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YOUR GUIDE TO THE PURSUIT OF THE GOOD LIFE IN THE **SUN.S**

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Not your typical vacation spot



## Into the Woods

Get lodged in one of nature's final frontiers

Story by ANNE Z. COOKE

**P**rincess Royal Island, BC, Canada — it's hard to imagine this sylvan cove in a corner of Barnard Harbour without its most famous resident. It's *only* resident, in fact, and that for just five months in summer.

During the winter, **King Pacific Lodge**, a "floating" eco-lodge built on a salvaged U.S. Navy barge, anchors 90 miles north of Barnard Harbour, in Prince Rupert's sheltered harbor.

But when the Humpback Whales return, so does the Lodge, sailing south on the Inside Passage to Princess Royal Island, down the Whale Channel, around a rocky islet — home to a herd of startled sea lions — and into Barnard Harbour.

Moored there until October, the 17-room luxury lodge is totally self-contained, carrying everything it needs except fresh food, which is flown in twice weekly. Trash, garbage and waste are processed onboard and stored. When the ducks fly south, King Pacific Lodge goes, too, leaving the wilderness untouched.

"You can't build here in the Great Bear Rain Forest," says **Marlene Berg**, our kayaking guide, as we paddle over to Cameron Cove. "It's protected. But the lodge is on the barge, and the barge doesn't touch the shore. We don't even leave footprints."

Summer's the time to be in Barnard Harbour. Humpback Whales dive and breach, scooping up krill and herring. Chinook and Silver Salmon arrive, preparing to swim upstream, followed by Orcas, hunting in packs. Wolves, Sitka Deer, Black Bears and Bald Eagles make an occasional appearance. And in late May, the first guests arrive.

Though most of King Pacific's guests are outdoors enthusiasts, a few are hard-core fishermen.

"I caught some Silvers yesterday, but I'm not quitting until I get a couple of kings," says Russell Benioff, a retiree from San Francisco, who fished every day, all day, and took home a half-dozen 14- and 15-pounders.

"I'm not a fisherman," says his wife, Joelle. "I'm here to watch the whales — and go to the spa."

An artist, Greg Burr, had his eye on the scenery. "I'd much rather kayak or paint the scenery," he says, taking his water colors and paddling across the bay.

On a wildlife trip with guide **Floyd Dundas**, one of the local Gitga'at people (a Tsimshian First Nations group), we spot a pair of Humpback Whales bubble-netting for herring.

"Got your cameras out? Watch the bubbles," he says, pivoting the boat and pointing

at the circle of froth on the surface. Seconds later two giant heads with mouths agape erupt at the surface.

Lodge stays include all ocean fishing, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, spa facilities, wildlife walks and guided cultural visits to the Gitga'at fishing camp at Hartley Bay. But there's an extra fee for a few excursions, including floatplane and helicopter trips.

The most amazing outing — available only in late August and September, when the salmon are actually spawning — is the *The Quest For the Kermode Bear*, a full-day guided bear-watching adventure aimed at seeing one of the rare white "Spirit Bears" indigenous to the Great Bear Rain Forest.

"All the Kermode guides are Gitga'ats," says **Michael Uehara**, President of the Lodge and a dedicated environmentalist. "If there's a bear to be seen, they'll find it," he assured us.

"We think tourism should be self-sustaining," Uehara continued. "You've seen what it's like when millions of people overrun sensitive places like Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. The lodge provides a unique wilderness adventure with gourmet cuisine and a five-star setting," said Uehara. "To maintain our standards we have to limit the guests to a maximum of 34."

The setting, elegant but spare, uses local materials to create a warm but uncluttered look. Local red and yellow cedar, sanded and oiled, has been used for paneling to produce a warm effect, echoed by the polished fir floors and staircase. Honey- and coffee-colored slate covers high traffic areas, like hallways and around the fireplace, and peeled log beams and railings support a cathedral ceiling and open stairwell.

Guests gather for cocktails before dinner in front of a cut-stone fireplace with a two-story chimney. Custom-made art-glass fixtures light the seating area, furnished with leather sofas and plush upholstered chairs. Panoramic windows overlooking Barnard Harbour face the setting sun.

The spa has two full-time massage therapists on staff and two treatment rooms, a steam room and a sauna. The hot tub, overlooking the bay, is a romantic spot to watch the sunset blaze from red to peach, pink and silver. As the long summer twilight fades to violet, the lodge lights twinkle to life. □

**+ GETTING THERE:** Fly to Vancouver to connect to KPL's charter flight to the lodge. All-inclusive rates for a seven-night stay start at \$7,650 per person. Call King Pacific Lodge at 888.592.5464 or visit [www.kingpacificlodge.com](http://www.kingpacificlodge.com).