

World Renown Sooke Harbour House

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Marechal Foch of Starling Lane Vineyards - a fabulous red from the extensive wine cellar - picture right
Photo Courtesy of the [Bullock & Kirstein Photography](#)



The casual elegance with which Sinclair and Frederique Philip conduct business at the Sooke Harbour House sets the Inn apart from every other in the area. The ability to make guests feel pampered yet free to do as they wish is really unsurpassed.

So, what's the skinny – since really that's what most readers are looking for! An elegant and luxurious accommodation with wonderful down comforters, fireplaces waiting for but a match, deep soaker tubs on the patio to relax your weary work-week muscles, a view that only the seagulls in flight overhead can beat, and oversize showers complete with warm mists.

When you call to book your room, your dinner reservations are secured, every possible food allergy or aversion, is covered, and your spa treatment is readied. When you arrive, you are personally taken to your room where fresh white chocolate and cranberry cookies greet you on the counter, beside the port wine poured in a small decanter waiting to take you into a world away from what you know.



Deluxe Waterfront Rooms
Photo Courtesy of Sooke Harbour House



Sooke Harbour House
Photo Courtesy of the Bullock & Kirstein Photography

Our stay began with the usual Friday afternoon traffic leaving Victoria – slow drivers, careful drivers, and, of course, the ever-present annoying driver. All of them combined made for an arrival four minutes after our scheduled hot stone massages. Not to worry – the front desk happily did an express check-in and escorted us to our open, airy, high-ceilinged oasis. The luxurious robes were awaiting and shedding our clothes was less than a difficult task. We donned the ubiquitous slippers and trundled down to the Potlach room.

We were greeted by soothing spa sounds, a refreshing glass of water from a hand-painted bottle, and our two wonderful masseuses. Never having had a hot stone massage – I knew not what bliss was to follow. One and a half hours passed as if they were fifteen minutes. My masseuse whispered occasionally in my ear to ask if the pressure was OK – I think all I could do was moan with pleasure and continue to “endure” the passing time. We were all too sorry to finish our treatments – but alas, it meant that dinner lay ahead....

We managed to sneak up to our room to sip a glass of the port on the deck. We listened to the waves lap up on the shore beneath us. Afterwards, we showered all the oil off of our bodies and readied for the fabulous feast that awaited us.

As we sauntered into the dining room, we found ourselves a quiet seat in the bustling room – one facing the roaring fireplace. We were embarking upon the seven course culinary “Gastronomic Adventure” with wine pairings, as Louie, our sharp-looking sommelier/waiter/fountain of knowledge, detailed to us. We started with a fabulous white that paired beautifully with our carrot soup with grand fir oil, roasted bacon, and apples. Warm on a cool evening, it inspired the overwhelming feeling of being at home but treated like royalty all at the same time. We continued on with a flaky, tender fillet of tamar-glazed sablefish in a unique gooseneck barnacle broth with wild rice, snap peas, and chive oil – absolutely wonderful. Next arrived a poached, spiced pork-stuffed chicken leg with cranberry compote, cauliflower puree, pickled beet white bean salad, and toasted walnuts. The sweet and sour with the nutty taste of the walnuts were perfect together.



Great Food

Photo Courtesy of the [Bullock & Kirstein Photography](#)

Louie walked us through an amazing trip through the vineyards of Vancouver Island and the Okanagan, pairing wines that perhaps we might have been skeptical about until we tasted them with each sumptuous course. From Blue Grouse Vineyards to Kettle Valley and back to Venturi-Schulze, our palates were teased, pampered and treated to a masterpiece of tastes. As Sinclair Philip sat down with us, bringing out a wonderful bottle of Marechal Foch from Starling Lane Vineyards, the conversation mesmerized us and made us feel as if we were at the dinner table at home with old friends – reminiscing, chatting, laughing and enjoying. What a memorable evening. The cod was buttery-soft and tasted as if the boat had just tied up at the Sooke dock. The lamb was tender, perfectly cooked, and bathed with a port reduction that was second to none. The presentation was eye catching, spirit lifting, and played with every one of our senses.

As the four facets of our rhubarb variations for dessert came out with a little Sauternes from France, a feeling of satisfaction overcame us. The cheeses from Hilary's in the Cowichan Valley, along with the selection from Moonstruck on Salt Spring, were the final cap on a decadent evening of wonderful eating and wine. We were happy, tantalized, pleasantly full and amazed by the meal we had just taken in. And, as Louie and Sinclair bid us good night, we felt like we were just heading up to the guest room to open our suitcases and to enjoy the wonderful hospitality.

Back in our room, we realized we had promised Sinclair that we would fill our outdoor deep soaker tub and sit in the cool evening air, drinking in the sounds and sights of an ocean paradise. We filled in our breakfast order for the morning and hung the request on our door – dreaming already of the treats that awaited us. This we did easily, as we sipped port, threw our clothes to the floor, and enjoyed what could only be termed a perfect evening.

As the light streamed through the curtains in the morning, a soft knock came at the door. We opened it to a very polite and bright “Good morning!” Our breakfast was brought in and placed on the table in the living room. Hot coffee – strong and addictive-smelling, fresh croissants - crunchy on the outside, soft and chewy on the inside. French toast, bathed in fruits and syrup with fresh squeezed orange juice. Scones, muffins, yogurt – the list was endless and that home made family feeling returned.



Superior Food Presentation at Sooke Harbour House
Photo Courtesy of the [Bullock & Kirstein Photography](#)



Art displays throughout Sooke Harbour House
Photo Courtesy of the [Bullock & Kirstein Photography](#)

As we lazed on the couch contemplating the rain and the tide pulling out we relaxed, read, talked, listened to classical music and we enjoyed. One can only enjoy in such a setting with these people around you – with this food in your stomach.

As we set out to check out Botanical Beach and the surrounding areas of Sooke, we could only think about when we would return. Who of our friends would enjoy coming, having their wedding here. Who would enjoy the wine, feeling the company of the friends here.

Our only regret is not touring the wine cellar – world renowned and Wine Spectator accoladed. But, alas – what a wonderful reason to go back to our friends at the Sooke Harbour House. What a perfect getaway!



Part of our scrumptuous breakfast
Photo Courtesy of the [Bullock & Kirstein Photography](#)

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