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IN-FLIGHT REVIEW

WINTER 2016/17



WHISTLER'S WINTER WONDERS

FINE SPIRITS
Whisky Appreciation 101

**HEALTHY
TRAVEL TIPS**

**NURTURE
IN NATURE**
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IN-FLIGHT REVIEW MAGAZINE

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In-Flight Review (IFR) is a quarterly
 magazine published by Archipelago
 Media Ltd. for Helijet International
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 Helijet International Inc. or Archipelago
 Media Ltd. ISSN 1916-5080

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*Above: Whisky is rich in
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 iStock photo.*

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Safety Culture

HELIJET EMBRACES A NEW SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

SOME NAMES MAKE PEOPLE shudder at the very mention: Titanic; Chernobyl; Bhopal; Deep Water Horizon; Fukushima. The list goes on. Horrific as these disasters were in terms of the environment and loss of life, each is made more tragic by the fact they were caused by a catastrophic series of failures that could have been prevented.

The common thread in each case was the “lack of safety culture at all levels” — a phrase first coined by the nuclear power industry regarding the failures that resulted in the Chernobyl accident.

The airline industry has had its own share of preventable accidents. The good news is that air travel has become increasingly safe over the last 40 years, and even more so since 1998. That was the year the Commercial Aviation Safety Team (CAST) initiated a data-driven study aimed at reducing the fatality rate in commercial air travel in the United States. The results were remarkable: the work of CAST, along with new aircraft, regulations, and other activities, succeeded in reducing the risk for commercial aviation fatalities in that country by an astonishing 83 percent from 1998 to 2008.

Success owed much to the adoption of Safety Management Systems (SMS) — a formal and systematic approach to managing safety, including the necessary organizational structures, accountabilities, policies and procedures, with oversight by government.



Above: Helijet Sikorsky S-76 helicopters arrive and depart from the Downtown Vancouver Harbour Heliport. Heath Moffatt photo

For its part, Transport Canada began making SMS mandatory for large passenger carriers in Canada soon after the CAST study was released in 2008. The aim of doing so was to add an extra layer of safety by encouraging companies to identify safety issues before they become bigger problems.

Helijet is not a large passenger airline and so it is not required to implement an SMS. Yet the company has elected to do so anyway, even though it has never had an aircraft crash in over 30 years of flight operations.

Notwithstanding this admirable safety record, there is always room for improvement.

SMS is about understanding and managing risk, not just following safety procedures. That requires employees to think about safety both as individuals and as an organization, instilling a culture of safety at all levels within the company, from the individual who sweeps the hangar floor at night right up to the President and CEO. At every level people are responsible and accountable for their own safety, and the safety of others.

Implementing SMS marks a significant step for Helijet, now and for the future. Safety and training can be expensive, which is why some companies cut corners when times are tough. But that is short-term thinking that proves costlier in the medium- and long-term. As the saying goes, “If you think safety is expensive, try having an accident.”

Helijet

VANCOUVER ISLAND

Points of Interest

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EXECUTIVE
CLASS HOMES

STARTING FROM LOW \$700,000

BY GARTH EICHEL



CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

Vancouver's holiday season officially kicks off on Friday, December 2, with the lighting of the official Vancouver Christmas Tree. This annual celebration takes place in Robson Square in the city's downtown core and is free to attend. A yearly holiday favourite, the tree lighting begins at 5:30 p.m. and runs until about 7:00 p.m.

The 2016 Vancouver Christmas Tree Lighting actually involves the illuminating of four separate trees, one of which towers 50-feet-high. This much anticipated annual activity includes a wealth of live entertainment, cookies and hot chocolate for children of all ages, as well as the presence of some of the city's most celebrated food trucks for those with heartier appetites. The Canada Post station will also remain open throughout the celebration to accept letters written for the Big Man's attention (North Pole delivery included).

While admission is free, this fun event serves in part as a fundraiser for the Vancouver International Children's Festival, so event organizers will be on hand to accept donations.

| childrensfestival.ca



YEAR OF THE ROOSTER

Vancouver's Chinese community is a huge part of the city's character, and no single event showcases this proud and colourful segment of the city's culture better than Chinese New Year celebrations. In the Chinese calendar 2017 will be the Year of the Rooster with the Chinese New Year falling on Saturday, January 28, 2017. Interestingly, Vancouver's 2017 Chinese New Year Parade will take place on February 14, Valentine's Day. Described as a kaleidoscopic celebration bringing together ancient pageantry and contemporary entertainment, the Chinese New Year Parade is noted for its traditional dancing troupes, lion dancers, marching bands, martial arts demonstrations and more. The parade is also the kick-off to a two-day cultural fair held annually at the Sun Yat-Sen Plaza on Pender Street.

| cbavancouver.ca

SUBMARINE TOURS

The frigid waters of the Pacific Northwest are home to some of the most diverse and remarkable marine ecosystems in the world. But the brilliance of this undersea world is largely the domain of those willing to spend the time, energy and money to become proficient cold water divers.

That will all change in early 2017 when Aquatica Submarines, in partnership with Head-Line Mountain Holidays, will begin offering private tours along the West Coast with a manned three-person



submersible, the Stingray 500, which is rated to a maximum depth of 500 feet.

"The Stingray 500 can go deeper, and stay down longer, than any human diver can," said Harvey Flemming, President, Aquatica Submarines. "That allows us to explore depths where extraordinary and uncommon things like glass sponge reefs are found." Best of all, he adds, "a submarine is a much warmer underwater experience than scuba diving."

For its part, Head-Line Mountain Holidays will fly its Whistler-based guests to/from unique dive sites for a one-of-a-kind adventure submarine tour that surpasses all expectations.

| headlinemountainholidays.com



IF YOU BUILD IT...

Buildex Vancouver opens its doors Wednesday, February 15 and 16, at the Vancouver Convention Centre West for what is expected to be an unparalleled networking opportunity for professionals from all across the province in the construction, renovation, architecture, interior design and property management industries. Billed as the largest trade-show and conference of its kind in Western Canada, this two-day event will feature more than 600 exhibits and host more than 70 individual educational seminars. More than 100 key note speakers will also be on hand to discuss everything from the latest green products to offering insights into the newest technologies revolutionizing the industry. In years past more than 14,000 people have turned out to attend this industry-focused extravaganza.

| buildexvancouver.com



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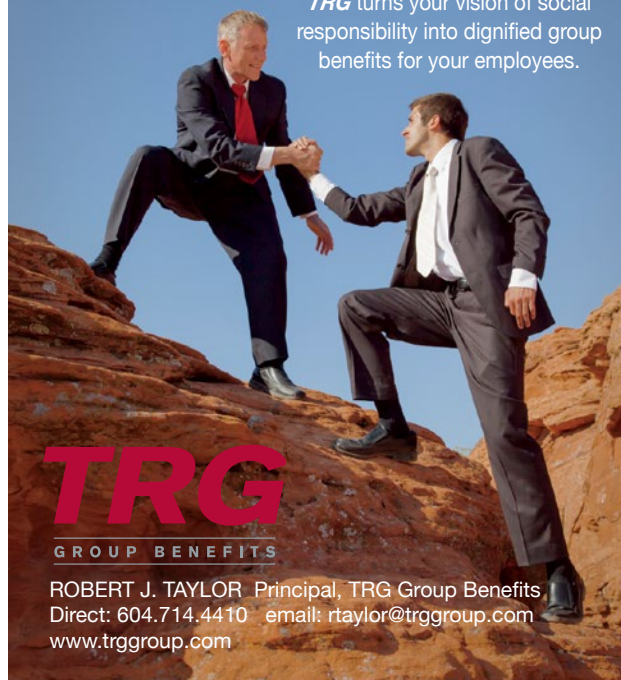
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CHRISTMAS IN THE CAPITAL

Victoria pulls out all the stops when it comes to celebrating the Yuletide season with a range of musical and sensory experiences throughout the city. A brief sampling of the festive fare includes the ongoing Choirs in the Courtyard, which takes place in the courtyard of the Greater Victoria Public Library beginning Thursday, December 1, 2016. Bringing together a selection of the city's finest choral groups, this popular annual event runs from December 1 to 12, from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. each day.

Another festive favourite for all ages is the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's *The Nutcracker*, coming to Victoria's Royal Theatre December 2 to 4, 2016. A classic Canadian take on the performance, this customized version of Tchaikovsky's famed presentation begins its pageantry on a frozen hockey pond, and includes a battle between the RCMP and the Mouse King. How Canadian, eh?

Christmas in Old Victoria is another Victoria holiday event that takes place at the historic Burnes House in Bastion Square. Taking place every Sunday in December leading up to Christmas, sessions involve storytelling about what Christmas was like in the city a century ago, followed by a 90-minute walking tour of Victoria's downtown core.

CONSTRUCTION BOOM

The construction industry in the Capital Region is experiencing unprecedented activity, and at a pace that's not expected to slacken anytime soon. According to Manley McLachlan, president of the BC Construction Association, there is currently around \$4 billion worth of construction taking place within a five-block radius of the provincial legislature alone.

One of the city's most extensive and widely anticipated projects is the Ogden Point Master Plan Project, a systematic updating of one of the city's

key waterfront areas. This project represents a plan that will take decades to complete, and will enhance the city's marine industries for the

21st Century. An incremental planning effort, Phase 4 of the Master Plan is slated to be completed in December when rezoning applications are expected to be forwarded to the City of Victoria to begin initial construction.

If fully developed as envisioned the Ogden Point Master Plan will enhance the city's cruise ship and cargo handling capacities, improve marina capacity and generally update the waterfront portion of the city's James Bay area with a number of mixed use facilities. If given the green light the anticipated development will continue to keep local building trades busy for decades to come. | gvha.ca



LIFETIME LEARNING

A recent Ipsos poll sponsored by Royal Roads University (RRU) reveals almost half of all employed Canadians anticipate making a career change within the next five years, but many feel their existing skill set leaves them ill-prepared for it.

Responding to this survey, RRU has launched a new campaign that encourages students to become lifelong learners — a concept the university strongly heralds as key to life and career success, and one that is particularly relevant given today's workplace realities. Focusing on the value of learning how to learn, the "Don't Stop" campaign aims to inspire everyone to keep moving forward in all aspects of their lives, whether through a formal education, in the workplace, or even an inspiring encounter.

"Gone are the days of getting an education to secure you in one life-long career," said Catherine Riggins, Associate Vice President, Marketing and Alumni Relations at Royal Roads University. "Canadians clearly understand the reality that they will have many careers throughout the course of



their working lives. The challenge lies in ensuring they are equipped for a lifetime of learning — a lifetime where they don't stop learning, succeeding and contributing to the world around them."

| royalroads.ca

SOHO CONFERENCE

Small business is big business in Canada, and this January the City of Victoria will be hosting a day-long event to celebrate, nurture and encourage the development of the city's entrepreneurs. Taking place at the Victoria Conference Centre in downtown Victoria, SOHO (Small Office / Home Office) Victoria will feature workshops, keynote speakers, expert advice and unparalleled networking opportunities for those thinking about, or currently operating, a small business.

The session will be held on Friday, January 27, and is one of two similar events planned for Vancouver Island early in the New Year.

| sohovictoria.com

BALLETBOYZ

BalletBoyz, the U.K.'s only all-male dance company, returns to Victoria's Royal Theatre with two new commissions on January 20 and 21. The double bill, called Life, premiered at Sadler's Wells in April 2016 and features new works by internationally renowned choreographers Pontus Lidberg and Javier de Frutos. BalletBoyz is an original and innovative force in modern dance. Led by former Royal Ballet lead dancers Michael Nunn and William Trevitt, the company thrills audiences and critics the world over with its distinctive style, fusing spectacular, energetic and graceful dance with stunning music and film. | dancevictoria.com



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KIDS CONFERENCE

On January 14 the Vancouver Island Conference Centre (VICC) will be hosting the second annual KIDS Conference, an event focused specifically on young families and on providing them with information about the services they may not be aware are available for them. The Conference also stresses the importance of promoting a future for all children, regardless of family economic status. This is the second year the VICC has hosted the day-long session, created as a means of showcasing the resources, programs and tools parents in the Central Vancouver Island area have at their disposal to assist them with raising a family.

Free of charge for parents and children 12 years and under, the KIDS Conference will be filled with music, games and other activities for the young and young at heart. Moreover, parents will have an opportunity to check out an extensive trade show of vendors with products and ideas to assist with the raising of young children. There will also be a number of workshops and keynote speakers addressing subjects ranging from nutrition to the importance of literacy to dealing with bullying.

More than 1,600 people attended last year's event. Organizers are expecting an even greater turn out for 2017. | kidsconference.com

RURAL DOCTORS COME TO TOWN

The medical profession encompasses a wide range of services and vocations that all boil down to meeting the needs of patients. But imagine that rather than working in a modern hospital with all the support and technologies you would expect you're a medical practitioner in a remote location facing an emergency. The real responsibility for making life and death decisions is a daily challenge facing general practitioners working in remote communities. Addressing the needs of doctors working in the hinterland is the subject of the Rural Doctors Conference, being held February 22 to 27 at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre (VICC).

Now in its third year, the Conference brings together medical doctors currently practicing in First Nation communities, rural villages and in other isolated spots all across British Columbia. The attendees come to the conference to share ideas, to collaborate with their peers, and to learn techniques that can be applied in their individual practices.

Last year's conference saw about 130 doctors attend and organizers are expecting even more this year. The event is co-sponsored by the Rural Coordination Centres of BC (RCCbc) and the Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice, and UBC CPD (Continuing Professional Development) of the Faculty of Medicine. | rccbc.ca



NATIONAL MBA GAMES

Do you know what you get when a university's Master of Business Administration (MBA) program collides head on with a love of sport and academia? The MBA Games 2017, that's what! An initiative of



Vancouver Island University (VIU), in conjunction with the Vancouver Island Conference Centre and various hospitality industry providers from across the Central Vancouver Island area, this event will see more than 700 MBA leaders from universities all across Canada descend on Nanaimo for three days of friendly competition.

Running from January 2 to 4, this prestigious event (which was first organized by Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, in 1988) brings together university students from across the country to compete for the Queen's Cup in a series of academic, athletic and spirit events. A true regional undertaking, participants will compete in various challenges at a variety of venues throughout the Harbour City. | mbagames.ca



SUGAR SHACK WEST

In February Nanaimo will once again tap into its francophone spirit with the 15th annual Maple Sugar Festival du Sucre d'Érable, running February 24 to 26. This unique bilingual event is inspired by the sugar shack traditions of Quebec and parts of Eastern Canada. Over the course of three days, festivities will include a variety of activities to delight visitors, including performances by a diverse range of musicians, dancers, and street entertainers. And of course, no sugar shack festival would be complete without traditional French Canadian fare, notably the decadent delight of sweet sugar toffy on snow. | francophonenanaimo.org

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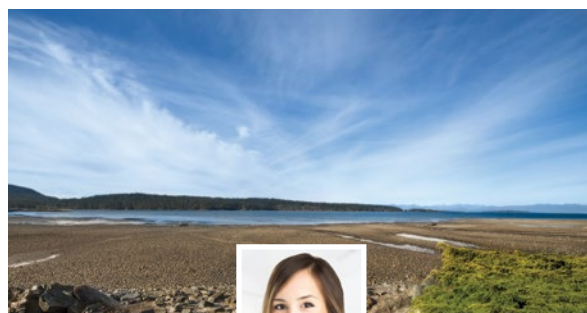
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Heath Moffatt photo

NANAIMO SERVICE EXPANDS

Starting December 24 Helijet will expand its service to include weekend flights between Nanaimo and Vancouver. Helijet currently offers six roundtrips each day between its Nanaimo Harbour Heliport and Vancouver Harbour locations. The expanded service will see Helijet offer three roundtrips a day on Saturdays and Sundays.

Scott Speakman, Manager, Sales & Community Relations Nanaimo-Mid-Island welcomed the announcement: "I have had many requests for weekend service from many differing groups. Resident commuters, business people and leisure commuters all see value in this offering. Whether it is having to make an important business meeting, taking the family to a concert, sporting events, or just shopping, they told us that having a reliable service available on weekends is very important."

To celebrate the occasion, Helijet is offering fares starting at just \$79 on all flights from December 19, 2016, through to January 3, 2017. Additionally, children 12 and under fly free when travelling with a paying adult.

In related news, the Nanaimo Port Authority (NPA) and Pacific Heliport Services Ltd. (PHS) announced on November 16, 2016, that an upgrade project to expand the existing heliport located on NPA's Cruise Centre lands had received final certification and approval for flight operations.

As the licenced manager of the private Nanaimo Heliport facility, PHS currently accommodates

Helijet's scheduled helicopter service to Vancouver and Victoria. It will now also be able to accommodate British Columbia's Air Ambulance helicopters during their 24/7 emergency air service requirements. Two additional helicopter landing apron sites were allocated on the heliport site, allowing two helicopters to be positioned for flight operations simultaneously during day and night operations, seven days a week.

The NPA has played an active role in developing transportation options for Nanaimo and surrounding mid-island areas.

"We have strongly supported the opportunity to offer this dedicated helicopter landing area, and with the recent expansion of the heliport it now allows emergency first responders to meet the needs of the community, all while making this area a truly multi-modal transportation hub," said Bernie Dumas, President and CEO, NPA.

Pacific Heliport Services Ltd. (PHS) is Canada's largest Heliport operator of publicly and privately designated heliports. PHS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Helijet International Inc.



Heath Moffatt photo

TRAINING BURSARY

The BC Aviation Council (BCAC) and Helijet recently announced a new \$3,500 Aviation Training Bursary as part of the annual Silver Wings Awards on October 24, 2016.

The Helijet International Bursary Award is a five-year annual corporate award of \$3,500 dollars aimed at mid-career candidates. Specifically, this

funding will help qualified individuals complete Helicopter IFR training, and on alternate years AME certification training.

The award is much needed: the requirement for well-trained aviation specialists has never been greater, but training and education costs continue to rise. In an effort to remove financial barriers, BCAC's Scholarship program awards approximately \$20,000 each year to help students and working professionals obtain the professional development they need. The organization's objective is to double the current annual giving to over \$40,000 annually in the next four years.

"[The Helijet International Bursary Award] is a great step in expanding our corporate award offering and this is the first BCAC award aimed at mid-career aviation professionals," said Heather Bell, Chair of BCAC.



PACIFIC GATEWAY HOTEL
— VANCOUVER AIRPORT —

LARGE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

The Pacific Gateway Hotel was recently named Large Business of the Year at the Richmond Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards in October 2016.

The hotel underwent an extensive rebrand in late 2014 from the Delta Hotel label and is one of the only independent hotels near Vancouver International Airport. The new name and logo for the 382-room hotel were a reflection of the natural landscape that surrounds the hotel, from the abundant green trees to the iconic waterfront setting of the Fraser River and the hotel's marina.

"While we anticipated some of the effects of a change of this magnitude, we didn't expect such a renewed sense of pride and energy from our team members," said general manager Eda Koot. "We were absolutely thrilled to be nominated for the award, and to be named a finalist; winning was just the icing on the cake!" | pacificgatewayhotel.com



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Nomad No More



**TED HOUSTON, DIRECTOR
FLIGHT OPERATIONS**

GENERALLY SPEAKING, there are two types of commercial pilots: those who fly to live; and those who live to fly. The former mostly follow a predictable path to an airline job where a seniority number ultimately determines their professional future. They take pride in professionalism, but as the years roll by flying loses its lustre and becomes a means to an end. The second type — those who live to fly — are usually colourful individuals who exult in the physical joy of flying and the variety of new opportunities aviation affords. Nomadic by nature, they are always looking to the horizon for the next exciting job.

Ted Houston, Helijet's Director, Flight Operations, falls into the latter category.

Houston grew up in Ottawa and spent many hours at the airport watching military fighter jets scream past. He decided that was what he wanted to do, but when he went for his air force medical it was revealed he had no adenoids in his nasal cavity. Minor as that is, the doctor disqualified him saying, "you'll never fly jets."

With a satisfied grin, Houston remarks, "Well, over the past 44 years I've spent more than 10,000 hours flying jets."

Like many determined, aspiring pilots, Houston was undeterred by the air force. He opted instead for the civilian route, learning to fly at a private flight school in Ottawa, and another in Windsor, Ontario. Upon obtaining his Commercial Pilot Licence he set off for Northern Ontario, landing his first job flying floatplanes in Sioux Lookout. From there he progressed on to a number of multi-engine aircraft flying jobs, including stints flying Douglas DC-3 in the arctic for Bradley Air Services, as well as a Cessna 421 for Atomic Energy Canada Ltd.

Many more jobs followed. Houston roamed the country flying everything from large turboprop aircraft and corporate jets to large airliners. Then in December 2006 a friend and fellow pilot called to say Helijet in Vancouver was looking for a Chief


“We follow Transport Canada regulations to the letter and our company operations manual is our bible. That’s what makes us safer than most companies.”

Pilot for the company’s fixed-wing operations. (Helijet also has a separate rotary-wing division with its own Chief Pilot.) Houston was hired two weeks later and, uncharacteristically, has never left.

In the 10 years Houston has been with Helijet he has functioned as both a manager and a line pilot flying the company’s LearJet 31. In 2014 he was promoted to the position of Director, Flight Operations, making him responsible for all aspects of the company’s helicopter and turbojet operations, as well as managing facilities at all Helijet bases throughout B.C.

“Every aircraft operator has safety procedures in place,” says Houston. “We follow Transport Canada regulations to the letter and our company operations manual is our bible. That’s what makes us safer than most companies.” He adds, “We have to be: Transport Canada has its office just across the road from us.”

Staying on top of red tape and overseeing all aspects of flight operations has its challenges, but Houston says working with likeminded professionals to improve Helijet’s safety and efficiency is its own reward:

“I work with an awesome bunch of people who are both knowledgeable and helpful. I’ve worked at a lot of companies where you were just a number. Helijet is different. People feel like they make a contribution, which is why so many choose to stay.” He adds, “When I came here I thought it would be a temporary thing — perhaps two, three, maybe five years at most. Ten years later it’s still a great place to work.” 



HELIJET FLEET



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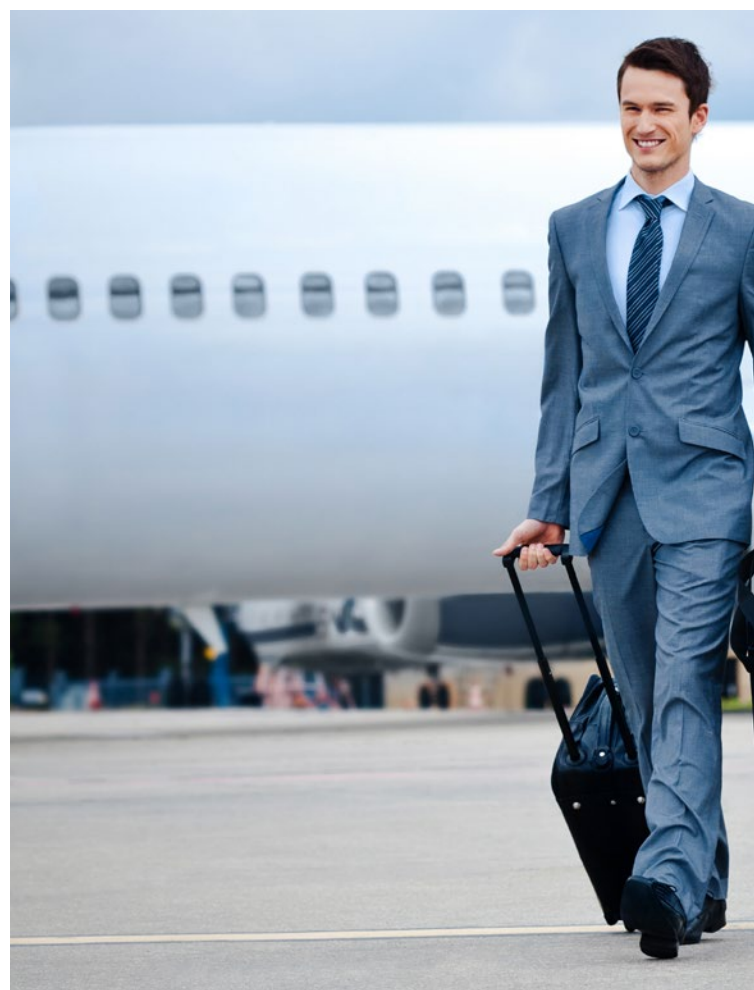
Healthy Travel Tips

TACTICS AND STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY BUSINESS TRAVEL

REMEMBER THE “GLORY DAYS” of business travel? Alas, gone is the joy of paper airline tickets, payphones, vibrating beds, and smoking sections in aircraft and restaurants.

Times certainly have changed, and today’s business travelers have different expectations, especially when it comes to making healthy lifestyle choices on the road.

Much has been written about the health risks associated with extensive travel. Indeed, a recent study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* found people who travel considerably for business have increased rates of poor health and health risk factors, including obesity and high blood pressure. Of course, the physical act of travelling isn’t necessarily linked to



Maintaining healthy habits while travelling for business improves performance and wellness.

these health risks. The real culprits are long periods of inactivity, unhealthy eating, and diminished quality of sleep.

The good news is that savvy travelers are not doomed to gain weight and become exhausted insomniacs just because they travel for work. With a little creativity, and help from hotels and health care professionals, business professionals can maintain a healthy lifestyle away from home, no matter how often they hit the road.

KEEP MOVING

Prolonged periods of sedentary inactivity is perhaps the greatest barrier to healthy business travel. Hours spent sitting in planes, trains, automobiles and ferries — not to mention airports, train stations



and BC ferry terminals — takes its toll over time.

The remedy, of course, is to keep moving. To that end, seasoned business travelers make a point of developing a practical exercise routine they can regularly maintain no matter where they are. Many make a habit of hitting their hotel gym, or going for a run or walk, as soon as they check in to their room, with regular workouts following at set times each day.

Still, many business travelers have a hard time getting motivated, especially after a long work or travel day. A number of hotels and resorts recognize this and are introducing their own in-house activity programs to help guests stay fit.

The Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort and Spa in Victoria has taken a particularly inspired

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approach to supporting health conscious travelers with their Concierge Programs, which provide organized and guided access to a range of on-site activities, from golf, tennis and yoga, to running, hiking and cycling activities, all at no, or very low, cost to guests.

Best of all, guests need not bother with the hassle of bringing their own gear and sporting equipment. That's because each concierge program is designed so everything is provided; guests need only show up.

For example, Bear Mountain Resort has partnered with New Balance to provide the necessary runners and running gear (including new socks that you get to keep!) all for a rental fee of just five dollars. Better still, they'll throw in a motivated Running Concierge to keep you on track and on the trails. Likewise, guests can hit the surrounding trails on foot or on a mountain bike with a Hiking or Cycling Concierge, get supple with a Yoga Concierge, improve their game with a Tennis Concierge, or enjoy a spectacular round of golf with a Golf Concierge.

The principle behind each concierge program is that people get stronger together when an enjoyable experience is shared with others who are supportive and likeminded.

"It's not just business travelers who are looking for support with their fitness goals," says Denise Palmer, General Manager of Bear Mountain Resort. "People want experiences when they travel — we get everyone from honeymooners looking to do day hikes to retirees wanting to up their tennis game."



Finding time for regular exercise on business trips helps improve performance in the boardroom. Bigstock photo



Making healthy food choices pays dividends when travelling. Bigstock photo

EAT WELL

Most seasoned travelers have honed their packing and planning to a fine art, building light, carry-ons that are equipped for every possible contingency. The same discipline can be applied to eating. If you are organized and stocked with healthy snacks those runway delays, missed lunches and less-than-average breakfast options won't make a dent in your healthy routine.

It helps then to pack a stash of healthy, non-perishable options in your backpack, briefcase, or carry-on item. These can include healthy snack bars, fruit, nuts, canned salmon or tuna with pull-off tabs, and even a shaker bottle with packets of your favorite post-workout recovery mix. For longer trips, pack extra food in your suitcase, or hit the local grocery store on arrival.

"My patients travel constantly and healthy eating is a primary challenge to staying balanced," says Dr. Lauren Fineman, Medical Director for Executive Health and Wellness Programs at False Creek Healthcare Centre in Vancouver. "Hydration is key, as is moderating alcohol and eating well. Avoid the creamy dressings and salty snacks and stick with light, easily digestible meals in restaurants and on airplanes".

SLEEP SOUND

Exercise and diet are within the control of every traveler, but sleep is the elusive third element in the holy trinity of healthy travel. A few lucky souls are blessed with the ability to sleep anywhere at any time, but the vast majority of us struggle with sleep issues on the road. That's because a combination of

factors, such as jet lag, strange beds, late nights and accumulated work stress can all conspire to mess with normal sleep patterns.

Like any animal, humans are creatures of habit who prefer a familiar routine and environment. Working on the road removes us from both; we're expected to perform in different, often stressful environments, usually on a hectic schedule. This, combined with restaurant dining (or room service), late nights and an unfamiliar bed is a surefire recipe for disrupted sleep.

Nevertheless, there are ways to be proactive:

First, start your journey well-rested. If you feel good starting out chances are you'll continue in a healthy pattern. Replicating regular sleep habits helps, too. As much as possible, stick to usual bed-times and wake-times to help regulate your body's internal clock, and avoid stimulating activities before bed.


Proper diet and exercise will also promote sleep, but be careful not to work-out just prior to bedtime as you may find yourself too stimulated to sleep. Likewise, power down those irresistible smart-phones and tablets; their gleaming screens — and


the texts, emails and news content emanating from them — can easily wreck an important night of rest.

Travelers should also avoid daytime sleeping as catnaps make nighttime sleeping that much harder. If you do feel the need to nap, limit it to no more than 30 minutes in the mid-afternoon.

Sleeping environment is also an important consideration. Try to keep your hotel room cool and free of noise and light. Accordingly, pack a sleep kit that includes such things as an eye-mask, earplugs or headphones, breathe-right strips, melatonin tablets, and night-guard, if applicable.

Lastly, pay attention to what you eat and drink before bed. Going to bed hungry or stuffed can result in discomfort, and too much fluid before bed can result in multiple midnight trips to the bathroom. And be wary of nicotine, caffeine and alcohol before bed, all of which inhibit or degrade sleep.


Self-evident as it may seem, exercise, diet and sleep are all complementary, and there are challenges aplenty for business travelers regarding each and all. Nevertheless, a practical and disciplined approach to managing all three while traveling for work can produce dividends, both on and off the road. 




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"Unless you're independently wealthy, or have family that can support you, the costs of living in a seniors housing facility — especially a higher end one — can be expensive," says Michael Kary, Director of Policy and Research, BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA). "How do you prepare for that? For many the answer is through long-term care insurance (LTCI)."



Canadians need to plan for the costs of long-term-care.
Bigstock photo

To put it simply, LTCI is an insurance product that sees the policy holder put money aside while they're working for eventual use once they require long-term care. Designed to protect against rising health-care costs, LTCI is a form of security against serious illness or injury at any age, but is most often associated with elders who can no longer live alone and care for themselves. LTCI plans typically pay in weekly installments ranging from \$150 to \$2,300, depending on the plan selected, and on the amount and duration of the contribution. Another benefit typically associated with an LTCI policy is that payments from this form of insurance typically start sooner than with life insurance, or other similar insurance products.

As societies the world over come to grips with aging populations, and the associated health-care costs of caring for the elderly, more and more are looking to long-term care insurance.

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"In the United States, in Britain, in Japan, and in parts of Europe it's a very popular way of preparing for the future," notes Kary.

In fact, a number of European countries, most notably Germany, have laws requiring citizens to obtain some form of long-term care insurance coverage as a hedge against future expenses.

That is not the case in Canada.

Understandably, many Canadians don't think about who will care for them late in life when a distant future may be decades away, especially when other more immediate financial priorities demand attention. Still, British Columbians would be wise to start giving greater consideration to long-term care insurance. That's because B.C.'s aging population is going to place ever greater demands on society in the years ahead as a growing number of seniors require long-term care.

In the decades to come strained government resources may not be capable of meeting increasing demand, especially in terms of long-term health-care. The harsh reality is that Canada's population

is rapidly aging, and the numbers paint a bleak picture: The BC Ministry of Health reports the percentage of seniors over the age of 80 in the province, currently pegged at 4.4 per cent of the population, will grow to 7.4 per cent by 2036. Statistics Canada estimated in 2010 that there were 4.8 million Canadians 65 years of age and older. By 2036 that number is expected to rise to 10.4 million people. In B.C. as much as 27 per cent of the province's population will be over 65 by 2038.

Many British Columbians are perhaps of the impression that government programs will meet all their long-term care needs. But that simply is not so, and certainly won't be as ever greater number of seniors place demands on the public purse. If anything, there will likely be fewer available resources in the future. As such, people need to plan for long-term care the same way they do for retirement. For some the answer is to save and build sufficient wealth to cover long-term care costs; for others LTC insurance plays an important role in preparing for the future. The problem with insurance, however,



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B.C.'s aging population is going to place ever greater demands on society in the years ahead as a growing number of seniors require long-term care

is that it can be very expensive — especially for those seeking coverage later in life — and premiums can go up to the point where it may become unaffordable.

Either way, people need to prepare for the considerable costs of long-term care in old age. For example, the average price of a room in a basic, privately-owned retirement residence is somewhere north of \$1,500 per month, while private rooms in high-end facilities can cost upwards of \$6,000 per month. At any rate, an individual's life savings can quickly be exhausted. And counting on children or

relations for financial support can place unrealistic, if not impossible, burdens on family.

“The alternative to having prepared for your elder care will be a public-sector-supported facility, which in many ways are more institutional than homelike, and may not be what you want for your ‘golden years’,” says Kary. “As with any other insurance policy, the sooner you start, and the larger the monthly payment, the better will be the eventual outcome. It does no good to start thinking about this when you’re 65 and expect to have enough put away to live the rest of your life.” He adds, “It’s like that old saying about not digging a well when you’re thirsty; the same principles apply.”

While relatively few British Columbians have taken measures to provide for their own long-term care, many are coming to terms with the reality of aging parents and family members. First-hand experience has a way of focusing the mind, and so more and more people are taking the necessary first steps towards preparing for an independent and self-determined life that corresponds with dignity. 



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WHISTLER'S WINTER WONDERS

Alternative outdoor experiences
in B.C.'s winter wonderland

Skiing and snowboarding are the main reasons most people head to Whistler each winter, but these pastimes aren't for everyone. After all, skiing can be expensive once you factor in the cost of equipment, lift passes and lessons, while snowboarding seems to require a degree of dexterity and physical flexibility not suited to many over 40. Nevertheless, there is more to Whistler than skiing and snowboarding. The following are just a few alternative pursuits to experience in B.C.'s beloved winter playground.

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BACKCOUNTRY SNOWMOBILE

Snowmobiles are nothing new to Whistler, but few operators are equipped to operate in the high alpine, or up on the Pemberton Ice Cap. Head-Line Mountain Holidays is the exception, operating state-of-the-art backcountry snowmobiles with long tracks that are designed to travel through deep snow with ease. Moreover, the company supplies guests with top-of-the-line gear and personal protection equipment.

With four tours to choose from — two trail tours, two heli-tours — guests can access some of the most secluded riding areas in B.C. under the guidance of avalanche-certified guides with extensive local knowledge. | headlinemountainholidays.com

BOBSLEIGH & SKELETON

For the ultimate chills and thrills in the hills visit the Whistler Sliding Centre on the southeast side of Blackcomb Mountain where the ride of a lifetime awaits in the form of the Public Bobsleigh or Skeleton Experience.

The Public Bobsleigh is an adrenaline-charged ride down the world's fastest track aboard a four-person bobsleigh. Steered by a trained bobsleigh pilot, riders discover the kind of G-forces felt by fighter pilots as they accelerate through 10 twists and turns at speeds up to 125 km/h.

For adventurous souls wanting to fly solo there is the Skeleton Experience, where riders clock speeds up to 100 km/h. | whistlerslidingcentre.com



WILDERNESS WELLNESS

Warm up in style with a Wilderness Spa experience like no other. Located on the backside of the Pemberton Ice Cap are a series of natural hot springs that are accessible only by helicopter, or an arduous multi-day snowmobile ride.

Those opting to arrive at the hot springs by helicopter are treated to a breath-taking flightseeing tour from Whistler that overflies the ice cap, offering unparalleled views of glaciers, waterfalls and the high alpine country of the Coast Mountain Range.

Once at the secluded hot springs guests can enjoy a casual soak in the geothermal pools, or take it a step farther and indulge in a full spa.

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ICE CLIMBING

Aspiring mountaineers can channel the spirit of Sir Edmund Hillary on a range of frozen waterfalls around Whistler with the help and guidance of several ice climbing tour operators who cater to all abilities, from beginner to expert. | whistler.com

ZIPLINING

If you still feel the need for speed after experiencing the whistler sliding centre then try flying through forest canopy at 80 km/h dangling from a metal cable. In fact, North America's longest zipline network is at Whistler, where Ziptrek Eco-tours' 10 lines add up to almost two-and-a-half kilometres of canopy sailing — the longest line dropping more than 20 stories from start to finish. | whistlewrziptrek.com



ADVENTURE DINING

You don't know fondue until you've driven 6,000 feet up the side of a mountain to get it. And it will be well earned upon arrival.

Catering to adventurous gourmands, Canadian Wilderness Adventures leads nighttime snowmobile and snowcat tours to the Crystal Hut atop Blackcomb Mountain for an exclusive dining experience of traditional Emmental cheese fondue served with baguette, pickles, assorted vegetables and beef tenderloin, followed by fresh-baked fruit pie and ice cream. | canadianwilderness.com



DOGSLEDDING

Run with the pack and howl with husky-hounds on Whistler's snowy trails this winter on a daylong sled-dog tour. No need to train for the Iditarod either: tour operators will bundle you in your sleigh beneath robes thick enough for Sam McGee.

Numerous tour operators offer a variety of guided dog sled tours between mid-December and late April. | whistler.com



SNOWSHOE

If you can walk, you can snowshoe. In fact, snowshoeing is an ideal sport for those wanting to enjoy B.C.'s backcountry without risking life and limb. And while most winter activities in Whistler often require costly lessons, the same doesn't apply to snowshoeing. Furthermore, it's a winter activity that provides you with the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors at what some consider the best time of year, while at the same time giving your physical and mental health a great workout. And if you long for the peace and solitude that only a

deserted winter trail can offer – far away from the hordes at the ski hills – then snowshoeing can give you the freedom to explore B.C.'s winter wilderness at whatever pace you like.

At Whistler you can take advantage of guided or self-guided snowshoe tours. There are over 10 kilometres of marked trails at Lost Lake Park, where you can choose to walk one of three loops, the longest of which stretches to Green Lake lookout and around Lost Lake. Tours range from 90 minutes to five hours and all levels of ability are catered for. | whistler.com

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“There is no bad whiskey. There are only some whiskeys that aren’t as good as others.”
— Raymond Chandler, novelist and screenwriter

BY BOB LOBLAW

FINE SPIRITS

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WHISKY

WHISKY IS BELOVED the world over for its heady aromas, robust flavours and spicy warmth. Like Champagne, the good stuff is often poured to signal special occasions, but even affordable, everyday whisky can be silky and sublime, lifting spirits in the dark, dank months of winter in the Pacific Northwest.

Whisky has been trending for several years now, enjoying a renaissance of sorts that owes much to improved techniques, better products and a growing following of sophisticates. This, combined with exponential increase in demand from India and China, has seen dormant distilleries in Scotland re-activated, existing ones expanded, and a host of start-up distilleries there and around the world. Closer to home, the B.C. government changed the province’s liquor laws in 2013 thus encouraging a

number of artisanal distilleries to try their hand at whisky production. It’s still early days, but a number are showing great promise.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

So, what is whisky, and how can the occasional tippler appreciate its wide variety?

The first thing to know is that whisky is not a uniform libation. It can be as diverse and nuanced as wine, and, likewise, it can confound even the most devoted *aficionado*. As such, anyone wanting to appreciate whisky should imbibe what they like most, not what others decide is “best”. After all, there is no such thing as the “best”; that is the personal decision of every consumer. This said, a basic understanding of whisky, its colourful history, and its various classes and types, can go a long

way towards enhancing enjoyment.

The unifying characteristics of whisky is that it is a distilled spirit made from fermented grain mash — usually barley, maize, rye and other cereals — that is aged in wooden barrels for a minimum of three years. The spectrum gets very broad beyond that.

Scots are loathe to admit it, but grain distillation was likely first introduced to Ireland by missionary monks sometime around the 7th Century. Since then, whisky has evolved the world over in a variety of styles appealing to every taste.

It's even spelled different depending on where it's made: Americans and Irish generally spell whiskey, while everyone else spells whisky. Whatever spelling, the root comes from *uisce beatha*, a Gaelic translation of aqua vitae ("water of life"), Latin for distilled alcohol.

SCOTCH WHISKY

Notwithstanding the spirit's likely origin in Ireland, few places are dearer to the hearts of whisky lovers than Scotland. And only whisky made in Scotland in a specified manner can legally be called Scotch Whisky, or simply Scotch.

Whisky is produced in a variety of styles north of Hadrian's Wall, but pure single malt whisky commands the highest regard (and price) among consumers. This is a peculiar and modern twist of fate: until recently, pure malt whisky was generally considered too ferocious for polite company; it was the domain of Scottish farmers, gamekeepers and a few lairds. Most single malt was blended with lighter grain whiskies to produce smoother, consumer-friendly blended Scotch whisky. Even today, nearly 90 per cent of all single malt whisky goes into the production of familiar blends like Johnny Walker.

Nevertheless, single malt has come a long way over its checkered 500-year history, having survived temperance movements, prohibition, illicit stills, smuggling and taxation, not to mention a series of economic boom and bust cycles.

Single malt Scotch varies in style from one region to the next, ranging from elegant smooth Speyside to the smokey peat of Islay. Some purists sniff at vatted (blended) Scotch, but quite a few vatted whiskies are gaining — and deserving of — equal respect. Ultimately it comes down to taste.



Graduate student Marla Cervantes designs components for the UVic-led Advanced Rare Isotope Laboratory (ARIEL) at Canada's TRIUMF lab. ARIEL will dramatically increase rare isotope production for scientific research while creating health and economic benefits for Canadians.

Sadly, the charms of fine Scotch are becoming harder for mere mortals to enjoy. Worldwide demand, especially in China, has outstripped supply, driving prices up and out of reach for the average tippler. Indeed, many single malts fetch upwards of \$100 a bottle, while premium single malts can fetch thousands of dollars.

IRISH WHISKEY

Some people temper sorrow with drink, but few have a grander time doing so than the Irish. Perhaps that feeds into a stereotype, but it's fair to say the Irish have a rich and tragic history that has been both relieved and bedeviled by whiskey.

The first record of barley-based whiskey in Ireland appeared in the mid-16th Century. In 1661 the Brits imposed an excise tax on Irish whiskey with predictable results: *poitín* (moonshine) flourished as illegal stills became pervasive. By the end of the 18th Century some 2,000 stills were percolating around Ireland.

The Irish resented British rule, but not established distillers, many of who exported vast quantities of Irish whiskey to the expanding Empire.



Each year the Victoria Whisky Festival hosts master distillers and brand ambassadors from some of the most renowned distilleries in the world. Jen Seele photo

At the same time, a huge market developed in the U.S. where millions of homesick Irish emigrants craved a taste of home.

By the late 19th Century Irish whiskey was out-selling Scotch whisky in most markets.

Success owed much to Irish whiskey being generally more approachable than Scotch, largely on account of the traditional Irish practice of triple-distillation in single-batch pot stills, which yielded a smoother, sweeter and lighter-bodied style of

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VICTORIA WHISKY FESTIVAL

Enjoy a wee dram of whisky, whiskey or bourbon at the 12th Annual Victoria Whisky Festival being held at the Hotel Grand Pacific, January 19 to 22. Arguably the premier whisky festival in western Canada, the 2017 Festival will showcase over 250 whiskies made in 50 distilleries from Scotland, Ireland, England, Canada, United States, Japan, Taiwan, India and France. Festival events include the Canadian Whisky Awards, consumer tastings, the Grand Tasting and several masterclasses conducted by distillers and brand ambassadors.

Access can be a challenge, though. The Festival's popularity is such that limited public tickets usually sell out at The Strath Liquour Store in a matter of hours. Nevertheless, out of town guests may purchase tickets to the Festival one day in advance of the public ticket sales in conjunction with a room reservation at the Hotel Grand Pacific. Guests can choose from several packages available and posted to the Victoria Whisky Festival website in October. For more information and details visit victoriawhiskyfestival.com

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Don't despair if you can't score tickets to the Victoria Whisky Festival as other opportunities abound for exclusive tastings.

In particular, The Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort and Spa in Victoria recently introduced a new whisky program with its "Spirit Tasting and Food Pairing" dinners in the resort's private cellar. For a mere \$50 guests enjoy a sit-down dinner with master distillers and brand ambassadors from renowned producers with each meal course paired to a specific whisky.

The resort launched its spirit pairing program in October with Canada's own Forty Creek Whisky, and on December 5 will be hosting famed Scotch producer Bruichladdich. For more information contact Bear Mountain Resort's concierge, or visit their website, bearmountain.ca

Another way to broaden your appreciation for *uisge* is the Scotch Malt Whisky Society.

Members in Vancouver and Victoria meet once a month to taste eight different single cask bottlings selected by the Society from 129 different distilleries for the exclusive enjoyment of its members.

Members get a tasting kit when they join, and if they attend all 12 "outturn" tastings it works out to 96 drams of deluxe whisky annually at around \$2.40 per ounce — a steal for cask strength Scotch whisky!

Currently, there are only two retail stores representing the Society in B.C.: Legacy Liquour Store at 1633 Manitoba Street in Vancouver; and The Strath Ale, Wine and Spirits Merchants at 919 Douglas Street in Victoria. Contact either store for more information, or visit the Society's website at smws.ca

National styles of whisky are giving way to new interpretations that are driven more by consumer demand, and less by geography and tradition.

whisky. Moreover, it lacks the aggressive, smoky peat character of most Scotch, which is ironic considering the natural abundance of peat in Ireland.

By the early 20th Century Scottish distillers were grabbing market share with smooth blended grain whiskies. Making matters worse, the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), and subsequent British trade embargoes, denied the Irish export markets in Commonwealth countries — a need the Scots were happy to fill.

At the same time, Prohibition in the United States (1919-1933) cut off the largest export market for Irish whiskey, giving rise to illegal Canadian rye whisky. Most Irish distilleries closed and the few remaining had insufficient stock to satisfy demand when Prohibition was eventually repealed.

The Great Depression and Second World War only added to the long decline. By the 1970s Irish whiskey's luck had pretty much run out. With only two distilleries in operation — one of them (Bushmills) in Northern Ireland — production was a piddling 500,000 cases a year, down from 12 million cases produced in 1900.

But don't discount the luck o' the Irish. The 1990s saw resurgence in consumer demand for Irish whiskey, which has been the fastest growing spirit in the world, averaging 20 per cent growth every year for over 20 years. Ireland and Northern Ireland now boast seven distilleries — producing 6.5 million cases a year for 69 brands — with several more in development. Growth is projected to again reach 12 million cases a year by 2018.

CANADIAN WHISKY

Exorbitant prices for premium Scotch whisky might explain why more consumers are (re)discovering the extraordinary quality and value to be had in Canadian whisky, which has been trending like mad in recent years. In fact, a good quality

Canadian rye whisky can be had at a fraction the cost of most half-decent Scotch.

Canadian whisky has long enjoyed a noble reputation for quality ever since Hiram Walker founded his distillery in Walkerville, Ont., in 1858. But it was Canada's ignoble reputation of supplying bootleggers like Al Capone during American Prohibition that firmly established the country's reputation for whisky.

Unlike their counterparts in the U.K., Ireland and the U.S., Canadian distillers have fewer limitations on labeling and the uses of grains and mash percentages in whisky production. If there is a common thread to Canadian whisky it is that it is usually a multi-grain blended style that is generally smoother, sweeter and lighter than most.

Oddly, Canadian whisky still enjoys greater popularity abroad than at home. Most likely, this is a simple case of not knowing what we're missing in our own backyard.

AMERICAN WHISKEY

In the U.S. whiskey made from rye and corn is most popular, but there are scads of regulatory hangovers lingering from America's "noble experiment" with Prohibition, so the making and labeling of whiskey is strictly controlled, if not confusing.

Without getting into the complexity of American liquor laws, suffice to say the dominant grain in each style of whiskey must account for at least 51 per cent of the mash, and whiskey made from corn is called bourbon. (Notable exceptions are Tennessee whiskey, which is identical to bourbon but undergoes charcoal filtration, and corn whiskey where corn accounts for at least 80 per cent of the mash.)

INTERNATIONAL WHISKY

Famous as the aforementioned nations are for their whisky, none has a lock on reputation. In fact, some of the finest whisky in the world hails from places you might not expect, such as India, Japan and Australia, Wales and England.

In many respects, national styles of whisky are giving way to new interpretations that are driven more by consumer demand, and less by geography and tradition. The result is sometimes better quality at better prices. And perhaps that is something worth raising a glass to. **H**



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Domestic Makeover

Quick fixes to transform your home



Home improvement projects can be a fun, and hopefully profitable, undertaking. Now more than ever, homeowners are deciding to stay in their homes and make improvements rather than trying to sell and buy something new. Below are seven easy ways to transform your home without making permanent changes, and without having to hire a decorator or contractor.

1. Window Treatments

Whether you're removing old window treatments and opening up your house to the beauty of the outdoors, or adding blinds, curtains, or draperies, window treatments are much more than window dressing. The colour and style of your treatments can transform a room.

Imagine your dining room with toile half-curtains—suddenly it's a Parisian bistro. Or your bedroom with floor-to-ceiling silk or brocade draperies for the ultimate in luxurious retreat. There are colours and styles to match any budget, whether you are a do-it-yourself-er or happy to leave the sewing to the experts.

2. Paint

Paint is one of the fastest ways to completely transform a room, or your entire house. Too many people live with white walls; don't be afraid of color! Try something dramatic, like a red bathroom or deep blue dining room. Let it grow on you for a week or two; if you hate the colour you can always re-paint. Still timid? Try painting just one wall of a room several shades darker than the existing colour. This will let you create some visual interest while not really changing the color scheme.

3. Area Rugs

Another easy change is adding area rugs. Area rugs can help define a seating or activity area—try adding an oval rug to center a group of chairs, or put a plush, shaggy rug in a corner by a bookshelf to encourage your kids to sprawl on the floor with a good book. Area rugs can also transform the color scheme in your room, either with a punch of colour and drama found in a brightly colored, modern rug, or with the muted tones and classic patterns of an oriental, or with any of the hundreds of styles and color schemes in between.

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4. Couch

A new sofa or couch is one way to dramatically change the style of your living or family room, all while increasing functionality. You can opt for cozy chenille, durable tweed or corduroy, formal prints, crisp white sailcloth, country charm with slip-covers... almost any color and fabric you can imagine! Since the couch is probably the most used piece of furniture, replacing it can make everything else in the room feel brand-new as well, especially if you also take the opportunity to implement another of these other “quick fix” tips, such as new paint or curtains, to coordinate with your new seating.

5. Rearrange Furniture

Even easier than adding new seating is re-arranging the existing furniture. Instead of having all the seats face a focal point, such as the television, why not try creating a U-shaped seating area where the seats all face each other? This will encourage conversation and bring the focus down from the walls and in on your family and guests. For a large room, consider having two separate seating areas, one for larger groups or centered on the television, and a smaller group, perhaps just a chaise or two simple armchairs, situated to take advantage of a lovely view from a side window or perhaps just for an intimate conversation area.



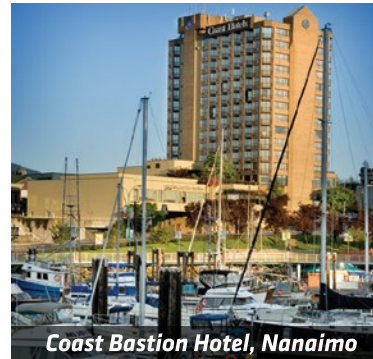
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6. Room Functions

A step up from re-arranging the furniture in your existing rooms, switching room functions can open up a whole new way of living in your house. Maybe your house has a formal dining room that you only use a few times a year, and you spend most evenings watching TV in your cramped living room or basement rec room. Now, imagine having a media room take the place of the under-utilized dining room, and how much more practical that would be. Or, perhaps you have a guest bedroom that is most often host to dust bunnies. Why not turn it into an office, a sitting room, a playroom, or a crafts room?

The possibilities are limited only by your imagination. Just because everyone on your block has an eat-in kitchen doesn't mean that you need to as well; perhaps what you really want is a butler's pantry instead of that kitchen table, or a desk for a centrally located home office, or a media armoire so that you can watch your cooking shows while actually in the kitchen. Give new life to rarely used rooms by reinventing the room's function.

7. Bed Linens

Often, the bedrooms are the most overlooked areas of the house. For many of us, the bedroom is just a place to sleep, store clothes, and hide items that need to be put away quickly when company arrives. Your bedroom can—and should—be so much more than that. Your bedroom should be a refuge, an intimate, private place where you can unwind and relax. Whether you are the type of person who likes to read the paper in bed on Saturday mornings or snuggle under the covers to watch movies late at night, there's a bed linen out there for you. Many retailers offer a wide range of styles at a variety of price points, so you can find one luxurious new comforter or buy many different duvet covers to alternate to match your mood. Coordinating dust ruffles, pillow shams, and sheets will complete the package, and are all you need to create the refuge of your dreams.



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**TIGH-NA-MARA SEASIDE
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HAVE A LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP with city life.

Like most people, I enjoy the variety, amenities, and stimulation of an urban lifestyle, but the trade-off is glass and concrete surroundings, interminable traffic congestion, and soul-sucking computer screens. It takes a toll after a while; come Friday afternoon I'm generally worn out and un-inspired. All I want to do is trade my smartphone and tablet for fresh air and greenery.

I doubt I am alone in this regard. The growing trend towards urbanization means most people are spending less and less time in nature, and that is contributing to a range of health complications in society — from stress and mental fatigue to anxiety and depression, among other things. But there is a relatively obvious antidote: get back to nature.

A range of recent scientific studies suggest even brief getaways to a restorative environment in which a person feels a sense of escape from the stressful demands of daily life helps promote cognitive function and improved performance on attention-demanding tasks. Moreover, the nurturing effects of nature help promote a sense of



well-being that can improve a person's overall health and wellness.

My wife, Heather, and I are both busy professionals, and after too many months without a break we decided we were overdue for a nature getaway to regenerate. But with the onset of winter neither one of us felt much like roughing it in the great outdoors. In other words, we wanted a nature experience with creature comforts.

The answer to our dilemma was a long-weekend stay at Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort in Parksville on Vancouver Island.

Getting a jump on the weekend, Heather and I set off from Victoria at noon on a Friday to beat rush-hour traffic and just over two hours later we find ourselves settling into our Oceanview room at Tigh-Na-Mara Resort. As soon as we drop our bags Heather starts investigating our accommodation, ooohing and aaahing at the variety of amenities, including a deep soaker tub, gas fireplace, and fully equipped kitchenette. And being one with an eye for small details, she is quick to note the room has recently been renovated with a

Busy professionals who live and work in Vancouver, Victoria or Nanaimo have a variety of natural getaway destinations to choose from, but few compare to Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort & Conference Centre in Parksville on Vancouver Island.

“All I want to do is trade my smartphone and tablet for fresh air and greenery”



Located just a short drive north of Nanaimo, Tigh-Na-Mara Resort is unique in that the natural environment is integrated into all aspects of the resort's accommodations and amenities.



contemporary design that integrates modern features with traditional elements like natural stone and wood beams.

I'm more interested in what's not in the room. Sliding open the patio window I step onto a large balcony that offers an expansive view of the Strait of Georgia. Lasqueti and Texada Island are visible not far off, framed from behind by the snow-capped peaks of the Coast Mountains. It is one of those stunning views that serves to remind me why I moved to the West Coast almost 20 years ago.

Just below the balcony is an accessible beach. It's low tide now, revealing rippled tidal pools extending some 200 hundred yards out from shore. At first glance, the beach seems unremarkable, but then we notice something:

"What's that peeping noise?" asks Heather.

"Look there!" I exclaim. "There are hundreds of shorebirds out there."

Exactly what's out there is hard to say. Parksville and surrounding areas are home to 250 native and migratory bird species. In fact, Tigh-Na-Mara

Seaside Resort is located in the heart of an officially designated Important Bird Area (IBA) of global importance that draws birders from all over the world.

Trying to sound knowledgeable, I suggest to Heather that these are probably semipalmated sandpipers, or perhaps semipalmated plovers. Going full Cliff Clavin, I further explain that plovers are slightly smaller, with yellowish legs, while sandpipers are slightly larger with black legs.

My wife is unimpressed: "Forget the birds," she says popping the cork on a chilled bottle of sparkling wine. "I'm heading for the spa!"

And with good reason. The Grotto Spa at Tigh-Na-Mara is the reason many people flock to the resort. Indeed, it was voted the Number 1 Spa in Canada in 2016 by Spas of America, an international spa and wellness travel website. The title is well deserved: the entire spa complex is constructed around a large, heated mineral pool hidden behind a waterfall and high walls of natural stone that are festooned with green plants and ferns. This,

Ultimate ESCAPE

Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort recently partnered with Helijet to offer Vancouverites a one-of-a-kind "Ultimate Escape" spa experience for couples. Departing from Vancouver Harbour, guests fly in style with Helijet direct to Nanaimo Harbour where a waiting limousine service will chauffeur them to Tigh-Na-Mara Resort. On arrival, an Oceanview room will be ready and so will a bottle of wine and a cheese platter to enjoy prior to dinner at the resort's onsite Cedars Restaurant & Lounge. After dinner, guests can retire to their guestroom to enjoy a romantic Rose Petal Turndown Service. The fireplace will be lit, and couples can spend the rest of their first evening relaxing in a Jacuzzi tub, soaking in the ocean view, and indulging with chilled sparkling wine and delicious chocolates by candlelight.

The next day couples wake up to a "Cup of Joe" amenity for two before heading to Cedars for a delicious breakfast. Afterwards guests can choose from one of

several adventures for the day, including: a scenic flight over the Coast Mountains and waterfalls with SeaAir; a day trip to Cowichan Wine Country with VI Expeditions; a cheese and wine tasting at Little Qualicum Cheese Works; a sea kayaking expedition in Nanoose Bay; guided spelunking at Horne Lake Caves; or walking among giant 800-year-old trees at Cathedral Grove. There are any number of other adventures to choose from each morning, and on one day the resort sends along a special gourmet picnic basket for couples to enjoy on their outing.

Of course, the "Ultimate Tigh-Na-Mara Escape" wouldn't be complete without some serious pampering. During their three-night stay couples enjoy the Grotto Spa's mineral pool, their own private suite complete with a fabulous copper soaking tub, Champagne and chocolate-dipped strawberries, two personalized Grotto Spa robes, side-by-side spa treatments up to one-hour service, and "Endless Tapas" upstairs in the spa's Treetop Tapas & Grill dining room.

When it's time to return to the real world, a limousine delivers guests back to the Nanaimo Harbour Heliport where Helijet will be waiting to whisk couples home to Vancouver, feeling relaxed, refreshed, rejuvenated and reconnected.

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The Grotto Spa has a large team, including registered massage therapists, aestheticians, hair stylists and a high-end culinary team responsible for the creation of the “endless tapas” experience, which guests enjoy in their robes.

combined with the sultry steam rising from the mineral pool, gives the Grotto Spa a funky Jurassic vibe

Heather and I doff our robes and sandals and wade into the mineral pool, easing in up to our shoulders to feel the warm embrace of the restorative water. For the next hour we loll about, relaxing and forgetting the cares of the outside world.

It's hard to leave this sanctuary, but as evening approaches we start feeling peckish and so we don our robes and sandals and agree to rendezvous upstairs in the Treetop Tapas & Grill for our “Dip & Dine” endless tapas experience.

I've never eaten a meal in a bathrobe before and I confess it takes some initial getting used to. It helps that all other guests are wearing the same attire, and after a glass of wine I start grooving to this unique, new dining experience, especially as the tapas start arriving. One after another, we're presented with exotic small plates comprised of delicious, savoury combinations, many of them sourced locally.

First up is a dish of apple and celery soup, served alongside a kale salad adorned with red quinoa, hemp seeds, and seasonal berries. Once those dishes are cleared away they are replaced by crab risotto with citronette, a plate of Bison carpaccio and duck confit with blue cheese polenta, topped with a pomegranate and orange glaze. The entire procession of 14 tapas plates carries on for close to an hour, and by the time



The Grotto Spa's 2,500-square-foot mineral pool is the centrepiece of Tigh-Na-Mara's 20,000-square-foot spa facility.

dessert arrives there is no thought of having “endless” second helpings.

Satiated and rejuvenated after an extraordinary spa dining experience, we head back to our room to digest and decompress by the fire. Wandering hand-in-hand across Tigh-Na-Mara's 22-acre property Heather and I both note how the resort seems to be part of the natural environment. All variety of deciduous and coniferous trees are planted on the grounds, shrouding every building, from bungalows and rustic cottages to the main lodge and fitness centre, in a natural forest setting.

We debate what to do in the morning — whether to walk the resort's on-site trails, or put on our wellies and explore the beach — and decide to decide in the morning.

Of course, when first light arrives we have a hard time stirring from our luxurious king-size bed. Instead of rising for a day of adventure, I opt to open the patio door and crawl back under the covers, taking comfort in the cacaphony of a few hundred semipalmated sandpipers (and plovers!) peeping in concert outside our window.

Perhaps we'll be more ambitious tomorrow, but one thing is certain for now — we're both feeling more rested and romantic than we have in months. After a few more days decompressing like this I expect we'll be ready to face any challenge the week ahead may have in store. ☺

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Papardelle With Pancetta, Cherry Tomatoes & Basil

INGREDIENTS

1 package papardelle pasta (18 oz.)
 3 oz. pancetta, thinly sliced
 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 3 garlic cloves, minced
 16 small cherry tomatoes, whole
 Salt and fresh-ground pepper
 ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
 15 fresh basil leaves, torn

Serves four

Suggested wine pairing: Sangiovese

Alternative wine pairing: Barbera

DIRECTIONS

Sauté pancetta in a large saucepan over medium high heat until golden and crisp. When done, transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.

Set stove on high and bring salted water to a boil in a large pot. Cook papardelle pasta until *al dente*, drain, rinse and set aside.

While pasta is boiling, place large pan on medium-high heat and add olive oil. Let oil heat for one minute and then add minced garlic. Sauté garlic until just starting to turn golden, then add cherry tomatoes. Cook tomatoes for approximately two to three minutes so they remain firm. Avoid bursting. Season with salt and pepper, and add red pepper flakes as desired.

Add the cooked pancetta and pasta noodles and mix to coat for one minute.

Prior to serving, add the torn basil and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

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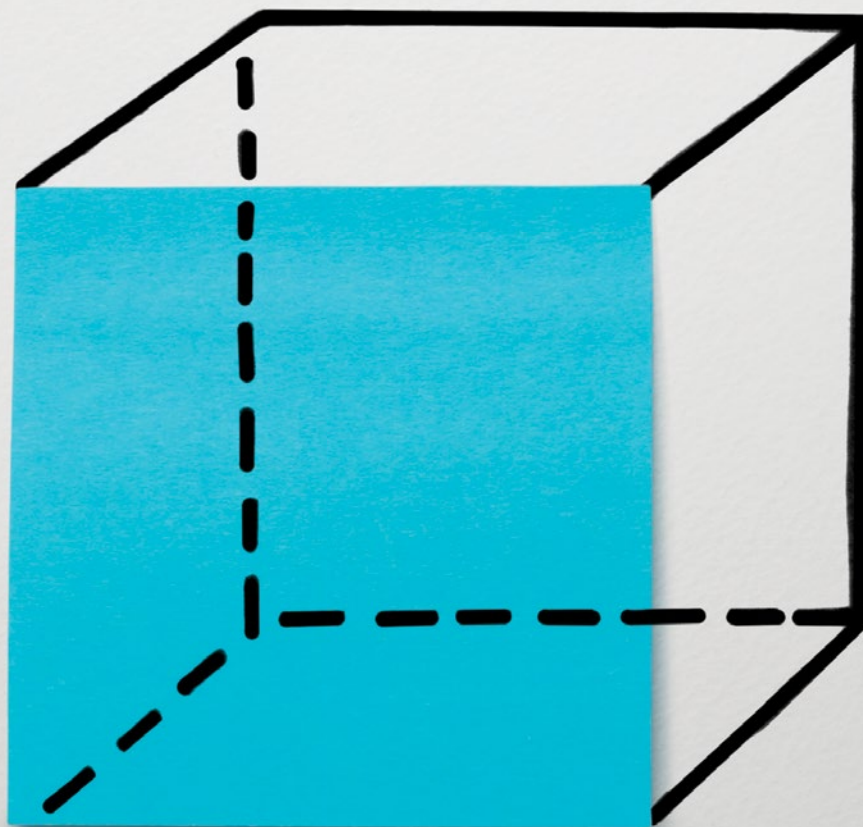


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