

# IFR

**IN-FLIGHT  
REVIEW**

## **New World Sake**

Artisan Sake Maker Masa Shiroki

## **Autumn Indulgence**

April Point Resort & Spa



**Helijet**

FALL 2013 ISSN 1916-5080

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IN-FLIGHT REVIEW

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**ON THE COVER:** A Helijet Sikorsky S-76 lifts off from the Downtown Vancouver Harbour  
heliport on a scheduled departure for Victoria. Heath Moffatt photo.



# Eye in the Sky

Pilots and air traffic controllers collaborate on safety

**HELIJET CUSTOMERS** arriving at, or departing from, the Downtown Vancouver Harbour Airport (CYHC) enjoy an air travel service that is among the safest and most efficient anywhere. It is also the only one of its kind in the world.

How so? Well, any defined place — on land or water — designated for aircraft flight operations is called an “aerodrome”. Some aerodromes are unmanned, while others have Flight Service Stations staffed by specialists who assist pilots with information and support services. Whatever the case, ultimate responsibility for safe operations on, or above, an aerodrome rests with pilots alone. In other words, aircrew talk to each other and act as their own air traffic control (ATC).

What makes an “airport” different is that, among other things, it has a control tower staffed by highly specialized air traffic controllers who oversee and control every aircraft movement from taxi and take-off to landing within a prescribed area on the ground and in the air. That is to say, pilots don’t get to freestyle; nothing happens without a clearance from “Tower”.

This is not to suggest any sort of hierarchy. Rather, pilots and controllers collaborate towards the common goal of air safety. We depend on their aviation professionalism as much as they depend on ours.

But what makes the Downtown Vancouver Harbour Airport unique is that it is the only “water airport” in the world. That’s right, an airport without runways.

What is more, perched on the roof of the 30-storey Granville Square Building, ours is the highest ATC tower in the world at 142 meters (465 feet) above ground. (Nit-pickers will surely quibble that it is not the “tallest” free-standing tower because it was built atop an existing building.)

From here we have a commanding 360-degree view of Vancouver and the Harbour below. Without doubt, it is the choicest office view in the city.

This view, combined with an array of sophisticated radar and tracking systems, provides our controllers with a detailed picture of where aircraft are at any given time in our airspace, and on the harbour surface itself.

Things get busy sometimes. Last year we handled over 54,000 aircraft movements, including 9,000 helicopter



*Dave Weston and his fellow air traffic controllers monitor flights into Vancouver Harbour from the roof of the 30-storey Granville Square Building. Garth Eichel photo.*

arrivals and departures. And another 21,000 aircraft transited through our airspace, enroute to elsewhere.

That makes for a lot of work in the tower at the best of times, but more so when the weather turns ugly, which is about nine months of the year on the West Coast.

Fortunately, we are able to keep things moving safely and efficiently with the help of Helijet’s aircrews. The company’s pilots all train to a high standard and we know we can expect more from them when we need it.

Their capabilities are especially important when the weather becomes so bad we are required to close the water airport to VFR (visual flight rules) aircraft, permitting only IFR (instrument flight rules) operations. Because Helijet’s S76 helicopters and flight crews are certified for instrument flight they are often the only aircraft permitted to take off and land at the water airport at such times.

Good weather or bad, we work closely with aircrews at all times, relaying weather, traffic information and clearances as necessary, with the goal of making every take-off and landing as uneventful as can be.

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- **Victoria Harbour Heliport:** next to the Ogden Point cruise ship facility; the heliport is a free shuttle ride or a short stroll from downtown Victoria.

As the company has grown over the years, Helijet's initial commitment to providing superior customer service, safety, and quality has never wavered.



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## NEW & NOTABLE

BY SUE KERNAGHAN



### HELP FOR TRAVELLING FOODIES

A trip to the cottage is all well and good, but how is a foodie to survive in a strange kitchen without seasonings?

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*Flight001.com*

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Idar Bergseth, Victoria's only custom jeweller, creates hand-forged wearable art informed by Nordic, Celtic and West Coast imagery.



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## NEW & NOTABLE

BY SUE KERNAGHAN



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Made of recycled laminate, and available in white and three kinds of grey, this and other clever furnishings can be ordered directly from the Copenhagen-based Reinier de Jong Design. [reinierdejong.com](http://reinierdejong.com)

### TECHIE CHEFS

iPads and other tablets are great resources in the kitchen, provided you can protect them from oil splatters and doughy fingers. Enter Belkin's Chef Stand + Stylus. Designed for kitchen use, it keeps your touch-screen clean no matter how goopy your hands get. Just pop your iPad or other tablet on the stand and tap away with the magnetic-tipped stylus. There's no need to touch the screen so it stays clean as you read recipes, follow video demos or just catch up on the news. The stylus works with any touchscreen, a non-stick base has two angles for easy viewing, and the whole set up is washable. It's now available at Amazon and Best Buy. [belkin.com](http://belkin.com)



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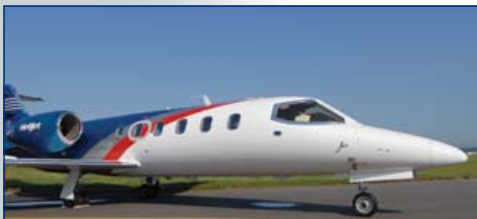
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# A Higher Standard

Kim Carswell brings years of experience and expectations to Helijet's pilot training program



*Helijet Senior Training Captain Kim Carswell brings 40 years of flying experience to the job.*

**HELIJET TRAINING CAPTAIN** Kim Carswell spent a lot of time in helicopters before ever learning to fly one. As a geology student at UBC he spent several summers riding as a passenger before deciding he preferred rotor blades to rocks.

Trading his rock hammer for a cyclic, Carswell began flight training on a Bell 47 in 1973, embarking on an aviation career that has spanned 40 years.

Since joining Helijet in 1985 he has performed a variety of roles in the company, including Chief Pilot. Now as a senior training captain, he is a member of the team responsible for overseeing training of Helijet's 45 pilots, making sure Transport Canada standards are met by each.

Carswell is well suited to the task: as a former Transport Canada examiner he knows firsthand what the regulator demands and so he plays a central role making sure Helijet's aircrew meet and exceed expectations.

"The travelling public doesn't realize how much hard work goes into safe and efficient flight operations," says Carswell. "We expect a lot of our pilots."

Helijet has a rigorous training regime: all pilots are required to have a commercial pilot license, multi-engine endorsement and an IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) rating before they can even start training on the Sikorsky S76, the mainstay of Helijet's helicopter fleet.



Upon selection, Carswell puts new pilots through an extensive initial training program that includes ground school, cockpit procedures, simulator training and a 12-hour flight training package before doing a Pilot Proficiency Check (PPC) ride.

The work doesn't stop there. Training continues during line operations, and every 12 months each S76 pilot undergoes two hours of recurrent training, followed by another PPC flight test.

Simulator training plays an important and ongoing role, too.

"We use a full-motion simulator to practice emergency scenarios that we can't practice in actual flight," says Carswell. "That gives us the benefit of stopping the situation at any point so we can step back and assess, then go do it better. You can repeat exercises over and over until the pilot reaches competency and proficiency."

If all this seems like a lot, it is.

Other air carriers operating single-engine aircraft with only one pilot under VFR (Visual Flight Rules) aren't required to train to the same extent, and simulator training is rare. That saves a lot of training time and money, but it limits capabilities — pilots can only fly in weather where the pilot can maintain visual reference to the ground. Moreover, they have to provide their own separation from other aircraft. Air Traffic Control (ATC) is not responsible for VFR aircraft in uncontrolled airspace.

The bar is set higher for IFR flight operations where pilots fly referring to cockpit instruments, and remain under the control of ATC at all times. In Helijet's case, that means having helicopters equipped with two engines, advanced avionics and navigation equipment, and crewed by two pilots who meet a higher standard of pilot training, both in the air and on the ground in the simulator.

Moreover, there is an increased workload and level of organization required with IFR flight. Crews need to know how to function in a multi-crew environment, so Crew Resource Management (CRM) is an added layer of training

Why go to the extra trouble and expense?

"Training to a higher standard is part of Helijet's business model," says Carswell.

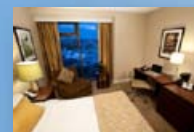
"Flying VFR at low level in poor weather increases the level of risk, and all the turning required to stay visual reduces on-time performance. That can be irritating, if not unnerving, for passengers.

"IFR allows us to fly much higher and maintain as straight a line as possible, in cloud, or at night. The result is a shorter and less eventful ride for passengers." He adds, "We figure that's something worth investing in." ✈

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A photograph of a middle-aged man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark kimono. He is holding a long wooden mallet with both hands, positioned diagonally across the frame. In the background, a large, dark metal pot is visible, suggesting a traditional Japanese setting. The overall tone is warm and focused.

BY GARTH EICHEL AND LYNDY GRACE PHILIPPSEN

# New World Sake





## Artisan Sake Maker Masa Shiroki embraces tradition and innovation

**WHAT DOES THE WORD** “pioneer” mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Some might imagine a geneticist working in a biotech lab; others may envision a high-tech savant changing the way we use the Internet. But pay a visit to the Artisan Sake Maker shop on Granville Island in Vancouver and chances are you’ll encounter an altogether different sort of pioneer.

There you’re likely to meet Masa Shiroki, an impeccably dressed, lean and distinguished Japanese expat who reinvented himself as an entrepreneurial sake maker — the first in Canada. Now, he grows the most northerly *sakamai* (sake-quality rice) in the world.

That’s right. Just north of the 49th parallel, in a muddy Abbotsford field off Sumas Highway, Shiroki is cultivating an organic sake rice crop from Canadian-grown seed. The result is Osake Fraser Valley Junmai Sake, a New World take on an Old World tradition.

*Opposite: Masa Shiroki imported quality sake from Japan to B.C. before trying his hand at making it locally.*

*Top right: The newly released Osake - Fraser Valley Junmai is the first Canadian sake made from 100 per cent locally grown organic sake rice.  
Artisan Sake Maker photos.*



*Above: Osake craft sake comes in a variety of styles. From left to right are: Junmai Nama, which is light, crisp and dry; Junmai Nama Nigori, a creamy, fruity and semi-dry style; and Junmai Nama Genshu, which is rich, complex and dry. Photo by Garth Eichel.*

Shiroki never set out to be a pioneer. When his job in the Ministry of Employment and Trade vanished in 2001 retirement was not an option. Ever venturesome, he decided to start anew by doing something close to his Japanese roots that he could get excited about.

That something began with importing artisanal sake from Japan to a growing number of Japanese restaurants in Vancouver, while also promoting it to local oenophiles.

North Americans are generally unfamiliar with artisan sake; most commercial sake served in restaurants is lower quality, made from table-grade rice and served hot with Japanese food.

Quality artisan sake is so much more. It may be pasteurized or not, sparkling or still, dry or sweet, cloudy or clear. Its hue can range from colourless to golden, pink, and even amber-hued rosé. The mouth-feel can be oily, or slip across the palate like silk from a shoulder. Indeed, the character of sake can be changed by varying the temperature at which it is brewed or served, the degree of polish the rice receives before brewing, and whether or not the sake is casked.

Shiroki notes that over the last decade sake has graduated from being narrowly paired with Japanese food to a range of





international cuisine. In fact, the 2001 World Association of Chefs Societies conference in Kyoto specifically focussed on promoting sake and pairing it with Western dishes. International chefs and sommeliers in the finest establishments now pair sake with everything from appetizers to dessert.

As an importer, Shiroki played a prominent role promoting sake on the West Coast, giving media interviews, lecturing for sommelier courses, liquor store employees and private engagements. But things changed when it occurred to him that Canadian consumers might start taking greater ownership of the product if he made sake locally.

Recently, the locavore movement has made Canadians quite particular about the sources of their food and drink. That, combined with increasing popularity of local sushi restaurants, created demand for local sake where none existed before.

With that in mind, Shiroki used his government severance package to fund the 2007 start-up of Artisan Sake Maker on Granville Island. There he became the first in Canada to make sake by hand from Canadian water and imported Japanese rice.

## A CLASS OF ITS OWN

Often referred to as “rice wine”, sake is not really wine in the true sense. Generally, sake is more subtle and nuanced in flavour and aroma, with lower acidity and higher alcohol content. In truth, sake has more in common with beer insofar as starch is converted into fermentable sugars, but any commonality ends there. Hands-on sake making is much more complicated with several unique processes. It’s more labour-intensive, too.

First, sake rice is milled, polishing away between 35 to 80 per cent of the grain, depending on quality level. Shiroki then washes and soaks the rice in sinks, which benefits flavour and texture. The rice is then steamed in vats in 30-kilogram batches.

Then comes the key ingredient — koji. Technically known as *aspergillus oryzae*, koji is a specialized mold sprinkled on sake rice that creates enzymes which break down starch to produce fermentable sugars. Unquestionably, koji mold is at the heart of the sake making process and a batch may go through the koji mixing process as many as four times.

Shiroki then creates a yeast starter known as the *shubo* (meaning mother of sake) wherein water and yeast cells are added to the koji and rice. After a couple weeks the mixture is moved to a larger tank in which Shiroki incrementally adds more rice, koji and water over several days to create the *moromi* (main fermentation mash). The batch then ferments at cold temperatures in large steel tanks over several weeks. Using large paddles called *kai*, he and staff stir the tanks twice daily to oxygenate the mash. At around 25 days the *moromi* is gradually pressed in a steel box to separate liquid from solids. In a settling tank kept at sub-zero temperatures, the cloudy liquid separates. Clear sake rises.

Repeating this small-batch method several times a year Shiroki is able to produce about 12,000 bottles annually.

To Shiroki’s surprise and delight, Artisan Sake Maker broke even in its first year. His Osake brand quickly garnered significant media attention as chic food, wine and travel magazines began touting his shop as a must-see in Vancouver. Importantly, his sake began winning awards in blind tastings. The result is that Osake is now found in numerous local restaurants, wine bars and specialty wine stores.



## PAIRED TO PERFECTION

It goes without saying that sushi and sashimi are ideal food pairings for sake. But what about Western cuisine?

Top-level chefs world-wide have taken to matching sake with a range of dishes including grilled fish, chicken, duck, foie gras, red meats, peaches, pears, eggplant, vegetable terrines, nuts, ham, sausage and various cheeses. Interestingly, Kenji Sato a Tokyo *kikizakeshi* (sake specialist) serves it over ice cream.

What professionals chefs and sommeliers know is that glutamic acid (a key component of the fifth taste sensation, *umami*) in sake marries particularly well with foods rich in *umami*.

And if there is a classic sake pairing it has to be oysters. Paired with sake the strong, briny character of the shellfish is muted and its subtle, creamy texture enhanced.

## TO BOLDLY GROW

Shiroki was not about to rest on his achievements following initial success. He imagined a Japanese-style *kura* (sake brewing house) creating *jizake* (local sake) for farm-gate sales on an established wine route.

"I want what the other guys have. A chateau," he says, "with one difference — no grapes."

With his *kura* in mind (and his eye on the significant tax breaks afforded to licensed Land Based Wineries), Shiroki blazed ahead where there was no trail. Drawing on the advice of northern Japanese rice farmers and sake makers, he began talking to B.C. farmers willing to grow rice in various locations in the province. He experimented with wet and dry methods, assessed the *terroir*, and weighed the pros and cons of each location. After several attempts, and learning about the realities of farming — weeds, pests, weather and other assorted setbacks — Shiroki decided to dig in at the Abbotsford location.

Together with an assistant, employing seed and equipment imported from Japan, Shiroki set about producing the first Canadian *jizake* crop in 2011. Unfortunately, unseasonably cool, wet weather and drainage problems prevented planting of seedlings until June. Unable to ripen fully, the rice harvested in October was not suitable for making sake. The silver lining, however, is that it produced excellent seed stock — now 100 per cent Canadian grown.

After improving field drainage, Shiroki planted his second crop much earlier in 2012. Again he discovered what a hard mistress Mother Nature can be: every weed had to come up by hand, and there was little he could do about algae blooms. Making matters worse, birds became a serious threat. But just when it seemed his second crop might fail, berry season started and the birds abandoned his crunchy grains for juicier pickings.

When Shiroki made sake from rice imported from Japan it arrived in neat bags. No longer: for the past two years he and his staff have run after a single-man, rototiller-like harvester, picking up the sheaves. (This past summer he returned to Japan to procure a combine, which will make next year's harvest much easier.)

After harvest Shiroki and his crew dried a ton of rice before threshing it with a machine not much bigger than a coffee roaster. Then they had to mill it to polish the grains.

In the end Shiroki was able to produce two styles of 100 per cent Canadian sake — clear sake and cloudy *nigori*. Both have been a resounding success on which to build.



Shiroki considers these two products (and the new combine) significant milestones towards becoming a licenced Land Based Winery. Still, challenges remain. Before he can settle on a permanent location for his planned *kura* and rice fields, Shiroki must contend with British Columbia Liquor Distribution Branch (BCLDB) regulations. As things stand, only honey, tree fruits and grapes qualify as Land Based Winery crops. To grow rice as a wine crop, he's going to have to convince the government to change the rules.

Rules don't change often, Shiroki says, but sometimes they do. Nevertheless, he seems content to venture into this grey area. He also knows the BCLDB is under some pressure from others with niche products. He hopes their lobbying might help his case to broaden the designated crops by the time he's ready to build.



*Masa Shiroki experimented growing rice in a variety of locations in B.C. in his quest to make 100 per cent B.C.-grown sake. Artisan Sake Maker photo.*

Though the task seems to get harder at every stage, Shiroki takes it all in stride. Lifting a glass of the first 2013 Osake Fraser Valley Junmai sake to the light and swirling it, he noses it and says, "You get to the point where the pain becomes a pleasure."

*Authors' note: Osake brand wines are available at select restaurants and independent liquor stores in Vancouver and Victoria, and from the source at Artisan Sake Maker, located at 1339 Railspur Alley, Granville Island, Vancouver. [artisansakemaker.com](http://artisansakemaker.com)*

*Acknowledgement: Parts of this story first appeared in Montecristo Magazine, Summer 2011.*



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# UPSIDES OF OUTSIDE

Nature does wonders for the body and mind

**FEELING STRESSED**, strung out, overwrought? Hugging a tree might help. But better still, take a walk in the woods, stroll along the shore, or skip stones in a pond.

It may sound like simple downtime, but interacting with nature may be one of the best things you can do for your health, creativity and state of mind.

Besides the obvious plusses of increased exercise and vitamin D exposure, studies have linked outdoor time to everything from improved memory, concentration and creativity to better immune function, faster healing, and lower heart rates. Communing with nature has also been credited with boosting critical thinking, risk assessment skills, teamwork and even generosity.

Author Richard Louv, who coined the term Nature Deficit Disorder in his 2005 bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*, calls this effect Vitamin N (nature). Following on the success of this book, Louv penned another in 2011, *The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age*, in which he points to a growing body of research linking time in nature, or Vitamin N, with everything from improved productivity in the workplace to faster healing times in hospitals.

And he's not alone.

A 2008 University of Michigan (U of M) study, for example, found that memory performance and attention spans improved by 20 per cent after test subjects spent an hour interacting with nature. And that interaction doesn't even have to be vigorous.

The U of M study revealed that just looking at photos of nature was enough to boost memory and attention.

In the same vein, Japanese researchers are leading the way in quantifying the upsides of being in the great outdoors. A 2010 study there found that walking among plants and greenery, as opposed to the concrete of city streets, reduced pulse rates, blood pressure and the stress hormone cortisol. The same researchers also found that a little Vitamin N goes a long way: just 15 minutes sitting in a chair in the woods was enough to show a measurable health benefit.

Visiting natural areas for therapeutic purposes, called "Shinrin-yoku," or "forest bathing", is a growing trend in Japan, so researchers have had plenty of opportunity to study the benefits of outdoor time on city dwellers. However you look at it, the effective variable seems to be nature, rather than exercise or fun — just sitting in a park incurs the same mental benefits as strolling through it, yet a walk along city streets results in no positive effect on brain function.

It goes without saying that improved access to nature has implications for employers, city planners, health care professionals, and anyone concerned about managing stress and keeping their mind sharp as they age.

With abundant wilderness, many Canadians think nature is part of our national identity. But that

assumption is mistaken says Becs Hoskins,  
Executive Director of the Child and Nature  
Alliance of Canada, a Victoria-based





BY SUE KERNAGHAN

coalition working to improve access to nature in Canada: "There's a cultural assumption that, as Canadians, we're connected to nature because of our great land mass and our history. In reality, families here face what they face everywhere — time pressures, the lure of electronics, and a pace of life that doesn't leave much time for simply being outside."

The Child and Nature Alliance works across sectors, encouraging urban planners and municipalities to provide access to green space; health workers to recommend time in nature as part of a healthy lifestyle; and schools to create opportunities to learn outdoors.

Slowly, this train of thought is catching, in schools, hospitals and elsewhere across B.C.

Indeed, several studies have shown that views of nature, natural light and even just images of nature can help hospital patients heal faster and manage pain better. Sunshine Coast residents can now see this in action at St. Mary's Hospital in Sechelt where an extension opened this spring complete with natural materials, natural light and ocean views from patients' rooms.

Schools, too, are embracing the benefits of natural surroundings. In the Gulf Islands School District outdoor education and eco-literacy (understanding our connections to nature) are now priorities.

"The biggest push in district planning is getting kids outside and looking at ways to use our environment in education," says School Trustee Katharine Byers. She adds that people of all ages can easily add more Vitamin N to their daily lives: "It can be as easy as going to the local park, or taking a walk and paying attention to what you see on the way."

And it's okay to embrace technology in nature. You can use your smartphone to navigate, track your route, download information on birds and plants, or call for help if you get lost.

You can take your work outside, too. Instead of having your next meeting in a boardroom, schedule a walking meeting in your nearest park and watch the ideas flow.

To be sure, outside has plenty of upsides, and no side effects. 🐾

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Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Jama Roberts. Photo © Andrew Eckels



## EXCURSIONS

BY SUE KERNAGHAN PHOTOS COURTESY OF OAK BAY MARINE GROUP

# AUTUMN INDULGENCE

Taking it Easy at April Point Resort & Spa

**THERE THEY WERE:** four black fins slicing through the glassy water just south of Cape Mudge. Brad, our affable Aussie guide, throttled the engines to idle so we could watch in silence as the orca — three adults and a frolicking calf — romped and breached just 100 metres away. All we could hear were the loud puffs of whale exhalations and the quiet zip of long camera lenses.

This encounter was part of a wildlife adventure tour run by April Point Resort & Spa on Quadra Island. Our little group, a dozen or so visitors decked out in orange survival suits, spent the afternoon cruising around Read, Quadra and Cortez islands in a zippy little Zodiac, from which we spotted killer whales, seals lolling on rocks, and treetops heavy with eagles' nests.

The whales — a clear highlight of the tour — were here for the same reason as most of my fellow guests — for the coho, chinook and pink salmon that run thick all summer around the Discovery Islands off Vancouver Island's east coast.

Back at April Point, I strolled (as gracefully as possible in my bulky survival suit) past stacks of kayaks and a dad-and-son team fishing off the dock to where a pair of staffers were writing up the tallies of the day. There were plenty of 9- and 10-pound coho, but also no shortage of 21- and 23-pound chinook.

"What people really want is a Tyee," explained one of the fishing guides. "That's anything over 30 pounds and, yes, it does happen."





*Above: April Point Resort & Spa on Quadra Island started as a fishing lodge in the 1950s, but has since evolved to incorporate additional amenities, such as an Aveda spa and on-site sushi restaurant.*

Me, I like my salmon on a plate, which is one reason I'd opted for a solo getaway at this serene little resort on Quadra Island, just across the water from Campbell River on Vancouver Island.

Opened in the 1950s on a point of land jutting into Discovery Passage, April Point Resort has come a long way from its fishing lodge roots. Since joining the Victoria-based Oak Bay Marine Group in 1998, the resort has added sea-view rooms and suites (think Jacuzzi tubs, slate bathrooms, and lounge-worthy decks), a handful of self-contained vacation homes, an Aveda spa, and an ocean-view restaurant, complete with weekly jazz nights and a sushi bar.

That's where I headed for my salmon fix. A wall of windows in the dining room gives every table a water view, but

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*Above: There is no shortage of activities to enjoy at April Point, but the most popular for many is doing absolutely nothing at all.*

for me the deck, set on pilings over the water, was the place to be. The menu skews, not surprisingly, to local seafood, featuring shucked oysters, rock cod fritters, halibut in season and, of course, salmon.

Over the course of two days I enjoyed a smoked salmon and cucumber salad, wild sockeye with baby bok choy, and, my personal favourite, April Point's signature maki roll, made with tuna, crab, tobiko, cucumber and, wait for it, salmon.

Had I joined a dawn trip on a Boston Whaler to actually catch some fish, the chef would have happily prepared that for me too.

The next morning, hours after the serious anglers had hit the water (I didn't hear a thing) I enjoyed my own version of "gone fishing". At April Point's Aveda concept spa, set in a sweet little

pagoda perched over a lagoon, I took in views of the snow peaks in Strathcona Park along with a pedicure on the sunny seaside deck.

And who says spas and fishing don't mix? Sports massages, a Fisherman's Steam Shower and a Mariner's Facial were options too.

Later on, it was time to slip those pedicured toes into the fiberglass bow of a kayak. I paddled into the sheltered waters of Gowlland Harbour, through water the colour and clarity of mint tea and around a family of seals sunning themselves on a rock.

Back at April Point, a rack of scooters and bikes offered two great ways to explore the island's winding, traffic-free roads, dotted with farm stands and artists' studios. Swimming lakes and walking trails abound here too, and there's even a nine-hole golf course and a winery on the island.

Two Quadra Island must-sees are Rebecca Spit Provincial Park, where trails lead to sandy beaches on both sides of a spit, and, in the village of Cape Mudge, the Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre. Fronted by a pair of traditional welcome figures, this six-year-old museum houses such potlatch treasures as cedar headdresses, raven masks, and bentwood boxes recently repatriated from museums across North America.

Between island exploration, ocean rapids tours, sunset cruises, wildlife viewing trips, and even a giant outdoor chess and checkers set, it would be a long time before even a non-angler like me ran out of things to do at April Point Resort.

And, if that did happen, I could always hop on a free water taxi to Painter's Lodge, a sister resort across the passage where April Point guests are free to enjoy a pool, hot tubs, children's activity centre, tennis courts, and fitness centre, dine at Legends Restaurant, or swap fishing tales at the Tye Pub.

My plan of action? Just chilling out. With water on three sides of the resort and lawns stretching to the rocky shore, I was never far from an Adirondack chair with an ocean view.

I settled into one that evening to watch the sky turn pink and the mountains of Vancouver Island shift to a deeper shade of blue. And, though I would certainly return to explore some more, right then I savoured a rare opportunity to do nothing at all. 🐟





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