

A Vancouver Island adventure getaway

Venture out on your own or join one of many guided adventures in Strathcona Park Lodge

Jeff Lukovich, Special to the Sun

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Some people like to go places and others just like to sleep around. Whatever your inclination, British Columbia offers a variety of accommodation options. As well as the traditional restful bed and bath, many travel lodgings these days offer a range of amenities.

Throughout the summer and fall, we will take you to places to stay in B.C. that reflect some of the diversity of both the accommodations and regions of the province. We will visit hotels, inns, resorts, B&Bs and more. Hope you enjoy your stay. Today we visit Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island.

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What:

Strathcona Park Lodge and Outdoor Education Centre

Where:

Strathcona Park Lodge borders Strathcona Provincial Park about 45 minutes west of Campbell River on Highway 28.

The property:

Since 1959, Strathcona Park Lodge has been promoting holistic education and experiential learning in a natural setting. Their school outdoor education program has almost become an adolescent rite of passage. Perhaps you've been on a school trip, or maybe you've done a bottle drive to fund raise for your kid's trip. Well, it's not just for kids. Strathcona Park Lodge has also become a destination for young couples, families and seniors. It is the most established, and largest adventure lodge, outdoor leadership training school and outdoor education centre in Canada.

Location is a big part of the attraction. Overlooking a vista that includes Upper Campbell Lake and snow-capped mountains in the background, the lodge invites adventure and physical activity. And the lack of televisions or telephones in the rooms keeps other distractions to a minimum. It's a place where visitors are encouraged to be participants not spectators.

The rustic accommodations range from standard rooms in timber-framed chalets to water-view and waterfront cottages. We stayed in a standard room in the Haig-Brown building. It included a comfortable king-size bed with fluffy duvet, a private bath and a deck that looked out over lake and mountains. One afternoon we saw a bride and her bridesmaids hurriedly scooting down the path enroute to the ceremony for which they were obviously late. Yes, they also do weddings.

Guests may choose to use the lodge as a base from which to venture out independently in search of their own adventures. Or they may choose expertly guided adventures that can include kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing, ropes course, zipline and overnight excursions. These can vary in length from a half-day to a full seven days. Every evening, guests can choose from free one and a half hour adventure programs such as kayak soccer games or cooking bannock over a campfire.

The lodge provides several meal choices. A couple of the buildings and several of the cottages have self-contained cooking facilities. The Whale Room serves three hearty buffets each day, as well as complimentary snacks and beverages. The Canoe Club Cafe

offers an a la carte menu.

The setting:

Strathcona Provincial Park, created in 1911, is B.C.'s oldest provincial park. Its 250,000 hectares of rugged mountain wilderness nearly straddle the entire width of Vancouver Island.

Its attractions are many: snow-capped peaks, glaciers, alpine lakes, waterfalls (including Della Falls -- Canada's highest), verdant forests and plentiful wildlife. It's the perfect setting for hiking, backpacking, canoeing and fishing.

The Park offers endless opportunities for multi-day backcountry hikes that require a fair degree of experience, fitness and self-sufficiency. It also contains a whole host of easier hikes and walks that access stunning waterfalls, beautiful viewpoints, alpine meadows and old-growth forest. We drove along Buttle Lake and explored all of the short hikes and walks we could cram into one glorious day.

Contact info:

www.strathcona.bc.ca, Email: info@strathcona.bc.ca, Telephone: 250-286-3122.

Miscellany:

For more information on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, visit Tourism Vancouver Island at www.islands.bc.ca, Ph: 250-754-3500 or email: info@islands.bc.ca.

Check www.bcferrries.com for ferry schedules and trip planning.

Jeff Lukovich is a Delta freelance writer.

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