

Playing on the Sunshine Coast

Secret Cove's envelopes you in rustic luxury

By Anne Georg, For The Calgary Herald June 27, 2009

From the moment I arrived at Rockwater Secret Cove Resort, my itinerary was full of activities and superlative gourmet food.

The resort, about 40 minutes north of the Sechelt on the Sunshine Coast, is a playground for active people. Operating since 2005, its 13 popular tenthouse suites that overlook the ocean are booked a year in advance.

Other accommodation is available in the form of 11 rustic cabins and 14 one-and two-bedroom lodge suites, with an ocean-or pool view.

No matter which room you're in, Rockwater offers excellent hospitality in a stunning natural setting overlooking the Pacific Ocean and surrounded by towering trees.

I discovered that the Sunshine Coast is famous for its mountain biking trails, some gruelling competitive courses and others appropriate for beginners. I cycled the Big Fir Trail and enjoyed being surrounded by Douglas fir trees, some of which are 1,800 years old.

Kayaking is another favourite Sunshine Coast activity. My night paddle began at dusk. My party explored the nearby Smuggler's Cove while discreet sea lions occasionally bobbed their heads above the water, curious about us interlopers. We returned to the resort at night, guided by the string of lights that line the boardwalk connecting the tenthouse suites.

The following morning I embarked on a sailing expedition on a 14.1-metre Jeanneau sloop called the Caledonia II. Unfortunately, the still ocean waters that we so

enjoyed while kayaking made for poor sailing conditions. Our amicable captain made up for the relentless calm by regaling us with salty sea yarns of sailing the seven seas and hunting for sunken treasure. When the wind picked up, we lifted sail and slowly glided back into Rockwater Cove.

To unwind from the activity, I indulged in a massage in the wall-less massage parlour, accompanied by the soothing sounds of wind rustling through trees and gentle waves lapping onto the rocky beach.

Among the highlights of my of my sojourn at Rockwater was the unwaveringly superb gastronomic experience. My favourite dish was the tomato-infused water served in a shot glass, only by a small margin, though, and that was in part due to its novelty. The fresh Pacific seafood prepared with mostly local ingredients, was equally delicious. Each dish was paired with British Columbia wines.

As a side trip, my party hopped onto a shuttle bus and travelled less than a half an hour to Sakinaw Lake for a tour of this little-known gem. The lake water reputedly gets up to 26 C in midsummer. In mid-June it was a balmy 23. As we cruised the seven-kilometre length of the lake, our guide pointed out ancient pictographs painted by the Sechelt First Nations; and he recounted the colourful history of white settlement in the area. A short hike brought us to the Agamemnon Channel, where we witnessed eagles soaring above the dramatic cliffs that rise from the ocean.

As the float plane taking me back to Vancouver flew over the rugged coastline of the Sunshine Coast, I got the eagles' perspective of my playground and I knew I'd be back to play some more.

If You Go

Access - By car: From Vancouver, take the 40-minute ferry ride to lang-dale at horseshoe Bay. then follow highway 101--approximately 45-minutes to rockwater. - By plane: Float plane from Vancouver harbour--20 minutes; or from Vancouver International airport--35 minutes.

Accommodation - Rockwater Secret Cove Resort summer season rates range in price from \$460 per night for the deluxe tenthouse suite to \$219 per night for a one-bedroom oceanfront cabin.

www.rockwatersecretcoveresort.comActivities - Mountain bikes can be rented from \$12 for an hour, \$35 for four hours or \$55 for a full day. guided bike rides range from \$140 for four hours to \$160 for six hours.info@offtheedge.org - Kayak rentals with halfmoon Sea Kayaks start at \$39 for a single kayak for up to four hours. Guided tours for up to five kayakers and up to four hours cost \$100; an eight-hour guided tour is \$175 for up to five kayakers. The company offers many other options, including multi-day tours. www.halfmoonseakayaks.com - Sailing ranges from \$259 for a two-hour sail without crew to \$875 for an eight-hour sail with crew. Add \$60 per person for gourmet meals.

www.rockwatersecretcoveresort.com/site/activities/sailing_at_rockwater.html - Two-hour Sakinaw lake lodge boat tours cost \$50 per person, including appetizers and refreshments. a four-hour cruise for two is \$80 per person, while a group of six pays \$60 per person. Sakinaw Lake Lodge is a B&B located on the lakeside. to get there, drive about a half an hour north of Rockwater Secret Cove Resort. www.sakinawlakelodge.com

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