

The Victoria & Vancouver Island Travel and Tourism Guide TRAVEL MAGAZINE

Taming the Wild Pacific

featuring the **Tauca Lea Resort in Ucluelet BC.**

by Ron Kirstein, Edited by Lisa Cole and Linda Kirstein
Photos Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

Ucluelet is approximately 4.5 hours from Victoria, plus stops along the way. We leave early to make sure we have time to enjoy this most scenic of trips. We also want to stop at Coombs Country Market to have lunch and one of the best ice cream cones you can buy on Vancouver Island. This is a ritual for Linda and I when we travel to the West Coast of Vancouver Island.

Great stops along the way begin at the top of the Malahat. The scenic viewpoint behind split rock is second to none. Next, we gas up in Duncan, where gas always seems cheaper. Then we head for Coombs. The Country Market is always a treat. I call it the best little tourist trap in the world. It's better known for the "goats on the roof". It contains everything from soup to nuts. Don't miss it. The next great stop is Cathedral Grove where you can see tremendous old growth trees right at the roadside. Be careful as you approach Cathedral Grove as there is always traffic congestion.

We stop overnight in Port Alberni to break up the trip. We visit Stamp Falls Provincial Park. Stop in at the visitor centre and you will be surprised at what Port Alberni has to offer. It is often short-changed as people bear down for the Pacific Rim and Long Beach, but I suggest you give it some consideration.

After Port Alberni, we check out Sproat Lake, a great location for swimming, fishing, waterskiing and, when the wind is up, windsurfing. A variety of short access trails lead visitors around this park, including a trail to the eastern end of Sproat Lake, home to one of the finest panels of prehistoric petroglyphs in BC. You go left off the highway to the park, and right to the Coulson Flying Tankers (Martin-Mars Water Bomber) Base. There is also a spectacular viewpoint at the west end of Sproat Lake called Taylor Arm, a great photo opportunity. Watch for it just as you start to climb a hill as you leave the end of the lake.



Goats on the Roof at Coombs BC
Photo by Ron Kirstein



Stamp Falls Provincial Park near Port Alberni-raging water
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein"

Our next stop is a roadside viewpoint of one of the many rivers along the way. It is on a corner and there is ample parking. Usually others stop there. You will identify it by the large boulders on the corner of the river. It is another great photo opportunity, especially if the water is really ripping.

Our final stop is at the Information Centre at the Junction where you go left to Ucluelet and right to Long Beach and Tofino. We stop here to pick up any new information on the area.



Scenic View Point - River on highway to Ucluelet
Photo Courtesy of Linda Kirstein

Then we head for the Long Beach Golf Course. Our check-in time is not until 4, so we decide to try golf in the area. The nine-hole golf course turns out to be quite a challenge for both of us. The holes are longer than anticipated and there is only one par three hole. The course is in great shape. The fairways are narrow, so make sure you stay on the fairway or you will not score well. We did not score well!

The last hole was unique. There are a bunch of obstacles across the fairway, so you have to lay up to them and then hope you have a shot through to the green. The greens are in great shape. The course is definitely worth a try. This course is likely the farthest one west in North America. Next step is the Pacific.



The Challenging 9th Hole at Long Beach Golf Course
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

After Golf, we head for the Tauca Lea Resort in Ucluelet, our home for the next three days. We find the resort on Ucluelet Harbour, on the East Side of Ucluelet. The wild pacific is on the west side and Barkley Sound is to the south.

Our one-bedroom suite has an ocean view and wow, what a view. Wildlife is right there for us to see. Be sure to bring your binoculars. I see a bear on the far shore. A couple of sea lions swim by and there are eagles sitting in the trees. We find well organized instructions about the suite and also information about the area. The staff even cough-up directions to the "locals" beach. This is rare indeed.

The room is ready for us. There's a light on and the fire is warming the room. We have a living room, fully equipped kitchen, a comfortable bedroom, a dining room and a Jacuzzi tub on the deck. We find the suite



Our one-bedroom suite at Tauca Lea
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

very relaxing. The decor is simple and warm and very serene.



The Tauca Lea Resort - Ucluelet BC
Photo Courtesy of Tauca Lea

We schedule an early supper. The dining room is right above the reception area. It is called the Boat Basin Restaurant named after the Boat Basin at Cougar Annie's Garden, a historical site north of Tofino. The restaurant faces the Ucluelet Marina. Our waiter is cordial and attentive. Linda and I both order the steak dinner and I must say it's the best steak I have had in years. Our appetizers are delicious and we are so full afterwards that we have to pass on desert. This is undoubtedly the finest place to eat in Ucluelet.

After a candle-lit Jacuzzi soak on our deck, we have a great sleep. Sleeping next to the ocean always seems so relaxing. In the morning we are back to the Boat Basin for a continental breakfast, which turns out to be more than ample. There is a choice of cereals, muffins, cinnamon buns, amazing croissants, fresh fruit, orange juice, coffee and tea. While waiting for breakfast I notice a rather large sea lion gently checking out the Marina next to the Boat Basin.



The Dining Room at Tauca Lea
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



The excellent breakfast at Tauca Lea
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



The Spa at Tauca Lea
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



The view from our deck at Tauca Lea
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



The Spa Reception at Tauca Lea
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

Later we head for the Spa. Linda is scheduled for a pedicure and I, for a massage. We find the staff throughout the resort very professional, helpful, and friendly. The massage therapist is very good. I can feel myself melting into the bed as the massage continues. Linda's feet receive the royal treatment. Exfoliation, mud masking, and moisturizer, followed by nail treatment. Both treatments are very professionally done and the results inspiring. The Spa has a very relaxing atmosphere and is professionally operated. It is worth a visit for sure.

We spend the rest of the day checking out Ucluelet. There is a major new resort being built here called Wyndansea Golf Resort. It will have a luxury 5 star hotel, a deep sea marina, a Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course, and 30 exclusive homes. The 15th hole has been completed. I can't resist. I take my driver out and drive over the ocean to what seems to be a small grassy area a long way off. The view from the 15th tee is spectacular. Talk about intimidating! Yes, I make it over!



The 15th Hole at WyndanSea Golf Resort
Photo Courtesy of Linda Kirstein

Later, we take a short walk on the Wild Pacific Trail, something no one should miss while in Ucluelet. There is so much to see and do here. Be sure to take an adventure into Barkley Sound and the Broken Group Islands. You can kayak, whale watch, or take adventure tours, but be sure to get out there. We have seen whales and sea lions, and even wolves on the shore in the Broken Group.

If you really want to see more of the area, try Flight Seeing. From the air you will get spectacular views. It is so beautiful. This is the most beautiful part of the Island and it is even more impressive from the air.



The Wild Pacific Trail - views like this are common
Note the difference at the same location on a cloudy day
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

We spend the rest of the day back at Tauca Lea just enjoying the resort and relaxing. The dinner was so good the night before, we go back to the Boat Basin for supper. The previous evening we'd noticed they had a gas-fired pizza oven, so tonight we both order a pizza. It's excellent and far above the standard restaurant pizza. It is very tasty.

In the morning we have another great breakfast and then go for a walk around the property at Tauca Lea. There is a boardwalk from town across the causeway leading to the resort. If guests would like to walk into town, they can use this boardwalk. It would take about 15 minutes to get into town on foot. The boardwalk next to our suite leads to a gazebo overlooking the harbour. Ucluelet means "safe harbour." This is a great place to view wildlife that seems to be in abundance.



Walkway to sea view at Tauca Lea
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

After checking out, we get an early start back to Victoria, so that we can enjoy the scenery along the way. It is such a spectacular drive between Ucluelet and Port Alberni we just don't want to hurry.

There is no doubt that the luxurious surroundings at Tauca Lea do indeed tame the Wild Pacific Coast. You can be out enjoying adventures in the wild pacific coast by day and soaking up your creature comforts by night. It doesn't get any better than this!



Spectacular mountain lake on highway home
Photo Courtesy of Linda Kirstein



Spectacular mountain view on highway home
Photo Courtesy of Linda Kirstein



Roadside waterfall on highway home
Photo Courtesy of Linda Kirstein



A sealion diving from the rocks in the Broken Group Islands
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein



Grey Whale
Photo Courtesy of Ron Kirstein

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