

DISCOVERING THE DISCOVERY ISLANDS



By David Morrison

Linda Inrig (centre) with “WWOOFers” Marie Chastang and Jon MacRae

“It’s just a lovely place to live and I can’t imagine living anywhere else,” says Linda Inrig of Quadra Island. “I know there are many fabulous places in the world to live, but the island lifestyle is just lovely.”

When considering the place she has called home for most of her life, the laid-back Inrig sprinkles the adjective ‘lovely’ about quite liberally. She is right to, as this is exactly what Quadra is: lovely. An island of breathtaking natural wonders, this member of the Discovery Islands archipelago also possesses a tangible stillness, an ambience that coaxes visitors into slowing way down to savour each moment in this special world. One dictionary definition of ‘lovely’ being to have “a beauty that appeals to the heart or mind as well as to the eye,” the single word summation of Quadra’s qualities offered by Inrig, as a true product of her environment, is therefore entirely accurate.

There is an awful lot to see and do on Quadra, but for the convenience of those like me that may only be able to grab a weekend or long weekend there, I’ll cut to the chase with a few choice highlights of the island’s panoply of options.

It takes just ten minutes for the ferry from Campbell River to land at Quathiaski Cove, and a couple of minutes’ drive from there is Cove Centre, where Books Bonanza-at-the-Cove (BBatC) is located. It may seem odd to begin a whistle-stop tour of an island of such natural magnificence indoors, but the truth is for one key reason there could hardly be a more relevant place. Owned by Robin King, the mother of Ryan and Molly Guldemon of fast-rising, Vancouver-based rock band Mother Mother, BBatC has, in



PART I

QUADRA ISLAND

Top: Heron Guest House from Heriot Bay Beach

Left: Detail from Ah-Wah-qwa-dzas at Cape Mudge

my opinion, the best-stocked section of Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, BC, Pacific Northwest and, pertinently, local interest books that I have ever laid eyes upon. It's a wallet-sapping cornucopia of knowledge and entertainment even before exploring the rest of the store, so be warned!


Heading outdoors, right at the water's edge in the southwest of Quadra is the delightful First Nations village of Cape Mudge, or Yaculta. Looking out over Discovery Passage to Campbell River, this traditional territory of the Kwa'Kwa'Ka'Wa'Kw Nation is a must-see for several reasons.

The impressive waterfront Ah-Wah-qwa-dzas ("a place to relax and tell stories") contrasts beautifully with the quaint Quadra Island United Church, where behind the altar there is a wonderful carving of two salmon by the legendary Bill Reid. A church historically known for ex-



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perimental, fun services, one in 1992 was based entirely on the spiritual lyrical imagery of certain Van Morrison songs!

The quintessential Cape Mudge/Yaculta experience, however, is a visit to the Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre (www.nuyumbalees.com), where stunning masks, carvings and more from the Kwa'Kwa'Ka'Wa'Kw Sacred Potlatch Collection are exhibited.

Hikers are in for a treat on Quadra, with at least fifteen trails of varying terrain and levels of difficulty available. The toughest and one of the longest, though with suitable rewards, is the climb up to Nuggedzi Lake, accessed off Village Bay Rd. But the most popular is the Chinese Mountain Trail, affording incredible views in all directions at the trail's conclusion. Detailed trails maps are available locally.

Anyhow, there is much more to discover according to taste and spirit of adventure, but the one thing all visitors to Quadra will agree upon is the island's jaw-dropping beauty. This is particularly pronounced when standing on the expansive deck of Linda Inrig's Heron Guest House in gorgeous Heriot Bay. More about the views later, as first the accommodation is worthy of exploration in itself.

The beachfront property on which Inrig was raised consists of a cluster of varied-use buildings on a sprawling piece of land sloping towards the sea. A cottage (accommodating 2-4 for weekly rental) and the main beachfront house are where guests bed down. And when I say beachfront, I mean exactly that, as the beach is accessed simply by walking down one of two small sets of steps leading from the house straight onto the edge of the land. One set of steps also leads to the now out of use Beach House, a wonderfully ramshackle but extremely cute small shack that Inrig used to rent out.

It is such fun mooching around the whole property, a B&B on and off for fifteen years, as Inrig's artistic flair and evident sense of creative recycling for such as driftwood, stones and fragments of pottery provide distractions all over the place. It's the result of years of putting flotsam, jetsam and assorted odds and ends to good use, wherever the fancy has taken her.

The main house, in which our compact suite (with deck access) was housed, provides the aforementioned incredible 180° view of Heriot Bay and beyond. The bay is roughly of the protective horseshoe kind, with arms of land cradling everything within. Beyond the bay lie the tiny, though spectacular Breton Islands, and Read Island, while the right 'arm' is the thin strip of land considered Quadra's principal natural attraction: Rebecca Spit Marine Provincial Park.

No trip to Quadra is complete without a good walk and/or picnic on this gorgeous 177-hectare isthmus. Beaches run along both sides, with a high concentration of driftwood and logs amplifying the drama of the views available from everywhere on the Spit. It is simply beautiful and as popular with locals as it is with visitors; Inrig takes her two dogs, Pearl and Tuna, for a run there

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Rebecca Spit

most mornings. My wife and I spent a couple of hours ambling around Rebecca Spit, particularly enjoying a huge raft of Surf Scoters (infiltrated by some Harlequin ducks) indulging in their fascinating synchronized diving behaviour just offshore.

As Inrig's property is substantial, requiring a lot of upkeep, she has taken the step of hosting "WWOOFers." I had not heard this term before, but discovered that WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms: www.wwof.ca) is essentially a global network linking hosts like Inrig with willing volunteers, often travellers. The host offers board, food and "opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles," in exchange for the WWOOFer's labour.

"I met a woman several years ago who had WWOOFers on Read (Island), and she turned me onto the idea," Inrig explains. "I started it because for a single person this is a big place to look after, but it's turned out to be really quite lovely. By doing this I've made a lot of good friends from all over the world."

When we visited, Inrig had two young people helping her out in this manner. Marie Chastang, a teacher from Grenoble, France, was staying at Heron Guest House for three weeks before moving on to do likewise at a Quadra oyster farm. From Truro, Nova Scotia, Jon MacRae had arrived as a WWOOFer six weeks before, with no intention of staying, but fell hard for the beauty of Quadra Island. "I love the solitude, and the scenery is amazing," he sighs. "I was only supposed to be on Quadra for a

day, but now I've got a job (as a kayak guide) and am living here!" Of his accommodation and host, MacRae says: "It was the uniqueness of it. It's such a character place with a lot of different things happening to it over a lot of years. It's been in Linda's family a really long time, and you can see that. And Linda's hospitality is amazing; it's the reason I've stayed on the island."

MacRae speaks the truth. Inrig is indeed an amiable and relaxed host offering guests a singular accommodation with a remarkable view of the world around it. She is also pleased to provide the space for retreats and workshops. This year has already included a wood sculpting workshop and a Flow Yoga retreat, and as Inrig is open to any ideas she has suggested the possibility of such as writing, songwriting, cob building, cooking and language workshops amongst many that may happen in the future. I give a personal guarantee that Heron Guest House is the ideal setting to partake in any of them, or simply to enjoy the views or stroll on the beach if that is what you would prefer.

My travels around the Discovery Islands will continue in future issues of *More Living*. In the meantime you should pay a visit to Quadra, as it really is very lovely.

For more information about Heron Guest House, including rates, availability and forthcoming workshops and retreats, please visit www.heronquesthouse.com. Contact Linda Inrig by email at linda@gicable.com or by telephone on (250) 285 3876. ■