

Heads Up on Tail Out Adventures!

by
Lisa Cole

I wake up at 5:40 a.m. My clock radio didn't come on, damn it! I have to meet Ron and Herb in 20 minutes. I throw on some warm layers and make a dash. Wait! I forgot my water bottle. Oh well... too late. I'll have to make do.

I meet Ron and Herb at the Tillicum mall in Victoria at 6:05 a.m. Luckily with very little traffic at this time of day, we're able to make good time. I can't believe it, but we arrive at Becher Bay by 6:40.



We find Chris Gurr at his 23' Champion Explorer. He greets and helps us onboard, offering us coffee. The spacious boat has comfortable seating for up to five people and all the latest marine and navigational equipment.

Born in Campbell River, BC, Chris has been doing guide work for over six years now and has been fishing all his life. He is also a chef, which sure comes in handy while working in a business like this!

It's a rather gloomy day and Chris tells us, regretfully, he's heard it's not going to get much better. The fog lends a mystical edge to the churning water and soon we're on our way, heading out of the marina towards Sooke, the wind in our faces.

Chris, Lisa & Herb at Becher Bay

(Photo courtesy of Ron Kirstein)

Ron tells us that many eagles die catching their prey like that. Once the bird's talons sink in, that's it - it's literally 'hooked', and if the salmon's larger than the eagle bargained for, the fish will pull it under. Both eagle and salmon die together, locked in a deadly grip. I'm impressed by this, understanding for the first time how powerful these fish must be if they can drown a mighty eagle!

Chris is constantly keeping watch on the water, maneuvering the boat, checking the equipment, changing the bait. He seems to have a sixth sense for when a fish takes the line. He turns on the treasured 'Black Box', explaining:

"It allows us to regulate positive voltage on the downrigger cable. All boats that have an electrical system will have an electrical charge surrounding

It's a rough day out here, but the Campion gives us a steady ride.

The Juan de Fuca Strait stretches out before us, Secretary Island looms in the distance. Banked in clouds, the Olympic Mountains do their best to watch over us. I sip on my coffee and marvel at the view. Nothing quite as exhilarating as being out on the open sea! We stop next to a pocket of fishing and tour boats, just off Beachy Head and the craggy cliffs of beautiful East Sooke Park.

Chris sets up the downrigger cables, making sure there's fresh bait on each one. Ron asks him where the name 'Tail Out' comes from.

"It's the part of a river pool where fish are often found holding, also the area in a river pool where fish are often landed and released. And, when netting a fish the head always goes in first. The name was inspired because it's all about fishing and catching fish."

An eagle swoops down between some of the boats, snatches a silver salmon out of the water and flies off with it writhing in its talons. I could swear the great bird was showing off for us, saying, "Hey look, no lines, no technology-- *this* is how you do it, silly people!"

them-a natural voltage would be about .8 volts on the downrigger cable; fish may find this charge to high and therefore try to avoid it; but with the Black Box, we can change the voltage to a more 'fish-friendly' one."



This was really my fish, why did he end up in their boat?

Ron throws a penny overboard and does a 'salmon dance' across the deck. Herb thinks he's off his rocker, but I've seen it work before! I try it, too-at risk of making a total fool of myself.

Within a short time, there's a tug on one of our lines. Chris notices it first and starts reeling it in, calling on Ron to accept the challenge. It's a giant, by the looks of it. Ron's working hard- he's clearly met a force to be reckoned with! Chris is all over the boat at once, checking our location, getting the net ready, coaching, "That's it! Not all at once, give it some slack, then start reeling again!"

We can see it now-a Chinook-so huge he looks like a small shark skimming over the water. Almost close enough to touch! Another fierce struggle and -

Suddenly it's easy to reel in the rod... *too* easy.

"Did he get away?"

"Bit the line right through!"

"Must have been a 26-pounder, maybe a 30!"

All around us, people are cheering and struggling with their own lines, a huge bite-on is on! Chris has never seen anything like it. Someone on the CB radio announces he just got his rod snapped in half. All across the water people are shouting, catching - and



Chris Gurr baiting our lines near Becher Bay
(Photo courtesy of Ron Kirstein)

On our way back to the marina, the wind begins to blow again. The waves toss us around a little, but Chris holds us steady. We're back where we started - both weather and location-wise. When we dock, I wobble to my feet and manage to get my sea-sleeping legs over the side of the boat onto the boardwalk. I hadn't needed my water bottle after all.

"Thank you, Chris! We had a great time!" No trophies today, which is highly unusual for Tail Out Adventures. But-with the sudden appearance and

losing-- salmon!

Then, as quickly as it started, it's over. The fish must have noticed this isn't such a safe place after all. One, two nibbles, then all is quiet. After all the excitement, we're starving! Chris breaks out lunch: delicious ham sandwiches and chocolate chip cookies. "There's water and more coffee, if you want, too," he says.

Chris tells us the best part of his job is the people he meets, from all over the world. He enjoys hearing everybody's stories. Fishing is one of his most favorite things in life and he's passed this love on to his 15-month-old son, who's already been caught fishing in the dog's water bowl!

"You should try coming out here in the winter time," he tells us. "People don't often know that it's a great time for catching, too."

After lunch, Chris takes us towards Secretary Island. Almost imperceptibly at first, the high tide begins to turn. The wind goes down. Before too long, the water is as smooth as glass.

"Does it get like this very often?" asks Herb.

"No!" says Chris. "Very rare for a day like this."

We sit back in silence and enjoy the beautiful calm, the mist coming up, the sun trying to shine through it,

disappearance of all those biting fish, and the strange weather that shifted from rough to calm and back again-- it's been an unusual day all around. And definitely-- an *adventure!*

Check out Tail Out at: <http://www.tailoutfishing.com>



**This bite was on everywhere
and then it was gone!**
(photo courtesy of Ron Kirstein)

the light reflecting on the
water all around us. It's so
warm out now, so still. Like
someone turned on a switch.
We couldn't have asked for a
more magical break.