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There is much to discover in the Discovery Islands. Some of it can be while riding Zodiacs through the passageway, while others can be seen on the dock as a catch in the women's derby is celebrated. Oak Bay Marine photos

## Fishing for beauty in the Discovery Passage

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It's evening and I'm sitting on the deck of my cabin at April Point Resort, allowing the beauty of this magnificent location to sweep me away.

Around me a rocky, heavily forested coastline hugs the shore, while in the distance the Discovery Islands dot the horizon.

The ocean is calm as it gently rocks the pier leading up to my abode and, occasionally, the silvery head of a seal glints in the fading light.

Many resorts in the gulf try hard to be sophisticated retreats for a demanding, big-city clientele, but April Point Resort & Spa brushes all that pretentiousness aside.

It is what it is: rustic, friendly, gracefully weathered and deeply tranquil.

Translucent jellyfish float in the water near the pier, schools of fish dart in the shallows and the broad wingspan of bald eagles is a common sight above.

At the resort's restaurant, shorts and t-shirt-clad visitors enjoy West Coast cuisine, and a jovial atmosphere prevails as serious fishermen rub shoulders with families and honeymooners.

One advantage of coming here, aside from the serenity and perfect island vantage point, is the fact you get to take advantage of two resorts for the price of one.

Just across the bay in the northern Vancouver Island city of Campbell River lies Painter's Lodge, owned by the same parent company, the Oak Bay Marine Group.

Getting there is easy as all spring and summer long a small water shuttle runs ferries visitors between the two resorts. If you're in the mood for a change of scene, you just hop aboard and are quickly escorted to a different lodge, with swimming pool, another menu, tennis courts and a variety of amenities that provide ample variety — should you require it.

April Point has an abundance of recreational activities, which include exploring the island on mopeds or bikes, chartering a fishing boat, boarding a wildlife viewing trip on the resort's speedy Zodiac or taking an adrenaline-pumping motorboat trip through the rapids.

There's a first-class spa if you feel like some pampering, and Quathiaski Cove, one of Quadra Island's hubs, is a few minutes from the resort with a smattering of gift shops, vegan restaurants and a supermarket.

Once a month on Saturday mornings, Quathiaski Cove bustles with its Farmers' Market, a place to catch up with locals, browse for

hand-made soaps, buy a rabbit, pick up a giant-sized zucchini and shop for one-of-a-kind jewelry.

For more traffic and larger stores, you have to venture to Campbell River. Billing itself as the Salmon Capital of the World, many come to fish here.

But there's certainly more of interest to this sleepy town of 31,000 than plunking a fishing line into the murky depths.

Few know, for example, that this area holds the record for the largest man-made, non-nuclear explosion in history.

Until 1958, just north of Campbell River lay Ripple Rock, hidden by tidal currents at the mouth of Seymour Narrows.

A major navigational hazard, the rock caused the demise of many a ship over the years and had claimed numerous human lives.

But until the 1950s, no-one had come up with a successful way of getting rid of it.

In 1955, engineers began a 28-month-long process of sinking a shaft through nearby Maud Island and tunnelling horizontally beneath Ripple Rock and up into its peaks to install explosives.

When those explosives were detonated, 700,000 tonnes of rock and water rose 1,000 feet into the sky, destroying the rock that had been nicknamed the Devil Beneath the Sea.

The fascinating story of this engineering milestone is depicted in images and video at the Campbell River Museum.

Though big-box stores like Wal-Mart and the Real Canadian Superstore ring the city, don't miss out on browsing the neat galleries, gift shops and boutiques on Shoppers Row and Pier Street in the downtown core.

With a delightfully old-fashioned ambience that feels untouched by the

modern day, downtown bustles with activity and

outdoor cafes in the summer, its stores offering one-of-a-kind furniture and

decorative items.

The best way to end

the day is with a glass

of wine at a pier-side

restaurant, watching the slow, steady movement

of the ferry as it crosses

to and from Quadra

Island.

Here, you can listen to the lap of the ocean, glimpse the water for sight of seals and lose yourself in the magical beauty of the Discovery Passage.

### **If You Go**

■ For reservations at Painter's Lodge and April Point Resort & Spa, call (800) 663-7090 or visit [www.obmg.com](http://www.obmg.com).

■ The Campbell River Museum ([www.crmuseum.ca](http://www.crmuseum.ca)) is located at 470 Island Highway and is open year round.

Info: (250) 287-3103

■ Getting There: The fastest way to get to Campbell River is by air.

Pacific Coastal Airlines ([www.pacific-coastal.com](http://www.pacific-coastal.com)) flies from Vancouver to Campbell River several times daily, with round-trip tickets costing about \$300.

Ferry service ([www.bcferries.com](http://www.bcferries.com)) from Vancouver to Vancouver Island is less expensive, but involves a two-hour ferry ride followed by a three-hour drive, which amounts to a full day's travel.

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