



THE CALL OF CANADA by Kim Houston, Director, WORLD JOURNEYS



If I were to live anywhere else in the world other than Auckland – it would be Vancouver. A very stylish city based around a stunning harbour, there are many similarities, but we can't compete with floatplanes taking off from the harbour to the Gulf Islands, ski resorts within driving distance (Grouse Mountain and Whistler/Blackcomb), and a vibrant food and wine culture. Granville Island in particular is home to an array of wonderful casual eateries, irresistible green grocers, fishmongers, ethnic food sellers, artisans and more. You can book a 'Market Experience' to sample these delights or opt for the 'Chef for a Day' experience which has you cooking with Vancouver's finest Chefs.

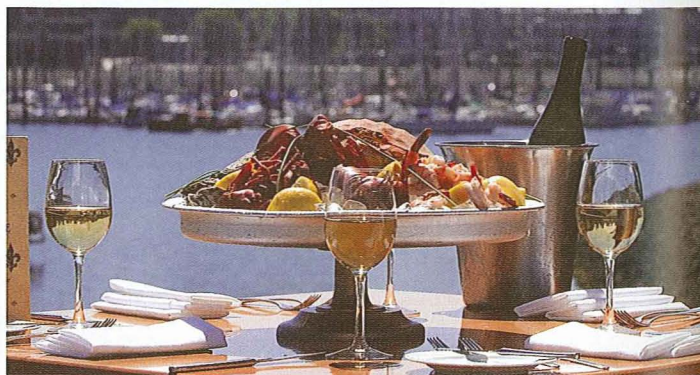
Luckily I get to visit Canada at least twice a year, and although it's often work, it's never a chore. Canadian's are, like Kivis, very friendly and hospitable, and seem to enjoy the same things we do, like getting out into the Great Outdoors. Luxury lodges and resorts are opening up all over British Columbia. Most are in remote wilderness areas, surrounded by water, so you get there by floatplane, by boat and sometimes by helicopter. If you want to 'get away from it all' this is where you want to be.

One of my favourite's is Sonora Resort on BC's Sunshine Coast. From the moment I arrived by helicopter, I was thoroughly spoilt. Each villa is designed for the utmost privacy, has a huge spa bath overlooking the water, and a fully stocked fridge at your disposal. Outdoor heated pools, mineral pools, hot tubs, steam rooms, tennis courts, a games room, movie theatre, fly-fishing pond and all your gourmet meals and wines are included in the cost. Those needing to relax can get pampered in the spa, while the more active can head off to fish for salmon, go whale watching, Grizzly Bear spotting, kayaking or wildlife viewing by zodiac.

To see a bit more of the country, I highly recommend taking the 'Whistler Mountaineer' along the scenic Sea to Sky Highway. Departing daily in summer this is a relaxing way to travel to the resort of Whistler – a European inspired alpine village with great restaurants, a new 'Peak to Peak' scenic Gondola and an array of outdoor activities. You can return to Vancouver, or continue by train along the Fraser River, through Fraser Canyon and the Cariboo Plateau to the small town of Jasper in Alberta. The 'Rocky Mountaineer', known as the 'Most Spectacular Train Trip in the World', leaves from Vancouver and takes you through the Canadian Rockies to Banff or Jasper. The scenery is spectacular as you travel through awe inspiring mountains, canyons and alongside lakes, and occasionally spotting moose and other wildlife along the way.

Of course the final selling point on Canada for me is that they have real summers when it gets scorching hot and real winters when you can ski and have a guaranteed White Christmas! And it's only one direct flight away from Auckland... **PN**

Kim



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