

# Luxury In The Wilderness

I usually cringe when I see the word “unique” in travel articles because it is rarely used correctly — to describe something that is actually one-of-a-kind. Having said that, this story is about a unique luxury lodge my husband and I recently enjoyed in a remote area of western Canada.

King Pacific Lodge is a handsome 17-room hotel that floats on a barge along the coast of the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia. The southern tip of Alaska is about 150 miles to the north and Vancouver is nearly 400 miles south. Guests arrive by seaplane because the area is completely devoid of roads, railroad tracks, and other means of transportation. The nearest village, Hartley Bay, is home to 170 indigenous people.

In spite of its rustic surroundings, *Condé Nast Traveler* says King Pacific Lodge is the “Best Resort in Canada” and “4th Best in the World.” The rating is based on the pristine environment, the opportunity to interact with abundant wildlife, beyond-first-class service, spacious and well-appointed rooms, and carefully-crafted meals.

I had heard about King Pacific Lodge for years and looked forward to experiencing the property first-hand. Did it live up to my expectations? Read on.

On our first day we kayaked to Cameron Cove where salmon had gathered en route to their spawning grounds. Entering the inlet, we literally surfed waves of pink salmon that were waiting for

rain to raise the water level and enable them to continue on their way home. When we beached the kayaks and walked along the shore, piles of fish bones made it obvious that bears and wolves were taking full advantage of the situation.



King Pacific Lodge floats on a barge along the coast of the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia, Canada

Paddling back to the lodge, I looked up just in time to see two humpback whales breaching — a thrilling sight, especially from a tippy little kayak. We also spotted sea lions, eagles, ravens, gulls, and large purple starfish hugging exposed rocks along the water’s edge.

During pre-dinner cocktails on the deck, a family of sea otters quarreled over scraps of salmon tossed by a guide cleaning the day’s catch. The fishermen — a father and son from Argentina — had just returned from a day of heli-fly fishing and shared stories of the grizzlies that took an interest in the KPL lunch boxes.

Dinner started with a delicious carrot and ginger soup, followed by lobster mushroom-crust rockfish served with red quinoa salad, heirloom tomato emulsion, and



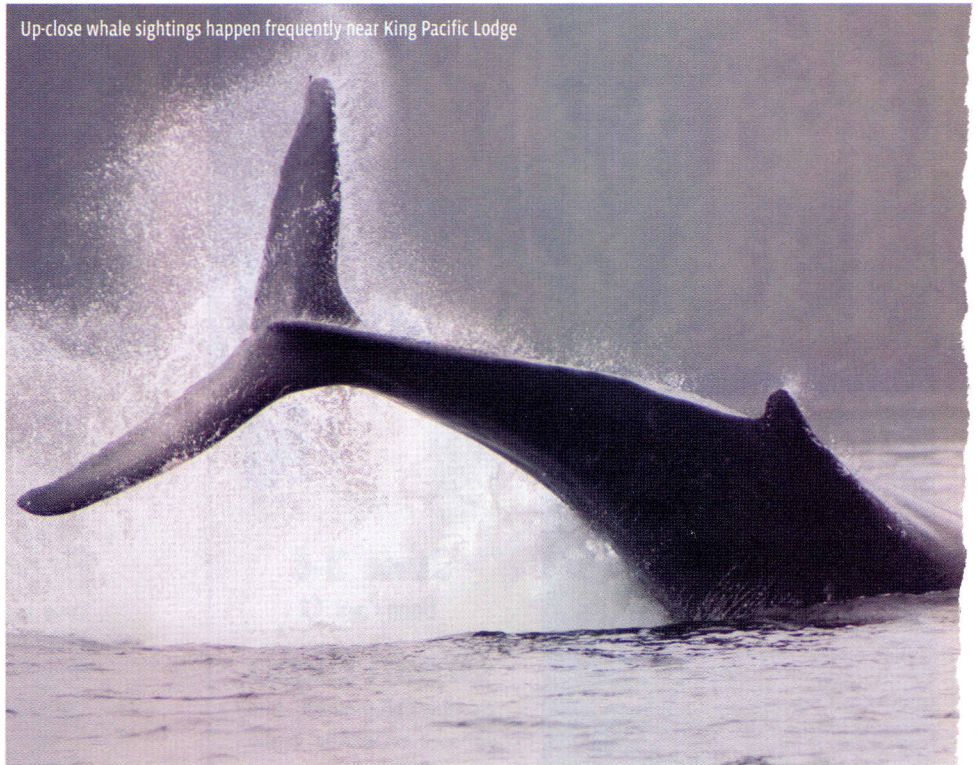
King Pacific Lodge guests arrive by seaplane

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and olive tapenade. The wine pairings were perfect, as was the dessert du jour: pistachio tart with plum compote.

Our time at King Pacific Lodge passed very quickly. One day we “trolled for coho using spoons.” Initially, it was my intention to catch and release, but every time I started to throw one back I’d remember what Whole Foods charges for wild salmon and into our cooler he’d go. In between tugs on our lines, our guide — known as a whale whisperer — watched for fin whales and humpbacks. Soon Richard and I found ourselves with front row seats for a breaching, tail-slapping, fin-slapping ballet that went on for over half an hour.

In spite of the good food, great wines, and spacious bedrooms at King Pacific Lodge, it’s really the staff that makes the place memorable. Prior to arrival, guests are asked about clothing sizes and upon deplaning are shown to a locker with their warm gear and Wellingtons ready and waiting. Likewise, guided excursions are bespoke events. A

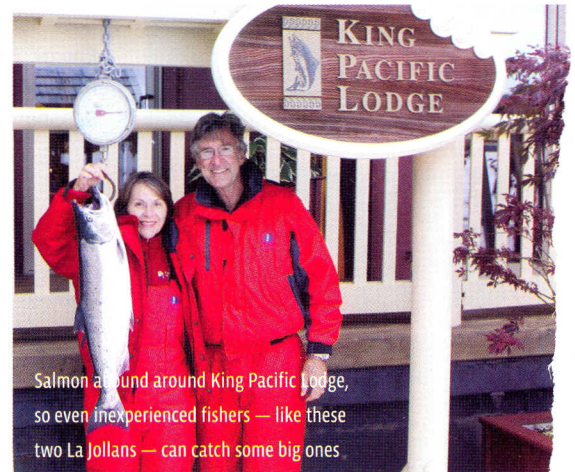


Up-close whale sightings happen frequently near King Pacific Lodge

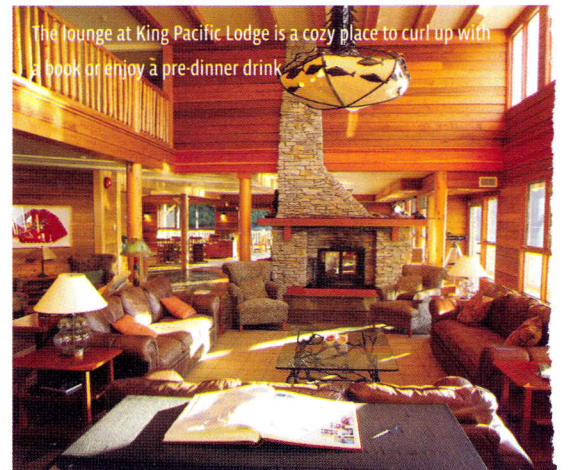
fleet of small- and medium-size boats enable guides to cater to one couple or family at a time.

One day Darryl, a native guide, took us to the First Nations community at Hartley Bay, where we visited the school, cultural center, and fish hatchery. Another day we went to the whale research center and listened to the vocalizations of orcas recorded on hydrophones. Janie and Hermann, locals in whose home the center is located, can recognize the various families of resident orcas by their unique dialect. ([www.whaleresearch.ca](http://www.whaleresearch.ca))

Back at the lodge, lunch included duck confit risotto with wild mushrooms, fried sage, and Reggiano cheese. Afterwards, I opted for the sauna and a deep-tissue massage. And yes — King Pacific Lodge is one-of-a-kind and it exceeded all of my expectations. (888/592-5464, [www.kingpacificlodge.com](http://www.kingpacificlodge.com)) ELIZABETH HANSEN



Salmon abound around King Pacific Lodge, so even inexperienced fishers — like these two La Jollans — can catch some big ones.



The lounge at King Pacific Lodge is a cozy place to curl up with a book or enjoy a pre-dinner drink.



A family of sea otters lives near the KPL dock and divvies up the salmon scraps.