

"THE PACIFIC RIM"

By Ron Kirstein

Terrific Tofino

The Esowista Peninsula is perched in the edge of the North America Continent. Next stop Japan! At the north end of the Peninsula is the town of Tofino, located in a protected harbour. Just to the North, you will also find protected waters, and directly offshore is the Wild West Coast.

The constant ocean surge in this area keeps the surf breaking on expansive white sandy beaches. In winter, waves can reach up to 50 feet in height! North of Tofino, you'll find the Ahousaht First Nations Community, Cougar Annie's Gardens and Hot Springs Cove, and just across the harbour you'll find Optisat First Nations Village on Meares Island.

Before you enjoy all the exciting tourist activities Tofino has to offer, you must first find a place to stay. Since nearly one million visitors flock to this paradise each summer, it is best to book in advance.

Clayoquot-Orca Lodge

If you are looking for a good value, check out the Clayoquot-Orca Lodge. It's centrally located on the East Side of Highway 4, just as you approach



The Beaches Go On Forever - Tofino BC

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Kirstein)

Olivia, the owner/operator of Clayoquot-Orca is a unique character who's dedicated to ensuring you have a special holiday. She quite regularly helps guests plan their days and book their chosen activities. Many people who've stayed here have written to say their stay in Tofino was the highlight of their trip. Olivia is currently adding an additional 30 rooms to the Lodge. We stayed in a spacious suite that had two Queen sized beds and a pullout couch in it. The room could have easily handled six people and there was lots of room to relax at the end of a busy day.

The Lodge also has a dining room that operates throughout the peak tourist season with an attached Solarium where guests can dine with their pets. Now that is pet friendly! Chloe is the host pet. The highway sign proudly boasts that the Clayoquot-Orca Lodge was voted #1 for best-value accommodation in the Tofino area.

Tofino, and close to all the major beaches. Clayoquot-Orca is a unique destination resort featuring on-site Eco Experience on 4 acres of old growth rain forest. Well groomed trails lead to Jensen Bay, a waterfront Bird Sanctuary, while other trails will lead you throughout the rainforest. The Lodge has comfortable, spacious ensuite rooms, some with private hot tubs. There is a licensed piano lounge, 'the Chuckling Oyster' which is also pet friendly. It's full of games and activities and has a nice fireplace to curl up beside on summer evenings.

Long Beach Lodge

If it's luxury accommodations you're after, look no further than the Long Beach Lodge Resort, a luxurious beachfront retreat for the discerning traveler. It's nestled just above the beach on Cox Bay, midway between the pristine beauty of Pacific Rim National Park and spectacular Clayoquot Sound. The resort has a beachfront lodge and rainforest cottages, offering first-class amenities and service in a relaxed setting. Here you can sit in your Jacuzzi or lay on your bed, look out on the Wild West Coast and let the surf lull you to sleep. The dining room offers a variety of culinary masterpieces. The lounge has a large fireplace, where you can curl up and watch the sunset and the waves roll up on the beach.



Clayoquot Orca Lodge & Seaside Bird Sanctuary
(photo courtesy of Clayoquot-Orca Lodge)

Activities in Tofino

Whale Watching is the first of the must do's while in Long Beach. Our guide was John Forde of the [Whale Centre](#). A seasoned veteran in the whale watching business, he offers a number of other services as well, such as Hot Springs Cove tours, bear watching, bird watching, and fishing. Experience the thrill of seeing whales, otters, bears, and birds in their natural habitat of beautiful Clayoquot Sound. Cruise through the spectacular waters on John's 24' Boston Whaler, searching for Orcas, Humpback Whales, Sea Lions and Dahl's Porpoises. Approximately 18,000 Grey whales pass by Esowista Peninsula on their way to food sources along the North American coast to Alaska. John's a master skipper who knows the area like the back of his hand. For a 2-1/2 hour cruise, he maneuvers his sturdy boat through the powerful water with the skill of an artisan, all the while providing a running commentary of what you're seeing. Prior to our trip

we were treated to a slide show of some of John's best photos, elaborating on what was in store for our Eco-tour of the area.

Don't forget your camera, binoculars and warm clothes!

Other Must Do Activities in Tofino:

Surf: Try Surf Sister -- Tofino's surfing school for women, and Live to Surf on the highway just before Tofino, where you can rent boards and get good info on the best waves in the area.

Hike: Lots of spectacular hiking trails in the Pacific Rim National Park. Go to



The Boston Whaler - Tour Boat

(photo courtesy of John Forde)



Grey Whale Diving

(Photo courtesy of the John Forde)

Bird Watching: Check out "Just Birding", a local bird watching company, or charter John Forde's Whale Centre. John has excellent knowledge of local birds.

Golf: Go to Long Beach Golf Course.

Ahousaht: Take the water taxi to this Native Village and walk the boardwalk trail.

Cougar Annie's Garden: Fly in to these exciting and unique horticultural gardens and learn about the history of this unique lady. Ocean Outfitters (250-725-2866) also provides day visits to Cougar Annie's

the Park Interpretive Centre at Wichaninnish Beach to pick up trail maps and ask for suggestions.

Big Trees: Take a water taxi to Meares Island and take the boardwalk trail to some 'monster' trees.

Hot Springs Cove: Visit by boat or float plane. The naturally steaming hot springs are 2.4 km on a boardwalk from the docks. A great experience! There are two accommodations at Hot Springs Cove - The Inchanter

(<http://www.inchanter.com/mainpage.htm>) and Hot Springs Lodge 1-866-670-1106

Beach Walks: Beachcombing, long walks, sunset watching, relaxing in the sun, listening to the waves - take your pick. There are miles and miles of white sand beaches.

Sea Kayaking: Try Tofino Sea Kayaking and paddle through the protected waters of Clayoquot Sound. Camp on sandy beaches and take in the wildlife.

Fishing: Try deep-sea fishing or fish protected inlets. Bring your own boat or try one of the local charter companies such as Ospray Charters.

Bear Watching: You have opportunities to see bears driving on the highway into Tofino, on backroad excursions, while kayaking (go at low tides), and on boat tours. Check out the Whale Centre for more info.

Native Canoe Experience: Check out Tla-ook Cultural Adventures.

Scuba Diving: Bring your own gear and charter a local boat.

Tofino Tips:

Good Coffee and light lunch:

Vincente's Cafe

Good Eats: The Schooner, Sea Shanty, Long Beach Lodge, Sobo, behind Beaches Grocery-voted one of the best new restaurants in Canada...not bad out of a truck

Good Breakfast: Blue Heron Dining Room at Weigh West Marine Resort

garden on Wednesday and Sundays. Their boat departs Tofino at 10:00 am, returning at 4:00 PM. Tofino Air can fly you there (1-866-486-3247)

Roy Vickers: Visit Roy's Eagle Aerie Gallery and check out the Native Art of world famous artist Roy Henry Vickers in the traditional cedar longhouse gallery in Tofino



A Sea Otter Near Tofino

(photo courtesy of John Forde)

LIVE crab: West Coast Market



Beach at Park Interpretive Centre

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Kirstein)

Rent a bike: Fibre Options Bike Rentals

Bread and Goodies: Common Loaf BakeShop

Smoothies: Jupiter Juice Bar

Find out what is shaking in

Tofino: Tofino Time

Surfing Equipment: Long Beach Surf, Surf Sister and Live to Surf.

Enjoy a cocktail & sunset: Long Beach Lodge Lounge...ocean views, fireplace - very nice.

Lookout - Viewpoint: Radar Hill in the Pacific Rim Park is spectacular

Rim National Park--Long Beach as it is known on the Island. Spectacular trails follow the shoreline near Amphitrite Point and northward towards the National Park, offering panoramic views of the Broken Group Islands in Barkley Sound as well as the shoreline exposed to the open Pacific Ocean. The trail winds through ancient rainforests, home to giant trees, moss, ferns, salal and all kinds of wild life. A great place for photographers.

THE PACIFIC RIM: Unbelievable Ucluelet

On the very rugged southern tip of the Esowista Peninsula lies the village of Ucluelet (U-clue-let), where the open Pacific Ocean pounds the western shore of massive rocky outcroppings. Islands protect a number of secluded coves and there is a large protected harbour on the "inside". This quiet village sits on the edge of the Broken Group Islands and is just minutes from the south end of the Pacific



Wild Pacific Trail View - Ucluelet

(photo courtesy of Ron Kirstein)

Most often between March and April, with a little patience, you can see the Grey whales migrating by the shorelines. Just watch for the waterspouts. You just never know when they are going to come close to shore or into one of the sheltered bays! Seals, sea lions, otters, eagles, deer and bear are seen quite often in the area. "Life on the edge" in Ucluelet puts you in the middle of temperate rain forests with hundreds of varieties of birds, abundant wildlife and countless marine animals.



Eagle on Wild Pacific Trail

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Kirstein)

Ucluelet is small and remote, yet it offers quiet and relaxation with all the amenities required for comfort. Spend your day in the great outdoors observing the wildlife, hiking the many trails or just relaxing on an expansive Sandy Beach. Dine out at one of the many fine-dining establishments or pack a lunch for the beach. Ucluelet offers a wide variety of accommodations, from full service hotels to romantic B&B's, where you can park yourself for a relaxing evening and a great sleep, often with the sound of surf lapping the shoreline. The fresh air, spectacular scenery and never-ending nature display will make you realize just how special life is in Ucluelet. Ucluelet has a good number of fishing guides and lots of Eco-tour opportunities. To spend time in the Pacific Rim and not be out on the water would be a colossal error! Whether you whale watch, kayak, fish, or just tour around, you will have the time of your life. Join us now as we provide the contacts and information you will



Beautiful Beachfront Cabins at Terrace Beach - Ucluelet

(photo courtesy of Terrace Beach)

require planning your vacation.

The Terrace Beach Resort

Terrace Beach is a tranquil bay just south of the town centre of Ucluelet on Peninsula Road. The Resort is perched on stilts within the rainforest, overlooking the sandy shore. The staff, Bruce Faith and Jean Suban are very friendly and helpful. A boardwalk accesses a 'village' of cabins-- the arrangement of buildings brings to mind the set of an adventure movie, and as we walked to our cabin, we felt a strong sense of excitement and suspense. The cabins are rustic, with open beam construction and are well appointed with Roots furniture and well equipped with all your vacation needs. The cabins are so close to the beach that the rolling waves breaking on the shore lulls you to sleep. The fresh air drifted in our open window and we slept soundly all night. These are very comfortable cabins and great for get-a-ways or family vacations.

Ebb Tide Bed and Breakfast and Vacation Home

If you continue further up Peninsula Road you will soon arrive at Ebb Tide Bed and Breakfast, owned and operated by Bernie and Sharon Lipichuk. Our room opened on to a deck that looked out over a secluded cove and pebble beach. Just a few steps from the door and you can be beachcombing. The area is quiet and the views breathtaking. Whales have been seen right out front of the B&B. Our room was spacious with a comfortable bed, lots of seating, satellite TV, and other amenities.

It was very clean and well appointed. The B&B has three rooms, two of which are at either end of the common area. The third is in the upper level. Three rooms could easily accommodate a family of 4-6.

Just steps from our cabin was a large tree with an Eagle's nest in it. The beauty of this nest is that it's not really high up and with a good zoom lens and some patience, you can get quite a picture of the eagles. Just down the steps on the south side of the Resort is a small parking lot, which is the beginning of the Wild West Coast Trail. This portion starts with a boardwalk and lots of steps that take you up and over a hill to the cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It is one of the most beautiful trails you will ever walk! The number of viewpoints overlooking the ocean here is impressive. Each one is both spectacular and unique. About 1 km along the trail will bring you to Amphitrite Point Light Station. Continuing along takes you to vistas facing the Broken Group Islands. Two kilometers down the trail, you emerge from the trees then pass through a small parking lot. Turn left and walk about 500 yards down the road back towards the [Terrace Beach Resort](#). Jason Priestly of "Beverly Hills 90210" fame recently purchased this resort. He and his family are dedicated to ensuring you have a great stay in Ucluelet.



View of Peaceful Terrace Beach from Trail

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Kirstein)

[Ebb Tide](#) is just steps from the south end of the Wild West Coast Trail. Each morning I walked the trail and returned by the same route. This was a comfortable 4-km walk with gorgeous views and very little traffic early in the morning. Whale spouts were common and eagles were everywhere. What a pleasurable way to start the day! When I returned, I was told an 82-year-old guest also did the same hike every day. All that exercise made me kind of hungry. Good thing! Bernie's breakfasts were something to behold. Several courses left me thoroughly satiated.



Spacious Comfort at Ebb Tide Bed and Breakfast Ucluelet

(photo courtesy of Ebb Tide)

The common breakfast table is a very nice feature here, where we could meet and converse with the other guests, which is always a delight. Bernie is a congenial host with a great sense of humor. He made us feel very comfortable and we thoroughly enjoyed our stay. Bernie takes the time to help his guests get connected with the services they need for a great visit.



Wild Pacific from the Wild Pacific Trail

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Kirstein)

He took me on a tour of his vacation home rental, just a few blocks away, on the opposite side of the peninsula and on the open ocean side, next to another protected cove. It has vaulted ceilings in the great room and enough room to sleep eight, an excellent home for a large family or two families of 4. It's also a great place to come during the storm season. On big days, the waves reach 30-40 feet and more, tossing the large logs about like twigs on the shoreline.

The vacation home and the bed and breakfast are well maintained, well-

Our guide was Brian Congdon of [Subtidal Adventures](#). Brian used to be a National Park Warden and knows the area very well. Not far out of Ucluelet Harbour, Brian went straight for an area he said is frequented by Gray Whales. We were not disappointed! We found two Gray Whales and watched them for a while. I had a zoom on the tail of one of them but the boat was moving and my camera would not fire. Darn! Then Brian took us through some of the Broken Group Islands. The scenery was spectacular. Very close Ucluelet was a rock island absolutely covered by Sea Lions. Most were docile just relaxing on the rock. Just after we passed by, one of them spooked, causing a mass panic. The first one dove off a 20 foot cliff hit the rocks below and bounced into the water.

equipped accommodations and they are good value for the rates charged.

Activities in Ucluelet

As with Tofino, the number one sought after activity in the Pacific Rim is Whale watching primarily because of the huge migration of Grey Whales. With 20,000 whales passing the Esowista peninsula, odds are you are going to see a whale between April and September. There are also other transient whales to see. On our Ucluelet whale watch we saw both Grey Whales and Orcas (Killer Whales).



Surf Backwash Rolling Back Into the

Brian said the first time he saw that he was quite upset but with the amount of blubber they carry and the tough hide, it really doesn't harm them. Looking back through the telephoto, I captured it in mid flight! Wow, was I impressed! As we traveled through the Islands we saw more sea lions, seals, otters and eagles. Sandy beaches were everywhere and apparently kayaking to these secluded beaches is very popular.



The Spectacular Broken Group Islands

(Photo courtesy of the Ron Kirstein)

Brian runs special kayak trips, bringing kayakers across the open stretch where they can paddle through the protection of the numerous islands in the Broken Group. Brian took us out in a rigid hulled inflatable (Zodiac type). It was fast and I was surprised at the ride. The sea was a bit bumpy but the boat rode fairly smooth, with little banging. Later on, the water settled down and Brian received a radio call telling him

Other Must Do's in Ucluelet

Everything you can do in Tofino you can do in Ucluelet with the exception of the Meares Island Big Trees, Hot Springs Cove, and Cougar Annie's. Bearing in mind it is only 20 minutes to Tofino, you can easily drive there and take in these activities, too.

the Orcas were not far away. Off we went and soon encountered the pod. They are such magnificent animals that I never tire of seeing them.

Flight Seeing

On this trip I had the opportunity to try something new. Louis Roleau, an excellent pilot operates [Wild West Coast Adventures](#). He took us on a 45-minute flight over the area and after numerous trips to this area, I think I really saw it for the first time. The view from the area was so moving. We could see the whole peninsula with its miles of white sandy beaches being washed by the relentless surf from the Pacific. Even on a day when the water is relatively calm the surge just keeps the waves striking the shore. High snow-capped mountains surround the peninsula. At this time of the year, you see very little snow as you pass through the mountains, but in a plane you see glaciers. We flew towards the glaciers in clear sunshine. As we approached the top of the mountains we started poking our nose into a snowstorm. Louis was looking for an opening but safety concerns caused him to do a 180 and head back towards the ocean.

We flew over the sea lion rock and there were so many they looked like lice covering the rock. Then we flew over a number of Grey whales. From the air we could see the whole whale, not just the parts emerging from the water. We watched them diving until they disappeared in the depths, then watched them come to the surface and blow. This area is beautiful from the ground but from the air it is heavenly. The Broken Group has so many islands and you can see them all at once. This was such an unforgettable experience that it's hard to describe in words. It's easy to recommend it as a must do while in



Louie with WestCoast Wild Adventures

(Photo courtesy of Ron Kirstein)

Surf, Beach Walks, the Native Canoe Experience and Golf -- all found between Ucluelet and Tofino. You are halfway there in either community.

Hiking: Lots of excellent hiking trails in the Pacific Rim National Park. Go to the Park Interpretive Centre at Wichaninnish Beach and pick up trail maps and ask for suggestions. Ucluelet has the Wild Pacific Trails. These are something special and unique to Ucluelet. Don't miss them.

Sea Kayaking: In Ucluelet you have the spectacular Broken Group Islands to explore and lots of sandy beaches to camp on. Once across Imperial Eagle Channel you are in protected water. You can ferry there by boat, paddle there, or go to locations where the passage is narrower.

Fishing: Try deep-sea fishing or fish in the protected inlets. Bring your own boat or try one of the local charter companies. Ucluelet has access to Barkley Sound which has world famous Salmon fishing. Ucluelet has a number of fishing charter companies and this is the better place to take a fishing excursion.

Bear Watching: You have opportunities to see bears driving on the highway into Tofino, on backroad excursions, while kayaking (go at low tides), and on boat tours. Most Whale Watch charters also include Eco-tours as part of the 3 hour tour.

Scuba Diving: Bring your own gear and charter a local boat. Subtidal Adventures will take out divers into the Broken Group Island where the diving is excellent.

Ucluelet.

Louis also has an all-day trip he calls the 7 wonders of Vancouver Island. On this Aerial Extravaganza you'll see the Rainforests of Meares Island, Cougar Annie's Garden or Hot Spings Cove (for a 2.5 hour sojourn, then a 2 hour flight over the Wild Pacific Coast). Next you will fly by Yuquot on Nootka Island, where Captain Cook and Chief Maquinna had their historic meeting. Then you'll fly over to Telegraph Cove on the East Side of Vancouver Island for a 4 hour Killer Whale Boat Tour. The water here is really clear and has some of the best Killer Whale viewing in the world with resident pods. On the return trip you pass over Della Falls, the tallest falls in North America nestled in the glaciers of Strathcona Park, then back to Long Beach in Pacific Rim National Park. The adventure of a lifetime! Louis will charter to do whale watching, trips to Hotsprings Cove, Cougar Annie's, or any location where a floatplane can operate. He's an excellent, conscientious pilot with a great knowledge of the area. Take this one in!



Flight Seeing Whale Watch with WestCoast Wild Adventures

(Photo courtesy of Ron Kirstein)

The Pacific Rim is my favourite part of Vancouver Island. It's truly a magical and mystical place and my visits have always been more enjoyable than anywhere else in the world. If you're planning a visit to Western Canada and do not come to Vancouver Island, and in particular to the Pacific Rim and the Broken Group Islands, you've truly missed one of the wonders of the world. The power of the open Pacific combined with ancient rain forests and an abundance of wild life makes this place very special indeed.

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