

# Travel

## Ucluelet the perfect mix of wild and wonderful

By JULIA CARANCI  
AV Times

Just an hour and a half drive from Port Alberni is a getaway that offers the best of both worlds: rugged wilderness and urban comforts.

Ucluelet may be a quaint little town (population: 1,559) but it is also an amazing place to experience the wild West Coast of Vancouver Island.

The word Ucluelet means "safe landing place" in the language of the Nuu-chah-nulth people, who have lived there for some 4,000 years.

You could say this little town has it all: a sheltered inner harbour, native residents like sea lions, bears, otters and majestic bald eagles, hiking and walking trails galore, temperate rainforests and some of the provinces largest stands of old-growth red cedar.

And did I mention mile after mile of sandy beaches?

Within 24 hours of arriving, I had seen no less than three bears, six eagles, a number of deer and a sea lion.

Yet within that same time period I checked into a resort with services that would rival the accommodations at any big city hotel or resort.

The Tauca Lea Resort and Spa on Harbour Drive in Ucluelet is nestled in a quiet harbour where fishing vessels come and go and eagles stand watch in tall trees overhead.

Each of the one and two bedroom suites at Tauca Lea is spacious (700 to 1,200 square feet), flooded with light and decorated with handcrafted pine and maple furniture, historic photos and terra cotta tiles.

Each has an impressive ocean view, covered balcony, fully equipped kitchen, deep soaker tub, sofa bed and cozy chair set before a gas fireplace.

Many of the suites feature a two-person air jet tub on the outside deck, perfect for celebrations or intimate evenings with a loved one.

Manager Crystal Bolduc treated my companion and I to a warm welcome the moment we arrived. Our room was warm and inviting with its crisp white bedding and modern appliances.

We loved the private deck and hot tub, ample closet space and fluffy fleece bathrobes.

Guest services at the resort include laundry facilities, concierge service to assist guests in planning day trips and activities, a gift shop and gallery, and picnic gazebo overlooking the inlet. Cozy chairs are laid out at the

Alberni Valley  
**TIMES**  
NEW PUBLICATION!!!!

ALBERNI VALLEY  
**Living**

EVERY FRIDAY  
Total circulation of 10,200

Featuring: • Community Events • Arts & Entertainment • Advertiser Spotlight • Health & Lifestyle  
Articles • Social News • Travel Ideas • Island-Wide Events • Book Reviews • Recipes and more.....

**ATTENTION Local Non-Profit  
Groups: Submit articles about  
upcoming events to:**



Karen Boden  
723-8171  
kboden@avtimes.net



Niomi Pearson  
723-8171  
npearson@avtimes.net

**To advertise contact:**



Linda Chase  
723-8171  
lchase@avtimes.net



Deborah Kruks  
723-8171  
CELL: 720-5501  
dkruks@avtimes.net



Rachel Theus  
723-8171  
CELL: 730-1070  
rtheus@avtimes.net



Pam Craig  
723-8171  
pcraig@avtimes.net

**For info contact:**

# Travel

► FROM PAGE 10



## Spa massages will rub the right way

On Saturday, Jodeyn and Melissa treated us to one-hour aromatherapy massages at the Spa at Tauca Lea.

What a treat!

We were asked to select a blend of oils based on the feeling we wanted to evoke during the massage: rejuvenation, relaxation - just

pick an emotion from a fragrant bottle.

Melissa, who gave me one of the most relaxing massages I have ever received, told me many of her clients fall asleep during the treatments. Mind you, I wouldn't have wanted to miss even one minute of it myself...

The spa at Tauca Lea offers a number of beautifying services, from tranquility facials to back treatments and body wraps. Try a salt or brown sugar scrub or marine bath therapy followed by a 60-minute massage (otherwise known as heaven).

Packages are also available, including a couple's only soak in the deep and relaxing rainforest bath, followed by massages.

Manicures, pedicures, waxing, make-up application, and lash/brow tints are also available.

Reservations are recommended.

Perhaps the highlight of our stay was the amazing dinner we had at the Boat Basin restaurant at Tauca Lea.

Chef Richard Norwood prepared a truly divine meal for us, and it's easy to see why his restaurant has the fine reputation it does.

Norwood uses organic, locally grown produce and select island seafood and meats to create a unique (not to mention delicious) West Coast dining experience you will never forget.

The restaurant itself is warm and inviting, featuring rich wood, well-spaced, candle-lit tables and a casual,

water's edge for guests to really get into relaxation mode.

Every morning of our stay we were treated to a lovely continental breakfast (complimentary for guests of the resort), featuring mouth-watering cinnamon buns, just baked muffins, cereals, fresh fruit, coffee and juice.

Mind you, guests can also choose to cook in their suites, which offer full kitchens, complete with coffee maker, toaster, fridge and stove and microwave, plus dishes, cook wear and utensils.

[GET A TASTE, Page 12](#)



The Tauca Lea Resort

# Travel

## Take a walk on the WILD SIDE

► FROM PAGE 12

amazing experience and a great way to see the area from the water.

Owner Brian Congdon took us on a four-hour odyssey to the Broken Group of Islands, a mysterious and beautiful group of 100 islands once inhabited by aboriginal people.

Along the way, our group was able to view wildlife in its most unspoiled form, from eagles to sea lions, river otters, bears and a brief glimpse of porpoises flying through the water.

The Broken Group is a popular camping destination for kayakers and boaters, a wild and rugged retreat just an hour or so from Ucluelet by boat.

Over the last three decades, Brian has established a number of popular adventures to offer both tourists and locals, including the Broken Group Islands Whale Tour, the Perfect Storm Cruise and the Cast-Away Day Trip, in which visitors are dropped off on a rarely visited island where they can hike, explore tidal pools or just lay around on the beach. A picnic lunch and safety kit are provided and only one party per day is taken to the island.

Brian is an experienced tour guide, with extensive knowledge of the area and a keen eye for finding wildlife - Subtidal is an excellent choice if you are interested in an eco-tour of this beautiful area.

Tour either on the Discovery, a fast and fun 27 ft. rigid hull inflatable or the Dixie IV, a 36-ft former Canadian Coast Guard search and rescue boat converted to include warm indoor seating and open deck viewing.

Brian and Kathleen Congdon established Subtidal Adventures in 1978, and have had extensive experience guiding guests on memorable adventures.

We loved our tour, but after four hours out on the water, we were definitely hungry again.



Above: Sea lions will pick any old place to call home - like this old dock just outside Ucluelet.

Below left: Brian Congdon on the Dixie IV, one of the two vessels Subtidal Adventures uses for its whale watching and other water tours. Congdon has more than 30 years of experience in the eco-tourism business and is an expert wildlife spotter.



Our final dinner in Ucluelet on Sunday night was at the Driftwood Patio Restaurant at 1672 Cedar Road, where chef Ron Armstrong treats patrons from all over the globe to his lovingly prepared seafood selections, along with hearty basics like veggie burgers, salads and wraps.

Flags from countries all over the world grace the outside of the Driftwood, and Armstrong's claim to fame is the fact he visits every table that comes into the restaurant and has them sign his guest book. Famous signatures in the book include Jean Chrétien's, along with the cast of the popular television program, Corner Gas.

Armstrong treated us to his specialty, a seafood medley of salmon, prawns and scallops in a coconut cream curry sauce. It's the house favourite and no wonder - so much succulent seafood, so little time! It really was a treat.

We also sampled his delicate hand-battered salmon and chips (cod, halibut and prawns are also available), along with crab cakes and bacon wrapped scallops to start.

Our chocolate layer cake was

the perfect ending to a perfect meal.

The Driftwood is open seven days a week from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Armstrong offers several popular late night specials, including \$6 fish and chips after 9 p.m.

and \$3.50 'burger blowouts' after 10 p.m.

And don't forget to have your picture taken out front with the captain - I did!

As Monday morning finally rolled around, we were sad to leave but also felt as if we'd had a much longer holiday than we did. The food and hospitality we were treated to will not soon be forgotten, nor will the rugged beauty of Ucluelet, a rough diamond softened by the generous hearts of its inhabitants.

### For more information

\*Tauca Lea Resort: 1-800-979-9303 for info and reservations or visit [www.taucalearesort.com](http://www.taucalearesort.com)

\*The Boat Basin Restaurant at Tauca Lea: 250-724-4644 for reservations

\*The Spa at Tauca Lea: 250-726-4612 or 250-726-4625 for reservations

\*Subtidal Adventures: 250-726-7336 or 1-877-444-1134 or visit [www.subtidaladventures.com](http://www.subtidaladventures.com)

\*Starfish Café on Main: 250-726-1237

\*Driftwood Patio Restaurant: 250-726-2739