

# The Langley Times

## Spa delights and stalagmites

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Vancouver Island boasts many of B.C.'s best spas. Take in some pampering with discount rates in the shoulder season.

*Submitted photo*

Like a string of pearls, the sandy beaches on Vancouver Island's eastern shore lie nestled one after the other, perfect and pristine, and whose luster can only be realized by being set upon them.

Kilometre-wide sandy beaches, crystalline caves and the ancient, lichen-covered cedars of Cathedral Grove — are all within an hour's drive. Add spas, marinas and year-round golf to nature's splendour and you have a jewel of a destination.

### Beside the Sea

Perched over the sheltered waters of Vancouver Island's Inside Passage is the charming beachfront communities referred to as the Oceanside region. It includes smaller communities such as Lighthouse Country, Nanoose Bay, French Creek and Arrowsmith Coombs Country.

### Leaves and lovers

After a leisurely stroll along one of the rippled beaches on an autumn day, nothing is more romantic than cozying up in front of a fireplace in one of the area's cabins, cottages or luxurious resort suites. Whether you and your partner are the rugged-outdoor-adventure types or relax-in-the-spa people, you can find what suits you best.

The region has 33 resorts, hotels and motels, nearly 30 bed and breakfasts, and 32 vacation rental homes to choose from. And the shoulder season from October to April offers attractive accommodation rates.

On the shore or by the sea, fall produces the kind of spectacular and majestic crimson sunsets worth writing home about.

## Body and Soul

While enjoying the colours of the countryside, visiting artisan bakeries, cheese makers or purveyors of exquisite culinary treasures, you'll find numerous restaurants to satisfy those tummy rumblings — from casual to gourmet, from Asian to Irish.

For revitalizing the body nothing beats a few hours at a spa. At Tigh-Na-Mara's Grotto Spa you may wish to revel in the invigorating and unique 232.25 sq. m (2,500 sq. ft) Grotto Mineral Bath, with its two-storey cascading waterfall.

You'll feel transformed and delicious once you've tried the Chocolate Mousse Body Wrap at the Aqua Terre Spa at Pacific Shores Resort. Please resist the urge to lick.

## Swinging, Swaying and Ocean Playing

Nineteen kilometers of sandy beaches to stroll, the country's mildest climate and the island's lowest annual rainfall make the "Canadian Riviera" a natural for beach-combing, bird-watching, and boating.

The protected waters of eastern Vancouver Island have been rated the #1 spot in the world "for value and healthiest marine environment" by Scuba Diving magazine.

## Grottos and Groves

It's rare when Mother Earth invites us deep into her home.

The Horne Lake Caves, at 1,219 metre (4000 ft) long and containing more than 1000 caves, are believed to be the longest measured natural caves in BC. The largest grotto, Riverbend, is 387 m (1270 ft) long and features a seven-storey waterfall.

These caves are ranked among the most significant and spectacular in the world and are a terrific family destination.

You'll be sure to marvel over the variety of rock formations such as cave pearls, brain coral and bacon strips. Other formations have been affectionately named after their appearance, "Howling Wolf" and "Smiling Buddha." The park is open year round with opportunities for family guided tours or even more advanced night time caving.

But even on the topside, Mother Earth doesn't fail to impress. Renowned Cathedral Grove in MacMillan Park provides access to the forest giants. Douglas firs more than 1000 years old and ancient Western Red Cedars are easily studied from a network of trails in this park.

## Westward 'ho

Oceanside is a treasure chest of unforgettable scenery and romantic memories: cosy and tastefully rustic accommodations complemented by a radiant landscape adorned and hued by nature.

The area's earthly pleasures don't go south for the winter but offer a warm autumn escape.

### IF YOU GO:

Oceanside Tourism Association

Phone: 1-888-799-3222 or 250-248-6300

Website: [www.visitparksvillequalicumbeach.com](http://www.visitparksvillequalicumbeach.com)