



Cristina Fox, co-owner of Go With the Flow Kayak Adventures, picks fresh beans from her prolific garden.



Guests of Go With the Flow enjoy a meal with the owners overlooking Maurelle Island's Feather Cove.



Seals can often be spotted sunbathing on rocky islets off Canada's West Coast.

Go off the grid in style

You might not want to leave Canada's Maurelle Island once you get there



Photos by Suzanne Morphet/Special Contributor

Kayakers paddle through Whiterock Passage on a day's outing with Go With the Flow Kayak Adventures. The company offers five-day paddling adventures through one of the most scenic parts of British Columbia's coast.

By **SUZANNE MORPHET**
Special Contributor

MAURELLE ISLAND, B.C. — “I don’t like any government,” says the man kneeling on the back of my legs and pulling my arms backward toward him. It’s a surreal moment. I’m lying in a First Nations teepee, getting a Thai-style massage from an American man who fled Chicago 40 years ago for a freer life on Canada’s West Coast. The island we’re on is totally off the grid.

I might have laughed at the absurdity of it all, but the way Reiko is wrenching my arms, I figure it’s safer to humor him. Besides, I get the appeal of this place: a fantasy island lush with life, where eagles soar overhead and psychedelic pink and purple starfish cling to the rocky shoreline. Outside the teepee, enormous cedar trees soar skyward, their tops out of sight, holding secrets from when Capt. George Vancouver sailed past 250 years ago.

Maurelle Island is about 150 miles from the city of Vancouver, B.C., deep inside the famed Inside Passage. A few miles away, cruise ships ply the widest channel on their way to Alaska.

The week I visit Feather Cove on Maurelle Island, there are only six guests, which is to say, the usual number. They include a corporate lawyer from Toronto, a filmmaker from Vancouver, a pair of young honeymooners from Calgary, a retired dental hygienist from Victoria and myself.

Ostensibly, we’re here for a multi-day kayaking adventure with Go With the Flow Kayak Adventures, but as soon as we’re dropped off by motor-

boat and wade ashore, it’s as if we’ve gone down a rabbit hole and emerged in a different world. The forest that looked dark and impenetrable from the water opens up into a light-filled space the size of a cathedral. Pine-needle paths wind through a tangle of native ferns, salal and huckleberry bushes and lead to three cedar cabins and the large, white teepee. Aboriginal people on the West coast never used teepees; they’re a Plains Indian abode. But why not? This is the Left Coast, or better yet, Portlandia North.

Wrapped in a plush robe, I pad barefoot down the path to check out Café Cabana and the wood-fired hot tub. Brody Wilson, co-owner of Go With the Flow, is loading it with wood he chopped earlier, so it’ll be nice and hot for when we return from our first paddle.

This island is where Wilson grew up, and while it’s easy to make fun of his organic tastes and roots — his parents were part of a housing co-op developed in the 1970s for back-to-the-land types — I’m envious of his childhood, with summers spent outdoors, Huck Finn-like, running through the forest, swimming in the

ocean, and fishing and foraging for food.

He’s now putting those skills to good use.

“Rock crab are strong enough they could take off the end of your finger,” Wilson tells us one day as he holds up a squirming red crab with formidable-looking pincers. While I’ve been giving myself a seaweed facial after our picnic lunch at Octopus Islands Provincial Marine Park, Wilson has been catching dinner. Armed with just a diving mask and a stick with a hook on one end, he’s managed to catch half a dozen of the feisty crustaceans.

Back at Feather Cove, Wilson’s business and life partner, Cristina Fox, is no doubt gathering the rest of our meal from the garden she cut out of the forest. When I visit with her one day, I’m astounded by the luxuriant growth. Swiss chard rubs shoulders with kale and lettuce. Beets push out of the loamy soil while green beans climb over a net that sags under their weight. It’s not a pretty patch, but it sure is productive.

That night we gorge on crab and fresh-picked veggies while watching the tide creep under the outdoor dining veranda.

“It’s going to be a full moon tonight,” says Wilson, who is completely attuned to the weather and tides. Good job, too, because the tidal currents here are some of the strongest in the world.

The next day, we can hear the roar of water pushing through Surge Narrows half a mile away. It’s no place for a kayak unless you time your passage for slack tide, which of course Wilson does, leading us safely through, just



The base camp’s spalike shower house was built from cedar harvested from the island.

When you go

Go With the Flow Kayak Adventures offers four- and five-day tours. The Luxury Base Camp Kayaking Tour is all-inclusive and starts at \$1,017 per person based on double occupancy. No kayaking experience is necessary. gowiththeflow.ca

Getting there: From Vancouver, drive or fly to Campbell River on Vancouver Island, then ferry to Heriot Bay on Quadra Island. From Heriot Bay, you’ll be picked up by the M.V. Cosmo for a scenic boat ride through the Discovery Islands and dropped at Maurelle Island.

like the mother duck who skitters across the calm water in front of us, babes in tow.

When we say good-bye to Wilson, Fox, their two young children, Harmony and Kale, and their dog, Journey, on our last day, it’s with a lot of

gratitude. Gratitude for a fabulous adventure, yes, but even more for a total immersion in living simply and freely.

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