

KAMLOOPS THIS WEEK

The ocean can wash your cares away

By Mark Macdonald - Kamloops This Week - November 02, 2007



ABOVE: A few of the 106 condominiums at the Pacific Shores Resort and Spa. Another 19-unit resort condo will be completed in the new year. RIGHT: This view of Craig Bay greets guests wanting to unwind at Pacific Shores Resort and Spa.

Pacific Shores Resort and Spa combines fantastic view with great food

Bob Eisfeld walked along the trail encircling the Pacific Shores Resort and Spa, hands in his pockets, looking out to the sea, which lapped against the shore a few feet away.

The sound of the gravel crunching under his feet mingled with the waves rolling into shore from Craig Bay, onto which this resort near Parksville on Vancouver Island looks.

With the fog settling low over the bay, Eisfeld, Pacific Shores sales associate, noted the dampness of the air on this October morning.

“You’ve got that smell,” Eisfeld said, inhaling the salty air into his nostrils.

“It’s something only

the ocean seems to provide.”

He walked a little further along the trail lined with cedar trees and the snow-capped peak of Arrowsmith Mountain appeared in the distance.

The trail came to a large gazebo on a rocky point, where guests can soak their worries away in a hot tub overlooking the sea, one of many such secluded spots at the resort.

“In the evening, people come out with their glass of wine and walk to the point and watch the sun set,” Eisfeld said.

People come to Pacific Shores to immerse themselves in the natural beauty of Vancouver Island.

Pulling into the resort, guests see apple and palm trees around the front office.

They also come here for the fine cuisine offered at the resort’s restaurant, the Landing West Coast Grill, and the luxurious treatments available at the AquaTerre Spa.

Sharon Linitzk of Kamloops visits Pacific Shores to watch the tide come in and out from the patio of her condominium abutting Craig Bay.

Linitzk's unit is one of 106 condos at the resort, and another 19 will be added next year after the last phase of the resort is completed.

Every year for the last seven years, Linitzk has travelled to Pacific Shores, escaping the sagebrush and dry hills around Kamloops and taking refuge amongst the gardens of the resort.

The resort has gardens to suit everyone's taste, from Japanese and Chinese to African and berry gardens.

Sitting in a chair on her patio, a blanket over her legs, Linitzk oversaw the calm waters of Craig Bay.

"One can sit and watch the water come in and out, in and out," Linitzk said.

"It's an absolutely marvellous place here, an absolutely marvelous place."

Linitzk is not the only person enjoying the resort.

Though fall has descended upon the resort, the parking lot is full of cars and the rooms are fully booked.

There is no such thing as off-season at Pacific Shores.

Eisfeld said the resort enjoys 90 per cent occupancy year-round.

"It's very seldom that there aren't people here. But yet, it's quite," he said.

"It's quiet, it's unique. This is a very comfortable resort, a very caring resort.

"I think people feel really relaxed here. There's no pressure. . . . It has a certain ambience of nature," he said, noting that bananas, apples and kiwis grow wild on the resort.

Eisfeld said guests to the resort have introduced the ocean for the first time to their grandkids, who can enjoy a resort playground while the adults soak in ozonated hot tubs or fire steaks at the outdoor barbecue.

When the water goes out on Craig Bay, guests can walk clear across the exposed sand to Rath Trevor provincial park, another natural wonder on Vancouver Island.

The beauty of nature is the inspiration behind the ambience of the Landing Grill, which offers West Coast cuisine with a Mediterranean flare.

Some restaurant entrées are garnished with a sprig of rosemary, which also grows naturally along the resort trails.

But the restaurant's most beautiful natural feature is its most obvious: two massive aquariums, standing floor to ceiling, in the centre of the dining room.

While enjoying lamb imported from New Zealand, a candle burning on the table, one can gaze into the aquariums and become acquainted with the beasts of the deep.

As you dine, a star fish may inch up the glass while a crab crawls along the aquarium floor, dodging rock fish, halibut and sea urchins as they go.

The fish contained in all three resort aquariums can all be found in ocean waters around the resort.

There are chinook and coho salmon, kelp, sea

bass and an elusive, three-foot-long wolf eel, which lords over a mini cave in one of the aquarium's enclosures.

Resort guests flock to the aquarium every day at 2 p.m., when assistant aquarium manager Tim Helset feeds the fish.

“They’re just going, ‘I never knew there was this many [fish] varieties,’ and I say, ‘There’s many more,’” Helset said.

“It is really unique,” he said of the aquariums.

“The way people look at them, it’s like, ‘Oh, this is really neat.’ I love it.”

In addition to the huge restaurant aquarium, there is also a smaller aquarium in the lobby and another one in the AquaTerre spa, which contains shrimp and perch.

Guests can escape their plush condominiums and gaze upon the fish while they shop for high-end cosmetics after booking an appointment with a masseuse.

The comfort of the king-size beds located in resort’s newest condominium, a 32-unit building completed this fall, pales in comparison stress-relieving environment of the spa.

One can sip green tea in the waiting room, lying in a chair by the fireplace, listening to soothing music and inhaling mysterious aromas.

Then feel the worries of everyday life melt away during a Swedish massage, one of many spa treatments available.

There are also couples treatments.

If spas are not your thing, the resort has a fleet of kayaks for guest use.

Green-thumbed guests can also get their hands dirty and help tend the resort’s gardens.

For more information on Pacific Shores Resort and Spa, phone 250-468-7121 or visit Pacific-shores.com.