



BRENTWOOD BAY  
LODGE & SPA

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# Intimate Luxury in B.C. Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa

by Danielle M. Clarneau

If quiet, intimate luxury stirs your soul, then the new Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa near Victoria, B.C. will seem almost heaven-sent. Tucked in on a pristine inlet not far from the famous Butchart Gardens, the lodge is a tranquil destination for those seeking upscale accommodations, fine dining and even a touch of adventure.

We found luxury in every element of the resort, which is not surprising given their recent acceptance into the prestigious Small Luxury Hotels of the World association. Brentwood Bay is one of only three properties in Canada to meet the high standards of the international association.

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The 32 suites, all with west-facing views of the water and the lodge’s marina, pleased our senses with a

design combining the minimalist influence of Asia with natural elements of the area’s environment. A stone fireplace creates a centerpiece in each suite, complemented by handcrafted wood furnishings, original paintings by local artists and irresistibly fine linens and down comforters on the beds (for me, an especially luxurious nest in which to curl up and read at the end of the day.) The bathing area is a mini spa in itself, with a natural stone floor, rainwater shower with bench and a jetted tub, steaming with relaxing fragrance from the Essential Elements amenities.

Each suite has its own patio, making a relaxing setting for sipping a glass of local wine and enjoying a typically radiant sunset before dining at one of the lodge’s two restaurants. For a more casual meal, the Marine Pub offers a menu ranging from brick oven pizza to lamb burgers and smoked wild salmon with local chevre. I especially enjoyed a lunch of pâté with local cheese and farm-style bread. However, if you indulge in the lodge’s complimentary breakfasts, you may be skipping lunch altogether. Served in the Arbutus Grille and Wine Bar (on



the patio if you prefer), the morning meal is a wake-up delight that includes either a sweet or protein-based entrée. The choice is yours, though perhaps a little difficult to make as you watch the equally enticing dishes being served to other diners. A smoked salmon egg benedict was cooked with perfection one morning, served with irresistible potatoes, while an indulgent French toast with berries the next day was fork tender and sweet tooth satisfying.

The menus at Brentwood Bay reflect the philosophy...based on regional and seasonal food preparation that includes using high quality organic and wild ingredients. Much of the produce, meats and seafood come from local organic farms and foragers

within a ten-mile radius of the lodge. To sample the region's bounty, we experienced the Menu Gastronomique – seven courses paired with local wines selected and served by Brentwood Bay's Sommelier Brian Storen. With a setting sun in the background, we were introduced first to shrimp plucked pink and tender from the local waters and served in a timbale with wild greens and wasabi vinaigrette. Like many of the items on the menu, the timbale was colorful and simply adorned with edible flowers and herbs grown in the lodge's garden.

Our server brought a wealth of knowledge as well as food to our table, and the meal became an educational as well as a gastronomique experience. From him we learned about the arbutus tree, with its often-crooked shape, curling bark and reddish hue, that can be found growing on the lodge's grounds and throughout the region – but only within five kilometers of the water. Not only is arbutus wood used in the kitchen for grilling, but the tree's influence is also reflected throughout the lodge, from the warm color of the exterior and interior woodwork to original paintings depicting the tree in its local habitat.

During our hours-long meal, we enjoyed local Dungeness crab-stuffed petrale sole followed by a terrine of smoked pigs trotters, rabbit and morels – and I discovered the true identity of pig trotters: simply, pigs' feet, which made perfect sense after I thought about it. The terrine is homemade on a farm just down the road. Next up was arbutus wood grilled local lamb with a creamy risotto, and after a palate refresher, we were introduced to the area's bison in a dish of fork-tender short ribs with potato mash and baby carrots.

Although at the beginning of the evening I seriously doubted I'd ever make it to dessert, I was surprised by

how ready I was to indulge in the bite-sized white chocolate mousse, strawberry mint compote, strawberry thyme sorbet and strawberry consommé. I even managed to appreciate the final course – fresh local cheeses, fruits and nuts. When I expressed amazement at the variety of foods I'd consumed without feeling overly full and uncomfortable, once again our personable server explained that each item on the menu had been carefully selected and prepared so that it would complement the others not only in taste but would agree with each other in the digestive system. My compliments to the chef.

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The wines were equally impressive, and the list has already impressed some impressive judges. The restaurant received two awards for its wine list at the 2004 Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival, Canada's premier wine festival and one of the biggest and oldest wine events in the world. One of our favorite pairings was a Venturi Schultz Sole 2002, estate grown from Vancouver Island. According to Sommelier Storen, the Schultz is “petulance on the tongue perfectly balanced with the acid of fruit on the palate.” Other memorable tastes were from a Hainle Vineyard 2002 Chardonnay and Stag's Hallow Gamay Noir 2002.

After a night focused on our palate, we were ready to get up and move the next morning. Had we been

divers, world-class scuba diving awaited only minutes away. Jacques Costeau proclaimed the waters in this region the second best for cold water diving in the world, second only to the Red Sea, because of its superb clarity and marine life. Brentwood Bay is Canada's only designated PADI dive resort. Kayaking and a variety of eco-tours are also available, and we opted for the two-hour cruise in a comfortable, 12-passenger glass-domed boat that slid past tranquil Tod Inlet into a unique fiord that revealed equal parts marine life, geography and history. Our guide, who had lived in the area all his life, related fascinating stories about wolf eels, giant octopi, red sharks and other underwater creatures swimming below us. On the surface, we enjoyed the antics of harbor seals sunbathing on a small rock outcrop and brilliant purple starfish clinging to the rocks at tide line. Bald eagles perched in treetops while a turkey vulture feasted on an unfortunate baby seal. Orca whales are also sometimes sighted. I ended the cruise with an enhanced appreciation not only of the area's marine and wildlife but its history, culture and lore.

One of the popular side trips the lodge offers is a water shuttle to the Butchart Gardens. You'll enjoy a relaxing mini-cruise up Tod Inlet and arrive at the “hidden gate” in Butchart Cove, avoiding crowds coming through the front entrance. Brentwood Bay Lodge also has a 65-slip marina that provides moorage and facilities to pleasure craft.

Other amenities include full spa service, outdoor pool, art gallery, complimentary calling within North America, high speed Internet and Wi-Fi, cable TV and DVD entertainment system.

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