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Finding Serenity and Adventure in Desolation Sound

October 23, 2019 | By **Michelle Hopkins**



Spectacular Desolation Sound is located off of the northern edge of the Sunshine Coast, a peninsula of British Columbia northwest of Vancouver. (Michelle Hopkins photo for Vacay.ca)

As we headed into the open waters at the gateway to Desolation Sound, 15-year-olds Matthew Louie and Dion Harry, of the Tla'Amin Nation, burst into an evocative chant. The teenagers then beat on drums, exquisitely crafted by hand, while singing ballads passed down from their ancestors.

Later, as we sailed past Grace Harbour, or *q̓aḡeyḡay* in the Tla'amin language, (pronounced "kah-kee-kay"), Louie and Harry started chanting in their native tongue, a melody they composed together, a song dubbed *Transformation*. It tells the tale of a sea serpent who used to roam the waters of Desolation Sound in search of fish.

"The serpent started taking all the fish from our people and they became hungry," Harry says. "Our people asked the serpent not to be so greedy. He agreed and went back to his underwater cave. One day, he couldn't fit into the cave anymore, and that's when he transformed into Savary Island."



The Lund Resort at Klah ah men is an eco-focused luxury lodge with deep ties to Indigenous culture. At top, spectacular Desolation Sound is located off of the northern edge of the Sunshine Coast, a peninsula of British Columbia mainland. (Photo courtesy of Pacific Coastal Cruises & Tours)

Both young men grew up in a community rich with traditional songs, being raised by song carriers. Louie says, “I was grateful to hear the songs from my ancestors, and how important the accessibility of storytelling and language are vital causes to champion.”

As we returned to [The Lund Resort at Klah ah men](#) — the first, full-service Indigenous resort on Sunshine Coast, a short ferry ride from Horseshoe Bay in West Vancouver — I was met by Drew Blaney, an elder and mentor to both young men. We sat in the resort’s Back Eatery restaurant, overlooking the bay, enjoying a fusion of Coast Salish and west coast-inspired cuisine. Blaney regaled me with the history of the Indigenous people in these parts of [British Columbia](#).

“*Klah ah men* means ‘a place of refuge,’” Blaney says of the resort’s name. “This is a destination that literally translates into a place to reconnect with nature and decompress.”



An orca, spotted on a Pacific Coastal Cruises & Tours trip, dives back into Desolation Sound after wowing onlookers.
((Photo courtesy of Pacific Coastal Cruises & Tours))

Blaney was informing me of his culture while we both bit into a colonial-inspired favourite, the mouthwatering Tla'amin Burger, a messy combination of bison, smothered in a jam of bacon onion and peach. It required several napkins as Blaney patiently told me about his world. The three Northern Salish Nations consist of the Homalco, Klahoose and Tla'amin peoples, and they are working together to keep their cultures thriving, their environment clean and healthy, and their tourism offerings vibrant.

"Historically, we have always been one people with no boundaries or separations between us," Blaney notes. "We are still very much one people, we speak the same language, share the same cultural practices and continue to have strong family connections."

Getting to Lund Resort at Klah ah men

If you drive along Highway 101, through scenic coastal views you will arrive at Lund. Originally built in 1895 by one of the Swedish Thulin brothers, the Lund Resort at Klah ah men has served as the heart of the quiet Lund community for decades, and previously was a Tla'amin village site. Today, the resort has been transformed and the décor honours the rich Tla'amin history.

Overlooking the bay, surrounded by old-growth Douglas fir and Western red cedar trees, the resort, including my spacious waterfront view room, features beautiful art and giftware throughout. I was mesmerized by the sheer beauty and symbolism of the massive wall carving in the lobby depicting a bear by Coast Salish artist Alano Edzerza of the Tahltan Nation's Raven clan.

Founded in 1889, picturesque Lund is home to about 300 residents. As an outdoor enthusiast, I took out one of the resort's kayaks to discover the waters. Granite walls are coated with seaweed and oyster shells, eagles soar high above, and mountain ridges rise through clouds to glaciers on high. It was also not the only water journey on the trip.



Refuge Cove is an isolated fishing village that has largely been abandoned. It's worth a visit for historic scenery and its retro general store. (Michelle Hopkins photo for Vacay.ca)

An afternoon cruise and picnic lunch took place on the Spirit of Lund vessel. A stop at Refuge Cove was the highlight. It is a popular disembarking spot for boaters to refuel and buy supplies. Old wooden boardwalks connect to weather-beaten buildings oozing with charm. I meandered into the bookstore, the art gallery, and one of those rural gems — the old-fashioned general store, selling everything from household wares to groceries and memorabilia, to artwork from local talents.

In 1913, long before boaters discovered Refuge Cove, settlers (who lived on their boats, float houses or in some cases cottages along the shore) opened a school, soon followed by a dance hall, and the general store. The boom was short-lived. By 1971, its population was down to six. But today Refuge Cove is a tourism attraction that draws thousands each year.

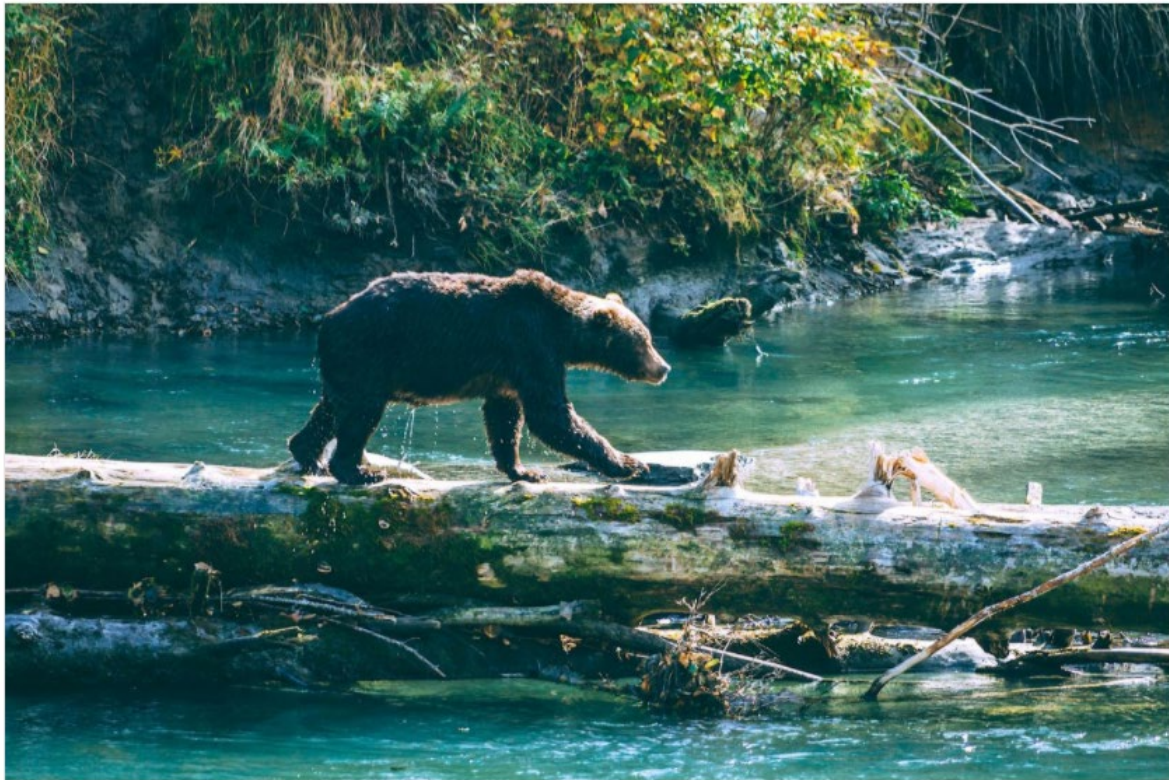
The following morning, after yet another fabulous meal at the Lund Resort, I headed for a two-hour cultural walk with [Terracentric Coastal Adventures](#)' owner/guide Christine Hollmann. As we hiked along a portion of the Sunshine Coast Trail, Hollmann regaled me with her vast knowledge of the area's fauna, the lush riparian zones, with several stops for Instagram-worthy photos.



Homfray Lodge is accessible only by float plane or boat. It's set right up against the Great Bear Rainforest. (Photo courtesy of Pacific Coastal Cruises & Tours)

After four days in Lund, it was off to [Homfray Lodge](#), which is only accessible by float plane or boat. The two-and half-hour journey on a refurbished fishing vessel complete with bar, galley, and open and enclosed decks was scenic and unforgettable in its own right. Once you've arrived at the lodge, you immediately learn why this isolated resort is so special. Sometimes, the best places to visit are not so easily reached.

At the edge of the Great Bear Rainforest, along the Homfray Channel, this remote wilderness lodge begged me to relax and decompress. It's hard to describe the sense of escape I felt when I reached my private ocean-view chalet. The mood throughout our three-day stay was set on the first evening. Besides our group of four, there were a few couples from the United States and one from BC. After a gourmet dinner in the timber-framed lodge dining room, showcasing locally sourced, deliciously fresh cuisine, two guests decided to jump into the waters ... in their dresses! From there, it was only more and more laughs to be had.



A grizzly bear traipses through the forest near Homfray Lodge, on the coast of central British Columbia. (Photo courtesy of [Pacific Coastal Cruises & Tours](#))

Every day, brought activity, whether it was morning yoga or afternoon read on the floating dock, a leisurely kayak paddle, a short hike, or a four-hour [Pacific Coastal Cruises & Tours](#) eco-trek on the sea. Although, I was told guests regularly enjoy sightings of porpoises, orcas and humpbacks whales, sadly it didn't happen for me. However, I spotted playful seals, sea lions, eagles, and a variety of sea birds. More memorable moments in this stunning, secluded region of the province.

More About The Lund Resort at Klah ah men



The forest walks at Lund Resort take you through pristine rainforests filled with towering old-growth trees. (Michelle Hopkins photo for Vacay.ca)

Location: 1436 NS-101, Lund, BC (see map below).

Website: www.lundresort.com. **Telephone:** 604-414-0474 or 1-877-569-3999 (toll free).

Room Rates: Fall rates for a standard room start at \$225 per night (double occupancy) while an oceanfront room starts at \$260 per night (double occupancy). All rooms offer complimentary parking and WIFI. **Fall Package:** For \$155 per night (double occupancy), guests can stay in a standard room, plus \$25 BC Ferries Gift certificate and \$25 food credit. Use the promo code "FALL" on the [property's website](http://www.lundresort.com).

More About Homfray Lodge

Location: You can only access the lodge via a 2 ½ hour scenic boat ride (included) via Lund

Website: Pacific Coastal Cruises & Yours and www.coastalcruises.ca. **Telephone:** 604-566-8026 or 1-844-504-1391 (toll free).

Room Rates: Rates are all-inclusive, with transfers by boat from Lund, three meals and daily snacks, alcohol, eco-boat tours, seasonal grizzly bear viewing, yoga, hikes and kayaking. Summer rates for 2020 depend on the number of days and what choice of cruises and tours you choose. Rates start at \$1,795 for 3 days and 2 nights.

Notable: Although, the lodge has WiFi, the serenity of the area seems to entice you to unplug. The resort is open April to October.

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