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Take a summer swim with the salmon

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Presented by



Joanne Elves / Canwest News Service

I've run with people and dogs. I've run up mountains and through vineyards but never did I think I'd run with salmon in a river.

With wild Pacific salmon showing signs of depleted stock, maybe fishing excursions shouldn't be just about what's on the end of your line.

While visiting the freshly refurbished April Point Resort across the straight from Campbell River, I did everything from drop a line to actually swim with the salmon. Did I catch one worthy of a fish fry? No. Did I care? Not at all.

Straight out from Campbell River, in the surge of the narrow passage, it used to be the place where huge tye (salmon that weigh more than 13 kilograms), were pulled from the waters on an hourly basis.

Pleasure craft would bob in the waves as tugs, shipping vessels and cruise ships headed either south to Vancouver or north to Port Hardy and beyond. Now the pleasure boats stream north, checking sweet spots along the shoreline, taking almost an hour to find "that hole" where the salmon lurk.

It's a slow boat, and in this case it's about the journey - and the destination. We watched for bears scavenging the shore and saw two, saw eagles (so many that we lost count), and spotted deer, seal and porpoises aplenty.

That's the beauty of being in your own boat with your own guide. You don't have to drop a lure, bait a hook or wait for the line to bob. It's your chance to watch the spectacular marine creatures frolicking in this awesome setting.

On a sunny day the sun moves the shadows across the cliffs, changing the colours and the scenery.

From mid-July to late October, the salmon "run" up and down the Campbell River, and if you're at all curious about a salmon's life, you'd enjoy a tour with Campbell River Snorkel Tours.

The tour starts with a lesson in the life of a salmon and then you're issued a wetsuit. The guide talks about the different species of salmon, the life cycle, the habitat and loss of habitat, the migration and return.

By the time we learned the reason for the disfiguration of their noses, we were heading to the shore of Campbell River.

What trepidation I had about floating head first and face down in a swift river disappeared when the first of hundreds of salmon darted past. Squeals of delight were muffled in 20 snorkels as we swam down the main channel.

Our guide saw the cluster of salmon and dove down to see them. Those fish seemed like the size of mustangs as they swiftly darted past me.

Two trips down the same stretch of the river allowed us to see lots, and on the second run three seals joined in at the end of the river. They weren't looking to run with the salmon, they were looking for dinner.

Back at April Point on Quadra Island, all that swimming with the salmon had primed me for an indulgent spa treatment. Wrapped in a fluffy white robe, I relaxed on the deck with a cup of tea with my feet soaking in an herbal concoction of warm water, I admired the ocean view.

Tug boats towing barges hummed by; float planes dove in for a swift landing and right on cue five whales surfaced, blowing a fine mist, filling their lungs with the warm sea air and slipping back under the dark surface.

As I took a sip of my tea I had to laugh out loud. If this is fishing, I'm hooked.

If You Go

-April Point Resort and Spa is part of the Oak Bay Marine Group, located across the channel from its sister property (a free shuttle is available), Painters Lodge at Campbell River. It offers everything you need for salmon fishing or not. Kayaks, bikes, whale and wildlife watching, and scenic wine and cheese cruises fill in when the fish don't bite.

-Pacific Coastal Airlines can fly you in from Vancouver to Campbell River Airport, where a shuttle will take you the five minutes to the harbour, or Kenmore Air will bring you dock to dock from Lake Union to April Point on float planes. WestJet flies directly to Comox, two hours south of Campbell River.

-April Point Resort and Spa www.aprilpoint.com 1-800-663-7090; Campbell River Snorkel Tours www.snorkelwithsalmon.com 1-866-704-4611.