

# Travel

GARDEN BAY

## A Sakinaw staycation

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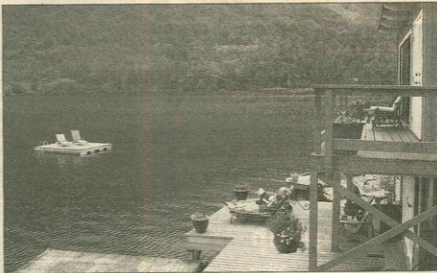
No doubt some promotional whiz in the tourism industry coined the term "staycation" to describe having an inexpensive vacation in one's own back yard. It's a concept that we on the Sunshine Coast should embrace — we boast many wonderful holiday retreats, and we don't have to take a ferry to get to them.

One such is Sakinaw Lake Lodge.

My partner Will and I spent two nights in June at this 11-kilometre long lake near Garden Bay. We had never visited before because the lake has almost no public access. You must know someone who owns property there to enjoy the warm water swimming and the feathery mists over Mount Hallowell.

Bed and breakfast owners Garrett and Liza Gabriel picked us up at the boat ramp in their pontoon boat, also known as a party boat, as we found out later. They arrived bearing ruby liquids in wineglasses and friendly smiles. We were off to a good start.

Less than three years ago, Donna, Garrett's mother, yearned to leave Vancouver and wandered down one of the few roads that lead to Sakinaw Lake. High on a tree, she noticed a real estate sign advertising a lodge for sale. She convinced Garrett and Liza



JAN DEGRASS PHOTO

Visitors lounge on the waterfront at Sakinaw Lake Lodge.

to purchase the place, and the rest is history.

Living off the grid was the first challenge: generating their own hydro, using solar panels and filtering their own water. Then there was the labour of planting a garden on rocky soil, which now blooms in a gorgeous display of Canterbury bells, catnip and daisies. They also installed a hot tub and an outdoor kitchen where guests could barbecue.

"Every night we'd fall asleep tired, but it was a good tired," Garrett said.

The waterfront accommodation is on two storeys: the top deck features a modern bedroom, hardwood floors, state of the art kitchen, private bathroom with clawfoot tub and

shower, DVD player and binoculars for watching the waterfowl. Downstairs has been divided into two units that can be rented as one. Secluded on the hill is a trendy luxury tent that will have its own bathroom.

Is this roughing it? Why, it was work to haul myself up onto the high, fluffy four-poster bed for an excellent night's sleep. In the morning I had to negotiate at least 10 steps from our cabin to dine *al fresco* on coconut yogurt smoothie, locally made sausage with fluffy pancakes and lots of hot, strong coffee. Rough, indeed.

Though the three owners are recent transplants from the city, they love to show off the lake and

will take guests on boat excursions for a fee. We piled into the party boat equipped with a cooler of quenching beverages and a supply of Liza's chicken, apple and brie sandwiches for our tour.

From the boat we paused to examine pictographs on the cliff side, a site where aboriginal boys became men, and a haunted cabin that leans drunkenly from the dark woods. At the farthest point where the lake once met the ocean, a choked channel is still available to coho and cut-throat trout. We moored at the tiniest of slips on the lake and walked through the woods to a sheltered cove on the ocean. There, among the salmonberries, wild roses, oyster shells and driftwood, we could imagine the welcoming fires of the first peoples on this land who once gathered on that special spot.

For more about this Coast experience, see [www.sakinawlakelodge.com](http://www.sakinawlakelodge.com).