SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 2007

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Inside: Hard to resist the sweet smell of onions, L2



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[CANADA SPECIAL SECTION]

SHIPSHAPE FOR TOURISM



The small town of Pictou created a replica of the ship Hector to celebrate the sacrifices of Scottish immigrants who, in 1773, landed in what would become Nova Scotia.



The side trawler Cape Sable, at the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, represents the kind of motorized fishing vessel that replaced schooners.

Tour Prince Rupert, before the crowds

By ANNE Z. COOKE For the Journal-Constitution

Prince Rupert, British Columbia – It's nice to be first on the scene. Or among the first. I would like to have seen the Columbia River when its waters ran free and the Yukon during the goldrush. To have explored Kenya in 1930 and Mexico in 1940.

The first travelers didn't always go in style, coping with places that were rough and dirty before they were sanitized for tourism. Once in a while, it still happens. This summer, a scant few thousand travelers will drive or fly to Prince Rupert, on British Columbia's northernmost coast, and a few thousand more Alaska cruise passengers will drop in each week for a quick look at this soon-to-be-discovered town.

Prince Rupert's first summer as a fledgling cruise port, in 2004, was a success despite an occasional snafu. Passengers disembarking at the new \$9 million Northland Dock and Atlin Terminal, in Cow Bay (formerly the historic Atlin Fish Packing Plant), had to thread their way past bulldozers enlarging the parking lot. Some tour operators were scrambling to find enough boats for presold whale-watching tours.

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► Please see PORT, L6



The Cow Bay Cafe, in Prince Rupert, is a favorite with locals. Now cruise ship passengers can eat there as well. Two cruise ships are scheduled to make weekly visits to the town from May 9 to Sept. 20. TRAVEL

CANADA SPECIAL SECTION]

Port: Heyday of cannery faded in 1960s

➤ Continued from L1

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"It won't benefit anybody, us or the tourists, to try to be like everyone else," he said. "We want to avoid Alaska's mistakes."

Still, tourism promises to help the local economy, in decline since 2001, when the last pulp mill closed. As we walked downtown, window shopping and looking in stores, the empty aisles and half-stocked shelves told the story. In the pharmacy, where we stopped to compare drug prices, we were the only customers. In the Safeway, no more than a dozen shoppers were filling their baskets.

But Prince Rupert isn't about shopping. It's all about being outdoors. We spent a sparkling sunny day following humpback whales with Prince Rupert Adventure Tours, on a a high-powered leffion-yellow boat, the luxurious Georgia Master.

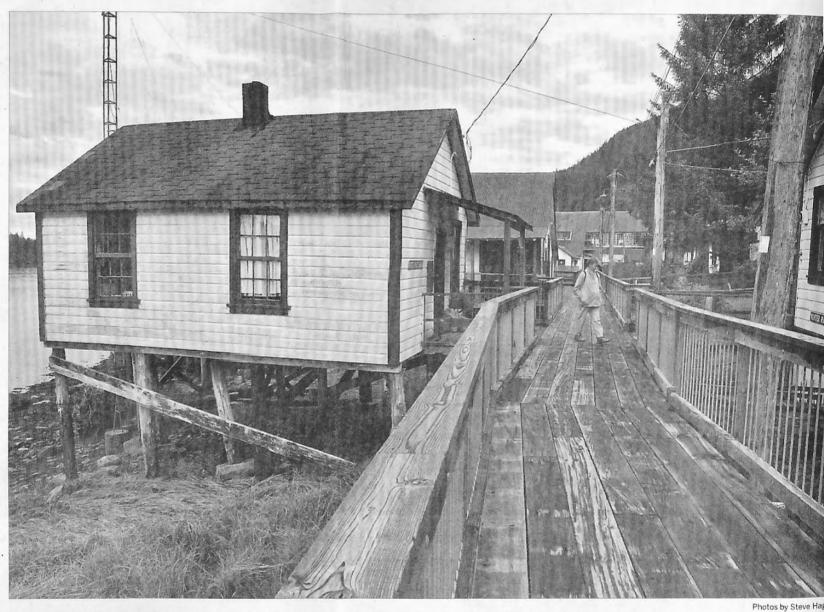
The har he next day, we crossed the harbor to Pike Island, led by Tsimshian guide John Haldane, who donned a hat and native dress for a tour of the island's pre-European-settlement sites, the oldest dating back 10,000 years.

The cultural highlight of our visit – and Prince Rupert's ading tourist attraction - was the Winter Feast tour at leading the Museum of Northern British Columbia, ranked among Canada's top 10 museums. Located in a traditional longhouse built of old-growth red and yellow cedar logs, the museum focuses on the history and art of the Tsimshian and Haida people, about 40 percent of the regional population.

The exhibits, part of a col-lection of arts and crafts made from the pre-European era to the present day, reveal a love of bold design and bright colors and a fine eye for craftsmanship, whether for decorating canoes and blankets or designing ceremonial masks, drums and headdresses.

"Whenever I'm feeling down about something, I come in here and look at this headpiece, made before the people had metal," said Sam Bryant, the museum's artistic director and a member of the Killer Whale Clan. He stopped in front of a favorite piece – a crown-shaped headdress with miniature figures made from mountain goat horn inlaid with abalone. It was carved, he said, with a sharpened beaver's tooth. Afterward, Bryant led us to the museum's longhouse to participate in a shortened version of the Winter Feast celebration, a potlatch held to celebrate weddings, promotions of chiefs and similar clan milestones. Donning costumes, Bryant and a small performance group, accompanied by two drummers, danced three traditional ceremonies and distributed gifts - tastes of local foods - to the onlookers. "There's nothing mysterious about the potlatch," Bryant said. "Think of it as a birthday party or a wedding reception, where guests bring gifts and the hosts give party favors." With limited time to spend, we missed other intriguing out ings, including a harbor cruise on the city's restored "heritage tugboat" and a guided trip to the Khutzeymateen (COOTzee-mah-teen) Grizzly Bear Sanctuary. We also passed up salmon fishing in the ocean with one of the charters docked in Cow Bay. Fishermen who go out can take home their catch, courtesy of Dolly's Fish Market, on the waterfront, which meets the boats and takes orders for flash-freezing and mailing. "Even if you're not a fisherman, you can take some home," said Charmayne Carlson, owner of Dolly's. "We sell canned salmon, frozen salmon and vacuum-packed smoked salmon in the store. And we serve every kind of fresh sea-

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IF YOU GO

Getting there

Expect to pay about \$500 round trip from Atlanta to Vancouver, British Columbia. Take the ferry from Vancouver or fly from Vancouver to Prince Rupert's airport on Digby Island. Most plane flights include the combination bus-and-ferry shuttle service that crosses from Digby to Kaien Island.

Getting around

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Instead of fishing, we saved our last day for a visit to the restored North Pacific Cannery, in nearby Port Edward, the last of dozens built along this coast. The cannery, a self-contained company town, was built entirely on a long row of wooded decks set atop pilings sunk into the Skeena River bank.

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State Ferry dock at Prince

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The cannery had its own general store, post office, church, processing plant, machine shop, net loft, boathouse, cottages for managers and crowded shacks for workers. Those long summer days on the river, later remembered in letters and diaries, swung between heaven and hell, slave labor and summer camp, with families living and working in close quarters.

"The fishing industry was divided along racial and gender lines," said curator Sophie Cormier, throwing a switch that started the assembly line clanking into action. The managers and storekeeper were Caucasian, Chinese workers made the cans and the Japanese built the boats and mended the nets, she said. Tsimshian men, who traditionally spent summers in native fish camps, netted the salmon, the women worked on the processing line, and the children, mostly unsupervised, kept one another company.

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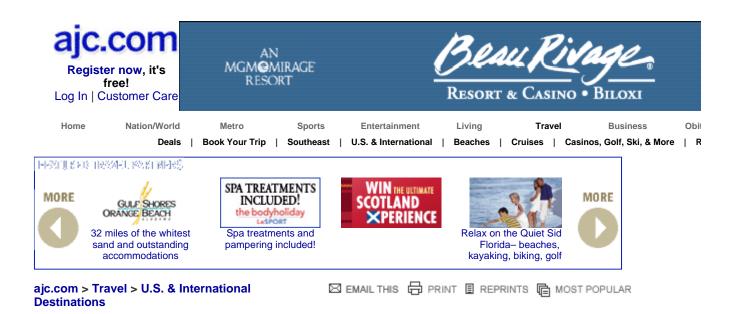
Tourism offices: www.tourismprincerupert.com or www.hellobc.ca.

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Prince Rupert, they predicted, could be bigger than Vancouver. The port has the world's third-deepest natural harbor, a natural for giant cruise and container ships. And Prince Rupert is the western end of Canada's national highways and the railroad.

Maybe someday. But this summer, Prince Rupert is still small-town Canada.



Click-2-Listen Tour British Columbia's Prince Rupert before the crowds

By ANNE Z. COOKE For the Journal-Constitution Published on: 03/25/07

What to know if you go



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http://www.ajc.com/travel/content/travel/otherdestinations/int_stories/2007/03/22/0325can... 3/30/2007

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