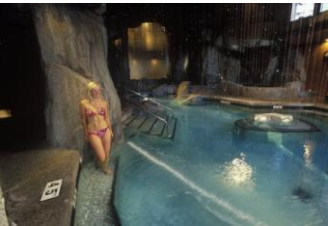


Island Ideas...



Cowichan – The Journey – The 70,000 residents of the Cowichan region – or “land warmed by the sun” as referred to by local First Nations people – are gearing up for a busy 2008 as they host the North American Indigenous Games from August 3-10. An estimated 9,000 participants will partake in 16 sporting events while more than 20,000 spectators are expected at the opening ceremonies. But the journey does not begin there. In July, 80 traditional ocean-going canoes from various canoe cultures and nations will make a 2-week journey, known as Tribal Journeys, to Cowichan. This year's Tribal Journeys are set to be the largest ever. In addition, a 20' western red cedar log will be altered into a traditional story pole by a Coast Salish artist. The pole will journey throughout the province, allowing many to participate in the carving until it's unveiling at the opening ceremonies in Cowichan. Throughout the games event, visitors will be able to wander the cultural village and partake in the international, modern and traditional entertainment, artisans, merchandise and symposiums. The event is being organized in direct association with the Cowichan Tribes, in full partnership with provincial and federal governments and the Cowichan Valley Regional District. The Games are geared to promote healthier lifestyles, foster and uphold pride and build a legacy of new and lasting relationships between indigenous and non-Indigenous people. www.cowichan2008.com. (Photo Credit: Boomer Jerritt)

Get Away with the Girls – for some golf, beachcombing, spa treatments, caving... The Parksville\Qualicum region has everything a girl could want. Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort in Parksville, hidden in a cedar forest on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, has created a ladies-only package that offers pampering and stress relief with no kids, no husbands and no distractions. The Guilty Pleasures for Desperate Housewives package offers two night's accommodation, a bottle of wine, a \$50 credit per person towards treatments at the Grotto Spa – the largest spa in BC - endless tapas for the group at the Treetop Tapas and Grill, and passes to the Grotto at the Spa (www.tigh-na-mara.com). AquaTerre Spa at Pacific Shores Resort & Spa in Parksville is offering a getaway with 2 nights' accommodation in a luxurious two bedroom suite, \$50 towards the Landing West Coast Grill, a customized facial with collagen mask, a pedicure, an exotic Cleopatra Wrapture, a spa lunch with a glass of champagne, and a cozy spa robe to take home as a souvenir (www.aquaterre.net). But the fun doesn't have to stop there – the group can book a ladies only golf session at the Morningstar Golf Club, scuttle through the Horne Lake Caves, relax on the beach, enjoy tea and a stroll at Milner Gardens, play a round of mini-golf, or explore attractions such as the Butterfly Gardens, the World Parrot Refuge, Coombs Old Country Market, Englishman River Falls, and North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre - the possibilities are endless. www.visitparksvillequalicumbeach.com. (Photo Credit: chrisheadle.com)



50th Anniversary of the World's Largest Non-nuclear Explosion – Ripple Rock, within Seymour Narrows near Campbell River, was a marine hazard accountable for the destruction or sinking of more than 120 vessels and claimed at least 114 lives. Some opposed its removal, seeing it as a potential bridge support for a railroad to the mainland. November 1955 marked the third attempt of its destruction as the Northern Construction Company, J.W. Stewart Limited, and Boyles Brothers Drilling Company began drilling. Miners worked around the clock, advancing six feet per day on what would result in more than 3600 feet of tunnels. 1,400 tons of explosives (10 times the amount needed for a similar explosion above water) were packed into the drilled rock. 27 months after the process had begun, Ripple Rock blew at 9:31:02 am on April 5, 1958. 700,000 tons of rock and water exploded in a blast that reached a height of 1,000 feet. Broadcast on live TV, the spectacle lasted less than 10 seconds but was the largest non-nuclear explosion in the world. The removal of this hazard has had considerable impact on marine traffic and shipping as well as on the economy, including the local cruise industry. An application has been sent to see if the site can be declared a National Historic Event. Info: www.crmuseum.ca or Lesia Davis at ldavis@islands.net. (Photo Credit: Boomer Jerritt)



Alberni Valley Heritage Network – The Alberni Valley has a rich history waiting to be discovered. Head to the Alberni Valley Museum where guests get an insight into unique First Nation and folk art as well as great traveling exhibits. Dive into an enticing marine history at the Maritime Discovery Centre where visitors can catch the sights and sounds of the port. From there, jump on the Number 7 Steam Logging Locomotive for a ride to the McLean Mill where you'll explore Canada's only operating steam sawmill. Relax under the cedars, stroll with the Tin Pants Theatre Troupe, catch the loggers in action, or learn how Port Alberni was settled. The Alberni Heritage Network – four captivating attractions to experience in one day. www.avcoc.com or www.alberniheritage.com. (Photo Credit: chrisheadle.com)





Indoor & Outdoor Golf Opportunities – revving up for a new season – Olympic View Golf Club near Victoria, voted #20 Best Golf Experience in Canada and USA West by Fairways and Greens Magazine in 2006, hosts the award winning GBC Golf Academy. With the Olympic Mountains as a backdrop, two magnificent waterfalls, twelve lakes, intriguing rock bluffs, lush west coast forests, and world-class facilities, it's no wonder that even Tiger Woods had to take up the opportunity. It is the only facility in BC to have two award-winning PGA teaching professionals: John Randle, Director of Instruction and his wife Lori Randle. John won the Teacher of the Year award in 2007 and is its first two time recipient while Lori was the first woman ever to receive the award in 2006. Both offer Golf Schools for all skill levels including private, semi-private, juniors, video instruction, coaching programs, women-only clinics and corporate services (www.randlegolf.com). The Golf BC Academy at Arbutus Ridge in Cobble Hill offers modern practice facilities with private programs, playing lessons, club fittings as well as the opportunity to customize a package to your needs and abilities. The Golf Academy at Morningstar in Parksville proposes individual and group lessons with full access to the range, putting and chipping greens, and practice bunkers. Morningstar also has a heated, indoor facility where certified professionals are ready to help you with your game. Weekly classes and drop-in sessions allow you to work around your schedule and enjoy instructor-led fitness classes, Golf for Ladies, and popular swing classes. Visit www.golfvancouverisland.ca. (Photo Credit: Golf Vancouver Island)



Nanaimo – Cultural Capital of 2008 – Nanaimo has been designated the 2008 Cultural Capital of Canada. Arts and culture strengthen a community not only by contributing to the local economy but also by fostering community pride and encouraging an increased quality of life for those who live there. Nanaimo will use a portion of its awarded funds to produce a series of concerts, workshops and contests that will showcase and celebrate Nanaimo's rich musical heritage. The programming projected by Nanaimo is a brilliant illustration of a joint effort between different cultural communities, local First Nations people and artists. As a Cultural Capital, Nanaimo will be "Living Our Culture" by celebrating a wealth of history and cultural diversity with five Celebratory Events and four Legacy events, showcasing professional and amateur artists of all ages. Celebratory Events in 2008 include: Alive with the Arts of Many Cultures; From Coal Mines to Bathtub Races - A Summer Street Theatre Festival; Capturing the Music; Spring Break Youth Festival; The Arts of Momentum. Legacy Events include: Portals to Our Heritage; Giving Voice to our Diverse History; Community Plan for Public Art; Building Momentum. Visit: www.harbourliving.ca (Photo Credit: terrypattersonphotography.ca)



Tipple Tourism – The Comox Valley, or "Land of Plenty," is widely known to produce some of the finest foods around, but a better-kept secret is the wide range of quality, locally-produced beverages. With two established wineries, a meadery, an upcoming single-malt whisky distillery and a microbrewery, the Comox Valley is set to become a major player in the culinary/viniculture sector of the tourism industry. Producing small quantities allows for hands-on care and attention of these delicious and unique beverages. Beaufort Vineyard and Estate Winery will harvest their first crop in 2009 but will open a retail shop and a small tasting room to the public in June 2008. A honey-based wine, called mead, is produced on Hornby Island by a young company called Middle Mountain Mead. They have created six varieties of the ancient drink including cranberry lavender, plum rhubarb and green tea elixir. Soon the Valley will also welcome a boutique whisky distillery and an artisan microbrewery. Shelter Point Distillery intends to take advantage of local mountain streams to distil a uniquely Canadian single malt whisky. Construction of the distillery is expected to be completed in spring 2008, with tours commencing shortly thereafter. Cream and fruit liqueurs will be available within a year, and the release of a highly anticipated single batch rye malt whisky should come within three years. Beer lovers will soon be drawn to the Valley as well, as a hand crafted microbrewery is slated to open in Comox next spring. Surgenor Brewery intends to offer a stout, a lager, a traditional pale ale and seasonal specialty beers crafted with fresh local ingredients. A tipple tour of the Comox Valley? - I'll drink to that! Visit: www.discovercomoxvalley.com. (Photo Credit: Boomer Jerritt)



Port Hardy – People, Plants & Pride! – Climate change and its environmental effects are a reality, but now Port Hardy can attest to contributing to the solutions. Communities in Bloom is a Canadian non-profit organization committed to promoting civic pride, environmental responsibility, information and cultural exchange, decreased vandalism, economic development and increased property values as well as an improved quality of life through community participation. More than 500 municipalities across the country as well as international locations including the United States, Japan and Europe are participating in the Communities in Bloom challenge. Communities are evaluated either provincially or nationally by a volunteer jury of professionals on the accomplishments of their entire community on a variety of criteria. Port Hardy has begun several initiatives to beautify its region including the selection of a community plant, garden competitions, promotion of beautiful garden tours, promotion of a beautiful business competition, holding a festival day to plant hanging baskets and planters, and planting a town garden. So come see what's blooming in Port Hardy this spring! Visit: www.PortHardy.Travel. (Photo Credit: Boomer Jerritt courtesy of Tourism Port Hardy)



Romance, Food, Recreation, Health and Retreat – The Cowichan region is a place for culinary delight, healthy lifestyles, relaxation, and recreational opportunities. The *Oceanfront Grand Resort & Marina* is an intimate, luxurious, waterfront resort located in the heart of Cowichan also known as the “warm land”. There is a package to suit every desire - wine and dine, stay and play, kayak, romance or relax and unwind. Whether you’re a beginner or a seasoned pro, the historic *Fairburn Farm* provides the perfect setting for a cook-off. This spring guests can learn hands-on with a choice of basic or advanced courses. Using fresh, local, seasonal, or organic ingredients, participants will whip up classic French and Italian meals. Those partaking will get tips on wine pairing and meet with local producers and winemakers as well as have the opportunity to experience the beautiful guesthouse and farm. For those seeking stylish luxury, the Aerie Resort, voted #1 Hotel in Canada by Travel & Leisure magazine readers in 2007 is a wise choice. The resort offers exceptional year-round package ideas including the Girlfriends Yoga and Spa Package, Sun Seekers Package, and Spa and Wellness Center Retreats. Guests can enjoy cooking classes with the Executive Chef, partake in a corporate retreat, bask in the spa and wellness centre or enjoy fitness opportunities such as archery and tennis. Yoga based retreats, featuring full weekends of both vegan and non-vegan cuisine options, philosophy discussions about ancient yogic literatures, as well as meditation and deep relaxation techniques are also available. Visit: www.visit.cowichan.net. (Photo Credit: Boomer Jerritt)

Unique Wildlife Viewing Opportunities this Spring – Join the Nature Trust of BC in association with the Canadian Wildlife Service, the BC Ministry of Environment and Ducks Unlimited Canada as you participate in eco tours, nature walks and talks, nature photography, an eagle release and a day of birding at the annual Brant Wildlife Festival from March 8 – April 12. As many as 20,000 Brant Geese will rest and feed along the shorelines of Parksville and Qualicum Beach during the festival. The Pacific herring spawn attracts thousands of water birds, eagles, sea lions, and harbour seals while spring brings in migrant songbirds and raptors. Head to the Calving Festival at Morningstar Farms, home of Little Qualicum Cheese Works, where you can witness a new life being born. Bottle feed one of fifteen adorable calves that are expected to be born during the month of April, or enjoy the dairy parlour and Farmgate store, where you can sample award winning cheese. The World Parrot Refuge, an educational facility with 23,000 square feet of heated indoor free-flight aviaries, houses over 600 previously owned pet parrots and provides a safe home for life. At Butterfly World & BC Orchid Gardens stroll amongst hundreds of free-flying exotic butterflies in the indoor tropical gardens or visit the Bird Aviary, Water Gardens, and gift shop. Tiger Lily Farm Barnyard & Trail Rides offers a hands-on experience featuring traditional farm animals. Milk a goat, bottle feed a calf, ride a pony or enjoy the Museum of Nature and Wildlife Learning Centre. Visit the Big Qualicum Hatchery to learn about populations of Pacific salmon and steelhead trout or follow a self-guided tour for a close up look at hatchery operations. www.visitparksvillequalicumbeach.com (Photo Credit: chrischeadle.com)

Welcome to Port Alberni! – With a population of less than 18,000, Port Alberni and the Alberni Valley serve as the gateway to BC’s West Coast and Pacific Rim. Freshwater lakes and streams provide year-round fishing with or without charter operators. Scuba diving, kayaking, hiking, golfing and wildlife viewing are abundant as are helicopter and floatplane tours. Sproat Lake Provincial Park, one of BC’s finest freshwater lakes, is used for water sports including waterskiing, canoeing, and windsurfing. The Martin Mars Water Bombers, also located on Sproat Lake, are known as the world’s largest flying boats, and provide firefighting protection in the region and beyond. Visitors can explore prehistoric petroglyphs or watch thousands of Pacific salmon on their way to spawning beds at the Stamp River Provincial Park. The Alberni Valley Heritage Network offers a collection of heritage experiences for history buffs and families alike. Take your time and explore the Victoria Quay, the Welcome Centre, the Capitol Theatre, the Rollin Art Centre and view murals featuring local artists. The Harbour Quay presents waterfront shops, galleries, and eateries, and grants panoramic views of the Alberni Inlet. Also on location is the MV Lady Rose, a passenger and working freighter vessel that offers journeys through the Broken Group Islands, to Bamfield and Ucluelet. For accommodations and more information visit the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce www.avcoc.com. (Photo Credit: chrischeadle.com)

Introducing the luxurious Four Points by Sheraton Victoria Gateway – Golf Vancouver Island is pleased to announce the opening of the Four Points by Sheraton Victoria Gateway on March 31, 2008. Located just off of the Trans Canada Highway between the Bear Mountain and Olympic View Golf Courses, the facility offers quick access to both golf courses. The Four Points is close to numerous recreational sites including Goldstream Provincial Park, Hatley Park National Historic Site, the Great Canadian Casino, the Esquimalt Naval Base and the Butchart Gardens. A short 10-minute drive provides access into the heart of Victoria where guests will find fine dining, museums and galleries, a beautiful harbour-front and hundreds of shops to explore. Back at the hotel, guests can enjoy one of 119 modern guest rooms boasting fabulous amenities such as 42” flat screen TV’s and free High Speed Internet. There is a suite for every style - some have a Jacuzzi tub, others a kitchenette, gas fireplace, connecting room, or balcony. Guests may enjoy the indoor pool, relax in a hot tub or sauna, break a sweat in the fitness centre, or get pampered at the Araina Day Spa. There is also the option of casual dining at the on-site restaurant or use the in-room dining service to unwind in the privacy of your room. Meetings can be held in style with more than 5,100 square feet of available meeting space. www.fourpoints.com/victoriagateway. (Photo Credit: Golf Vancouver Island)





Nanaimo's Harbour Air Seaplanes – Flying Green into the New Year! – The world's largest all-seaplane airline, Harbour Air Ltd., has pledged to become carbon neutral as of 2008. The airline began its initiative in 2007 by purchasing high quality carbon offsets to lessen the climate impact of all scheduled services, charter and tour operations. Now, it is North America's first air carrier and the world's only seaplane airline to make all of its flights 100% carbon neutral. Harbour Air has contributed over \$15,000 to carbon neutral programs so far this year, and is looking to offset its corporate emissions so that it may become the first carrier in the world to achieve complete carbon neutrality within every aspect of its business. The airline has chosen to measure its corporate greenhouse gas footprint using the World Resource Institute's GHG protocol for GHG accounting and reporting which is the most internationally accepted and most thorough GHG accounting and reporting standard. For more info visit: www.harbour-air.com. (Photo Credit: terrypattersonphotography.com)



New! For all your Port Hardy travel needs, take a look at the new website! Tourism Port Hardy and Tourism Vancouver Island recently launched www.PortHardy.Travel, the official travel site for Port Hardy. The new site is still in the development phase and more details will be added. In the meantime, visitors to the site can browse through different categories, utilize Google maps, customize Google driving directions to Port Hardy, and link to an online order form for the new Port Hardy brochure. Future plans include a Google Site Search, additional images, and member listings. Visitors can acquire information on Whale Watching, Bear Watching, Fishing, First Nations, Arts & Culture, Outdoor Adventure, Parks & Trails, Caving, Ferry Travel and much more! Plan your visit today: www.PortHardy.Travel. (Photo Credit: Tourism Vancouver Island)



Valley of Festivals – The Comox Valley loves to celebrate. With more than 50 annual festivals and events it's little wonder the area is known as the Valley of Festivals. Some of these events celebrate nature's best by showing off the incredible bounty from the Valley's farms, rivers and ocean. Others showcase the wealth of arts and culture in the region or challenge participants with dynamic physical quests. During the summer months there is at least one special event every weekend! A few major festivals occurring this spring and summer include the 2nd Annual Comox Valley Shellfish Festival (June 14-15), Showcase Theatre Festival (June 25-July 21), the Vancouver Island Music Fest (July 11-13), and the Filberg Festival (August 1-4). For details on all of the exciting festivals, events and happenings in the Comox Valley visit www.discovercomoxvalley.com. (Photo Credit Boomer Jerritt)



Stay, Play and Discover – Campbell River – Surrounded by lakes and mountains, the *Strathcona Park Lodge* is Canada's largest adventure lodge, outdoor leadership training school and education centre. Having the choice between a rustic room or waterfront cottage, guided adventures such as rock climbing, ropes courses or zip-lines, and home-cooking or à la carte menus, allows every guest to feel at home. *Painter's Lodge*, located on unspoiled shores near Campbell River offers first-rate BC salmon fishing, exhilarating wildlife and nature tours, awe-inspiring landscapes and all the services you could wish for. From Painter's Lodge, take a 10-minute water taxi across the Discovery Passage to the world-famous *April Point Resort & Spa*, on Quadra Island, where guests can anticipate outstanding recreational angling that has been around for decades. April Point offers suites and guest houses, a pool, spa, fitness centre and children's activity centre as well as numerous outdoor adventures. *Oyster Bay Resort* offers chalets with a two-person jet tub, numerous amenities and a stunning ocean view. Popular activities in the area include fishing, golfing and skydiving. Beautifully renovated, with a mix of new amenities and antique European décor, is *Heron's Landing*, Campbell River's only Boutique Hotel. It offers standard rooms and spacious suites with all the luxuries of home. Enjoy old-fashioned charm at the *Dolphins Resort* and choose from oceanfront cabins or the luxurious forest lodge. Take a challenging fishing charter, hike in pristine wilderness, enjoy marine eco-tours, whale watching, caving, kayaking or golf. With so many options, your only task will be to make a decision! Visit: www.campbellriver.travel. (Photo Credit: Boomer Jerritt)

Visit us!

Note: information was accurate at time of publishing, but is subject to change without notice.

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