

SOAR

Inflight
Magazine for
Pacific Coastal
Airlines

Playtime on the Powder Highway

Snow time is go time
in the Kootenays

Down Under

Exploring the world-famous
Horne Lake Caves

In top flight

Looking back on 35 years
of Pacific Coastal Airlines

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Port Alice Development Lot: 1.25 acre oceanfront lot offered by the Village of Port Alice for tourism/travel accommodation development. Mostly cleared lot with development-friendly topography, 140ft walk-on beachfront, south-west exposure. The Village is willing to work with purchasers to adapt zoning to suit, so bring your ideas!
\$480,000



Nootka Sound Shellfish Tenure: Intertidal beachfront tenure actively farmed for over 20 years, in the protected waters of Plummer Harbour in Nootka Sound, off the west coast of Vancouver Island. The farm grows both oysters and clams. This a productive, straight-forward shellfish farm site, with current stock and limited equipment (predation nets) required.
\$90,000



Kendrick Inlet Clam Tenure: Productive clam tenure in Nootka Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. This 13.5 acre shellfish farm is on an undeveloped beach. The ground is excellent for clam growing, mainly small pebbles, mud and sand mixed. The lease is current to 2029, and is in close proximity to another offering which is approximately 2 nautical miles to the south.
\$160,000



Lake Cowichan Riverfront Home: Beautiful, level property on the Cowichan River, with a 1748sqft 3 bed, 2 bath home. Lots of bright living space including living room overlooking the river. Sunroom, fenced backyard, mature rhododendrons and fruit trees, detached double garage. Amazing location with access to fly fishing, river recreation, walking trails and the town of Lake Cowichan.
\$999,988



Sonora Island Property: Appealing 1.26 acre property in Owen Bay. Beautifully forested, diverse and user-friendly topography. 12 x 16ft cabin with sleeping loft, extensive deck, outhouse and outhouse shower. Shallow dug well on property. Water access recreational development in the Discovery Islands, with Government Dock moorage. Zoning permits residence and a cabin.
\$129,000



Pearse Island Oceanfront: Two individual titles on Pearse Island, totaling 3.6 acres. Lot 12 has 315ft of shoreline on Pearse Bay with moorage potential, while Lot 14 has 442ft of south-facing frontage on Johnstone Strait. Stunning marine views and beautifully forested. Water access properties in the popular Broughton Archipelago region. Offering includes both properties.
\$600,000



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WHEN YOU'VE REACHED
THE EDGE OF YOUR WORLD,
OURS BEGINS



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HAIDA GWAI

"Southwest Wind" appears with permission of the artist, Guud San Glans Robert Davidson

NEW INTERLINE PROGRAM & MORE FLIGHTS!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Thank you for considering Pacific Coastal as part of your travel plans!

I'm thrilled to announce our first interline program in partnership with WestJet. Customers can now purchase a single ticket for travel involving connecting flights between Pacific Coastal and WestJet networks. Interline reservations can now be booked through travel agents or online travel agencies. This new interline expands the existing relationship between the airlines: Pacific Coastal operates all WestJet Link flights on behalf of WestJet under a capacity purchase agreement, serving 11 communities in Alberta and British Columbia.

At Pacific Coastal Airlines, we honour our motto of People Friendly, People First. We encourage a positive, caring workplace and put a high value on collaboration, accountability and loyalty. We are inclusive and respectful, and we have a friendly corporate culture. As our business continues to grow, we are on the outlook for like-minded, hard-working employees to join the PCA family. If you know someone who

is interested in the aviation industry, please encourage them to view the current job listings on our website at pacificcoastal.com/careers.

As the aviation industry continues to recover from the impact of the pandemic, we are happy to be able to respond to this demand for our passengers, as they prepare for the holiday season. Understanding the busy nature of the upcoming holiday season, we have expanded our flight schedule, offering more flight options and flexibility. This expansion means additional daily and weekend flights across our network. Flights are available to purchase at pacificcoastal.com, through our call centre at 1-800-663-2872 or with your travel agent.

On behalf of Pacific Coastal Airlines, we wish you a season of joy and look forward to continued success into the new year. Whether you are a returning passenger or a new passenger, thank you for choosing to fly with us! 


Quentin Smith



UN-ORDINARY YOUR DAY

CAMPBELL
RIVER

łəmatax^w, Campbell River, is nestled within the territory of the Liǵ^wil̥daǵ^w peoples; the WeWaiKai, WeiWaiKum, and Kwikiah Nations; here there are no borders between city and nature. łəmatax^w, Campbell River is located in the heart of the Discovery Passage, a small city nestled in nature, surrounded by the wild, with all the comforts of home. Explore your perfect itinerary and get inspired to plan your stay, from where to grab your morning coffee to the best places to explore the great outdoors and discover our community culture.

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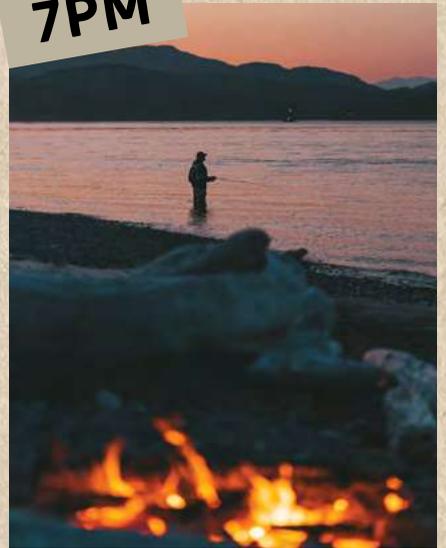
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“A game-changer” with free beach wheelchairs

By Nora O'Malley, westcoasttraveller.com

TOFINO: The last time Donna Seedorf-Harmuth strolled a beach with her husband Phil was seven years ago in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

On November 19, 2019, the retired speech language pathologist was diagnosed with multiple system atrophy (MSA), a rare condition that causes symptoms similar to Parkinson's disease.

“I thought my days of walking on the beach were done,” Donna said.

But this past August, during a Tofino getaway to celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary and Phil's 70th birthday, she was surprised with a beach wheelchair on lend for free from Tourism Tofino. Her husband took her along the water's edge of Cox Bay, Long Beach and MacKenzie Beach.

“To be able to walk not only with me, but with friends along the beach, was an amazing experience for her and really very uplifting,” Phil said.

“When you think that something is done and it's the last time that you are ever going to do that, and then to be able to do it again... It's a very powerful experience. It was a game-changer.”

Donna was one of the first to test-ride Tourism Tofino's two new beach wheelchairs, available for guests and residents to rent out. Visitor and member services manager Jody Kirk says the chairs are loaned out for free with a \$250 deposit, which can be waived if that's a barrier.

“Now families can spend more time together on the beach. Ideally, folks would take it out for three days at a time, based on availability, but we're happy to be flexible with that,” said Jody.

Costing about \$5,000 a piece and acquired through the federal Enabling Accessibility Fund, the two beach wheelchairs are easy to put together, waterproof, and feature big, fat tires that don't sink into the sand.



Donna Seedorf-Harmuth and Phil Harmuth spend quality time together on Cox Bay.
Photo by Cathy Thicke

Anyone interested in borrowing Tourism Tofino's beach wheelchairs can contact info@tourismtofino.com or call 1-888-720-3414.

2022 season sets BC Parks reservation record

A record number of people made reservations for campsites, day-use passes, backcountry permits, cabins and picnic shelters in provincial parks this season.

More than 317,000 reservations were made on the new BC Parks reservation service for the 2022 season, for an increase of 26.5 per cent since 2019.

“The new and improved reservation service is more reliable and easier to use, which is reflected in the record number of reservations,” said George Heyman, BC Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

The new reservation service, launched in March 2022, is part of a broader, ongoing redesign of BC Parks' digital services to improve visitors' experiences from computer to campground. Designed with input from

campers, park operators and other service organizations, the new reservation service includes more flexible search options, such as a map to find campgrounds by region, an interactive calendar that shows when booked sites will become available, saved booking preferences within customer accounts, information on nearby facilities, and large photos of campsites.

The website provides descriptions and photos about accessible facilities and infrastructure, such as parking, pathways and campsites, to help people choose the park that best meets their needs.

“It has been another exceptionally busy season for BC Parks as more people discover and enjoy the health benefits of being in nature,” said Kelly Greene, Parliamentary Secretary for Environment. “We are working hard to create more camping opportunities in BC and improve accessibility so more people can experience the joy of exploring BC's parks.”

BC Parks is investing \$21.5 million to expand and enhance opportunities for outdoor recreation, including adding new campsites and trails, and upgrading facilities. Since 2017, more than 1,700 campsites have been added to provincial parks and

MEET A PACIFIC COASTAL EMPLOYEE: BRITTNEY



Position: Flight Attendant

Location: YVR

Time with PASCO: I just had my nine-year anniversary October 1

Job description: As a flight attendant, I am in charge of the comfort and—most importantly—the safety of our passengers.

What path did you take to get to this job?:

I moved up to the Kootenays in 2013 and found out that Pacific Coastal Airlines was hiring. I immediately applied for a customer service position at the Trail Regional Airport and was hired that day! I transferred to YVR in 2014 and became a flight attendant in 2017. In 2018, when we started up WestJet Link, I was one of the first flight attendants to be cross trained.

What do you like best about this job?:

Every day is different! I might be flying to the same places, but each day brings its own unique challenges and excitements.

Who is your family?: My boyfriend, who I met at work, and our two kitties Piper and Misty.

What are your hobbies outside of the job?:

We love anything outdoors like camping, hiking, fishing or just spending the day at a lake! British Columbia is such a beautiful province, and we do our best to explore that beauty.

AROUND BC

recreation sites in high-demand areas. Of those sites, 500 are in Lower Mainland parks, including Cultus Lake, Golden Ears,

Chilliwack Lake, Stawamus Chief and Garibaldi.



A rendering of the campground at Buddy Bay. Photo courtesy of ICET

New ecotourism campground: part of “Come Back Home” plan

The Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis First Nation government has initiated a “Come Back Home” plan that will provide necessary housing, education, health, transportation and other basic amenities, allowing for the return of their people to their homelands.

The cornerstone of this plan is the creation of a tourism economy that will replace the once vibrant forestry and fishery industries that employed many of their people.

The First Nation received \$50,000 in funding for the new camping facilities at Buddy Bay, near the Gilford Island village of Gwa’yas’dums, from the Island Coastal Economic Trust’s Capital and Innovation Program.

“Our Nation is one of the few First Nations who are still fortunate enough to live in their traditional village site, which we have occupied for thousands of years,” said Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis First Nation Chief Rick Johnson. “Gwa’yas’dums Village remains a strong draw for many of our members who live off reserve and who wish to return home.”

The Come Back Home plan has other initiatives that respond to public interest in Indigenous cultural and ecotourism experiences. These include the restoration of the Gwa’yas’dums Bighouse in

2014, the acquisition of the Echo Bay Marina and Lodge in 2020, and the completion of an interpretive ecotourism trail in Echo Bay in 2022. All of the initiatives were led by the Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis First Nation.

The Buddy Bay Campground will offer accommodation to visitors to the area arriving through group kayak tours, self-organized tours, and other marine excursions. Amenities will include tent pads and a covered meeting area, outdoor shower and outhouse, potable water, safety and cultural interpretive signage, and improvements to existing trails to facilitate easy access to the village.

Future offerings may include traditional experiences such as meals, marine tours and cultural excursions led by Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis First Nation community members.

“First Nations have stewarded and continue to steward these special places which visitors come to experience,” said Aaron Stone, Island Coastal Economic Trust chair. “By introducing a new tourism experience to the Broughtons, this project will attract visitors to beautiful Gwa’yas’dums where they can experience Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis culture and community in a respectful way.”

Four new trails added to BC Bird Trail

In partnership with Destination BC, The BC Bird Trail has kicked off the 2022-2023 birding season with the all-new Sea to Sky Bird Trail in both Whistler and Squamish, along with two new standalone Bird Trail Outposts in Langford and Osoyoos.

The expansion of The BC Bird Trail provides locals and travellers, as well as budding and seasoned birders, with a free, self-guided itinerary and resource to view and identify some spectacular birds and nature across five regions of BC. From western meadowlarks, bald eagles and the arrival of the snow geese in the fall and winter to countless songbirds, swallows and warbler species in the spring and summer, nature enthusiasts of all levels can utilize the newly expanded BC Bird Trail to easily explore birding, conservation and community across the province.

“As we begin our third year of The BC Bird Trail, our entire group of partner organizations are thrilled to be connecting even more nature lovers from BC—and beyond—with iconic opportunities to explore the world of birding in our province,” says Ceri Chong, director of destination and industry development at Tourism Richmond. “Birding truly is for everyone. With the addition of the Sea to Sky Bird Trail and the all-new BC Bird Trail Outposts in Langford and Osoyoos, there are even more opportunities for folks to get outside and discover all the spectacular birding opportunities our province has to offer.”

A sudden rise in birdwatching took the world by storm in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic as people sought safe, outdoor hobbies and activities to try out—and it hasn't stopped. Called the “big birding boom,” birding continues to attract more enthusiasts each year, along with a younger, more diverse



On the Sea to Sky Bird Trail in Squamish



Yellow-winged blackbird on the Osoyoos Oxbows Trail.

group of people than ever before.

With British Columbia's reputation for offering some of the best birdwatching in North America, The BC Bird Trail was developed as the leading source of information on attractions, activities, and accommodations related to birdwatching travel, while also promoting responsible visitation, sustainability and mindfulness in birdwatching communities across the province. Most importantly, while The BC Bird Trail is designed to support budding and seasoned birders alike, it is also designed to attract, inspire and encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to get outside and discover the accessibility, benefits and supernatural wonders of birding.

The BC Bird Trail is the result of a group of dedicated folks who love British Columbia's diverse communities, the natural landscapes that surround them, and the migratory birds that nest in our regions throughout the year. Funding for this program is provided by Destination BC, Birds Canada, Indigenous Tourism BC, Tourism Richmond, and more than a dozen additional tourism partners throughout the province.

To discover more regions and communities throughout the entire BC Bird Trail, and to plan your very own birding experience, visit BCBirdTrail.ca. 



Victoria's secret

Where a holiday or a staycation will have you seeing the city in a new festive light

By Toby Tannas

Photos by Don Denton and courtesy of the Fairmont Empress and Wind Cries Mary

While most of Canada hibernates beneath a blanket of white during the winter months, Victoria remains green. That, no doubt, spurns some regional envy, but it also makes BC's capital city a prime destination for those who want to escape winter's icy grasp. Or, if you're lucky enough to call Victoria home, a holiday-season staycation will have you seeing your city's most famous landmarks in a new festive light.

Holiday charm is on full display at the Inner Harbour, where lights of the Legislature building flank the crown jewel of Government Street: The Fairmont Empress. The majestic

hotel strikes me as the embodiment of Victoria itself. Old-world charm standing tall amid the modern world. I've been coming to Victoria for years (my husband spends half his time here with work and family commitments), but this is my first stay at the Fairmont Empress.

The Fairmont Empress takes you back in time. I imagine women in petticoats and parasols parading through the grand lobby when the doors first opened 110 years ago. People dress a little differently now but the building seems to inspire a level of sophistication in its guests. The tone is set the moment you step through the front doors. Let the stunning lobby chande-

lier draw your eyes up. The massive, multi-tiered installation is the proverbial cherry on top of a more-than-\$60-million restoration completed in 2017 that has brought a new level of modern luxury, all the while maintaining the hotel's proud history.

We are efficiently checked into our Fairmont Gold suite overlooking the harbour. I must mention something about the atmosphere here. It is not stuffy; it's relaxed but elevated. This is perhaps punctuated most by the number of dogs I see checking in with their owners. Where there are dogs there are smiles, I always say, and the Fairmont Empress has its own



Tea at the Fairmont Empress.

Gin, chocolate truffles and turn-down service.

We freshen up and then venture off into the night for a late dinner at local eatery Wind Cries Mary. Walking distance from the Fairmont Empress, it's a popular subterranean experience tucked into trendy Bastion Square. We splurge and go with the chef's menu and I highly recommend this: four courses selected by the chef and not necessarily all of them are on the regular menu. We *oohed* and *ahhed* over every bite.

The next day, we hit the Malahat early bound for a new must-see tourist attraction: the Malahat SkyWalk. We spend just over an hour walking among the tree tops and taking in the incredible views. Keep your eyes peeled for driftwood creations by local artist Tanya Bub hidden amid the landscape.

Re-charged by our immersion into nature, we head back to the Fairmont Empress to take part in a long-standing tradition: Tea at The Empress. Fresh in our velvets and silks, we are seated in wingback chairs in the bright Lobby Lounge. If you book during the holiday season tea takes on a festive air with holiday-inspired nibbles and Christmas carollers.

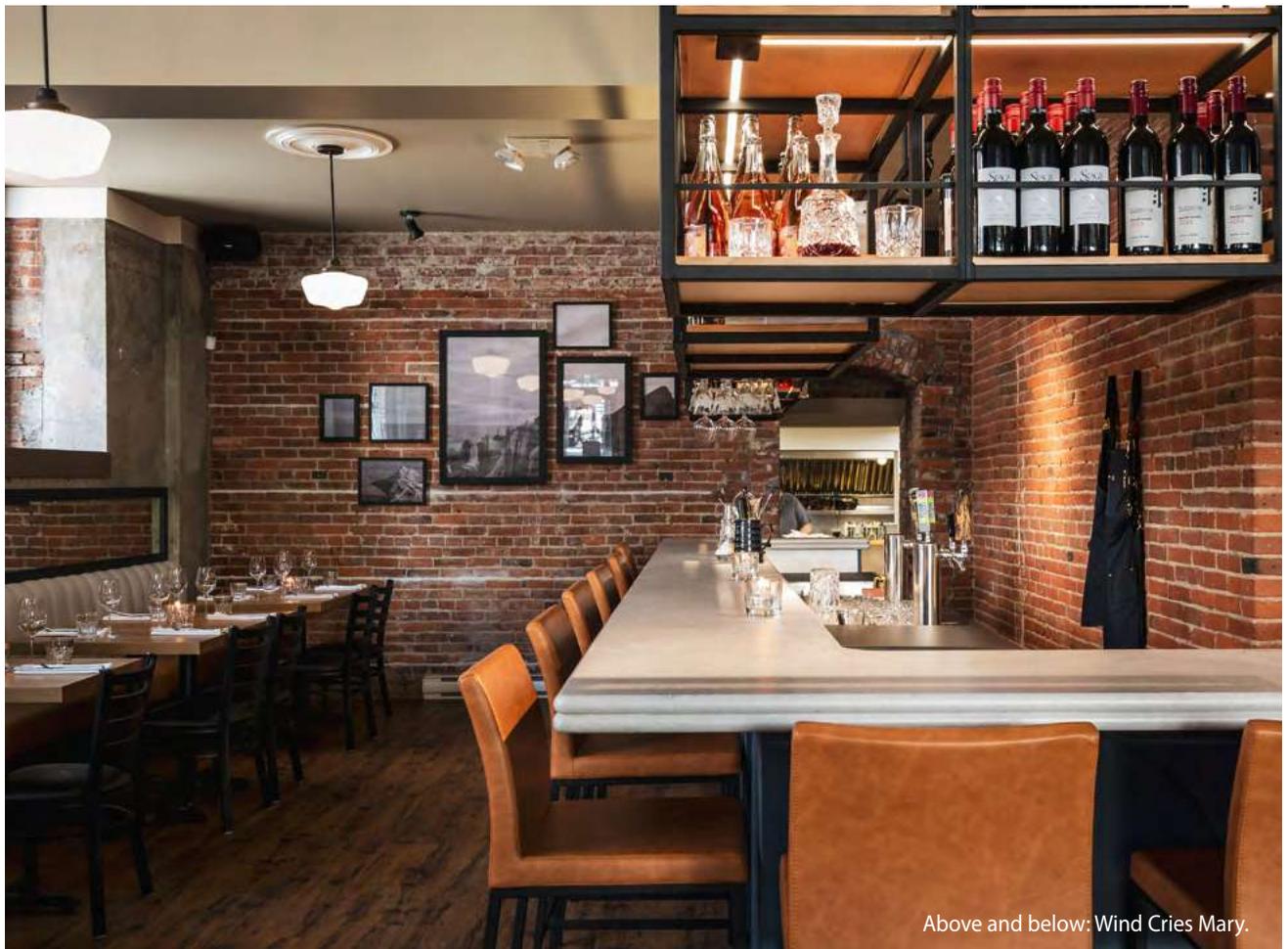
We decide a walk is in order to

four-legged ambassador, Winston. He's a Labrador Retriever X that failed guide dog school for being too friendly. . . need I say more?

Our suite is everything you would expect from Fairmont Gold: spacious with thoughtful touches like small bottles of the famous purple Empress



Q at the Empress.



Above and below: Wind Cries Mary.

work up our appetites for a late dinner. We head to Fisherman's Wharf. It's a delight for the eyes with its brightly coloured houseboats. We hop in the car and head for Dallas Road to take in the views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. We park and meander through the pathways of Beacon Hill Park and then walk the quaint streets of Oak Bay.

Sufficiently hungry once again we arrive for dinner at Q at the Empress. Located right next to the Lobby Lounge, this wood-panelled restaurant is modernly ornate and grand. On this night, lovely live music is playing at the adjoining Q Bar. Q's crafty mixologists have dreamed up some special cocktails for the festive season so you can sip your way into the holiday spirit.

Our final day is reserved for a visit to The Butchart Gardens. As someone who doesn't have a garden or a green thumb, I wasn't sure what to expect. If you live on Vancouver Island, you already know that the first glimpse of The Sunken Garden takes your breath away. If you've been once or even 20 times, the holiday season is a beautiful occasion to take the short drive to Brentwood Bay. You'll delight in the twinkling lights, ornaments and other holiday surprises.

Just like the island it calls home, The Butchart Gardens is a delight in all seasons.

In a time when many people are still choosing to stay close to home, Victorians can count themselves lucky to have so many treasures, both historic and modern, right in their island backyard. 🏡



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Playtime on the Powder Highway

Snow time is go time in the Kootenays

Story by *Lia Crowe* / Photos courtesy *The Josie Hotel*

In true romantic style, befitting the moment, Peter and I intertwine arms for the first sip of our sparkling wine, cold and crisp, as our deliciously exhausted, post-ski bodies cuddle in front of a glowing orange wood stove.

With the exception of Jack, our host at the Constella cabins, tucked high in the soaring hills of RED Mountain Resort, we feel like we might be the only people for miles. Outside there is nothing but acres and acres of snow-covered alpine forest. And as the flakes start falling silently from the sky and the day turns to the deep blue of dusk, the words “trip of a lifetime” come to mind.

Newbies to the Kootenay Rockies area—also known as the home of the Powder Highway due to its numerous adventure-packed ski resorts—we arrived a day earlier

with a smooth touchdown via Pacific Coastal Airlines at Trail airport, followed by a picturesque drive through the historical town of Rossland, as we made our way to RED Mountain Resort.

Expecting funky, down-home, Kootenay-vibe accommodations, we were thoroughly surprised as we pulled up to the grand entrance of The Josie Hotel with its chic decor and sophisticated atmosphere. Up in our room, a corner suite beautifully furnished and wrapped with mountain views, we settled in for an experience like no other. The Josie Hotel (Autograph Collection) merges high-end luxury with all the charm of a boutique hotel. It has true ski-in, ski-out access, cedar barrel saunas, a ski concierge who takes care of all your equipment, vibrant dining and a stylish apres-ski



lounge, where I had one of the best gin martinis of my life.

Soon seated in The Josie's buzzing Velvet Restaurant, we feasted on melt-in-your-mouth pork belly and truffle risotto, which we washed down with the dark, rustic, raspberry freshness of a Lambrusco—the pairing recommended by executive chef Derek Bendig. The Velvet's menu highlights local meats, including a to-die-for Kootenay Bison Tartare on roasted bone marrow with cured egg yolk and brioche.

We sampled buttery Steelhead Trout Rilletes, Squash and Burrata Salad, Crispy Spiced Potatoes and a delicious dessert of perfectly puffy madeleines, all offered with wine pairings that even impressed my food-and-wine-connoisseur partner, Peter.

The next day, suited up in ski gear expertly selected—based on our ability and preferences—by the friendly staff at the RED Mountain High-Performance Rental Centre, we were ready for first day

of skiing, and this is the moment Dieter came into our story.

A fit-looking, moustached man in his 70s, Dieter is a “snow-host” at RED Mountain, a volunteer who guides skiers

around the mountain and someone who will remain a highlight of our trip. With 3,850 acres of pristine skiing (placing the resort in the top 10 size-wise and number one for the



Skiing on RED Mountain. Photo by Lia Crowe

most acres per skier in North America) and 110 runs spread across three mountains, RED is all about its terrain, which is vast and varied—hence my appreciation for our guide.

Dieter glided and delicately carved down the slopes and after a couple tips like, “put your weight into your big toe on the downhill side,” Peter and I, intermediate skiers already, were gliding right along behind him as he showed us why after skiing at 100 different resorts RED is the mountain he’s chosen as his home.

RED, he said, has a culture of respectful, high-quality skiers and snowboarders, gorgeous groomed runs, loads of powder, long and winding traverses and magical, tree-skiing runs that are even suitable for intermediates like us.

At the end of the day, Dieter dropped us off at the Paradise Basin, high on Granite Mountain, to experience the Constella cabins and clubhouse for the night: RED’s newest bucket-list experience. Our time spent here, which included a fondue dinner prepared by our host, was truly memorable.

After a few days of skiing and working up an appetite, we ventured off RED Mountain into the nearby town of Rossland, where the main street is lined with historical build-



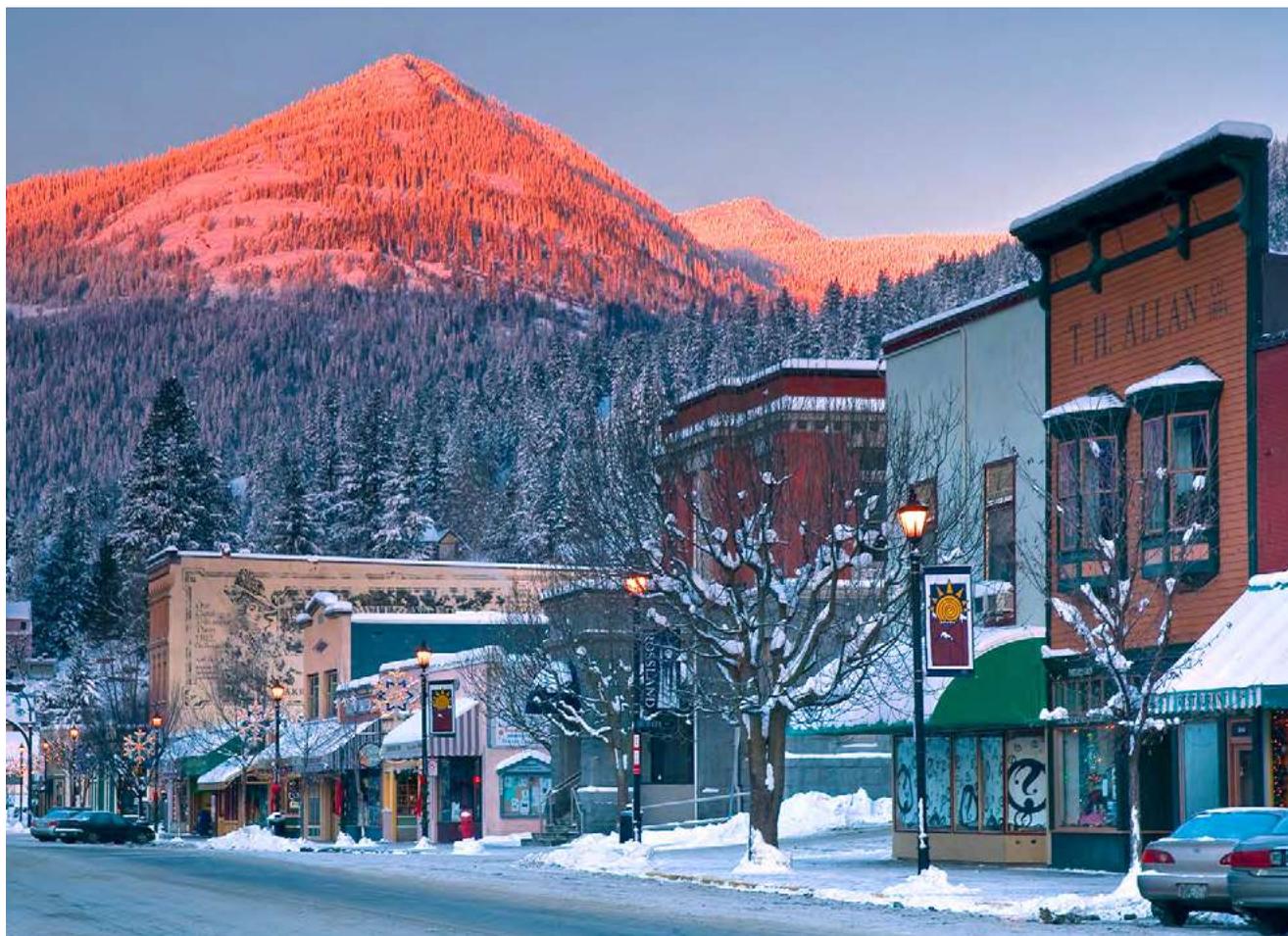
ings that house cute shops, cafes, bakeries and specialty food and wine shops. The Rossland Beer Company glowed and buzzed with warmth and activities as we wandered by en route to a local favourite, Gabriella’s Restaurant.

Here, we enjoyed a six-course “trip around Italy” dinner created by chef, owner and native of Italy, Gabriella Pelli-Lapointe. With each course, our server showed us on a map of Italy the place by which each course was inspired; she described the region, gave a little history and explained why Gabriella chose it.

Prosciutto-wrapped dates served over arancini (which are crispy fried risotto balls), inspired by the city of Bologna, and a creamy smoked salmon fettuccine, inspired by the island of Sardinia, were a few of the courses which were all perfectly paired with wines.

By now Peter and I, fully bitten by the ski bug, were ready to round out our Kootenay visit with a day at the next stop on the Powder Highway—Whitewater Ski Resort near Nelson—and we lucked out with a “bluebird day” of cloudless skies and jaw-dropping views.





Rosland. Photo by Iain Reid.

After a few days of skiing and working up an appetite, we ventured off RED Mountain into the nearby town of Rosland, where the main street is lined with historical buildings that house cute shops, cafes, bakeries and specialty food and wine shops.

Whitewater offers a welcoming, down-to-earth community vibe, uncrowded slopes and the day lodge's famous Fresh Tracks Café, which is consistently referred to as the best mountain food in North America. As we ravenously enjoyed the Glory Bowl and Thai Bowl, we began to see why.

As we fly back to Vancouver Island, feeling super-charged by the mountain air, Peter and I recap the high points of our trip. We concur that this includes experiencing the luxurious Josie, sleeping in a sexy little Constella

cabin, gliding at high speeds down perfect, uncrowded runs, enjoying so much good food, and snowshoeing at Strawberry Pass.

However, we agree that if we had to choose one highlight, it was most definitely the welcoming vibe and the friendly culture. We were treated so well by everyone we encountered, people who all share a deep love of where they live and work. And as the mountains drop away behind us and the ocean comes into view, our conversation turns to... when are we going back?! 🏔️



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Top of the list at the edge of the world

Ucluelet's Pluvio restaurant named Canada's best fine dining experience

By Andrew Bailey, westcoasttraveller.com

If it's fine dining you're after, it's a Ucluelet restaurant that TripAdvisor suggests.

TripAdvisor recently unveiled its Best of the Best Awards for 2022 and Pluvio Restaurant and Rooms tops the list of Best Fine Dining Restaurants in Canada.

Warren Barr and Lily Verney-Downey opened the intimate 24-seat culinary experience in 2019 and have been delighted to see their creation quickly become a TripAdvisor darling with a five-star rating based on 553 reviews.

The restaurant has also racked up a list of accolades that's as long as its reservation list, with the recent fine dining award joining an already crowded trophy cabinet that includes a spot on Air Canada's *enRoute* magazine's list of Canada's Top 10 Best New Restaurants, canadas100best.com's Best New Destination Restaurant list, and fourth place on TripAdvisor's Best Date Night Restaurant in the World.

"Between Canada's 100 Best and TripAdvisor, we feel like we've had a really spectacular year and we're just

really grateful for all the awesome guests who come through and are so supportive of us, whether they're visiting from afar or from the community that joins us so often," Barr said. "It's very rewarding. We get a lot of cards, letters and even presents from guests after they've left just thanking us for a wonderful evening. It's pretty amazing to be able to impact people that much through a restaurant. It's awesome."

Verney-Downey said they had not heard about the Best Fine Dining award from TripAdvisor before her



“We’re definitely trying to deliver a world-class experience to the best of our ability here, but we also want to make sure you know you’re in Ucluelet and on the west coast of Vancouver Island. So, we’re trying to marry those two things.”

phone started buzzing with congratulation messages from excited patrons and supporters.

“That really comes from our team making that connection with the guests . . . and to make a level of impact that people are choosing to go online and write reviews,” she said. “We don’t solicit reviews. We don’t do any rewards for reviews, so this really does come from people wanting to share their experience—and that comes down to the work that our team does here.”

She added one of the first people to congratulate them was Richard Norwood, who operated Ucluelet’s former Norwood’s Restaurant in the same spot Pluvio is now.

Barr noted Norwood’s had also cooked up a long list of awards in its day.

“Obviously there’s a horseshoe somewhere in this building,” he laughed.

He added he and Verney-Downey are “very hands-on” and work hard to ensure the restaurant’s staff is as happy as its guests.

“When we first conceived Pluvio, the focus was always going to be on the team. If the team’s happy then the guests are going to be happy as well. A miserable server is not going to deliver a really happy, positive experience. So, we wanted to focus on a positive team environment,” he said.

Verney-Downey explained the 17-member crew is vital to the restaurant’s success.

“Notoriously, hospitality has a really high turnover and ideally we would like to never have to hire again. We’d like every single member of our team to be here forever,” she said.

Barr added the community’s welcoming and rustic charm provided a hearty foundation to build the restaurant’s menu around.

“We’re definitely trying to deliver a world-class experience to the best of our ability here, but we also want to make sure you know you’re in Ucluelet and on the west coast of Vancouver Island. So, we’re trying to marry those two things,” he said.

“As thought out and meticulous as it is, we try to keep a bit of a rugged edge to it because that’s just what I think about the coastline here . . . There’s that feeling when you’re walking along the Wild Pacific Trail that everything is beautiful and magnificent, but it’s pretty raw still and untamed. So we try to carry that feeling through the food program as much as we can.”

Verney-Downey added the community’s support has been palpably robust since day one.

“There are a lot of guests who we see quite regularly and then there are guests that we see once or twice a year to celebrate those really big special occasions and that’s so wonderful to be able to have that here. We feel very supported.” 🏠

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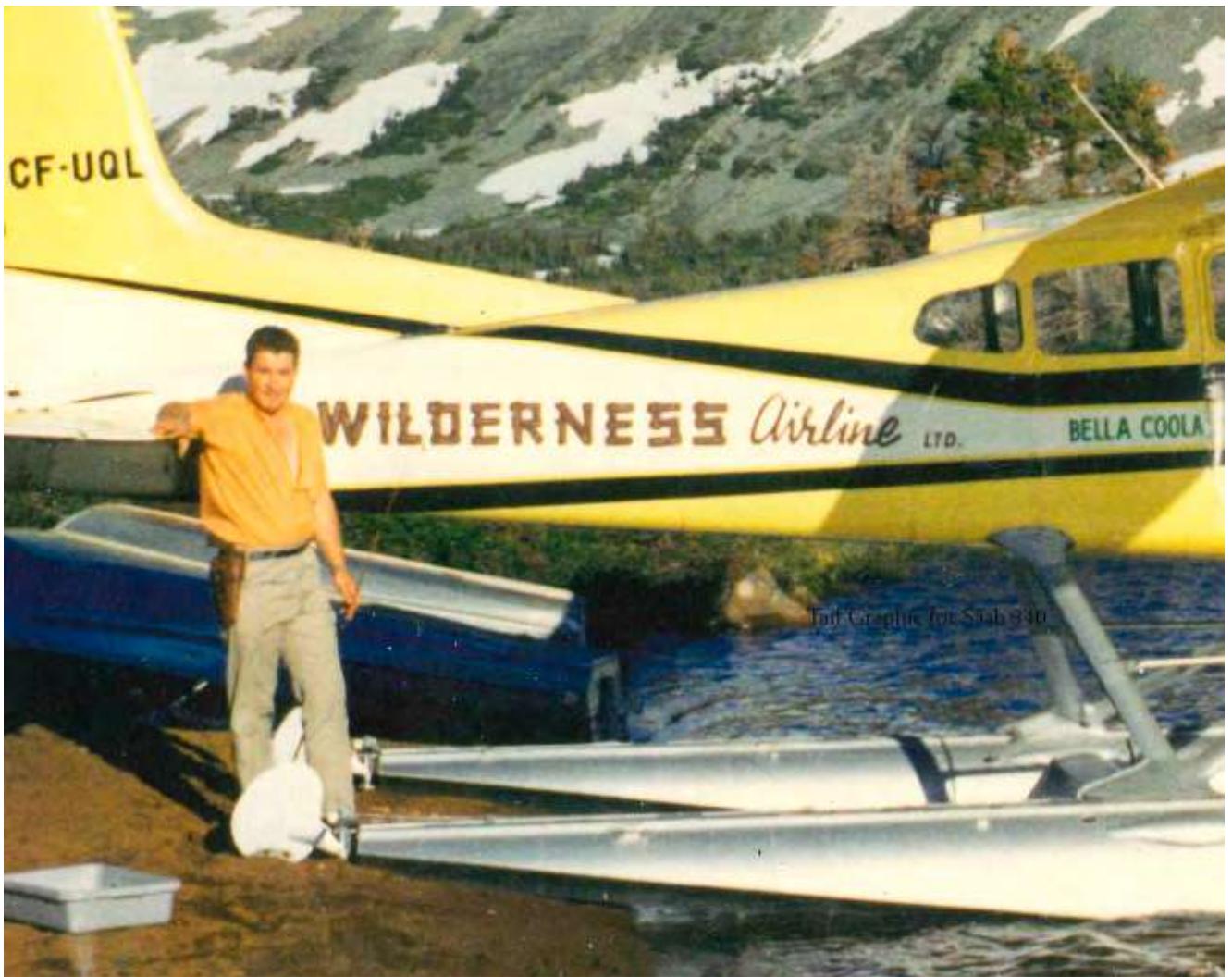
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Eco Tours BC photo



John Wellburn photo



In top flight

Looking back on 35 years of Pacific Coastal Airlines

Pacific Coastal Airlines was founded by Daryl Smith 35 years ago. A truck logger in Bella Coola, a small community on the central coast of British Columbia, Daryl decided to get a pilot's license and purchased a small seaplane to make it easier to get in and out of remote camps. Some friends chipped in for fuel to tag along and thus began the adventure that led to Pacific Coastal Airlines (PCA).

Daryl earned his reputation through 42 years of aviation experience as a pilot and owner of several regional carriers during the most significant era of aviation history in the province. That legacy of dedication

and hard work continues with his son, PCA president Quentin Smith, who is intimately involved in all aspects of the aviation business started by his father. A legendary figure in British Columbia aviation, Daryl received numerous awards and accolades from both his peers and industry associations.

It all began in 1987, with the merger of Powell Air and Air BC's Port Hardy seaplane operation. The name Pacific Coastal Airlines was chosen from five company names that Air BC owned at the time. "Pasco" was then born, providing floatplane service into the mainland communities and interlining with Air BC's Dash 7 scheduled flights

between Vancouver and Port Hardy.

The launch of daily-scheduled twin-engine wheel aircraft service from Port Hardy to Bella Bella and Vancouver started in 1988. This service utilized a seven-passenger Piper Navajo. In 1990, PCA introduced its first pressurized turboprop aircraft. The Beech King Air was purchased to meet increased demand and improve service levels on the Vancouver and Bella Bella routes.

Pacific Coastal's corporate culture has always had a shared value of giving back to the people and the communities it serves. In 1992, the Pacific Coastal Airlines' Annual Charity



Today, Pacific Coastal operates a fleet of 19, which includes a mix of Saab 340A and B and Beechcraft 1900C and D. Its network continues to encompass major ski destinations, a multitude of fishing lodges, outdoor and wildlife adventure tours, and authentic Indigenous experiences.

Golf Tournament was launched. Over the years, with the hard work of Pasco volunteers and the generous support of sponsors, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised to support BC-based charities.

PCA introduced its first 705 aircraft in 1995—the Short 360. This aircraft was introduced to help meet the growing demand on PCA’s central coast destinations as well as fishing lodge charter opportunities. In 1998, Pacific Coastal entered a capacity purchase agreement with Canadian Airlines to operate as a “Canadian Partner” by providing service from Vancouver to Nanaimo, Comox and Campbell River, operating on the Short 360 aircraft.

In 1999, PCA introduced the Saab 340A aircraft. Three Saab 340 aircraft were added to further enhance service levels and to expand Pacific Coastal’s network “reach”. This began the replacement of the Short 360 aircraft and led to the acquisition of a further seven Saab 340s.

PCA’s Community Sharing Program was established in 2016, with the goal of supporting families in need within the airline’s network each Christmas, and providing gift certificates for utilities, food, warm clothes, household items and gifts from Santa for the children. This was all made possible by internal staff fundraisers.

In 2017, Pacific Coastal’s seaplane division obtained an independent Air Operator’s Certificate and rebranded as Wilderness Seaplanes Ltd. Today, as Pacific Coastal’s affiliate airline, Wilderness operates seaplane service to more than 50 coastal communities from bases in Port Hardy and Bella Bella.

A year later, PCA entered a capacity purchase agreement with WestJet and became the operator of WestJet Link, which was created to connect smaller cities in British Columbia and Alberta with WestJet’s domestic hub at the Calgary International Airport.

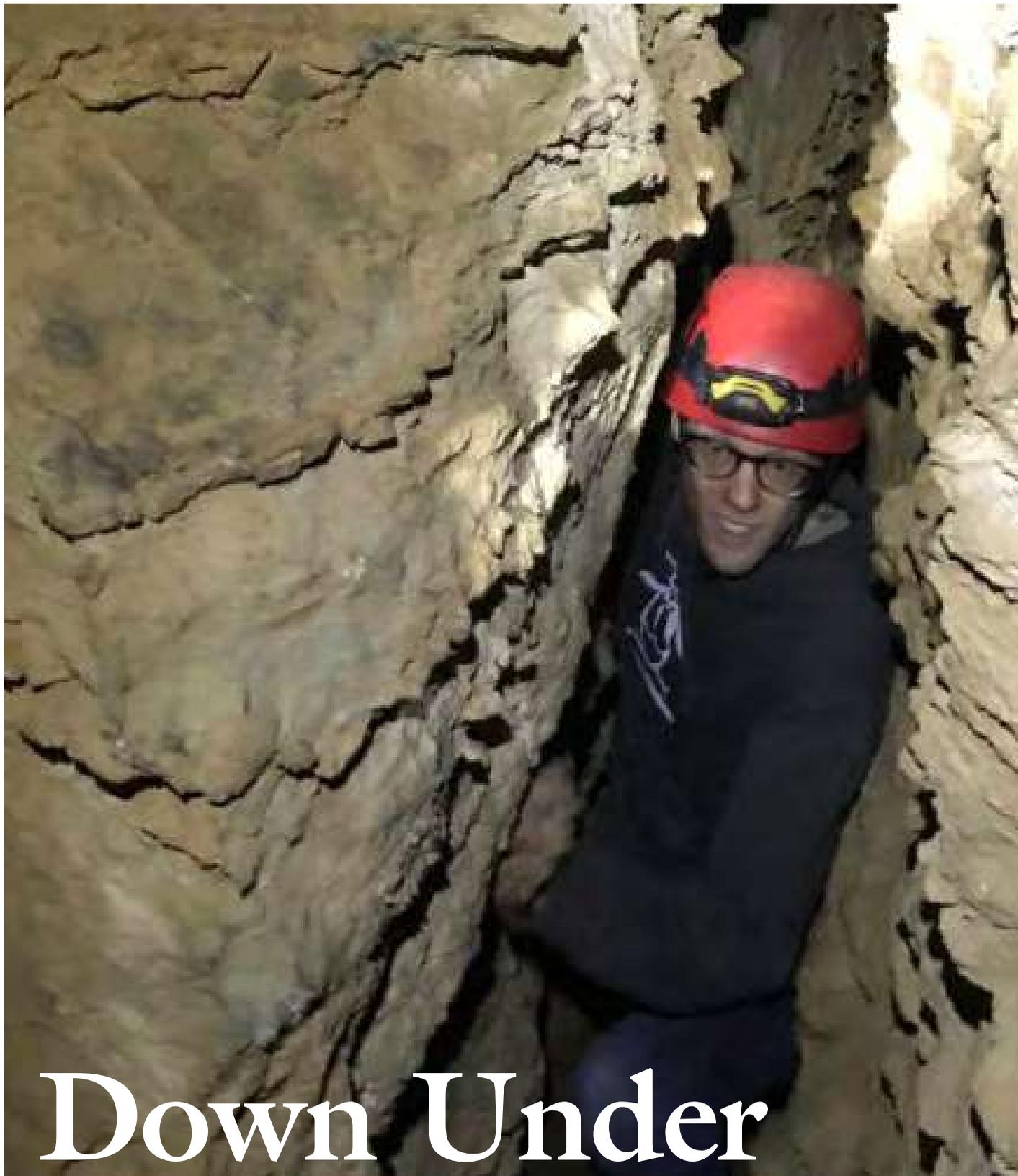
Over the years, Pacific Coastal has provided air travel for Special Olympics BC athletes, coaches and volunteers, enabling them to attend events all over BC, and helped with ongoing fundraising efforts throughout the year. In 2019, the airline celebrated its 20-year partnership with SOBC and is a proud member of the Special Olympics BC Hall of Fame.

Pacific Coastal Airlines also generously donates space on its flights to transport animals to and from BC SPCA shelters across the province. These flights allow animals to receive urgent medical care and gives them their best chance of adoption by moving them to shelters in more populated areas.

Today, Pacific Coastal operates a fleet of 19, which includes a mix of Saab 340A and B and Beechcraft 1900C and D. Its network continues to encompass major ski destinations, a multitude of fishing lodges, outdoor and wildlife adventure tours, and authentic Indigenous experiences.

As the airline looks back on its history and celebrates its 35-year anniversary, it is proud to see how it’s grown over the years. With over 400 employees in BC and Alberta, Pacific Coastal continues to grow and provide essential services—and it all started with a former truck logger with a great passion for aviation. 





Down Under

**Exploring the world beneath in
Vancouver Island's famous Horne Lake Caves**

By Kevin Forsyth, westcoastraveller.com



It's a tight squeeze (roughly a foot) for PQB News reporter Kevin Forsyth as he exits Main Cave at Horne Lake Caves, west of Qualicum Beach. Photo by Chloe White

Visiting the Horne Lake Caves was one of my most unique tourist experiences and, as a resident of mid-Vancouver Island, it's located right in my own backyard. There's something to be said when you can combine geology, slides, a "sacrifice room," climbing, a touch of claustrophobia and several minutes of total darkness into one outing.

The caves, located just an hour from the Pacific Coastal Airlines destination of Comox, are presented as natural formations, with no lighting, paved walkways or hand-railings. Inside are calcite crystal formations, fossils, large chambers and numerous places to climb over and squeeze through.

My tour explored both Riverbend Cave, which is 384 metres long, and the shorter Main Cave, at 136 metres long. Our small group started off crossing a suspension bridge over the Qualicum River and taking a short-but-scenic hike as we climbed to reach Riverbend Cave.

There's a good reason Trip Advisor named Horne Lake Caves as the number one thing to do in the Qualicum Beach area. It's a fun way to push some of your own boundaries in a safe environment.

We descended metal stairs to the cave's gated entrance, and into our subterranean mini-adventure. I was lucky enough to have T.J. and Chloe as guides, plus the holidaying Forsyth family (no relation that we're aware of).

One of the first things I learned was to not touch the calcite formations, as tempting as it might be. They look like huge, melted marshmallows. Sadly, they can be—and many have been—easily damaged by the oils in our skin. It takes an enormous amount of time for them to recover, so they're off limits.

This is probably a good time to point out that if a person is uncomfortable in the caves, they are welcome to turn on their headlamp (preferably not directly into anyone's eyes). Similarly, there are a range of options to make your way through, including tighter spaces or less intimidating alternatives.

We received a mini science lesson, as T.J. demonstrated a process known as triboluminescence by rubbing two quartz crystals together, creating energy with the friction.

I enjoyed checking out the caves' many stalagmites and stalactites, mineral formations that form on the floors and ceilings of a cave.

We parted ways with the Forsyth family at this point and T.J., Chloe and I headed to Main Cave, a short hike away.

A number of mineral mounds and calcite formations were destroyed by vandalism in the park's Main Cave, right after it was gated off in the 1980s. It's a mystery how the vandal, who also spray-painted several parts of the cave, was able to enter, but I guess the fact it happened is not a huge surprise—sometimes people stink.

There's a little more adventuring to be done here, including climbing up a small waterfall (it was dry when I visited), and then venturing through a tunnel, while following a few signs and my guides' instructions.

There's also a cave slide, which looks a bit intimidating, although it's actually quite slow, depending on how frictionous your clothing is. T.J. is a master at propelling himself down it, but, of course, he's had lots of practice.

My first-ever spelunking experience ended with a squeeze through a narrow gap. When I looked at the gap, I was skeptical I would fit, but my guides assured me much larger folks had managed to get through, so I would be fine. It's a good spot for a photo op, too.

I'd recommend a rain jacket, or other waterproof clothing, plus some footwear with a good grip, and gloves, when you visit the caves. Dress in layers and wear clothing you don't mind getting a little dirty.

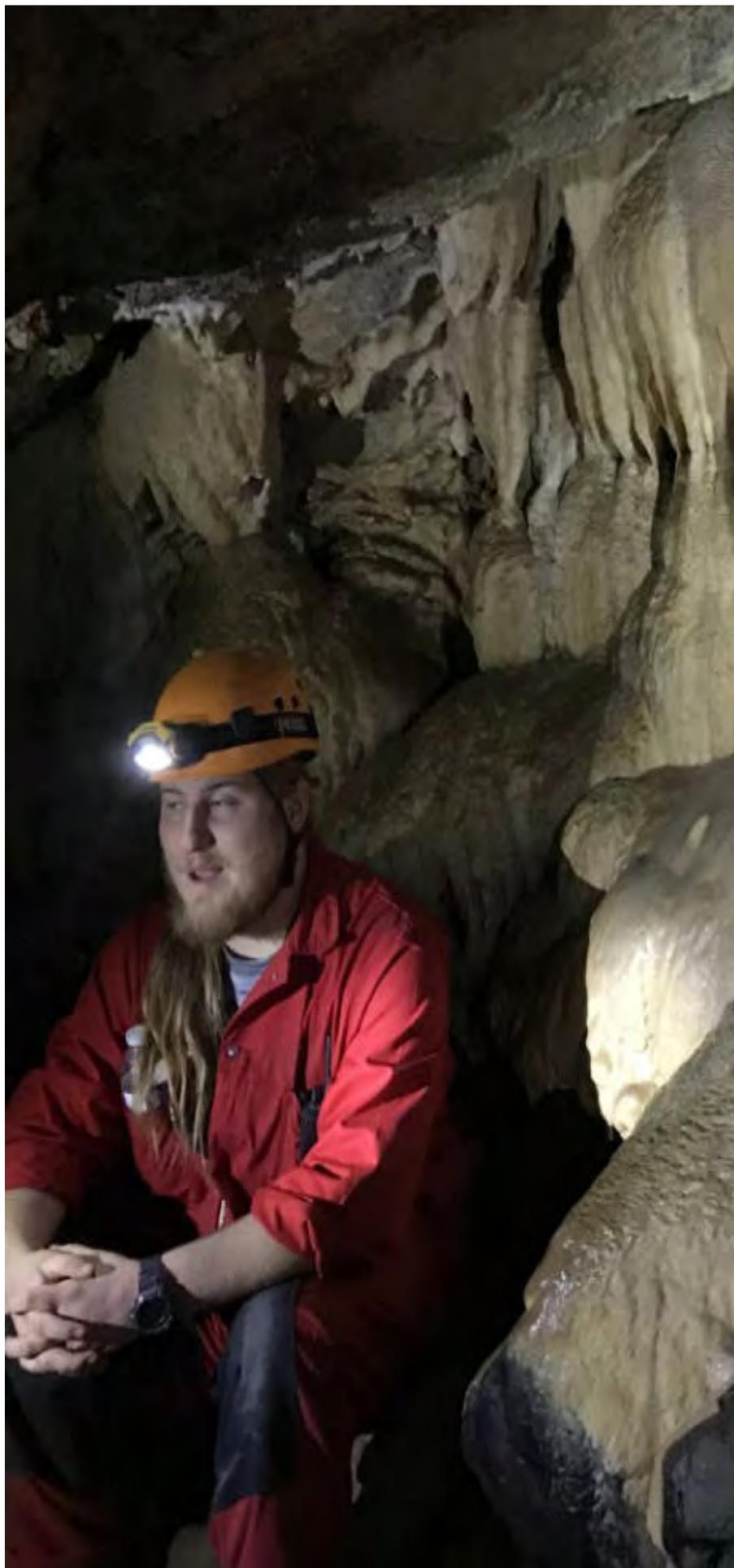
There's a good reason Trip Advisor named Horne Lake Caves as the number one thing to do in the Qualicum Beach area. It's a fun way to push some of your own boundaries in a safe environment.

Recently, longtime guide and operations manager Myles Fullmer, with his company Hidden Realm Adventures, took over as the park director and operator of Horne Lake Caves. He hopes to continue mapping and exploring the caves with the team.

There are also plans to possibly add tours of other local caves and even a canyoneering tour.

The tour I went on is called the Multi-Cave Experience and tickets are \$79. Other options include the Riverbend Cave Explorer (\$54), the more challenging Achilles Challenge (\$139) and the Max Depth Adventure (\$199). Times and availability can vary based on the time of year, so be sure to check online or call ahead (250-248-7829) for more information. You can also get in touch via info@hornelake.com.

The cave system, home to more than 1,000 caves, is under the jurisdiction of the BC provincial government, which incorporated the area into a provincial park in 1971. 🏠





Horne Lake caves tour guide T.J. next to a calcite formation.

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Flavour with a view



Tap & Barrel Bridges.

Granville Island restaurants take sit-down feasting to new levels

By Joanne Peters

Tap & Barrel Bridges photos by Lia Crowe

Granville Island packs a lot into its 40 or so acres: the former industrial site is home to theatres, art galleries, specialty shops and much more. Where the urban peninsula really shines, however, is in its culinary offerings.

The Public Market is famous for everything from fresh crab to apple fritters the size of dinner plates. And while it's great to make it a day of grazing, there's nothing like sitting down for a meal at one of Granville Island's standout restaurants with city-meets-sea vistas.

Tap & Barrel Bridges is the island's newest culinary destination, and we're willing to call it a knockout. Nearly all of the restaurant's 800 seats have breathtaking views of False Creek, the marina and the West End; there's Burrard Street Bridge and beyond it, English Bay and the North Shore mountains. The year-round heated and covered patio, along with the extended upper balcony with a retractable roof, boast nearly 400 seats combined, the umbrellas matching the building's iconic sunflower yellow.



A brief bit of history: the landmark restaurant, located in what was formerly the Arrow Transfer building, first opened in 1980, with Bridges being among the first anchor tenants to move into the cultural hub operated by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The place is close to Tap & Barrel owner Daniel Frankel's heart; his parents moved his family to Vancouver from Israel to help bring Bridges to life with a team of founders on the once-derelict site.

Other than the venue's sunny exterior, most of the restaurant has changed, with the interior taken right down to the studs and rebuilt with a new floor plan and fixtures. It's a more open and breezy space than before, with butcher-block tables and booths looking out to the water through floor-to-ceiling windows. There are flat-screen TVs for sports games; a glass-encased fireplace at one end; a "library room" upstairs where people can flip through books; and accents that pay tribute to the community's marine heritage, with mirrors resembling portholes and a wall of dangling, weathered wooden buoys. There

are even some of Frankel's own artworks here and there. (Look up, waaaay up.)

Josh Gale, executive chef of culinary development, has created a menu that fuses Tap & Barrel's focus on premium comfort food with the seafood-forward cuisine for which Bridges was known.

Anyone who frequented Bridges will instantly recognize the hot seafood Caesar—the greens studded with seared garlic prawns, halibut and salmon, all topped with shaved fennel, house-baked croutons, crispy capers and Parmesan in a creamy dressing. A pleasing tomato-fennel broth is the savoury base for seafood cioppino, with mussels, seared prawns, halibut and Yukon gold potatoes.

Then there are the famous Bridges nachos, a locals' favourite featuring crunchy cumin-dusted tortilla chips, cheddar, smoked mozzarella, pickled jalapeños, black olives, pico de gallo, feta cheese, green onion, cilantro and sour cream. (Look for the "b" on the menu for menu items that are Bridges classics.)

Then there are newly created dishes, such as hummus and baked-to-order za'atar flatbread with

whipped feta and harissa; honey Valentina lettuce wraps, with either crispy fried chicken or cauliflower, along with fillings like charred corn and roasted pumpkin seeds; and a truffle-mushroom mac and cheese cranked on the flavour scale with arugula, sharp cheddar bechamel, and Parmesan breadcrumbs. The noodles for this dish come from InGrain, a BC company; other local suppliers include Mario's Gelato and Island City Baking Co., to name a few. We love that the seafood is Ocean Wise.

The rotating tap list is purely BC, the 32 taps representing some of the best brews in the province: think Brewhall Beer Co., Wildeye Brewing, Red Truck Beer Company, House of Funk Brewing Co., Granville Island Brewing and Superflux Beer Company. Sixteen wines are on tap, and the system allows for premium options to be served by the glass. The list leans local, but this location is Tap & Barrel's first to offer international bottles. Desserts are not an afterthought in the culinary team's hands, with up to six selections; we're suckers for the sticky toffee pudding, which consists of a warm date and molasses cake, smooth

toffee sauce, Mario's vanilla bean gelato and addictive candied walnuts.

Beer and wine flights, happy hour and brunch are all available; this is a place to kick back, soak it all in, and play tourist in your own town.

At the opposite end of Granville Island is another stunning waterfront dining destination. Dockside Restaurant in the Granville Island Hotel features an elegant indoor space with double-height windows and ceilings, and a 50-foot aquarium; the outdoor setting, with beautiful greenery, flowers and even a few cherry trees, makes for serene al fresco dining.

Views here are unique, as your eyes follow the furthest reaches of False Creek toward Telus World of Science, the city's skyline across the way; there's so much marine activity to watch, from people on paddle boards to dragon boats plying the waters and sailboats heading out to sea. Distinct patio spaces total just over 200 seats, with cabana-style sections and luxe low chaises around gorgeous marble fire tables.

Ocean Wise seafood plays a starring role on executive chef Zach Steele's menu, with dishes such as seared plump scallops served with almond purée, green beans, bacon, apple and watercress and dressed in warm shallot vinaigrette; and steelhead salmon accompanied by chorizo-and-cannellini bean ragu and cavolo nero, a dark green Italian variety of kale. Halibut is featured in an innovative way; the grilled filet comes in a pool of creamed corn purée with celery, cubes of potato and carrot, and chili and chive oils. The flavours evoke the kind of nourishing chowder a mariner would crave.

Steele adeptly gives texture to his dishes; take the toothsome roasted beets and carrots with the snap of puffed barley, the creaminess of labneh in an evenly

balanced tarragon vinaigrette.

There are other nice touches here: all of the restaurant's flatbreads for hand-helds (such as pesto-prosciutto arugula or hot-smoked salmon) are made in house by executive sous chef Joel Chiasson, while breads and rolls are from La Baguette, a local supplier formerly on Granville Island. Other from-here purveyors that Dockside prides itself on supporting are Two Rivers Specialty Meats, Mikuni Wild Harvest and Oyama Sausage Co.

Being in a hotel, Dockside is open for breakfast, lunch, happy hour, dinner and weekend brunch. Look for local beer by the likes of

Red Truck Beer Company, Four Winds Brewing and 33 Acres Brewing Company; spirits by Vancouver Island's Ampersand Distilling Co.; and wines by BC's own Blasted Church Vineyards and Stoneboat Vineyards, among others.

Desserts here are handled with as much thought as mains. We love the idea of sharing the triple chocolate mousse—with black-out sponge cake, milk chocolate mousse, white chocolate mousse, dark chocolate mirror glaze and vanilla anglaise—and the Instagram-worthy lemon tart, with its caramel orange compote and hat of dry meringue. 🍷





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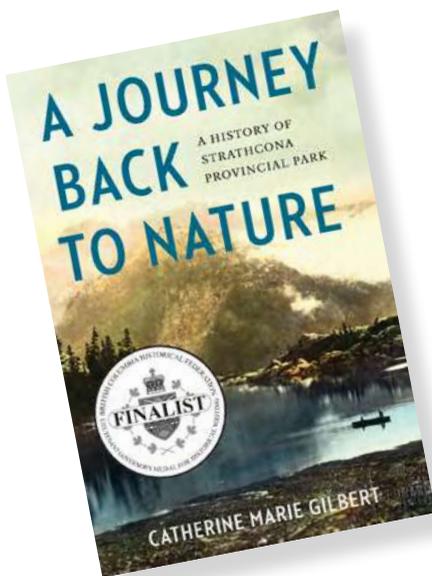


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Contradictions haunt BC's oldest provincial park

**Excerpt from *A Journey Back to Nature:
A History of Strathcona Provincial Park*
by Catherine Marie Gilbert (Heritage House, 2021)**



Although we celebrated the 110th anniversary of the founding of Strathcona Provincial Park in 2021, the triangle of land and water in mid-Vancouver Island that was delineated as a park in 1911 has a history going back into the mists of time. Indigenous Peoples of Vancouver Island have been coastal dwellers and derive much of their sustenance from what they harvest along the coast and in the sea. We know, however, that they have always made forays into the inland mountainous regions, where evidence of marmot hunting and tools have been found. In an area that abounds with wildlife such as elk, deer and bears, these mammals were hunted too, especially in times when salmon were not as plentiful. The lakes of Vancouver Island abound with trout, a delicious addition to the diet. Recent archaeological evidence points to much more activity in the park region than initially thought, such as tool making and butchering, changing notions of prehistory at today's Buttle Lake.

Numerous trails cross Vancouver Island that were travelled long before any Europeans found their way into these territories. Trade was conducted between peoples of the east coast of Vancouver Island and the west, and there was also interaction between western peoples and those who lived south of the present-day park.

Strathcona Provincial Park is situated approximately in the middle of Vancouver Island and comprises a territory of about 250,000 hectares, bordering



Catherine Marie Gilbert.



Strathcona Lodge newly situated at the top of the hill.
Photo courtesy Myrna Boulding Collection



The gravel road leading to Strathcona Park, 1960.
Photo courtesy Myrna Boulding Collection



Rail line from Elk River Timber Camp 9.
Photo courtesy Will J. Reid Family Collection



The landscape after logging at the edge of Buttle Lake in the late 1930s.
Photo courtesy Will J. Reid Family Collection

Clayoquot Sound on the west, Port Alberni on the south side, and on the east, a large property that was once part of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo (E&N) land grant. Today, with its majestic mountains and exceptional lakes and waterfalls, the park is a premier destination for mountaineers, hikers, campers, fishers and paddlers, and provides an idyllic wilderness in which to get away from the vagaries of modern life. Yet behind this picture of serenity is a less than peaceful history, and Strathcona's borders would change numerous times throughout its history in favour of industrial development, prompting outbursts of discontent among conservationists.

The future of Strathcona Provincial Park looked promising in 1911, when Premier Richard McBride's Conservative government established the park based upon reports by early explorers of its stunning vistas, rugged mountains, jewel-like lakes and magnificent waterfalls. There were lofty plans to transform this new park into the next Banff, with visions of rail lines extending 275 kilometres from Victoria to this remote location, and first-class accommodation awaiting travellers.

The traditional use of what became Strathcona Provincial Park was not considered by those who wished to set aside this region as park land. The vision for the park did not include wondering how it could be shared with the peoples who first ventured into the area, but rather was based on what white explorers beginning in the 19th century reported of their findings—and what excited the explorers was the idea of finding minerals.

It is interesting to think that the contradictions that were to plague the history of Strathcona Park are rooted in the very beginning of its establishment. The search for gold, which followed on the heels of the Cariboo Gold Rush in the British Columbia interior in the early 1860s, was uppermost in the minds of many, and when gold was found in the Strathcona region, out-of-work prospectors and placer miners

were quick to try to exploit those discoveries. Initially, no one became wealthy on any of the 19th-century claims in Strathcona, but the die had been cast. Early 20th-century claims that existed when the park was established would eventually allow for industrial-scale mining in the mid-1960s, in direct opposition to the stated purpose of setting aside this territory as parkland.

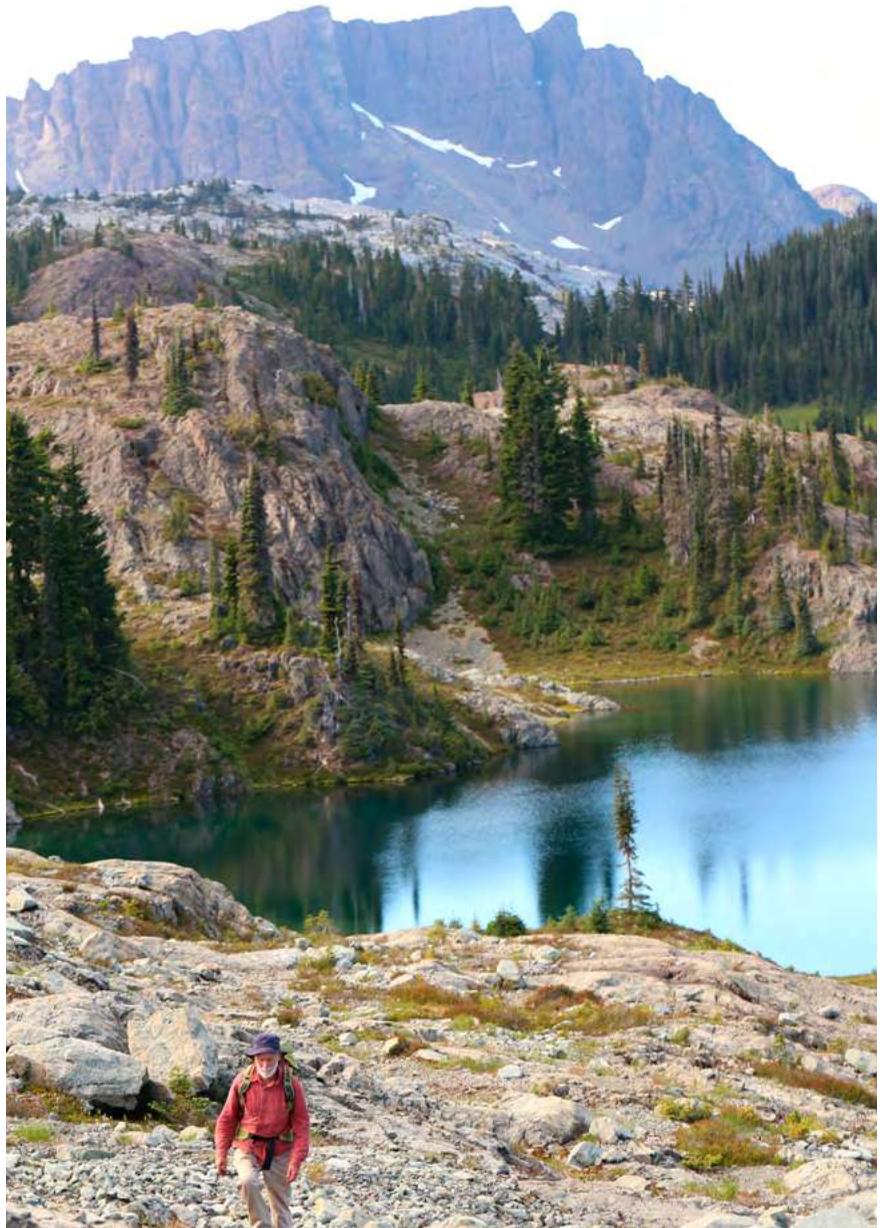
There were complications, too, regarding pre-existing timber licenses. Logging carried on within park boundaries until the licenses could be purchased, then commenced again when work began on an adjacent hydro-electric project. A portion of the old E&N land grant that bordered the park was sold to logging concerns, and their activities on the edge of the park and around Buttle Lake ruined the look of the approach to the park.

This same part of the park was considered for hydro-electric development, and changes were made to the original Park Act to allow for such development; however, the 1911 and 1929 plans did not come to fruition. A third consideration in the 1950s was abandoned for practical reasons, but also because of public protest against this use of the park.

Legislation was changed again in the late 1950s to allow for a mine in the park, but public protest would halt more industrial development when a second mine was proposed in the late 1980s. Lessons had been learned by some about just how destructive such an operation could be in a pristine territory, and this was not going to be allowed to happen again.

Finally, in 1993, a master plan was created, stating once and for all that Strathcona Provincial Park should be first and foremost a park for recreation, to be enjoyed by the public.

Today the park is indeed enjoyed by many and with the addition of Forbidden Plateau on the east side in the 1960s, this region offers exceptional hiking, mountain climbing, boating and fishing opportunities, with nearby skiing in winter. It is still



Looking at Mt. McBride. Photo by Emma Hay

wild. Elk continue to roam through its forests, and cougars, deer, bears and marmots find their habitat there. The park has its dangerous side and, sadly, hikers and mountain climbers, even those with vast experience, are lost in the park every year. The public should certainly not be deterred from enjoying the wilderness experience of exploring this park, but should enter the backcountry with the appropriate caution and equipment, and never alone.

In 1911 those who worked to establish the park felt that people were looking for a journey back to nature, a chance to get away from the busyness of life and return to the era before the Industrial Revolution. Now, 110 years

later, the desire to get back to nature has become increasingly important as people experience all the stresses related to technology and overcrowding. The onset of the COVID-19 virus in 2020 found ever more seekers of sanctuary in nature.

The park provides a sanctuary, a place to reconnect with nature and consider our place in the universe. We can be grateful that some had the foresight to keep this region from permanent habitation by a human population, and even though industry was allowed to exploit its riches during some periods of its history, the park continues to offer a unique sense of time standing still. 

Pacific Coastal

AIRLINES

