

# THE PETERBOROUGH EXAMINER

## **Go west to find adventure:; [Final Edition]**

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Vancouver Island lives up to its reputation as top travel destination

(Second in a series of articles)

Picking up where I left off on our explorations of Vancouver Island, our next B&B adventure was with Yvonne and Len Hooper, owners of the Bahari Oceanside Inn (baharibandb.com) at Qualicum Beach.

Like all the others we stayed at, we found another spacious hot tub right in our room near the fireplace, but the unique feature of this home was its sort of being an exotic oriental art gallery perched on a cliff overlooking the Georgia Strait.

Dragging ourselves away for a while, we drove to Herons Restaurant in the attractive Bayside Oceanfront Inn in Parksville where we were joined for a memorable dinner by Luba Plotnikoff, of Oceanside Tourism. Luba revealed to us the existence of the World Parrot Refuge which I recently told you about and was the highlight of our trip.

The next morning we drove inland a ways in search of adventure in the **Horne Lake Caves.**

We've been to Mammoth, Carlsbad and other caves where one walks on smooth pathways, admiring formations illuminated by copious artificial lighting. So we passed on the 'Three Hour Cave Adventure!' and the 'High Adventure Expedition,' in favour of the shorter 'Family Cavern Tour,' although we could have opted for an easy self-guided tour.

I guess a small goat could handle our own trip if he was wearing a headlamp, but when I climbed out over an hour later, every joint in my body hurt except my scalp which I would no longer have were it not for our helmets.

We began with a 20-minute, 100-metre vertical climb up to the entrance. Then through an opening the size of a car window to the top rung of a 40-step ladder down into the blackness. That was the easy part - the rest was climbing and descending slippery, wet rocks and finding precarious perches from which to study the fascinating formations. At least, on this trip, no actual rappelling was required.

At one point we all turned off our headlamps. It was interesting to discover that in total blackness, the light on one's wristwatch would provide sufficient illumination for one to find his way back out.

Next stop was the North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre near Parksville, which was founded in 1985 to assist injured, ill and orphaned wildlife.

I particularly remember a bald eagle whose beak had been shot off by a hunter and was now able to eat with the help of a prosthetic beak designed by a skilled dentist.

We ended our day's excursions with a drive to Cathedral Grove on the road to Port Alberni for a little tree hugging. This is a rainforest preserve of old-growth Douglas fir, and a walk along its pathways puts one in a more worshipful mood than a visit to the grandest of cathedrals. Since our last visit, an exceptional windstorm has knocked over quite a few of the giants, enabling the visitor to appreciate their size from a horizontal perspective.

Many of you have surely yearned from time to time for a "romantic getaway." Well our accommodation that night at the Kingfisher Resort and Spa near Courtenay ([kingfisherspa.com](http://kingfisherspa.com)) was the sexiest place we've ever stayed, and I don't mean this in a vulgar way at all. Even the dining room was sensual and intimate. Our room had a double hot tub of course, but it even had twin shower heads in the large glass shower stall.

But how to describe the "Pacific Mist Hydropath" provided after dinner? Each couple separately proceeds through a series of water experiences in the most sensual surroundings imaginable while attending staff remain discretely out of sight. God save us from hidden cameras!

There was a massage rinse, followed by a mineral "massage pool," a waterfall massage, steam cave and glacier waterfall, a "river walk" for leg muscle stimulation, a sensory "sea mineral soak," tidal baths with generous mud applications and finally a long, warm rainfall. A true water park for adults - sort of a private Plato's Retreat - gets your juices flowing if you know what I mean. I've since met a woman who didn't enjoy it much, but she went with her sister!

Next morning we were ready for a cooler adventure - snorkeling with salmon down Campbell River with Paradise Found Adventure Tours. The salmon run in B.C. goes from mid summer to late fall and we passed thousands of the really big ones in our 2 km float down the fast-running shallows. Our guide managed to recover a lure from a dead salmon which, he explained, he could sell for \$200 since it had proven its appeal as a lure.

That afternoon we returned to Victoria to join Charles and Claudia Dorrington for dinner atop the Chateau Victoria. Chuck is a Peterborough native and a high school sweetheart of mine. He has recently retired as a bishop of the Reformed Episcopalian Church after running a church and downtown mission in Victoria for many years.

Our unforgettable final night was spent at Victoria's famous Abigail's Hotel ([abigailshotel.com](http://abigailshotel.com)), a Tudor-style and opulent 17-suite B&B and voted Victoria's Best Small Hotel by Frommers. It's a very special experience and only a short walk from the harbour and many other attractions.

Since wildlife encounters has been the recurring theme of our adventures, I'll conclude by remarking that before embarking on our Alaskan cruise, we visited the Seattle Science Center, next to the Space Needle. There I got to hold a huge Albino Burmese Python, a large iguana and lots of other reptiles that their owners had brought in for an educational science exhibit.

Go West, my friends - there's something to provide memories for everyone.

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