

HOTEL INTEL

GUIDED ADVENTURES BY WOMEN, FOR WOMEN

Expeditions company offers challenging experiences in dozens of countries



ROCHELLE LASH

Strong women wanted.

Wild Women Expeditions will take you where you have never gone, or even imagined going. The travel company organizes 200 complex, challenging excursions — guided by women, for women — in nearly 30 countries, from Canada to Chile and Iceland to Indonesia.

“Empowering women doesn’t only refer to the #MeToo movement,” said Jennifer Haddow, Wild Women Expeditions’ owner and director.

“Conquering the wilderness helps women connect with elements of their psyche that might be lost in daily life,” said Haddow, who hails from Newfoundland and lives in B.C.

As a sampling, Wild Women offers jungle safaris, trekking and cultural experiences in Thailand, Bhutan and India; hiking, cycling and kayaking in Italy; horseback riding in Argentina; and around 20 backcountry expeditions in the pristine outdoors of Canada and the U.S., on water and in the mountains.

Group sizes vary, and often there are two guides for a group of up to 10 or 12 travellers.

Wondering where you’ll sleep? That also varies.

During a horseback riding adventure in Ireland, Wild Women stay both in a farmhouse and at a four-star resort.

While discovering the Galapagos, home is a yacht. And in Mongolia, travellers bed down in yurts. And yes, there might be an outhouse in your future.

Who can go?: If your cardio max amounts to a stroll in the park, or if you are a traveller who needs air conditioning and bellhops, Wild Women Expeditions might not be for you. On some excursions, women haul their tents, food and clothes in their kayaks, and it can be rough and strenuous.

IF YOU GO

Wild Women Expeditions:

888-993-1222, wildwomenexpeditions.com

Great Bear Rainforest Kayak Adventure, British Columbia:

July 8-15, July 15-22; approximately \$2,995 p.p. for eight days, including tents, guides, meals, kayaks, camping/cooking gear and some transportation. Travellers meet in Vancouver.

Pura Vida Adventure Retreat, Costa Rica:

March 1-8; approximately \$3,645 p.p. for eight days, including lodging, meals, guides, equipment and transportation from San José.

Other warm-weather trips include: Vietnam (April 22-May 5 and Sept. 23-Oct. 6), Tanzania (June 2-11 and June 11-19) and India (February, March and October).

“You have to be physically fit, ready to face difficult weather and carry your gear,” said Haddow. “And you will likely be far out of your comfort zones.”

How far out? The company’s website eliminates some of the guesswork by asking: “Is this trip right for you?” Here you can decide if you’re suited to hours of paddling, hiking up a mountain or bouncing along in a safari vehicle.

Haddow would be a good inspiration. As an adult, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis; determined to fight the worst-case scenario, she studied nature and alternative healing.

She hiked to the base camp of Mount Everest, became a yoga instructor and bought Wild Women Expeditions.

She still joins some of the excursions, and travels the world to research new destinations.

Here are some Wild Women trips that will take place in 2019.



Wild Women Expeditions’ journey to Costa Rica features morning yoga in a rustic lodge, but it’s not all laid-back. PHOTOS: WILD WOMEN EXPEDITIONS

B.C. kayaking: The Great Bear Rainforest Kayak Adventure is a Pacific Coast expedition in a remote rainforest of Vancouver Island. It’s both strenuous and spiritual. This spectacular land is the traditional territory of the Heiltsuk First Nations.

Virtually the only sounds you’ll hear are birdsong and the splash of your paddle as you thread through a maze of islands.

You’ll tell time by the sun and make camp on beaches surrounded by towering stands of 1,000-year-old western red cedars and Sitka spruce.

There is no guarantee of seeing wildlife, but the forest is alive with bears, cougars and wolves, and the waters dance with dolphins and humpback whales.

Accommodations are in tents, usually for two, and after a rugged day you’ll feast on fresh-caught salmon and steelhead trout, soups and venison stew, cooked camp-style.

Among Wild Women’s other Canadian trips:

■ In B.C., a West Kootenays retreat, the Chilcotin Cowgirl Riding Adventure and Desolation Sound sailing.

■ Alberta offers Atayokan: Traditional Living Skills Retreat, a First Nations experience.

■ In Ontario, Wild Women go canoeing and kayaking and practise yoga.

■ A Newfoundland trip explores fjords and icebergs, focusing on marine life and geology.

■ There are challenging 10- and 15-day canoe trips in the Northwest Territories, for experienced paddlers.

Costa Rica: The Pura Vida



A rugged B.C. rainforest expedition is built around camping and kayaking.

Adventure Retreat unfolds in the tropical climate of Central America.

It incorporates tame events such as a coffee tour, yoga, swimming, nature walks and snorkelling in the conservationist Ballena Marine National Park.

It sounds relaxing, but this Central American adventure is not all laid-back. Travellers are

physically tested on challenging hikes, kayaking, horseback riding and even rappelling over waterfalls.

Accommodations are in simple lodges, for two or more; singles are available for an extra fee.

Breakfast is a full buffet, and dinner might be fresh seafood, barbecue chicken or traditional rice with beans and salsa.

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