

# Birchwood Tours

Watson Lake

Started: 1997

Contact: Lael Lund

Birchwood Tours has worked with “in-bound” agents in Vancouver to customize a winter “Northern Lights” tour package that focuses on meeting the interests and level of comfort its primary target market, Taiwanese tour groups. The company also packages tours for independent travelers.



**Getting started:** A Vancouver “inbound” tour agent, who deals extensively with Taiwanese travelers, came to the Yukon to discuss options for promoting northern lights oriented tours. Birchwood Tours evolved out of this effort and began to design a package drawing on the Vancouver agent’s substantial knowledge of Taiwanese likes and dislikes.

**Key to success:** Last fall a Taiwanese media group was brought to Watson Lake to go on the tour and most of the subsequent clientele had seen some of the coverage that arose out of the media’s tour. Lael also traveled to trade shows in Taiwan and she found a feature on Birchwood in a Canadian Airlines Taiwanese publication provided a very helpful introduction to Taiwanese agents when she was overseas. Most important to Birchwood’s success has been tailoring every aspect of the Northern Lights tour package to the typical interests of a Taiwanese traveler. Though viewing of northern lights is never guaranteed, Watson Lake’s location in the “aurora oval” gives it an advantage over most of the Yukon.

**Lessons learned:** Many Vancouver based tour operators are attempting to underprice the package offered by Birchwood by getting pricing information on all aspects of the Northern Lights. Lael is very cautious about sharing details on her prices and itinerary with other agents and has tried to ensure her arrangements with local suppliers are kept confidential.

**Future of business:** Birchwood Tours is currently marketing a new summer tour package for the Taiwan market. The company also plans to eventually expand into the Asian and the European markets and is considering doing more adventure oriented tours for the latter. A website will be developed to broaden their outreach efforts.