

Ucluelet offers ocean hot spot; [Final Edition]

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Are you looking for an open Pacific Ocean experience in your fishing? If so, try fishing from Ucluelet. Most trip packages take you first thing in the morning to various offshore spots on the La Perouse Bank that stretches out as much as 40 kilometres before dropping dizzily to 6,000-foot depths.

You can certainly tow your boat, too. Turn left off the Inland Highway and follow Highway 4 west to Ucluelet. While a 15 kilometre stretch is still a bit windy and narrow, most of the western leg has been updated and the trip is not as hair raising as it once was.

Before going, however, make sure you are confident in your boats' ability to carry you out and back safely. Along with a compass, boat electronics are vital, including: a depth sounder, GPS chart plotter, radar, and VHF with DSC capability (a self-locating distress signal). Remember, too that you will be beyond cells in many places. In my opinion, a boat less than 21 feet is too small.

But once on the water, you have onshore fishing, right around Amphitrite Point near the harbour mouth to Wya Point and Florencia Island. These onshore rock piles (including those on the Broken Island side) are where to fish for big returning Chinook bound for Robertson Creek and the Nitinat River.

If there are numerous boats, your best bet is to go with the flow. That means, as most boats troll, to use down riggers in the 25- to 40- foot levels against 50 foot and deeper walls. Gear of choice includes anchovy in a teaser, four feet or more behind the Betsy, or gold hued, flasher, a more useful colour from now until late September when most Van Isle Chinook have passed.

Alternatively, and far more spine tingling, is motor mooching a cutplug herring six feet behind a four- to eight-ounce ball weight attached to an easy slider clip. Big springs like a blunter cut in bevels: almost 90 degrees from ventral to dorsal surface and as little as 30 degrees from lateral to lateral surface. (I will put a more in-depth description on my website shortly: catchsalmonbc.com).

Power mooching moves your bait in a trough and crest fashion in front of the kelp beds where Chinook lie. Put your boat in gear and let the line rise to 45 degrees off vertical. Then take the boat out of gear and let the line drop to 90 degrees, i.e., vertical. Wait for 30 seconds as the dangle can be deadly, as can just after you re-engage forward. The most typical bite is a tingling on the rod tip. Leap to the rod and fire out two two-foot pulls before lifting the rod from the holder. Fire two more pulls and strike resistance.

If you wish to move out from the rocks to various hotspots on the banks west from Ucluelet, check the chart in the Island West Resort office where most people launch and moor their boats. This will tell you distances, compass bearings and GPS coordinates. With this info in hand, you can move out in the morning (going out with the fleet makes for safer boating, too).