should not be attempted by novice hikers.

Individuals who have previously injured their ankles, knees or back, or who have chronic pain frequently experience flare-ups while hiking the Chilkoot. To avoid unnecessary problems test your strength and endurance on shorter, less demanding overnight trips prior to hiking the Chilkoot. Hiking with a guide in a small group is preferable.

#### 4 | HIKING SEASON

Early June: Winter like conditions persist.

Travel may be very difficult. Avalanche hazard exists. During this time you will want to cross Chilkoot Pass early in the day to reduce your exposure in avalanche terrain. There will be few other hikers on the trail. Check with the Trail Center for seasonal conditions.

Mid-June - early July: Early season backpacking:

Significant amounts of snow, variable travel conditions. Avalanche hazard persists until mid-July. During this time you will want to cross Chilkoot Pass early in the day to reduce your exposure in avalanche terrain.

Mid-July - mid-August: Peak Season:

Trail is generally snow free though some snow patches persist. Travel conditions are highly variable and dependant on weather. Peak visitor use occurs during this period.

Mid-August - late September: Fall Backpacking:

Trail is generally snow free though some snow patches still persist. Weather is wetter; daylight hours are shorter, nights are colder (often below freezing). The route over Chilkoot Pass is not marked after patrol staff leaves the trail in early September.

## 5 | EQUIPMENT

Your main goal on the Chilkoot will be to stay warm and dry. Use equipment and clothing designed for cold, wet conditions; aim for quality, lightweight equipment. Synthetic or wool clothing is best.

Have the capability to quickly prepare hot meals and drinks. Pack everything in plastic bags to keep it dry.

Think of your Feet - Do not break in new boots on this hike. Be able to treat blisters adequately; apply moleskin to blister prone areas before starting to hike.

Walking Poles - The increased use of walking sticks and ski poles has added to the erosion problems on the trail. Use your walking aids only on snowfields or where you need them to ensure safety; avoid using walking sticks on the exposed trail.

Water Purify - all drinking water by boiling, filtering, using iodine or bleach, and/or other appropriate methods. Water is available all along the trail.

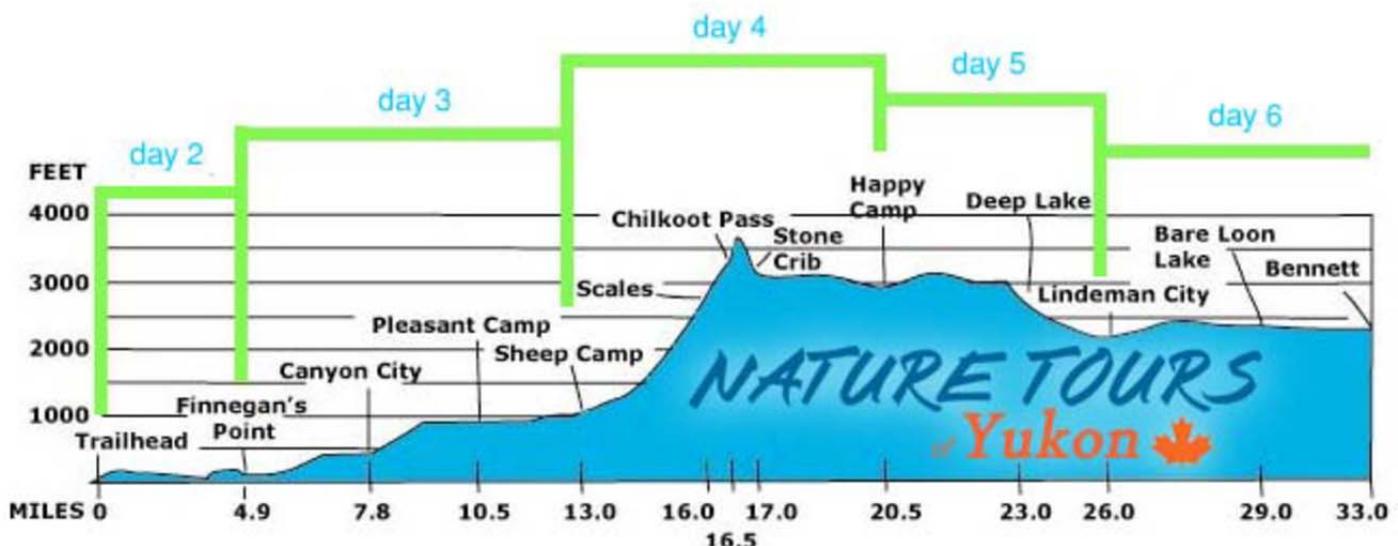
Your pack should fit well and weigh no more than 30% of your body weight. Reassess your pack contents if your pack is too heavy. Be realistic.

## 6 | ON THE TRAIL

Take your time...enjoy your experience.

Problems often occur when hikers are ill prepared, rushing, not paying attention to terrain or conditions. Ensure that you are properly equipped, take adequate rest breaks and watch for signs of exhaustion and hypothermia amongst your party members. Be prepared to wait if you encounter extreme weather or members of your group have problems.

## 7 | TRAIL MAP



## 8 | EVACUATIONS

Between one and five helicopter- assisted evacuations occur each year. If you have an accident while hiking on the Chilkoot Trail, you may be expected to pay for search and rescue and /or medical services, which can run in excess of \$2,000.00.

Make sure you have adequate insurance coverage. Slips, trips and falls occur due to a variety of reasons. If you are not seriously injured and are near the Trailhead, then attempt to get off the trail with the assistance of your party or other hikers. Do not continue on in the hopes that your condition will improve.

If you have knee or ankle injuries at Sheep Camp, you are encouraged to turn back, as the climb to the Pass is extremely challenging and will aggravate your injury.

## 9 | HIKING & CAMPING IN BEAR COUNTRY

The Chilkoot Trail is located in an area home to both black and grizzly bears. Bears have an acute sense of smell and are attracted to human food, garbage, and other items with strong odours.

Bears who obtain human food/garbage quickly develop a taste for it, and can become bothersome as they become increasingly persistent in their attempts to obtain more.

You can help promote the harmonious coexistence of bears and hikers on the Chilkoot by ensuring that you are not presenting bears with opportunities to get a hold of food and garbage. During the day when on the trail, always keep your backpacks within arm's reach. Immediately upon arrival in camp, securely stow all food and other attractants. Bear poles or food-storage caches are provided at each campground.

Prepare food and eat only at shelters or near food storage areas; not at tent sites.

Familiarize yourself with the principles and practices of safe travel in bear country.

## 10 | BORDER CROSSINGS

Due to the fact that the Chilkoot Trail spans two countries and your tours start and end in Whitehorse, Yukon, you will cross the border twice; once by road or by train (from Canada into the USA), and once when hiking the Chilkoot Trail (back into Canada). Since there is no custom station on the trail specific procedures apply, and we strongly recommend you to familiarize yourself with these procedures in order to avoid any issues with custom and border services in either country.

### A - Guideline for entry into the USA

Except for Canadian Citizens, all holders of a non-US passport are required to have a visa or apply for a visa waiver upon entry to the USA by road. For countries participating in the US Visa Waiver Program, please refer to the website of US Customs and Border Protection; <https://www.cbp.gov/>.

While an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) approval is only required for entering USA by air or water, having ESTA approval may expedite the Visa Waiver application at the border. Please note: passport should be at least valid for 6 months from the date of entry. E-Passports are required to be eligible for the Visa Waiver Program. Failure to follow procedure may result in delays or refusal to enter.

### B – Guideline for entry into CANADA

As there are no customs on the trail, passports will be checked by the NPS Rangers before a permit will be issued. Upon return to Whitehorse, every participant is personally responsible to report back to Canadian Customs in Whitehorse (Elias Smith building at 110-300 Main Street), either in person, or when that is logistically not possible, contact Fraser border station as soon as possible upon return in Canada (usually open from 8 am until midnight). Depending on future travel plans, it is recommended to have the Visa Waiver card removed by Canadian Customs at the earliest opportunity. Failing to follow this procedure may result in difficulties with or refusal to enter Canada and/or USA in the future.