

Nature's playground

Fishing, snorkelling, golfing, jet-boating, hiking and more

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Campbell River, in the middle of Vancouver Island and in the midst of one of nature's best playgrounds, is a delight for city-slickers needing rejuvenation. As the Salmon Capital of the World, it has attracted a contingent of retirees and loyal tourists who revisit every year to meet salmon that have been trained from birth to jump in to their boats.

You can eat the fish or swim with da fish. We donned wetsuits and snorkels to float down the Campbell River with Paradise Found Adventure Tours, battling our way through the traffic jam of various species trying to find a safe place to mate. And, of course, you can dance with da fish on the end of your line.

But there is plenty else to do in Campbell River. The area has golf courses and shopping, and the hiking is terrific but we liked the jet-boating even better.

We chose to don survival suits for a high-speed rigid inflatable scream around the nearby islands. The fellow at the wheel intentionally allowed us to be swept into a sea whirlpool big enough to swallow a cruise liner. He zipped in and out of the hole, testing how far down we could sink before our howling outboards clawed us back to sea level. Racing down wide channels at several waves per second, we miraculously outraced a purple black squall that stalked us back to base.

You can be at the edge of everything water related at Painter's Lodge or at Quadra Island's April Point Resort & Spa. Our favourite activity is sitting at April Point gazing out at the sunset. With the water in the foreground and the mountains behind, nothing could be more peaceful.

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