

# SOAR

Inflight  
Magazine for  
Pacific Coastal  
Airlines

## Adventures aplenty

Exploring the  
Great Bear Rainforest  
at Tweedsmuir  
Park Lodge

**Go west coast**  
Vancouver Island's  
Spirit Loop

**To the lake!**  
Okanagan Lake is the  
heart of summer  
life in Kelowna







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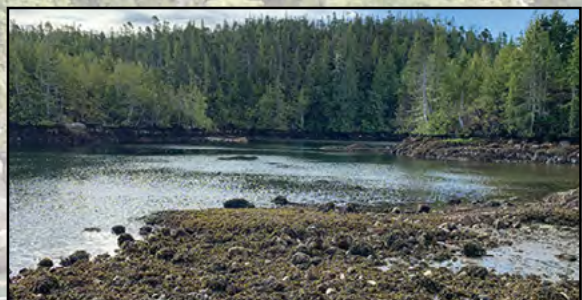
**Tahsis Oceanview Home:** Ocean and mountain views from this 2134sqft 2-story 4 bedroom home! Terraced property on three levels, shop with power and lane access. Home features attractive wood detailing, living space up and down with a separate entrance downstairs. Enjoy a fire in the backyard, or sitting on one of the two patios, while taking in the views! **\$289,900**



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Chris Esbati worked day and night to find us the perfect home. He took into account our very particular list of requirements and was very proactive in searching for and suggesting possible homes that would fit the requirements.

He made good suggestions to help us beat all the competition, a definite necessity in this competitive market. I would not hesitate to recommend him to anyone looking to buy a home, and we will definitely use him as our realtor when we sell or buy in future.

Jenn

**"EXACTLY WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR"**

Chris was our Realtor for our very first home! He was active in showing us listings and getting us viewings in such a hot market. He really worked hard to get us exactly what we were looking for and made the buying process easy for a couple of newbies to the market. Chris did such a great job for us that he's now working with my parents and my sister!

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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSTANT SUPPORT!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I would like to start this message by expressing our deepest gratitude for our passengers' unwavering support and loyalty to Pacific Coastal Airlines. As we spring into the summer travel season, we're thrilled to share with you some special events that have happened and some exciting updates for the upcoming months.

In April, we celebrated two milestones that hold great significance for us. We marked a momentous 25 years of service at Bella Coola (QBC) and Anahim Lake (YAA), and a remarkable five-year milestone at our Tofino - Ucluelet (YAZ) base. We recognize that these achievements would not have been possible without the support of the local communities, airport authorities and our business partners. We're incredibly grateful for the support from the people and organizations who have been with us throughout these years and we look forward to continuing to serve these destinations for many more years to come!

In line with our commitment to constantly improving our services, we're thrilled to announce that we have brought back the Saab 340 to Powell River (YPW) after a hiatus of seven years. This decision allows us to increase seat capacity, cargo space and charter frequency to meet our passengers' travel needs.

We are delighted to introduce our new increased pay scale for direct-entry captains and boosted incentives for first officers. As a people-first organization, our employees' work-life balance and career-growth opportunities are our top priorities. Thus, we take pride in providing competitive compensation and promoting from within. If you or someone you know is looking for a career in the aviation industry, please fly over to our careers page at [pacificcoastal.com/careers/](https://pacificcoastal.com/careers/) to explore your options!

Finally, I am honoured to announce the launch of three aviation scholarships for Indigenous youth and Pilot-AME training. These scholarships are made possible by the proceeds from our annual Memorial Charity Golf Tournament and will be awarded in partnership with the British Columbia Aviation Council (BCAC). I would like to invite anyone to participate in the 29th Annual Memorial Charity Golf Tournament taking place on Thursday, May 25. To register, donate or become a sponsor for our annual golf charity event, please visit our website at [pacificcoastal.com/golf](https://pacificcoastal.com/golf).

Again, thank you for choosing Pacific Coastal Airlines as your preferred travel option, and we look forward to serving on your next flight. ✈️



**Quentin Smith**





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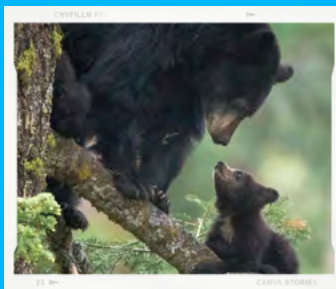
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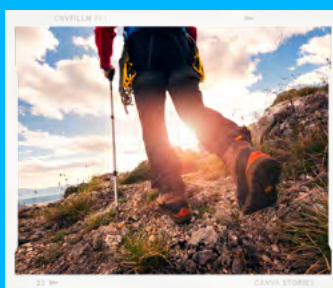


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## Upped fishing fees support angling and conservation

**BC WIDE:** It will cost a little more to go freshwater fishing in British Columbia this year.

The provincial government announced that angling fees were going up for the first time since 2003. Anglers will see an increase of 9.9 per cent in the 2023/24 season with an additional four per cent in 2024/25. This means a basic adult angler's license will increase to \$39.56 per year in 2023, then go up to \$41.15 in 2024.

All revenue collected for freshwater angling fees goes to the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation to help support the management of fisheries, habitats and angler opportunities in BC.

The increase in fees is expected to provide additional funding to the two organizations in their efforts to deliver conservation services to residents of the province. The Provincial Angling Advisory Committee approved the increase.

The proposed increases are expected to help the two organizations continue providing conservation services.



A basic adult angler's license in BC will increase to \$39.56 per year in 2023, and then go up to \$41.15 in 2024. AdobeStock

The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC delivers the provincial stocking program and stocks more than 5.4 million fish into 641 lakes annually. The non-profit organization works in partnership with government, industry and anglers to improve fishing in the province through the enhancement and conservation of BC's freshwater fish resources.

The Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation is a non-profit charity that invests in BC's fish and wildlife and the habitats in which they live. A large network of recipients benefits from this funding.

To learn more about freshwater fishing licenses and requirements in British Columbia, go to the provincial government's website at [www2.gov.bc.ca](http://www2.gov.bc.ca). 🇩🇪

## Greater Vernon is now officially the trails capital of BC



Greater Vernon has officially been marked the trails capital of BC.

Photo courtesy Ribbons of Green Trails Society.

By *Brendan Shykora*  
*westcoasttraveller.com*

**OKANAGAN:** With an abundance of places to hike and bike, British Columbia's Greater Vernon region has carved out a unique designation.

The Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO), in partnership with the Ribbons of Green Trails Society, has officially marked Greater Vernon as BC's trails capital.

The designation was proposed to the RDNO board of directors in 2022 to emphasize the numerous qualities of trails in the area. The official mark from the Canadian Trademarks Act recognizes the contributions of many people and

organizations to the vibrancy and diversity of local trail networks.

"We are thrilled to see recognition of the years of hard work by volunteers, elected officials, business partners and government staff to develop the extensive trail network in Greater Vernon," said Kim Young, director of the Ribbons of Green Trails Society. "We hope this will encourage and support continued growth throughout the region for years to come."

As part of advertising this new official mark, a committee led by the Ribbons of Green Trails Society has selected a brand and logo which will be added to trailhead signage and used digitally. 🇩🇪



## MEET A PACIFIC COASTAL EMPLOYEE: JUSTIN



**Position:** *Captain*

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

**Time with PASCO:** *Four years*

**Job description:** *Operate flights out of YVR all over the Pacific Coastal Airline network in British Columbia.*

### **Where were you born and where did you grow up?**

I was born in Langley, BC and lived there my entire childhood.

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

I love travelling around the province of BC and flying over places that I've never visited before. I have a long list of must-visit places on my bucket list within the province!

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

I love chainsaws, hiking and fishing. Anything outdoors!

**What is your favourite thing to do in your city?** I love exploring new lakes and forest service roads that I've never seen before. If it's raining hard, I'll just stay inside and read. 📖

# Tee up for a good cause

## PCA hosts 29th annual golf tourney and announces three aviation scholarships



For many businesses across BC and Canada, the annual Memorial Charity Golf Tournament hosted by Pacific Coastal Airlines is an event that has been close to their hearts since 1992. The tournament was started to raise funds for the Source Club Society of Powell River, a non-profit organization that helps people living with serious and persistent mental health conditions. Over the years, the tournament has raised the incredible amount of over \$550,000 for local charities.

Starting with a humble mission to give back to the communities in memory of PCA founder Daryl Smith and his son, Sheldon, the event has grown to be one of the most exciting and meaningful occasions of the year for both Pacific Coastal employees and attendees.

Golf enthusiasts across Canada are invited to join the 29th Memorial

Charity Golf Tournament on Thursday, May 25, at the Mayfair Lakes Golf and Country Club. With dinner and a get-home-safe gift card included, it's an event that you won't want to miss. To register, donate, or become a sponsor for PCA's annual Memorial Golf Charity, please visit [pacificcoastal.com/golf](http://pacificcoastal.com/golf).

In 2022, the event welcomed over 150 golfers and sponsors across British Columbia and Canada, with some from as far away as Dallas, Texas, coming together to raise a record amount of money for local charities. The golfers and sponsors, along with a spirited team of Pacific Coastal volunteers, raised \$90,000 after expenses—money which is being distributed to BC-based charities including the Source Club Society of Powell River, Power to Be and the Heiltsuk Community Men's Wellness Group.

Each donation made from the





Pacific Coastal Airline's 29th annual Memorial Charity Golf Tournament takes place May 25.

proceeds of the event was chosen carefully, as it is a source of pride for the employees and all participants who dedicate their time and donations to make it happen.

After three months of planning efforts and evaluation for the 29th tournament, Pacific Coastal Airlines has announced three aviation scholarships for BC Indigenous Youth and Pilot-AME training, along with donations to two BC-based charities: The Source Club Society and Power to Be. The scholarships will be awarded in partnership with the British Columbia Aviation Council (BCAC) and aim to promote job opportunities in the aviation and aerospace sector.

The \$10,000 Pacific Coastal Airlines, Daryl Smith Memorial Indigenous Youth Aviation Scholarship, and the \$10,000 Pacific Coastal Airlines, Paul Biglin Memorial, Indigenous Youth Aviation Scholarship are open to any Indigenous students across Canada who are attending school in BC. The scholarships are awarded to students who are actively pursuing training as

a pilot, aircraft maintenance engineer (AME) or flight attendant, or in-flight operations, airport operations or airline management and demonstrate a commitment to pursuing a career in aviation. The selection will be based on agreed criteria between BCAC and Pacific Coastal Airlines.

The \$10,000 Pacific Coastal Airlines, Sheldon Smith Memorial, Pilot-AME Aviation Training Scholarship is open to all BC residents who are actively pursuing training as a pilot or AME. The scholarship recipient must demonstrate how the training will contribute to their aviation career and show a commitment to pursuing a career in the small- to medium-sized British Columbia aviation sector.

"We are thrilled to offer these scholarships in partnership with BCAC," said Quentin Smith, the president of Pacific Coastal Airlines. "By supporting the education and training of young people who are passionate about aviation, we hope to contribute to the growth of the industry, and help to address the current pilot shortage."

Heather McCarley, chair of BCAC, thanked Quentin and said, "We congratulate Pacific Coastal Airlines in establishing these excellent scholarships by adding to BCAC's growing list of scholarships in support of aviation training in BC."

Beyond its charitable mission, the event is anticipated to be a fun-filled day with networking opportunities for local and international businesses across BC to meet and expand their connections.

With a well-planned itinerary that promises something for everyone, the tournament is sure to be a day to remember. Participants are welcome to bid on the silent auction prizes, team up for games and enjoy delicious food from local food trucks.

The event also includes drinks and door prizes for all golfers, along with hole activities with a golf cannon that are sure to be a blast! And, of course, there's the main event: the friendly golf matches, which promise to be competitive and enjoyable for golfers of all levels. 🏌️‍♂️





# ANNUAL MEMORIAL CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

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James Manke is rolling new life into Ucluelet's iconic The Wreckage building with a kayak museum.

(Andrew Bailey photo)

# Iconic Ucluelet

## Building transformed into kayak museum

By Andrew Bailey, [westcoasttraveller.com](http://westcoasttraveller.com)

**A** unique new future is rolling into one of Ucluelet's most cherished icons.

James Manke has officially opened what he believes is Canada's first dedicated traditional kayak museum inside The Wreckage building on Peninsula Road.

The Wreckage's visibly quirky exterior, with the vessel *Evelyn Mae* perched next to it, is a popular photo spot for tourists and passersby, but the building has sat empty for the past few years waiting for a new vision to revitalize its locally hallowed walls.

"Since I've moved here, there's been a lot of talk about this building and how it holds a lot of significance for a lot of elders in this community who grew up here," Manke says. "I had driven by the building many, many times and seen people looking in the windows. And one day I was walking by and poked my head in the front window and I had a vision for this space. I saw a kayak museum and a community space and an area where we build kayaks."

Manke won Gold competing for Canada in the Greenland National Kayaking Championship in 2014 and has spent the past 12 years teaching traditional kayaking around the world.

"This is my way of giving back. This is for

the people," he says. "It's to really encourage the growth of kayaking in this area."

Ucluelet is making a name for itself as a "kayaking Mecca of Canada" for its dynamic waters and proximity to the Broken Group Islands, he says.

"It's very quickly become a world-class destination for kayakers," he says, suggesting the new museum could help introduce kayaking to locals who may not know what they're missing out on in their own backyard. "It will help expose traditional kayaking and the history of kayaking to people that may not have had the chance to ever experience something like this."

Manke moved to Ucluelet with his partner Kim last year after visiting the community frequently as a kayak instructor.

"I've spent a lot of time in this area and every time I'd come to Ucluelet, and then leave, I'd get heartache. I'd literally feel like I was leaving home. So, last year, we decided this really is a true sign that this is home for us. I'm a big fan of the weather and the storms and I'm a big fan of big surf, so living in this type of environment for me is a great balance of life," he says.

The museum will offer opportunities to learn how to build traditional kayaks and paddles, as well as feature a community lounge where international and local kayak instructors will give presentations.

"It's just a place where people can come

and collaborate and be together," he says.

"The energy that you really get from being around like-minded people is a very empowering feeling and, when the pandemic hit, we kind of lost a lot of that. We couldn't get together anymore, and I think a lot of people have really suffered from that. So, this particular space is really intended to help bring people back together and let people collaborate and share that stoke."

The space already houses several traditional kayaks and paddles, with five more frames on their way from Greenland which Manke plans to hang from the ceiling.

"The ultimate goal that I have is that you'll walk into this place and there will just be framed kayaks all the way around you," he says. "I really love the frames of kayaks because it shows you the meticulous work and the hard work that's been put into that craft. Sometimes, when you skin it, you don't see all that amazing work that's under there."

The museum is also collaborating with local artists to bring commissioned pieces into the space and will be collecting donations to bring in youth, who he will help build their own kayaks and then teach them some kayaking techniques, before partnering with a local kayaking company for a trip through the Broken Group Islands. 📍



# Adventures aplenty



## Exploring the Great Bear Rainforest from Tweedsmuir Park Lodge

By Lucas Aykroyd / Photos by Jesaja Class

Is that...? Yes, it is! A 400-pound male black bear forages by the side of the road for wild strawberries. We've just entered Tweedsmuir Provincial Park on the Chilcotin Plateau, and my adventure is already underway.

I'm excited as I stare out the van window. We spotted this hungry bear just minutes after our 70-minute flight from Vancouver to Anahim Lake. The thrilling drive to Bella Coola and Tweedsmuir Park Lodge in the Great Bear Rainforest just got even better.

It's mid-July, a little ahead of the prime grizzly bear-viewing season

(September and October), but there's still plenty to see and do in this land of tall cedars and deep valleys. From hikes and hot springs to river rafting and Indigenous petroglyph-viewing, each day has a rhythm of its own.

Spanning nearly a million hectares, Tweedsmuir Provincial Park was named in 1938 in honour of John Buchan, the Scottish adventure novelist (*The Thirty-Nine Steps*) who served as the first Baron of Tweedsmuir and Canada's 15th Governor General. However, as we'll discover, the park's roots run much deeper on the unceded ancestral territories of the Nuxalk and Ulkatcho nations.

Our descent from 5,000 feet above sea level to 500 feet on the 1953-built Freedom Road is an adventure in its own right. The broad dirt road abounds with hairpin curves and steep grades, offering stunning views of the Bella Coola Valley. When we finally reach the valley floor, the road becomes paved and we whiz past the Atnarko River, a traditional hot spot for Chinook salmon and trout fishing.

Tweedsmuir Park Lodge offers a tranquil village feel. Eleven red-roofed luxury chalets with rustic charm grace a long lawn that extends down to the river. Our group drops off our bags before promptly making another short





drive to the lodge's nearby climbing route, called a via ferrata ("iron path").

After a safety talk, we don helmets for the guided two-hour rock-climbing tour. Harnesses and carabiners keep us attached to steel cables as we climb on metal rungs, which makes the 700-foot ascent easier. However, breathtaking challenges, like clambering across a gully while clinging to cables, still abound.

At the top, the imposing silhouettes of Stupendous Mountain and Defiance Mountain juxtapose beautifully with the Bella Coola River flowing grey-green below us.

Back at the lodge, I hop on the well-appointed gym's rowing machine before retreating to my comfortable timber-framed chalet that has a gas fireplace and queen-sized bed. After lathering up with all-natural liquid soap in the walk-in rain shower, I join my travel companions for dinner in the main lodge.

From watermelon salad with feta cheese and mint to pork tenderloin with kale and whipped sweet potato, the fresh ingredients in every course captivate my taste buds. Dessert, featuring profiteroles with chocolate

**As we float downstream in a four-person inflatable raft, I understand his enthusiasm. Wildlife sightings abound. We spot bald eagles soaring ahead, a large beaver lodge and two male mule deer half-hidden in riverside bushes. Apart from distant birdsong and cool breezes, the silence feels eternal.**

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mousse and strawberries, adds a delicious touch of decadence.

When we head out for a nature walk the following morning with local guide Doug Barker, I'm inevitably curious about whether more bear sightings lie ahead. Doug whets our appetite by describing how the grizzlies feast on gooseberries and Saskatoon berries in the summer and stock up on pink salmon in the fall in this temperate coastal rainforest.

Hiking beneath towering 500-year-old Douglas firs and huge cottonwoods by the Atnarko River, we spot everything from a deserted eagle's nest to a black bear's day bed. Finally, just after 11 am on Tote Road, Doug points out a female bear and her yearling cub, foraging far above us on a rock-strewn hillside. They resemble grizzlies but are actually black bears with unusual golden-brown fur.

It's a magical moment. However, we maintain our healthy distance, as Doug elaborates on the animals' keen sense of smell: "They're very savvy. A downwind black bear will smell a grizzly and realize it's time to go elsewhere."

Unbitten and unbothered, we continue our journey through "Pikaville." In this rocky area, pikas—which look like a cross between rabbits and chipmunks—stockpile food in caches, although they're

keeping a low profile today.

After a casual outdoor lunch, we drive to the Fisheries Pool Campground, the launching site for our Atnarko River float.

"My main reason for living here is the awesome rivers," explains Jessup, our exuberant guide.

As we float downstream in a four-person inflatable raft, I understand his enthusiasm. Wildlife sightings abound. We spot bald eagles soaring ahead, a large beaver lodge and two male mule deer half-hidden in riverside bushes. Apart from distant birdsong and cool breezes, the silence feels eternal.

Another relaxing evening awaits back at the lodge. I enjoy the 75-degree-Celsius heat in the on-site Finnish sauna before hitting the outdoor hot tub. My gourmet dinner ranges from spring rolls with shrimp to duck breast with confit parsnip.

I'm well-fueled for more Great Bear Rainforest adventures. And they just keep coming in the days ahead.

On a misty Bella Coola Grizzly Tours boat tour, we gaze at the abandoned 1916-built Tallheo salmon cannery while learning about the late 19th-century history of Norwegian settlement here. Stopping at the Eucott Bay Hot Springs trumps my previous hot tub experience,

as I alternate between steaming natural hot pools and tingling-fresh ocean dips. When we hike near Larso Bay to view "Big Cedar," a five-metre-wide colossus that's one of BC's largest western red cedars, it's awe-inspiring and humbling.

A roadside sighting of a four-year-old grizzly foraging for vegetation adds another genuine thrill prior to a 14-kilometre mountain hike in the Rainbow Range. The area is awash in rich volcanic soil. Fire-scarred jack pines and purple lupines give way to glistening ponds and cliffside views of the snowline.

To cap off my Tweedsmuir Park Lodge stay, we head into Bella Coola to meet Sheldon Tallio, a Nuxalk Nation artist and cultural tour leader with Copper Sun Journeys.

"Everything I tell is just an echo of our ancestors," says Sheldon, who focuses on language preservation and archeology.

After touring a nearby Nuxalk petroglyph site that depicts creation myths, we follow a wooden walkway through the sun-dappled forest to view a traditional sweat lodge.

As Sheldon sings a traditional Nuxalk song about ancestral connections to the land, I feel like I'll be flying home with a deeper connection to the Bella Coola region as well. 📍



# Un-Ordinary Your Day

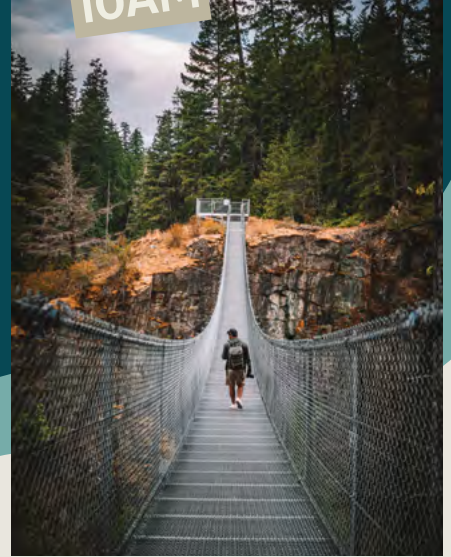
ᐱᐞmatax<sup>w</sup>, Campbell River, is nestled within the territory of the Liᑖ<sup>w</sup>iᑖdaᑖ<sup>w</sup> peoples; the WeWaiKai, WeiWaiKum, and Kwikiah Nations; here there are no borders between city and nature. ᐱᐞmatax<sup>w</sup>, Campbell River is located in the heart of the Discovery Passage, a small city nestled in nature, surrounded by the wild, with all the comforts of home.

Find your perfect itinerary and get inspired to plan your stay, from where to grab your morning coffee to the best places to embrace the outdoors and experience our community culture.



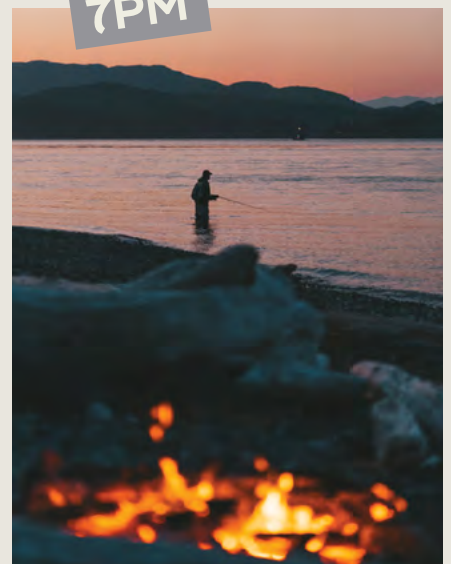
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# Go west coast

## Discovering Vancouver Island's Spirit Loop

By Susan Lundy

Photos by Landon Coplestone, courtesy Tourism Langford

**T**ake the Pacific Marine Circle Route, add in a passion for nature, a need for relaxation and a palate that's craving divine flavours, and you're ready for the Spirit Loop—a driving tour that explores the Vancouver Island communities of Langford, Sooke, Port Renfrew and Malahat.

This well-loved route is easily accessed by car after flying via Pacific Coastal Airlines to Victoria International Airport. And as my husband and I set out in late April last year—amid typical west coast sun-rain-sun weather—we were astonished by the array of sights and experiences, and elated by the Spirit Loop's celebration of everything west coast.

It's tough to decide what stood out the most.

Was it the views? Because they were spectacular. On our first evening we dined in the newly renovated Masters Lounge at Westin Bear Mountain Resort, gazing at the

expansive edge-of-the-mountain view as seen through the retractable glass roof and walls above and beside our table.

Then there was the inky ocean vista from the rocks at Sheringham Point Lighthouse in Sooke, and the mesmerizing, top-of-the-world scene from the Malahat SkyWalk. And almost capping it all was the view from the window-encased bathtub at the Malahat's Moon Water Lodge, where the sight line extended up and down Finlayson Arm. In the distance, we could see the hive-like structure of the Malahat SkyWalk jutting out from the trees; and it was here in the morning that the sunrise stretched pink fingers from the horizon straight into the room.

So the views stood out, definitely. But the hikes were great too. At Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail in Langford we followed an easy-to-navigate path through a dense thicket, where the sun shone on lichen-draped trees and it felt like an enchanted forest. The trail led us to a waterfall-viewing platform and a suspension bridge. Later, we strolled the



windy-sunny-rainy Whiffin Spit in Sooke, then scrambled down a hillside path to the Sheringham Point Lighthouse, wandered the rocky beach in front of our dockside cabin at Wild Renfrew, and explored the beautiful blossoming trees in the orchards at Merridale Cidery & Distillery in Cobble Hill.

But perhaps most surprising was our hike along Sombrio Beach—a surfers' paradise near Port Renfrew—where we followed directions just off the beach to an absolutely spectacular waterfall and water-carved canyon.

Food and drink options on the Spirit Loop also stand out as highlights, starting with our impeccable dinner at Masters Lounge, where a three-course meal paired with wine by master sommelier Bipin Bhatt had us swooning over both the flavours and the artistry of the presentation. Elevated even higher by the view, it was a royal feast.

BridgeMans Bistro, nestled along the Mill Bay shoreline at the foot of a marina, was also a revelation. Views from the floor-to-ceiling windows, the chill atmosphere and excellent food will, going forward, forever command a Mill Bay detour from Highway 1. It claims to pay homage to the blue-collar sensibility of the hard-working, adventurous bridge worker, offering “dishes that are imaginative yet grounded in the unique hard-working communities we serve.”

At House of Boateng in Langford we met chef-owner Castro Boateng and got the story behind his restaurant's menu, which merges flavours of West Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific Northwest cuisine. (More info below.) Not only did we relish our breakfast here, we walked up the road to Castro's store and purchased a bottle of HOB hot sauce. Recommended!

We had so many amazing feasts on the Spirit Loop, but a meal at House of Boateng is really something special. There is a lot of love and creativity here, with West Coast flavours enhanced by an African influence. Take the highly-popular Hippy Bennie, which has an African-style chickpea



Malahat SkyWalk.

base with a hollandaise sauce featuring wild BC mushrooms and nettle. I'm not generally a big breakfast person, but my gluten-free, dairy-free vegetarian African Bowl (jollof rice with Senegal flavours, pickled vegetables, scrambled eggs and smoked eggplant puree) was so good, I may have to change my morning ways.

We also found spirits on the Spirit Loop, first at Sheringham Distillery in Sooke, where we sampled the distillery's unique west-coast

take on gin, liqueur and aquavit. Divine.

At Merridale, we discovered that in addition to producing a full line of ciders, Merridale was one of the very first craft distilleries in BC. We ended up tasting a flight of spirits and a flight of ciders and headed home with a bottle of Rhumb—a very tasty rum-style spirit made with honey instead of cane sugar. Our tasting took place in a beautiful indoor setting but (had the sun been shining) we could have sat outside in the picturesque orchard picnic area.



Accommodations? Options are plentiful, and all our overnight spots were pet friendly. Our experience included a spacious, upscale room at the Westin Bear Mountain. (While the rooms are lovely now, they are all scheduled for renovation. New owners at the Westin are renovating much of the hotel, and if the new Masters Lounge is any indication, the results will be spectacular.)

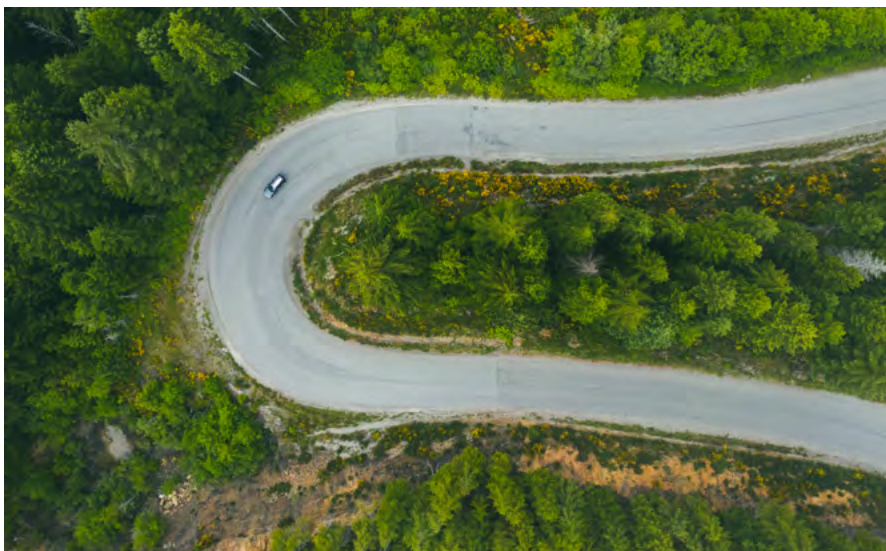
In Port Renfrew, we stayed at Wild Renfrew in a sweet two-room cabin accessed off a dock and near great food at the Renfrew Pub. We spent our final night at Moon Water Lodge, and while the location just off the highway on the Malahat might not be optimum, you can solve the problem by hopping in the window-side bathtub, drinking in the views (and perhaps a glass of something bubbly) and forgetting all about everything else.

The final stop for me on the Spirit Loop left me in excellent spirits. Back at the Westin Bear Mountain, I stepped into Amatista Spa and slipped into the velvety world that is their signature West Coast Body Wrap, using award-winning BC-made Beauty Through Balance products. This luxurious, detoxifying body treatment features Pacific seaweed, sea salts and pure green tea, as well as a Canadian glacial mask, with ingredients harvested



from the mountains on Vancouver Island. The experience was so deeply relaxing, I drifted into a light sleep, dreaming I was wrapped in a cocoon while my face was gently rubbed and my scalp massaged.

A true west coast experience and a perfect conclusion to the Spirit Loop journey. 📍







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The Swaren family: Wes, Tara, Piper, Kristen, Ella and "Bentley"  
Photo by Lia Crowe

# To the lake!

## Okanagan Lake is at the heart of summer life

By Lia Crowe

**A**s we begin our descent down the east side of the Okanagan Connector mountain pass, which runs from Merritt to Kelowna, the landscape quickly changes from a green forest of fir and aspen trees to a dryer landscape of pine and bunch grasses. My partner and I immediately feel

the temperature warm up a few degrees. And then, like a majestic queen, Okanagan Lake suddenly appears in our view: blue, sparkling and impressive in its immensity.

Okanagan Lake is like a magnet around the centre of which Okanagan life orbits. The picturesque towns of Peachland, Summerland and Naramata dot its perimeter and the larger cities of Penticton and Kelowna hug its shores.

They are all connected by fruit-producing land with orchards and wineries that flow from the hills down to the fresh water. And as the summer temperatures start to creep up, the lake is the place to be—this is where valley residents and visitors get to play.

Winding along West Kelowna's Boucherie Road, we pass numerous



wineries that beckon with the promise of cool Chardonnay—with notes of honeycrisp apple and butterscotch—or bright Pinot Gris, refreshing in its minerality. But the wineries will have to wait because after our lengthy drive from Vancouver Island, our ultimate destination comes into view—Hotel Eldorado, Okanagan lakeside luxury at its finest.

Hotel Eldorado has been a hidden gem of Okanagan hospitality since 1926. Beautifully situated right on Okanagan Lake, “The El” has a private boardwalk that glows in the evening with twinkling lights, a luxury marina that offers boat and personal watercraft rentals, along with daily and weekly moorage for all in-house guests’ boats. It immediately sets the tone of stepping back in time to an era of luxurious elegance.

We open the door to our lavish lake-view suite and let out a big sigh as we flop onto the comfy king-sized bed. The sound of waves lapping the shore and a sweet breeze fill the room from the open window, and our nervous systems start a slow unwind.

Later that evening we have dinner in the Eldorado dining room, where an old-fashioned wooden rowboat suspended from the ceiling gives the room a lovely feeling of warmth against the backdrop of the blue lake that turns grey as the last light fades from the sky.

We sample buttery steelhead trout with burrata salad to start, and then dive into Cornish game hen and a vegetarian coconut curry, all paired with mouthwatering Okanagan wines.

Our server delights us by offering a bit of the history of The El, which was founded by Countess Bubna, an aristocratic English woman, who decades earlier had



been married to an Austrian count.

But the highlight of the dinner for me—and my sweet tooth—is the pina colada dessert of compressed pineapple, passionfruit cremeux, coconut rum sorbet and almond financier.

The next morning at the West Kelowna Yacht Club, we meet Wes and Tara Swaren and their family, who are taking us out on the lake on their Starcraft pontoon boat—which is like a floating living room—for some fun in the sun. Wes and Tara regale us with stories about summer on the lake as

we sip cold rosé. The lake bustles with life, and activity on it is essential, they say, as Okanagan summer temperatures can soar, hitting close to 50 degrees Celsius last summer.

The three Swaren daughters laugh and smile as their dad pushes the pontoon boat into high gear. I face the wind and look down the long lake and start to get what it’s all about. Suddenly my hat flies off, landing far away on the water’s surface. Tara’s husband turns the boat around and the girls jump into





action as one assures me that this happens all the time. As I place my rescued and now soaking hat back on my head, I feel—just like that—I’m inducted into lake life.

Looking to join the fun? Here are some of the many ways to enjoy life on the lake in Kelowna.

## To the beach

Okanagan Lake is home to over 30 beaches, and many of them have playgrounds, concessions and bathrooms. Five of the most popular beaches in Kelowna are Hot Sands Beach, Boyce-Gyro Beach, Rotary Beach, Sarsons Beach, and Strathcona Park.

## On the lake

There are many, many ways to have fun on the lake, where the summertime water temperature averages 19 to 23 degrees Celsius. Things you can rent include: stand-up paddleboards (SUPs), wakeboards, sailboats,

houseboats, jet skis, pedal-boats, charter boats, flyboards, kayaks and canoes.

With a host of marinas, serene bays and isolated beaches, boating is a great way to explore the 135-kilometre-long lake that stretches north and south from Kelowna. Numerous marinas, yacht clubs, charters and rental companies dot the shoreline in both directions. Several

marinas on the lake have gas bars with convenience stores.

Boaters can take their time on the lake in some sort of vessel, or try parasailing, wind-surfing or learning to wakeboard. Another opportunity? Finish the day with an evening dinner and dance on one of the local charter cruises.



Dinner at the Eldorado.  
Photo by Lia Crowe





Kayaking on Okanagan Lake.  
Photo courtesy Tourism Kelowna

## SUP trail

If stand-up paddle boarding is your thing, Okanagan Lake offers a 27-kilometre SUP trail that runs from McKinley Beach to Bertram Creek Regional Park. Running along Kelowna's shoreline, the trail has many buoys to guide paddlers along their way. Paddle by more than 20 beaches and parks, three waterfront resorts and two bird sanctuaries, as well as downtown Kelowna. Paddlers can choose to explore part of the trail or test their stamina by

paddling the whole thing. Either way, it's a great chance to take in the beautiful sights from the water.

## Scuba diving

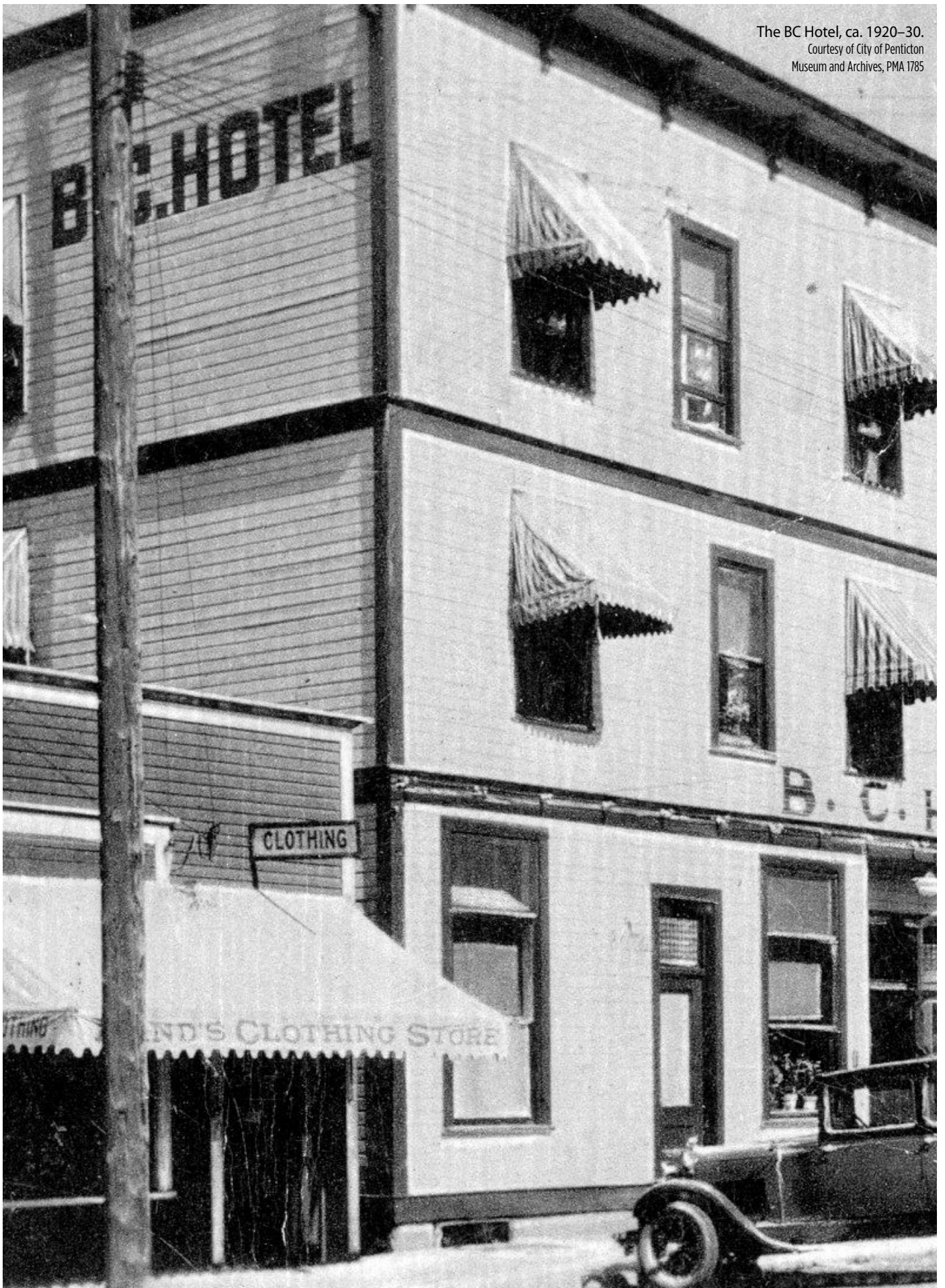
Okanagan Lake offers scuba divers shore and boat dives, catering to all levels of expertise. The lake is 232 metres at its deepest and has shallower reaches too. Visibility is best in the spring, fall and winter months: explore rock formations, small caves, overhangs, shelves and drop-offs.

## Explore a mystery

Okanagan Lake is welcoming and refreshing during the summer, but it also has its mysteries, such as mythical creatures, hidden coves and tombs. Search for Ogo-pogo, hike Paul's Tomb trail at Knox Mountain or snorkel in the crystal clear water of the quiet, secluded bays. 🏠



The BC Hotel, ca. 1920–30.  
Courtesy of City of Penticton  
Museum and Archives, PMA 1785





# BUSTED

## at the BC Hotel

### Robbers caught at historic landmark in Penticton

An excerpt from *Room at the Inn: Historic Hotels of British Columbia's Southern Interior*, written by the late historian Glen A. Mofford and published by Heritage House.

*This fully illustrated social history profiles 40 historic hotels spread over five regions of the southern interior of British Columbia. Covering the period of the 1890s to 1950s, Room at the Inn reveals the long-forgotten histories of BC's early hospitality industry, through the riveting stories of the men and women who built, ran and frequented hotels, hostels, resorts and roadhouses in BC's southern interior. Room at the Inn transports readers to a bygone era and pays tribute to the pioneers, entrepreneurs and hard-working men and women who built and operated these historic accommodations. The following excerpt describes the BC Hotel (1905-54), later called the Valley Hotel (1954-2012), located at 123 Front Street in the Pacific Coastal Airlines destination of Penticton, BC.*

**P**enticton in 1905 was a growing community with a government dock on Smith Street (later named Front Street), where passengers and freight would be loaded and unloaded from the sternwheelers that plied the waters of Okanagan Lake. Upon arriving at the government dock in Penticton, travellers could either head to the mining camps growing around the Oliver area or to a ranch.

The two-storey BC Hotel was

**Exhausted from their journey, James and Wilson were spotted two days later by co-proprietor Art Thompson inside the lobby of the BC Hotel. Thompson immediately alerted the BC Provincial Police.**

constructed at that important junction and rapidly became the cornerstone hotel when it opened in 1905. The location of the hotel was perfect, and it was built during a critical time in the city's development, according to Penticton Museum curator Peter Ord.

"The perfect place to put a hotel was right at the foot of that dock. That was one of the attractions of the BC Hotel. It remained a bustling place for years and could easily be found, being the tallest structure in the community at the time."

The BC Hotel was built by Percy Marks and immediately filled a void in the community.

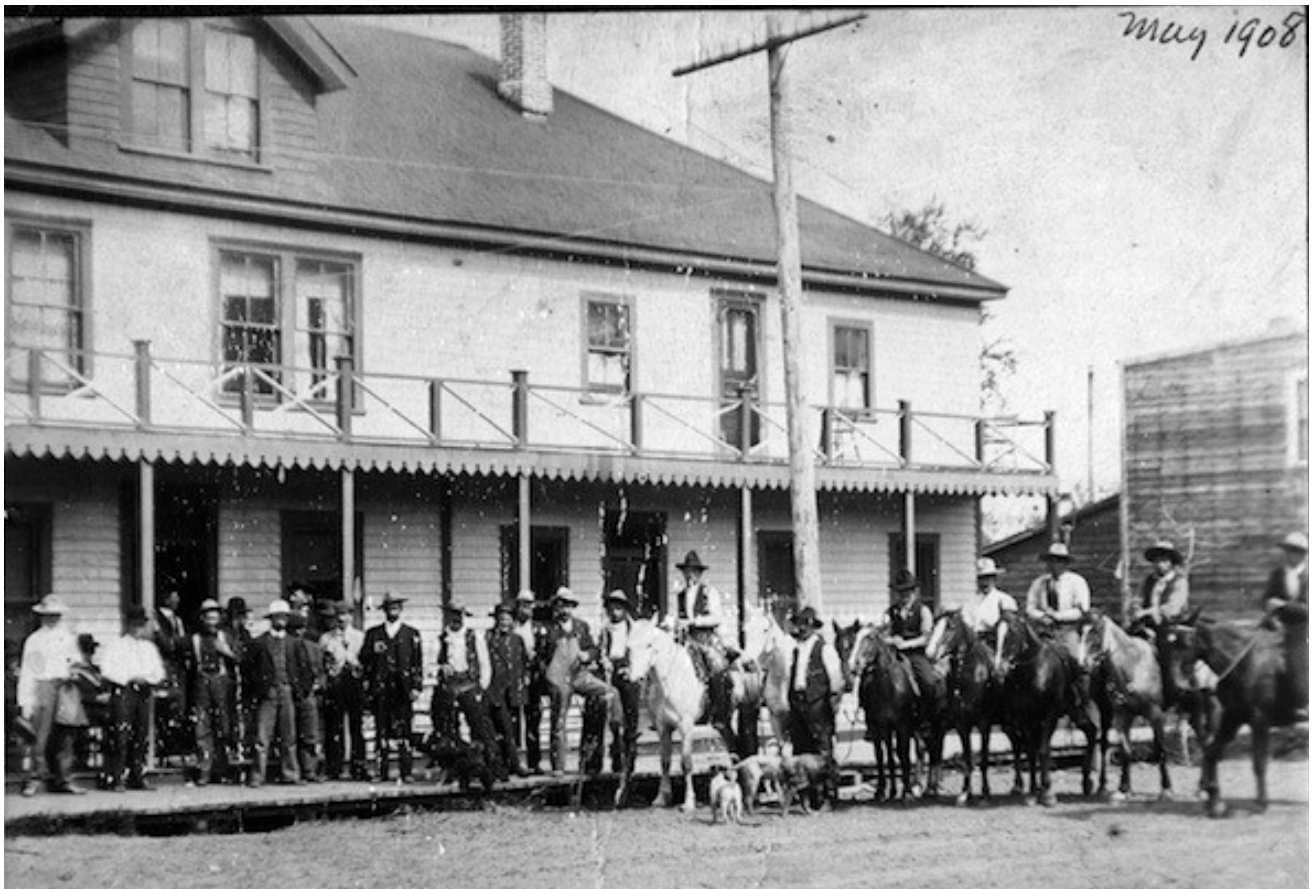
An article in the Hedley Gazette is the first mention of the BC Hotel in Penticton, stating that, "Penticton is beginning to wake at last. Buildings are going up and the sound of the saw and hammer is heard the weeklong. Percy Marks' hotel is being shingled. Percy seems to have a knack of catching a new place just before the rush."

A significant event took place in the BC Hotel in the spring of 1912. On a cool evening in March that year, a masked man entered the Charter and Taylor's General Store and Post Office in South

Kelowna, pulled out a revolver and demanded money from the cash register. Co-owner Mr. Taylor complied as the few customers present looked on in terror, their hands in the air. While Taylor was collecting the money for the robber, almost nobody seemed to notice that a boy, Roy Randall, slipped out the back door. Young Randall ran as hard as he could to the barroom of the Bellevue Hotel, which was crowded at the time in the aftermath of a Saturday rugby game. He informed the bartender of the robbery and word was immediately sent to Constable John Tooth, a veteran BC Police officer stationed in Kelowna, who warned the nearby provincial police detachments. A thorough search for the armed robber ensued.

The thief was identified as Walter Boyd, alias Walter Boy James, alias James Polke, a 24-year-old from Goodrich, North Dakota, who was known to police. He was a labourer who had worked for the local land company and was reputed to be a crack shot with a pistol or rifle. James had seen Roy Randall flee from the store and even took a potshot at him with his .44 but missed. James knew that the police would soon be on his trail but still demanded that the safe in the store be opened. The proprietor complied, and then the desperado made his escape. It was reported that James's take was hardly worth the effort, as he escaped with \$8.75. The robber then met up with an accomplice, Frank Wilson, at the lakeside, where Wilson had a boat at





The BC Hotel, 1908. Courtesy of City of Penticton Museum and Archives, PMA 4949

the ready, and the two outlaws made their way south to Penticton.

That's where the BC Hotel comes into the story. Exhausted from their journey, James and Wilson were spotted two days later by co-proprietor Art Thompson inside the lobby of the BC Hotel. Thompson immediately alerted the BC Provincial Police. Constable Geoffrey H. Ashton, accompanied by Chief Michael Roche, entered the BC Hotel with guns drawn and surprised James and Wilson, arresting them on the spot. James was carrying a loaded .44 pistol that Roche seized during the arrest, but the chief didn't notice the .22 handgun hidden underneath James's arm.

James was booked into jail, and the following morning the two would be transported back to Kelowna on the sternwheeler SS Okanagan, which was due to depart at 5:30 the following morning. Constable Ashton was assigned to take the pair back to Kelowna, where they would stand trial for armed robbery. It was during

that trip on the SS Okanagan that the prisoners made their escape. James asked for a drink of water but couldn't drink from the cup while chained, so Constable Ashton took the handcuffs off for a moment. It was then that James went for his hidden .22 pistol, taking the constable by complete surprise. James quickly fired a shot that hit Constable Ashton in the forehead. The bullet lodged in his brain and Ashton fell to the deck, mortally wounded. Meanwhile, James fumbled for the handcuff keys and released himself and Wilson. The desperate pair waited for the sternwheeler to make its scheduled stop at Peachland, where they jumped ship.

Without a real plan other than to escape, James and Wilson wandered the hills outside Peachland, most likely looking for a couple of horses or an automobile to steal to then make their getaway south to the US. Meanwhile, the whole South Okanagan was alerted to the shooting of Constable Ashton (he was in a coma and barely

alive). Local farmers joined in the search for the fugitives. Two farmers from Wilson's Landing came upon James and Wilson and got the drop on them before James could unholster his gun. The recaptured prisoners were handed off to the authorities and held over for trial in Kamloops. James was convicted of armed robbery and murder and was hanged at Kamloops on August 9, 1912.

Talk about the murder of Constable Ashton eventually calmed down, and by October 1913 the BC Hotel had a new owner. The BC Hotel went through a name change in 1954 to the Valley Hotel operating until a devastating fire destroyed the building in 2012.

From its beginnings in 1905 as a modest two-storey hotel in which the top floor was a bordello, and expanded over the years through countless renovations, the BC Hotel was a landmark in the community of Penticton and its history will long be remembered. 🇨🇦



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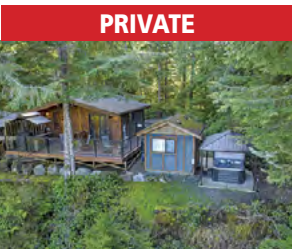
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