



ESCAPE TORONTO WISDOM

LONG STAY

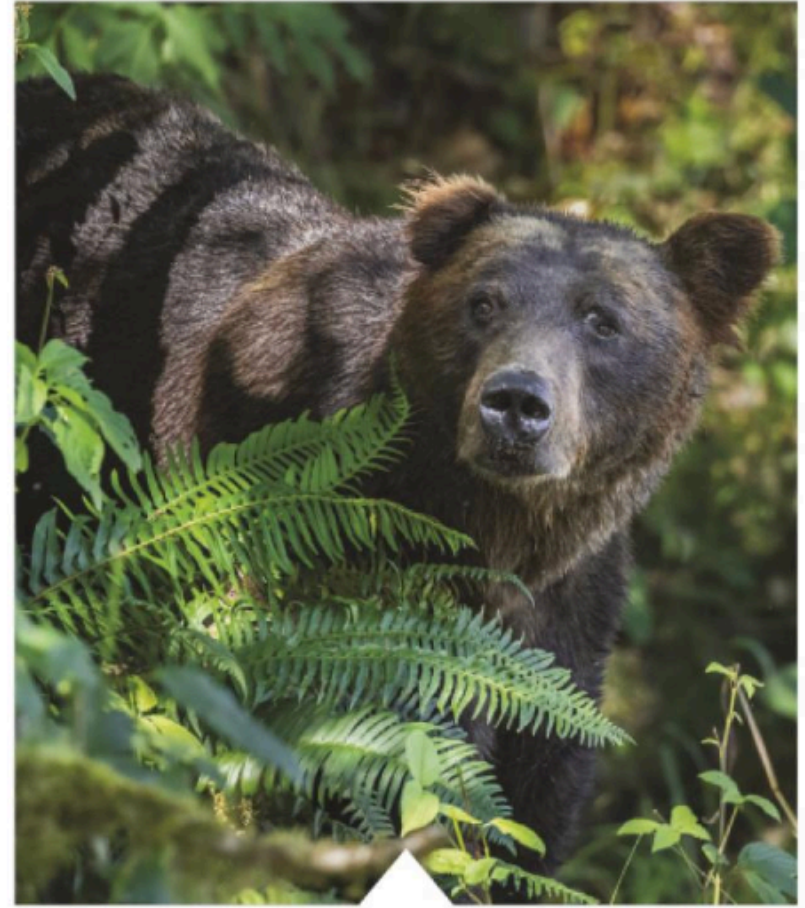
In Campbell River, Taylor Newlands finds natural beauty in the charm of small-town living.

[CAMPBELL RIVER, B.C.]



GO WAY WEST

The gateway to the magnificent natural splendour of Vancouver Island and the Discovery Passage, Campbell River is as unassuming as its wildlife experiences are humbling. The quaint town is painted against a backdrop of mountains looking down over the Salish Sea. Lined with little boutique shops and cafés, the walkable downtown is nestled against the waterfront and its beautiful boardwalk, where you can spy tour boats coming and going. It's easily explorable in an afternoon, during which you must stop into West Coast Wildflowers for local gifts and wares, and Standing Spruce Farm + Apothecary for wild-harvested wellness products. But the region's real draw is the breathtaking natural landscape and wildlife surrounding Campbell River.



SEE

CAMPBELL RIVER WHALE WATCHING FALL GRIZZLY BEAR VIEWING TOUR

Silently clamouring up into a wooden tower and waiting breathlessly for a grizzly bear to emerge, then finally spotting one in the distance catching a fish from the river and devouring it in majestic glory shakes me to my core. Wildlife sightings are never promised, and that's what makes it so special when we see bald eagles, breaching orcas and humpback whales, all on a grizzly bear tour with Campbell River Whale Watching. The journey starts in Campbell River, where we travel by boat up the Bute Inlet, then we're handed off to guides from the Homalco First Nation, who cautiously lead us into grizzly bear territory. If you're lucky enough to see them on your tour, it's the experience of a lifetime, and if not, it's still a beautiful day spent amongst breathtaking scenery.

EAT

FREYA

A beautiful immigrant success story, Freya is a Scandinavian-inspired café rooted in Vancouver Island. Known for their slow-fermented sourdough and organic Canadian flour, the beloved bakery blends Nordic tradition with modern fare. From sweet to savoury, every pastry I try here is heavenly.

MATTONE ITALIAN KITCHEN

Set right on the water, this casual counter-service restaurant is worth visiting just to gawk at the incredible panorama of mountains splitting the sea and the sky. But the food is a draw in its own right. Campbell River native Ryan Gark cooked all over the world, won *Chopped Canada* and then came back home to open Mattone with his wife Katrina. His menu focuses on handmade pastas, seafood and pizzas, with the dough made in-house daily.



GETTING THERE

From YYZ, fly into Comox, B.C., with a brief layover in Calgary, starting around \$300 round-trip. Then, rent a car and drive 45 minutes to Campbell River. Having a car allows you to explore the surrounding areas at your leisure, like the beautiful Elk Falls Provincial Park.

STAY

NATURALLY PACIFIC RESORT

Previously, the choice between rustic abodes offering only a simple place to lay your head or luxury resorts with eye-wincing price points left a lot of travellers without a desirable accommodation option. So, Campbell River native Amanda Mailman set out to create an affordable luxury hotel that would make the area's incredible natural wonders more accessible for the average person. The result is Naturally Pacific Resort, an answer for nature-lovers and adventurers who want to be surrounded by comfort and beauty for the duration of their stay, without breaking the bank.

Perched on a hilltop, the hotel boasts tremendous views of evergreens, the sea and the distant mountains. The moment I step into the lobby, the sleek and soothing

THE HOTEL BOASTS TREMENDOUS VIEWS OF EVERGREENS, THE SEA AND THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS

ABOVE: A view from one of the balconies at Naturally Pacific Resort

design immerses me in the beauty of nature, from the artful photographs on the walls to the colour palette reminiscent of its surrounding landscape. The rooms follow suit — clean, comfortable and earthy, they allow me to fully unwind after a stimulating, and sometimes exhausting, day of adventure.

Thoughtful amenities like covered outdoor firepits, a hot tub, sauna and a large indoor pool that opens up to the terrace in warmer weather take relaxation even further. In addition to a full menu of services, Immersion Spa + Wellness features a mineral pool and “experience showers” that make for a rejuvenating hydrotherapy circuit unlike any I've tried before. The gorgeous grounds are also home to Campbell River Golf Club, where you can play 18 holes. But Velocity Driving Range & Lounge is more my speed. With a bay all to ourselves, we snack, sip and work on our swings while a fun virtual component tracks our strokes. The horticulture team doesn't just keep the greens pristine though — an on-site garden supplies the hotel's restaurant, Carve Kitchen + Meatery, with hyper-local ingredients for their comforting, seasonal menu. ♦

LEFT: Wake up ready to explore at Naturally Pacific Resort

