

# SOAR

Inflight  
Magazine for  
Pacific Coastal  
Airlines

## Women in aviation

Meet Sukhniyamat Gill

**Food lovers rejoice**

Whistler is a culinary kingdom

**Go fish!**

Top fishing  
destinations named

*Pacific Coastal*  
AIRLINES

March/April | Volume 17 | Number 2



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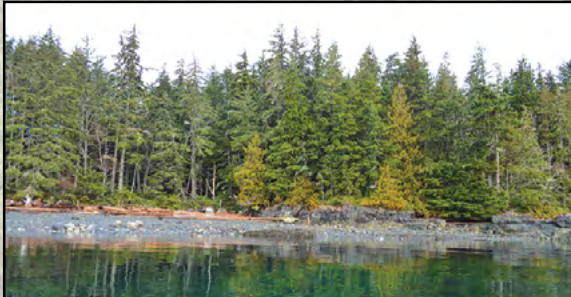
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**Calvert Island Oceanfront:** Undeveloped 59 acres with approx 2300ft of oceanfront in Safety Cove. Relatively steep topography with a number of benches and plateaus. Views to the east and north-east looking across Fitz Hugh Sound to the mainland. Recently logged, with a forested portion still on the southern shoreline. Calvert Island is about 62 miles north of Port Hardy. **\$294,000**



**Zeballos, Vancouver Island:** 13 room motel with commercial kitchen, restaurant space, plus one bedroom owner/manager's suite. Guest rooms each have a 3 piece bathroom and come furnished with two beds, microwave and mini-fridge. Lots of possibilities here – fishing catering lodge; family retreat; work crew accommodations; short-term or long-term rentals. Seller motivated! **\$399,000**



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# CONTENTS



Photo courtesy Wild Blue Restaurant + Bar

## Features

### 10 WOMEN IN AVIATION

Meet Sukhnyamat Gill

### 12 FOOD LOVERS REJOICE

Whistler is a culinary kingdom



### 21 NOTHING IS THE NEW SOMETHING

BC's Southern Gulf Islands

### 20 GO FISH!

Top fishing destinations named



## Departments

### 4 UP FRONT

President's Message

### 7 AROUND BC

News from around the province

### 8 MEET A PCA EMPLOYEE

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## Always wanted to go to *Italy?*

### Welcome to Valle Tours

The diverse countryside of Abruzzo includes all types of terrain, making for some spectacular scenery. This scenery includes the towering Gran Sasso (highest peak in the Apennines) in the west, the rolling hills filled with olive orchards, world class wineries and the fabulous beaches of the Adriatic Riviera. Within this region lies many wonderful destinations to explore.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I would like to begin this message by expressing our sincere gratitude to all of you for your continued support. Your loyalty over the years has enabled us to grow and serve you better and we are honoured to have you on board with us.

As we head to the final stretch of winter, the aviation industry in BC has again been challenged with another series of extreme weather events that caused disruption to our passengers' travel plans and our industry partners. Thank you to all travelers and passengers for their patience and kindness toward our employees and crews during those challenging times. We were truly humbled and inspired by your understanding and continuous support.

I am excited to announce that Pacific Coastal Airlines has successfully kicked off our partnership with AIR MILES® as a redemption option. This partnership allows AIR MILES members to easily book flights with Pacific Coastal Airlines using their miles. AIR MILES is one of Canada's largest loyalty programs and travel agencies, and we are thrilled to be a part of it.

For the month of March, we are greeted with a monumental event—Women in Aviation Week. This occasion is an opportunity to celebrate women's contributions across the skies and to recognize the barriers that women have overcome to achieve success in this industry. This event celebrates everyone from the

female pioneers who were the first to operate an aircraft to the women who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep the aviation industry moving forward. Pacific Coastal Airlines is lucky to work with many talented women in the industry; over 40 per cent of our operations team are women. We're thankful for the incredible women who pioneer and contribute to the aviation world and will continue to push for gender equality in aviation.

As we continue to champion diversity and push for inclusivity in the aviation world, we're looking 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/](https://pacificcoastal.com/careers/)

Finally, we're also excited to announce that we've kicked off our 29th Annual Memorial Golf Tournament. This traditional event aims to raise funds for the communities we serve through sponsorships, silent auctions and donations. Last year, we raised \$90,000 to donate to Source Club Society of Powell River, Power To Be and the Heiltsuk Community Men's Wellness Group. If you're interested in taking part in this meaningful event, please fly over to [pacificcoastal.com/golf](https://pacificcoastal.com/golf) for more details!

Once again, I want to thank you for choosing to fly with us. We appreciate your trust in us and look forward to welcoming you onboard soon! 🇨🇦



**Quentin Smith**

# Un-Ordinary Your Day

Łəmatax<sup>w</sup>, Campbell River, is nestled within the territory of the Liḡwíłdaŋ<sup>w</sup> peoples; the WeWaiKai, WeiWaiKum, and Kwikwiah Nations; here there are no borders between city and nature. Łəmatax<sup>w</sup>, 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.

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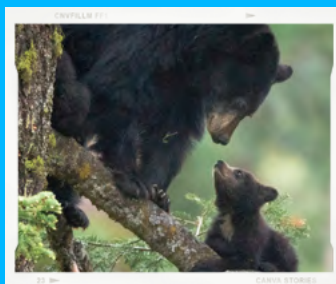
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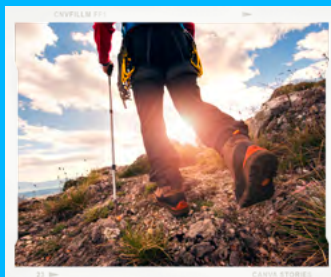


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## Bacon, Beer and Bourbon

**VICTORIA:** Inspired by unique pairings between chefs and mixologists, a new festival called Bacon, Beer and Bourbon will celebrate the best of seasonal beer, bourbon cocktails, and the smells and tastes of pork-forward creations by local chefs.

The festival, set to take place June 24 at Starlight Plaza in Langford (near Victoria), focuses on bold rich flavours that elevate the barbeque season.

Tickets went on sale February 23 and can be accessed here:

[bit.ly/BBBLangford](http://bit.ly/BBBLangford)

An adult-specific festival, guests will receive a welcome cocktail or beer upon arrival, and a complimentary piece of Hertel Meats' bacon. They will then be invited to wander through the grounds, exploring the wares of festival vendors, enjoying buskers and indulging in the rich flavours created by participating chefs and beverage vendors.

Festival-goers will also have the chance to show off their competitive sides in the oversized lawn games, and vote for their favourite creations from the array of chefs and mixologists.

"Dream of the smell of bacon wafting across your nose while you sip on a batch bourbon cocktail laughing with a friend. We want to create the ultimate backyard party that mimics elements of a fair but focuses on being strictly adult," says festival founder David Bain.

## Summerland food hub

**OKANAGAN:** With the development of a new food hub in Summerland, there will be more opportunities for farmers and food and beverage producers and processors to grow their businesses while helping strengthen food security.

"Expanding the BC Food Hub Network to the south Okanagan will bring new opportunities to local farms and businesses that will help them increase their production, sales and market presence," said Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food. "Summerland is known for its amazing fruit, like cherries, strawberries and peaches, and the food hub will enable entrepreneurs in the area to use those locally grown ingredients to create products to share with British Columbians."

In partnership with the District of Summerland and Community Futures Okanagan Similkameen, the Government of BC is investing \$800,000 over two years in a new Okanagan Food and Innovation Hub in Summerland and growing the BC Food Hub Network to 13 facilities throughout the province. The hub will be will open in summer 2024.

Food hubs provide a commercial shared food-processing and innovation space that are helping increase the volume of food grown and processed locally, creating more demand for ingredients from local farmers and increasing the number of people employed locally by the food industry while addressing food safety and security issues.

The BC Food Hub Network supports the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Grow BC, Feed BC and Buy BC programs, which encourage greater food security and local business growth.

## Comox chamber moves to remote-first

**COMOX:** The Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce announced that, as of the end of February, it has moved from its current location at 2040 Cliffe Avenue and become a remote-first organization.

According to the chamber's newsletter, "We realize that the most impactful work we can do as a chamber is to actively engage with the business community, in the community. The way of work is evolving, and traditional bricks-and-mortar operations are no longer necessary nor relevant. Our address and phone number have changed but the chamber staff email addresses will remain the same."

The new address for the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce is: PO Box 3007, Courtenay PO Main, BC, V9N 5N3. The new phone number is 250-465-0019.

## MEET A PACIFIC COASTAL EMPLOYEE: JASON



**Position:** Lead Aircraft Maintenance Engineer

**Location:** Vancouver, British Columbia (YVR)

**Time with PASCO:** Since July 2022

**Job description:** To ensure that our aircraft are maintained to a high standard of quality and safety. I provide our apprentices with coaching and guidance to help them develop into the kind of engineer that upholds these values.

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

I have been working as an AME for 10 years now. I started as an apprentice in Kelowna, and also worked various contract positions for companies like Cascade, Conair and Sunwing. I also worked for Premier Aviation and AAR, and did additional contracting for Cargojet and Canadian North. In 2019, I went to Toronto as a team leader in Air Canada maintenance, and also worked as a technical representative for Air Canada, overseeing heavy maintenance operations. In 2021, I returned to BC as a supervisor at Cascade Aerospace. In summer of 2022, I had the opportunity to join Pacific Coastal and I took it!

### What do you like best about your job?

I love the close-knit family atmosphere that we have in the maintenance department. I also love that work is fun every day. Never a dull moment!

### What are your hobbies outside of the job?

I enjoy playing golf, working on projects in the garage and at MakerLabs Vancouver, and a little bit of gaming! Kerbal Space Program and Flight Simulator, anyone?

### Anything else you'd like to share?

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Pacific Coastal. This company treats their people well, and there are excellent opportunities for professional and personal development here. 🇨🇦



Shuswap Highland Stills owner Simon Koczwarski displays his award-winning apple-based vodka and coffee spirit. (Lachlan Labere, Salmon Arm Observer)

## Salmon Arm distiller in high spirits

By Lachlan Labere, [westcoasttraveller.com](http://westcoasttraveller.com)

Shuswap Highland Stills owner Simon Koczwarski gets to mark his first year in business with a pair of awards.

Two products from the Salmon Arm-based distillery, the Wee Nip Coffee Spirit and the Gneiss Vodka, recently earned medals in the 2023 Canadian Artisan Spirit Competition. The coffee spirit received a bronze medal in the Infused or Flavoured Vodka category. Gneiss was awarded a gold medal in the Vodka-Contemporary category.

Having just opened the distillery last March, Koczwarski says the awards, determined by judges across the country, were a sign he's on the right track.

"That was definitely the number one takeaway," he says. "We sort of felt legitimized—okay, you're doing it right!"

Prior to becoming a distiller, Koczwarski was involved in the wine industry in New Zealand. At the back of the winery was a "gigantic, handmade Portuguese still" that the assistant winemaker was learning how to use.

"I had to do tours and describe what distilling is to all these customers, and I kind of had a crash course in how to make all this stuff by

talking about the process of distilling," Koczwarski says.

When he returned to Canada, Koczwarski went to work at a West Kelowna winery that also had a distillery. He was pouring in the tasting room and chatting with a couple whose son started a distillery.

Koczwarski thought, "That sounds doable. I think I should do that."

In the summer of 2019, he took a course in Oregon and in 2019 he incorporated the business. Next came the purchase of a piece of agricultural property in Salmon Arm.

"We got this farm with the idea to grow what we were going to supply our distillery with," Koczwarski says. "It was an apple orchard with some really old trees on it and we have some other fruit—plums, cherries—and I turn it all into different types of spirits."

The Gneiss Vodka is an apple-based spirit, as is Wee Nip. Koczwarski uses four varieties of apples grown on his property and from neighbouring orchards.

The chocolate-infused coffee spirit uses beans provided by Shuswap Coffee Company.

Shuswap Highland Stills is located at 4540 50th Street NE (Highway 1).

For more information, go to:

[shuswaphighlandstills.com](http://shuswaphighlandstills.com). 🇨🇦

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# Women in aviation

## Meet Sukhniyamat Gill



By Vy Nguyen

**W**omen of Aviation Worldwide Week is a global aviation awareness event held for women and young girls to commemorate the issuance of the first female pilot's license, which took place in 1910. As Women of Aviation Worldwide Week took place this year from March 6 to 12, Pacific Coastal Airlines looked to highlight one of its many women in the industry.

Meet Sukhniyamat Gill (Nimo), a customer service base supervisor, based at YVR's South Terminal. Niyamat joined PCA in March 2018 with the goal to eventually become

a PCA pilot. She was promoted at the beginning of 2023 from customer service agent to the position of supervisor. She is also currently a commercial pilot, working towards her multi-engine and IFR rating. Niyamat hopes to soon become PCA's certified pilot!

We took the time to sit down with Niyamat and ask a few questions.

**Soar:** Hi Niyamat. Thank you for joining us in this project for Women of Aviation Worldwide Week. Can you tell us about your journey as a pilot at Pacific Coastal Airlines? How did your interest in aviation begin?

**Niyamat:** I started at Pacific Coastal in March of 2018 as a customer service agent, became a trainer in spring 2020 and a supervisor in 2023. My interest started as a child when I wanted to become a pilot, and Pacific Coastal stood out to me for being a small family-oriented company, which encourages lots of internal promotions.

**Soar:** What do you think are the three words your colleagues would use to describe you?

**Niyamat:** Ambitious, supportive, chatty!

**Niyamat was promoted at the beginning of 2023 from customer service agent to the position of supervisor. She is also currently a commercial pilot, working towards her multi-engine and IFR-rating. She hopes to soon become PCA's certified pilot!**

**Soar:** What challenges have you faced as a woman in the aviation industry?

Sometimes you'd get comments from men suggesting, "you're mediocre" or "you're a woman, therefore you can't keep emotions out of things." But at the end of the day, you just have to understand it's not you, it's the way that the industry has been for generations. So, I'd say that one of the biggest challenges is to overcome the prejudices and trust the trainings.

However, these challenges are also a big motivation for me. It encourages me to show the world that women are just as capable of flying an aircraft or handling leadership roles. It encourages me to do better because I know I'm not any less. Especially since I'm with Pacific Coastal Airlines, which continues to show that women can lead a strong team and that's very important.

**Soar:** What has been the proudest moment in your career so far, and why?

**Niyamat:** Definitely influencing other women to step into the industry and show them this is a great industry to join. With the challenges of being a woman in this male-dominated industry, keeping my head high and pursuing my dream also make me proud of myself.

**Soar:** Can you speak about your experience working for Pacific Coastal Airlines? Why did you choose to grow with Pacific Coastal Airlines?

**Niyamat:** My experience has been nothing but fun—the past five years have been filled with memories and opportunities; and I've learned that this is a company where you can grow. PCA is a company where you can move around between different departments: it offers a lot of potential for growth for employees. It's a great way to experience a bigger airlines operation in a smaller scale and learn all aspects of it.

**Soar:** Can you tell us about a memorable experience you had with Pacific Coastal?

**Niyamat:** Working with my colleagues for the Charity Golf Tournament has been my favourite thus far, the way all the teams from different departments come together to host this event and raise funds for a great cause. It goes to show that we are one big family.

**Soar:** Can you share one thing Pacific Coastal has helped you achieve during your time here?

**Niyamat:** It wouldn't say it's one thing—it's many. I've learned to be more professional, how to read people's situations and how to keep emotions out of a lot of situations that need to be handled with facts instead. I've learned from PCA how to maintain professionalism representing an airline, to keep intact the policy and procedures that are put in place. Being in a leadership role also allows me to make executive decisions and be behind the scenes. This has taught me

to be more decisive, and to see things from multiple perspectives.

**Soar:** What do you think are the benefits of having a diverse workforce in aviation, and how can the industry better support and retain women in these roles?

**Niyamat:** A diverse workforce definitely brings a wider range of perspectives. But beyond that, diversity brings more opportunities for equality, where we get to learn from each other, hear about what works and doesn't work, and how to make the workplace better for all.

**Soar:** What are your future career goals and how do you see your current role with Pacific Coastal fitting into those aspirations?

**Niyamat:** My ultimate goal is to become a pilot with the airline, and my current role goes hand in hand with it. My role teaches me to be factual and professional, and how to handle situations independently. All of these skills will be carried forward when I become a pilot.

**Soar:** What advice would you give to women who are considering a career in aviation?

**Niyamat:** Hold true to yourself, don't give up, don't ever think that you're any less. Keep holding your head high and keep going, you will get where you want to be, and it'll be nothing but sweet fruit at the end of the journey. 🍌



# Food lovers rejoice



Sidecut Steakhouse at Four Seasons Whistler Resort and Residences. Photo by Leila Kwok

# Whistler is the kingdom of culinary delights

Located just a short drive from the Pacific Coastal Airlines hub at Vancouver International Airport's South Terminal, Whistler is the perfect bucket-list trip for PCA travellers. Rent a car and drive the scenic 2.5-hour journey or take a shuttle bus directly from the airport. Either way, prepare for a culinary treat.

By Joanne Peters

**W**histler Blackcomb is well known the world over for its epic, extensive terrain. The powdery winter playground makes skiers and snowboarders believe they really have reached seventh heaven. But there's another side to the village of Whistler, and the secret is starting to get out: with a vast menu of dining experiences, it has become as much a draw for food lovers as it has for powder-hounds.

Located just a short drive from the Pacific Coastal Airlines hub at Vancouver International Airport's South Terminal, Whistler is the perfect bucket-list trip for PCA travellers. Rent a car and drive the scenic 2.5-hour journey or take a shuttle bus directly from the airport. Driving presents several options for stops along the way: for example, indulge in an immersive, multi-sensory experience the award-winning Britannia Mine Museum, just south of Squamish. Or soar to new heights at Squamish's Sea to Sky Gondola. Either way, prepare for a culinary treat once you hit Whistler.

Some of the earliest restaurants to open in Whistler are iconic today. There's the upscale Rimrock Café, which has been specializing in fish and game since it opened in 1987, and Araxi Restaurant + Oyster Bar, a farm-to-table restaurant launched in 1981 by Jack Evrensel



Portobello. Photo by Kevin Clark.

(who named it after his wife) that's now owned by the Aquilini family's Toptable Group.

Whether brand-new or well-established, upscale or casual, several other restaurants are elevating Whistler's culinary offerings to glacier-level heights.

The latest addition to the local scene is one of the most exciting and anticipated restaurants in all of BC. Wild Blue Restaurant + Bar comes from a team of industry superstars, including Evrensel, a BC Restaurant Hall of Fame inductee. At Wild Blue, he's joined forces with classically trained chef Alex Chen, an Iron Chef Canada champion with numerous other honours to his name, and veteran restaurant director Neil Henderson.

The room is elegant but warm and comfortable, with a refined but approachable style that's reflected on the menu. Executed at the highest level by executive chef Derek Bendig, the dishes favour substance and purity of flavours, not unrecognizable ingredients or esoteric techniques.

Wild Blue's focus is on food from the ocean—think oysters, geoduck and littleneck clams, kelp, seaweed, caviar, halibut, sablefish, salmon, prawns—and, to a lesser degree, the land, with items like foraged wild mushrooms, Pemberton organic produce, Alberta elk and

Japanese A5 Wagyu beef. Bar manager Zack Lavoie's cocktails are a draw (try the French 75-inspired Beretta, with limoncello, citron vodka, Italian herbs, lemon and Prosecco), while wine director Chris Edens offers thoughtful, playful pairings to make a meal a multilayered experience.

"Experiential" is an apt descriptor for a visit to Bearfoot Bistro, a Whistler classic helmed by award-winning chef Melissa Craig. Discerning diners can order premium BC seafood and wild game, as well as discover coveted global ingredients ranging from Wagyu beef to Périgord truffles. This is also where guests can rest their glass of Champagne along a pewter bar's rail of ice so it stays perfectly chilled, or try a hand at sabering a bottle of bubbles.

Then there's the dazzling Ketel One Ice Room, where people can pop into sub-zero temperatures to sip on a flight of four vodkas. The walls are literally made of ice, and the bistro provides parkas to keep guests warm for the coolest tasting in town.

If there are chefs and then there are culinary artists, Nick Cassettari falls into the latter camp, coming up with daring, creative dishes at Alta Bistro. The menu is ever-changing, in keep-



Wild Blue Restaurant + Bar.

ing with its focus on fresh, seasonal ingredients, but count on finding inventive takes on everything from elk tartare and tuna crudo to glorious boards of cheeses and cured meats. Winter visitors might find cassoulet and tourtière on the menu. Also making appearances when the time is right are spruce and fir tips, wood ear mushrooms, elderflower, and pickled everything.

Fairmont Chateau Whistler is a must-experience, with its unbeatable views and location at the base of Blackcomb Mountain, and its four on-site restaurants. The intimate Grill Room prioritizes chops, steak and seafood. The Wildflower offers refined family-friendly dining, offering everything from an alpine breakfast


buffet to à la carte dinner entrees such as beeswax-aged Fraser Valley duck and crispy-skinned king salmon. The Mallard Lounge is quintessential Fairmont—sumptuous chairs, a soaring ceiling, a commanding fireplace, excellent cocktails and top-notch shareable plates. There's a vast selection of Scotch, too.

Portobello's casual counter-style service, meanwhile, belies one of the most well-executed menus in town, which stands out for a few reasons: there's the decadent waffle selection (from berries to buttermilk-fried chicken); meats cooked to juicy perfection in a rotisserie oven, including a hard-to-find, perfectly crackly, consistently excellent porchetta; and house-made pastries, muffins and doughnuts.

Over at Four Seasons Whistler Resort and Residences, the newly renovated Sidecut Steakhouse, with its magnificent central fireplace, excels at premium, perfectly cooked meats and a level of superlative service for which the hotel name is known. Goa-born executive chef Sajish Kumar Das has curated selections that range from Wagyu Black Label flat iron steak from Idaho's Snake River Farms, to High River, Alberta's Chateau-briand centre-cut tenderloin. Guests can enhance any of the steaks with one of Sidecut's signature rubs, like the zesty Sergeant Pepper. A stop in at the adjacent Braidwood Tavern is where adults can enjoy spiked hot chocolates from around the world.

An altogether different culinary journey happens at the unfussy Barn Nork Aharn Thai. The newish restaurant is tiny, but takeout is an option, and it has quickly won over locals with items such as pad thai, beef massaman curry with roasted Pemberton potatoes, hand-made spring rolls, and gang kiew waan (spicy green curry with eggplant, Thai basil and bell pepper).

Sushi Village Japanese Restaurant has long been a Whistler favourite among locals and visitors alike. Opened in 1985, it's a go-to spot for birthdays and a must-visit eatery for touring pro skiers and boarders. Udon, donburi and teriyaki dinners are all popular, and the restaurant has a section of the menu dedicated exclusively to tofu. We love the freshly made rolls, especially Pete's Beet (with mango, cilantro, ginger, avocado and house-made chili oil) and box-shaped sushi topped with flame-seared salmon, lemon, jalapeno and rare black tobiko (flying fish roe).

Whistler, finally, is home to Purebread. With locations in the village and at Function Junction, this is the place to find a huge, jaw-dropping assortment of freshly baked and simply but gorgeously decorated squares, loaves, cakes, bars, cookies, pies and other forms of baked goodness. Look for the lineups out the door. They're worth it. 



Barn Nork Aharn Thai. Photo courtesy Barn Nork.



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# “Nothing is the New Something”

Get cosy in the off-season on BC’s Southern Gulf Islands



Burgoyne Bay on Salt Spring Island. Lower right, forest hike in the Gulf Islands. Photos by Susan Lundy

But the concept of “slow living” is old news to the residents of the Southern Gulf Islands, located just ferry rides away from the Pacific Coastal Airlines destination of Victoria International Airport. In fact, on the islands you could say “slow living” is just plain old “living.”

By Katrina Leslie,  
[westcoasttraveller.com](http://westcoasttraveller.com)

**M**any travellers believe spring and summer are the best times to explore. That means the off-season often gets the “cold shoulder,” despite offering a variety of perks for those looking to save money or avoid crowds. Southern Gulf Islands Tourism lovingly refers to this time of year as the “cosy season”—and they might be onto something!

With its new “Nothing is the New Something” campaign, Southern Gulf Islands Tourism is encouraging tourists to fully embrace the trendy movement of disconnecting from hustle culture and reconnecting to a slower way of living.

With burnout on the rise and the call for work/life balance growing, disconnecting from regular obligations is gaining popularity. But the concept of “slow living” is old news to the residents of the Southern Gulf Islands, located just ferry rides away from the Pacific Coastal Airlines destination of Victoria International Airport. In fact, on the islands you could say “slow living” is just plain old “living.”

With cheeky catch phrases like “the subtle art of not showing up” and “how to not crush your goals,” the message from Southern Gulf Islands Tourism is pretty clear: take time to rest, relax and fully embrace your inner islander by trading in the laptop and smartphone for slow mornings, afternoon naps and tasty treats from local bakeries this off-season!

The shoulder season is the best time to practise Nothing is the New Something, and here are three reasons to use a few of your vacation days and get in on the art of doing nothing on the picturesque Southern Gulf Islands:

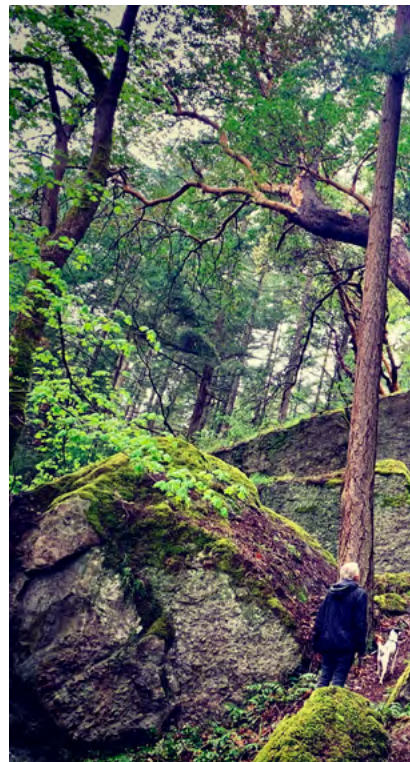
**ONE:** There’s nothing quite like having a West Coast beach all to yourself! Sure, sunbathing might be off the agenda, but frankly those UV rays are not good for you anyway. You’ll need to dress for unpredictable weather for your shoulder-season beach day, but we think the positives outweigh the negatives! You’ll have vast, breathtaking beaches all to yourself (added bonus: mist-covered beaches make for epic photos!), and gorgeous green forests to hike and explore without the bustle of busy summer trails.

“Cosy” takes on a whole new meaning when you’re enjoying your favourite warm beverage from a local café at a beach with your favourite adventure buddies. Grey, foggy beach walks stir something in the human soul, so if you’ve been facing a creative block, an off-season island adventure might be just what the doctor ordered! Yes, it might rain, but as long as you dress accordingly that doesn’t have to ruin your fun!

Not sure which island beach to check out? Consider Montague Harbour on Galiano Island, Bennett Bay on Mayne Island, Beaumont Marine Park on Pender Island or Ruckle Park on Salt Spring Island.

**TWO:** Artisan food and wine tasting is even better when you are not stuck three-deep in a crowd of like-minded travellers.

The vast crowds of tourists during the peak summer months can make getting into local vineyards and artisan cheese farms a nightmare, but many of these same locations are open during the shoulder season. A quick web search or phone call to research reduced hours or reservation requirements can get you all the information you need for planning your stress-free, crowd-free visit during the cooler months.



Another bonus to having the place all to yourself is the opportunity to enjoy more genuine conversations with the owners and staff members who, while always delightful, understandably don’t have as much time to provide all their guests with one-on-one attention during their busy summer months. So, if you’re looking for that VIP feel without the VIP price tag, booking an off-season food and wine tour is the way to go!

**THREE:** Local resident deals make off-season staycations a worthwhile investment that you can feel good about!

Need a vacation but can’t take more than a long weekend off? Can’t justify crossing international borders this winter but still need a break? Staycations offer a variety of benefits and can be just as relaxing as a more traditional vacation.

Many B&Bs and boutique hotels offer local-resident deals. So, practise the art of “Nothing is the New Something,” turn off your phone for the weekend and know that you’re helping support your local economy, saving money by staying local and still taking that invaluable time for yourself. 🏡

TOFINO

# Honouring the hot spring

The new \$1-million boardwalk leading to the natural hot springs in Ahousaht territory was built in partnership with 43K Wilderness Solutions, Maaqutusiis Hahoulthee Stewardship Society and BC Parks. (Keltsmaht Adventures photo)

## Ahousaht hot springs re-open under new visitor-use management plan

By Nora O'Malley, [westcoasttraveller.com](http://westcoasttraveller.com)

**A**housaht First Nation has re-opened Maquinna Marine Provincial Park and Hot Springs to the public—good news to those visiting the small west coast towns of Tofino and Ucluelet.

Located a 1.5-hour boat ride northwest of Tofino, which is serviced by Pacific Coastal Airlines, the natural geothermal hot springs was closed for more than two years due to pandemic restrictions.

During the closure, BC Parks worked alongside Ahousaht's Maaqutusiis Hahoulthee Stewardship Society (MHSS) to upgrade the infrastructure with a new, \$1-million cedar boardwalk trail.

MHSS is responsible for managing economic development for the nation. Its senior advisor, Tyson Atleo, said the opportunity to rebuild the two-kilometre trail to the hot springs provided lasting employment for Ahousaht members and proved to be a major step toward building trust between BC Parks and the Ahousaht Nation.

"This was really critical for us. It got our people back into the hot springs, working on the trail, and feeling a sense of ownership and responsibility for this natural asset that we have," Atleo said.

The closure period also gave BC Parks and MHSS time to "jointly re-envision" a visitor-use management plan, Atleo said.

"We very carefully made a plan to re-open the Maquinna Marine Park with new access conditions," he said, noting the plan considers ecological values alongside Indigenous culture, economic value and visitor experience.

**"We very carefully made a plan to re-open the Maquinna Marine Park with new access conditions," he said, noting the plan considers ecological values alongside Indigenous culture, economic value and visitor experience.**

"Bringing the Indigenous culture into parks management for BC was a big deal. It resulted in acknowledging that Ahousaht deserved the opportunity to have some kind of exclusive access for its community members and all Nuuchah-nulth," Atleo said.

In the past, there were zero restrictions for commercial tour operators taking guests to the hot springs. According to BC Parks, the annual visitation to Maquinna Marine Park pre-pandemic was 28,000 to 32,000 visitors, with most of the guests travelling between June and September.

Commercial vessels are now only permitted to bring 12 guests on one vessel per day, between the hours of 11 am and 5 pm.

"Some companies would 'burn and turn.' They would be dropping people off and returning with another load of guests. It led to just having a lot of people and just maxing out the capacity of the park," said MHSS consulting advisor Sarah Reid, adding that one company did as many as 8,500 guests in one year.

Tour operators must hold a park permit to legally take guests to the hot springs. BC Parks says there are currently 14 valid permits for Maquinna Marine Park and a few pending renewals. Park Use Permit application fees are \$125 and annual permit fees range from \$250 to \$500 depending on the activity.

Reid said that the restrictions were designed to "reduce the footprint and impact of the tourism industry on the ecological and spiritual and cultural uses of the site."

The restrictions are under a trial period which ends in March 2023.

BC Parks collects a mandatory \$3 day-use fee per person to access Maquinna. Many commercial tour operators tack that day-use fee into their day tour rate (which is now about \$220 to \$230 per person before tax) and remit it to the province.

According to BC Parks, a portion of those day-use fees are then paid annually to MHSS to "cover expenses of work outside of the day-to-day maintenance of the park." Ahousaht park operators can collect and retain the overnight moorage fees at the dock, BC Parks said.

In addition to the provincial \$3 day-use fee, MHSS is asking visitors to their territory to make a voluntary donation to the Ahousaht Stewardship Fund, an ecosystem service fee that supports trail maintenance and ongoing restoration and monitoring efforts.

"We are asking people to reflect really on where it is that they are and the reason that they are able to create economic opportunity for themselves in this territory and chose to contribute to the Ahousaht Stewardship Fund," Reid said.

Atleo expressed his thanks to the non-Ahousaht tour operators for recognizing the significance of the new management plan for the community of Ahousaht.

"Even though we have been marginalized from the economic tourism economy, we are rebuilding that, and we are aiming to benefit from that sector, and we are doing so as a result of partnerships. We are very open to protocols with any tourism operator that is open to working with us," he said. 🇺🇸



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Sooke is a fishing hot spot for five species of salmon and halibut.  
FishingBooker photo

# Go fish!

## Calgary, Sooke and Haida Gwaii named three of the best fishing destinations in Canada

By Jennifer Blyth, [westcoasttraveller.com](http://westcoasttraveller.com)

**T**he three western Canadian locations on FishingBooker.com's list of Canada's best fishing destinations reveal the diversity that awaits anglers plying local waters.

With the 2023 fishing season on its way (apologies to those die-hard ice fishers), those planning the coming year's angling adventures might want to start in Calgary, which garnered top spot on the list.

With the Rockies on its doorstep, along with the mountains' accompanying rivers, lakes and streams, "fly

fishing is off the hook here, and trout are the main target," the site shares.

In particular, it's the region's bull trout that are a unique attraction: "These ferocious fighters can grow to be very big, and having them on the fly is an experience. They're highly protected, and as such, can't be kept even when you win the fight. That's why you have your brown and rainbow trout—equally feisty, good to eat, and open for fishing," the site says. "Then there's cutthroat trout, which are Alberta natives, always ravenous,

and ready to attack your fly with wild abandon."

For saltwater fans, two West Coast regions making the list are undoubtedly on more than a few bucket lists.

Number two on the FishingBooker list is Sooke, on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, where the "stunning piece of coastline is a great place to take a breather from your busy everyday life," the site notes.

"Vancouver Island needs no introduction when it comes to its phenomenal fishing scene, and Sooke is no



Lower Kananaskis Lake, about two hours from Calgary. With the Rockies on its doorstep, with their numerous rivers, lakes and streams, “fly fishing is off the hook here, and trout are the main target,” says FishingBooker.

different. All five species of Pacific salmon pass through these rich waters, each with its own unique seasonality,” FishingBooker said in a news release. “If you don’t feel like timing your fishing trip, no worries—the halibut bite is always on.”

For a diversity of species on offer—including salmon, trout, lingcod, halibut and maybe some tuna—you can’t beat Haida Gwaii, landing in fifth spot on the list.

“The fishing season starts in the spring, usually around March, and lasts until November. During that time, you can go after a wide variety of fish all on the same trip,” FishingBooker told the *Haida Gwaii Observer*.

They recommend visiting the archipelago between March and November for anyone who plans to cast a rod, with the opportunity to reel in a Chinook starting mid-May. Other salmon, including coho, pink, sockeye and chum, arrive later but stick around until December.

Anglers not interested in salmon will find great bottom fishing for halibut, rockfish or lingcod in the waters surrounding Haida Gwaii.

For those wanting to cast their line farther afield, also hooking a spot among prime fishing regions were St. Lawrence River, Quebec; Avalon Peninsula, Newfoundland; Lac Seul, Ontario; St. Peters Bay, PEI; and Dauphin Lake, Manitoba. FishingBooker is the largest platform in the world for connecting anglers and fishing guides,

with over 34,000 fishing trips available in more than 1,900 destinations worldwide.

— With files from Kaitlyn Bailey, Local Journalism Initiative, from the *Haida Gwaii Observer*, and Kevin Laird from the *Sooke News Mirror*. 📷



Three fishermen show off a halibut caught near Haida Gwaii, while on a guided fishing trip with CMF Charters. FishingBooker photo

KELOWNA

# Journey to Naramata





# This small town packs a big punch of things to do and see

By Darcy Nybo

**W**hat do a *séance* and an Indigenous Australian word have in common? They are both suspected origins of the name of a gorgeous community in the Okanagan: Naramata.

One thought is that the name came from a *séance* held back in 1907. Apparently, the great Sioux Chief, Big Moose, came through in the *séance* and told participants the land was called Naramattah, named so after his wife. It translates to “smile of the manitou,” a nature spirit.

Then there’s the other option: that it was named after an Indigenous Australian word, “naramata,” meaning “place of water.”

Whichever origin story you choose, you are sure to be greeted with smiles, be surrounded by nature and have access to lots of water when you visit Naramata.

Wineries, distilleries, fields of lavender, hiking trails, the Kettle Valley

Rail Trail, leisurely beach strolls and a newly renovated hotel await you for your Naramata adventure.

## About Naramata

Getting to Naramata is easy. From the Pacific Coastal Airlines destination of Penticton, head north and follow the signs on the eastern shore of Okanagan Lake for 15 kilometres (nine miles). The area is famous for its orchards, as well as for being one of Canada’s top wine-producing areas. It has a unique climate, and the Naramata Bench is a designated sub-zone of British Columbia’s extensive Okanagan Valley appellation.

As soon as you turn onto Naramata Road, you’ll be greeted with picturesque orchards, vineyards, clay bluffs and lakeshore. The population here is small—just a little over 1,600 people—but you may be surprised at how much this community has to offer.

## So much to do!

Grab your camera or smartphone and get ready for some of the best photo ops around. Naramata is a great place to explore the Kettle Valley Rail Trail. You’ll find incredible views of the lake and nearby communities. Cycling is the preferred way to explore the trails, as there is so much to see. Make sure to stop at Little Tunnel and take in the views.

Visit Rock Ovens Regional Park, a collection of stone and rock ovens built between 1911 and 1915. The park has several hiking trails that lead to more than 10 rock ovens used to bake bread and feed the immigrant workers who built the Kettle Valley Railway. Over 100 years later, they are still standing.

Want to hit the beach or have a picnic? There are lots of options here. Manitou Park and Beach is a popular destination that offers a white sand beach with plenty of shade trees right near the water. There’s also a baseball diamond, a volleyball court, two kids’ playgrounds, a swim dock and picnic tables, as well as wash-rooms.

A walk through Naramata Creek Park is also popular. The creek runs through a deep river canyon to a

As soon as you turn onto Naramata Road, you'll be greeted with picturesque orchards, vineyards, clay bluffs and lakeshore. The population here is small—just a little over 1,600 people—but you may be surprised at how much this community has to offer.



Emily Walker,  
wine director at  
Naramata Inn.

cascading waterfall. The hike is a 2.4-kilometre (1.5-mile) round trip, and takes about an hour to complete, depending how long you stay in the gully. This is a year-round trail, with new sights to see every season. Wear comfortable hiking shoes as the trail is packed dirt with some rocks and roots jutting out.

For something a little more relaxed, check out some of the 40 wineries in the Naramata area. Some require reservations for tastings, while others welcome you to drop on in.

### Places to eat

You won't be disappointed in the wide array of food available, much of it farm-to-plate, grown within minutes of the restaurants. Despite its small size, Naramata has a great selection of places to eat.

Many of the wineries in the area have a bistro or a restaurant attached to them. There's also the Naramata Pub, which provides pub-style food, including the biggest, tastiest wings around.

One of the finest restaurants in the Okanagan is right in Naramata. Simply called The Restaurant, it's a main draw of the Naramata Inn. Top Canadian chef Ned Bell, who influences the Inn's culinary program, is world-renowned for his signature dishes. He's also a strong advocate for the world's lakes, oceans and rivers, and a voice for hyper-local farming sustainability. At this restaurant you'll find the very best from local growers and artisans, paired with amazing award-winning local wines.

### Places to stay

In addition to several VRBO and Airbnb locations, The Bench d'Or is a luxury log guesthouse in Naramata, nestled within a vineyard with stunning views of the natural surroundings and Okanagan Lake. You'll find this unique property has a casual European flair, and no two suites are alike. There are private outdoor decks, barbeques and fireplaces, as well as saunas and outdoor water features.

The Naramata Inn is one of the





Chef Ned's King Crab Cobb Salad

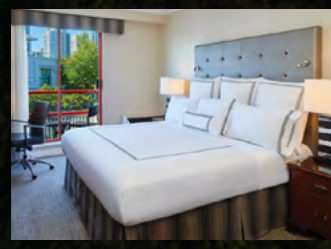
oldest buildings in town. It was constructed 114 years ago by the town's founder, J.M. Robinson. Over the past century, the Naramata Inn has welcomed visitors from all over the world. While it is newly renovated, every room still showcases the original 1908 charm, including detailed carpentry and clawfoot or deep soaker tubs. It has 12 mission-style rooms, each with direct access to the upper veranda and views of the gardens, lake and hills. It's also home to The Restaurant.

No matter where you stay or what you do, your visit to Naramata will be one to remember. 🏡



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Carolyn Redl, author of *Four Seasons by the Salish Sea*.

# Ebb and flows of the Salish Sea

Excerpt from *Four Seasons by the Salish Sea: Discovering the Natural Wonders of Coastal Living* by Carolyn Redl. © 2023. Published by Heritage House. All rights reserved.

Photos by Nancy Randall

**P**art travelogue, part natural history, this book explores life over the course of a year by waters that extend from Port Renfrew on the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Desolation Sound.

After moving to Vancouver Island from the Prairies in 2001, author Carolyn Redl made it her mission to learn as much as she could about the Salish Sea and island living. **Four Seasons by**

**the Salish Sea** evolved over 20 years of observation, curiosity, discovery and delight at the natural wonders and seasonal ebbs and flows along this magnificent stretch of coastline.

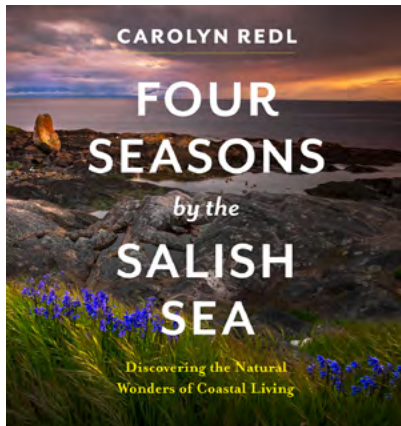
This profoundly personal and deeply informative book contains facts about plants, animals, history, parks, and communities. It highlights events in nature, such as spring flower blooms and herring and salmon spawns, and reveals mysteries in the water and in the coastal cedar, hemlock and Douglas fir rainforest. It describes places as diverse as Malcolm Island, the Sunshine Coast and Stamp Falls. Experiences range from viewing orcas in the distance to finding sand dollars, Turkish towels and nudibranchs in the inter-

tidal zone. While celebrating the area's idyllic setting and warm climate, the book also recognizes potential threats such as earthquakes, water shortages and challenges for gardeners. It also touches on the histories of Indigenous Peoples and settlers.

Our fruit trees are at the peak of their blossoming cycle for Mother's Day. Having escaped pruning, the cherry tree is heavily laden with flowers. We have spent every spare moment in the garden. Weeds are under control, garden boxes have been amended and prepared for seeding, and seedlings are arranged in one flat after another in the sun room.

We are ready for a break and eager

## An excerpt from *Four Seasons by the Salish Sea: Discovering the Natural Wonders of Coastal Living* by Carolyn Redl



to explore. Spring wildflowers are surely in bloom and hiking trails should be relatively dry. Hans and I have only to choose from the many island trails waiting for us to hike.

"I'm curious about the fish," I comment. "Did you read in the paper last week that there are salmon at Stamp Falls? Hard to believe. Would salmon be running in May?"

"Maybe steelhead."

Several fishermen in the family would know, but I do not. I cannot tell a coho from a chinook, but I do know that any salmon running now would not be sockeye, those signature autumn swimmers up the Fraser River to their spawning grounds in the Adams River near Shuswap Lake in interior British Columbia.

"I thought I read chinook. Could that be? Maybe the reference was to last fall's spawn?"

"We won't know if we don't investigate for ourselves, will we?" asks Hans. I am always game for a road trip.

While another pot of coffee brews, we pack fruit, veggies and other picnic nibbles in the cooler. Toss essentials in the car. Camera. Binoculars. Plant and bird identification books. A backpack and, in case

of rain, umbrellas and jackets. In summer, Oceanside—that is, all the coastal communities from Nanoose Bay to Bowser—is a prime tourist destination. Come winter, tourism slows down. We can tell which season it is by the length of time we have to wait to turn onto the Old Island Highway. "Old" because, during the 1990s, a new highway from Parksville to Campbell River was built only a few kilometres inland. The old highway which runs through downtown Parksville and follows the coastline up-island is still used for local traffic and has become a designated scenic route. Where the road from our community meets the busy old highway, there is only a stop sign. In winter, we quickly move on, but on a summer day it takes several minutes before there is a break in the traffic. Patiently, we wait before slipping onto the old highway—not a long summer wait, but not winter's speedy entry onto an empty road either. A spring wait.

Once past Parksville itself and on the highway to Tofino, we slow down for the funky Goats on Roof Old Country Market in Coombs. It gets its unusual name from the goats that literally graze on the grass-covered roof in the summer. Only an hour or so more before we will reach Stamp Falls.

It feels summer hot as we ascend "the hump," the local name for Port Alberni Summit. At 425 metres above sea level, it separates Vancouver Island into southeast and northwest. Calgarians would have to dig down over 500 metres to be as low in altitude as the summit is high. The altitude at the hump is enough to affect temperature; precipitation may fall as rain at nearby Cathedral Grove, but on the hump it snows. Clearcuts high on the mountainsides, visible from the highway, are definitively outlined by snow, and we encounter a few small patches of snow at the top of the hump.

While snow occasionally remains on the ground in our neighbourhood a few days now and then throughout winter, it can stay for weeks only a few kilometres inland and a couple hundred metres higher. Less than two hours up-island and at over 1,000 metres altitude, Mount Washington Resort has prime ski conditions at least

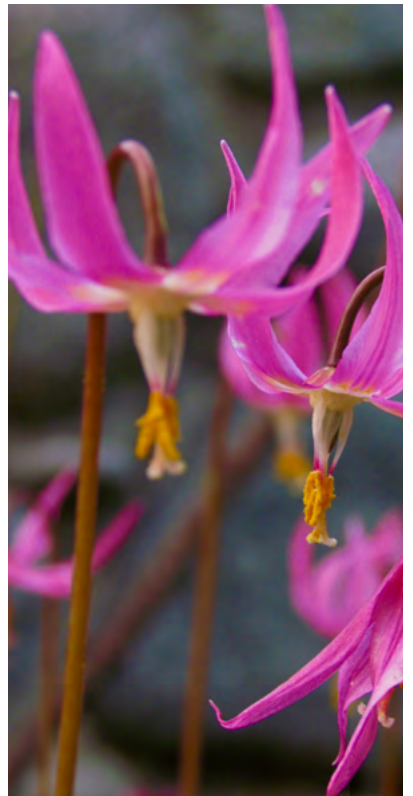
from December to March.

When we emerge from the car to gas up in Port Alberni, it is summer hot, well above May's average daytime temperatures of 11 or 12 degrees. Overnight, the temperature still drops to single digits. We will delay planting the garden until overnight lows stay above 10 degrees. We have had few days without some rain this month and still not one with sunshine from morning until night. You can see why we answer the call of our wanderlust when the forecast calls for a sunny day with no chance of precipitation.

Stamp Falls Provincial Park is on a road 18 kilometres almost straight northwest of Port Alberni. The road dissects the rural community of Beaver Creek into acreage properties that sprawl on either side of the road. Beyond the scattered houses, there is seemingly endless wilderness and mountains.

"I wonder if we'd have bought here if the real estate agent had thought to show us available properties."

"Not likely," Hans quickly responds, "I couldn't live under the dense, tall trees."





He is a prairie guy through and through and loves his open spaces. I learned this the first time we camped together over 25 years ago. I suggested a shady spot under some trembling aspens, but he pitched our tent in the open. If this was a signal warning of possible trouble ahead for our many differences, we ignored it. Happy to have an enthusiastic traveling companion, I easily accommodated his need to see far.

At the provincial park sign, we turn left and descend the hill. A half-dozen or so truck campers and motor homes are in the campground set along the Stamp River. We slip into the adjacent parking lot. On the short trail to the fish ladder, we immediately encounter our first surprise: a sweep of fawn lilies and trilliums in a continuous carpet from the path down the adjoining embankment to the swift-flowing Stamp River.


"Look at them," I marvel, "they just go on and on, I've never seen so many fawn lilies in one place."

Some of the trilliums are past their prime but each one is unmistakable with its whorl of three leaves that provides a green background for the small, single flower, itself composed

of three petals and delicate yellow stamens.

But it is the fawn lilies, all in full glorious bloom, that provide by far the dominant blossoms. Like the trilliums, the lilies have single flowers on relatively long stems. Unlike trilliums, whose flowers sit upright on their stems, the fawn lily flowers seemingly nod. Their petals curl under and the entire flower head falls groundward in a showy droop. Leaves provide the key to sure identification: fawn lily leaves are mottled green and dark brown; the

trilliums' leaves are uniformly green.

"Look closer." Hans drops to his knees, shuffling through the daypack for his magnifying glass, a sure sign that I am in for serious botanizing. "There are smaller white flowers growing here, too." His single-mindedness when it comes to our natural surroundings is what attracted me to him in the first place. He has an unquenchable curiosity for nature. Who could resist his enthusiasm now and not squat beside him? 



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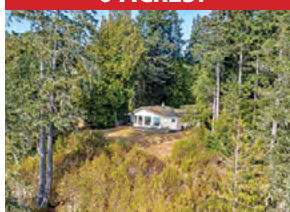


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