

Fall 2016

WILDCOAST

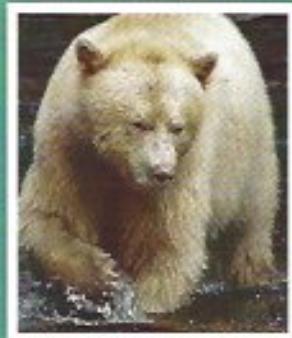
Magazine

BC's real
best
beaches



The Top 10 list that
The Guardian missed

Coastal
Journeys



A look at some
unforgettable trips from
the BC Marine Trails.



Whales first?

Creating the North Island Whale Heritage Site

Issue #4



The Magazine of Adventure Travel and Outdoor Recreation

THE REAL BEST BEACHES

The Real Best Beaches



WHEN THE BRITISH NEWSPAPER THE GUARDIAN ran an article in February listing their choice for the best 50 beaches in the world, it wasn't too surprising that two beaches were from British Columbia. Perhaps the biggest surprise was their pick: Chesterman Beach (#33, and also best in the category of "Wild and Remote") and #47 for English Bay in Vancouver.

Fair enough. We don't know enough about the world's beaches to argue. But we do know British Columbia's beaches, and as far as "wild and remote goes," it's a stretch to say Chesterman Beach is anywhere near that, given it is backed entirely by private property and invariably

overrun to the point that on most days parking is difficult to find along adjacent streets.

And there is the irony of the international perspective of what constitutes wild and remote – that a foreigner's choice should have parking issues. Trust us, BC's most wild and remote beaches don't have parking issues. For the most part they don't even have parking. So in response, Wild Coast Magazine has put together a list of the real best beaches in British Columbia – with most substantially more wild and remote than any on The Guardian's list.

You will note neither Chesterman nor English Bay made our list.

10. Ahous Bay

Located on the west coast of Vargas Island, Ahous Bay is a great example of the vast beaches to be found on the outer islands of Clayoquot Sound, yet still within easy paddling distance of Tofino.

This is one of a number of beaches that all get the nod for superb getaways in Clayoquot Sound, from the more wild and remote Cow Bay on Flores Island to tiny but sundy Whaler islet. Here you'll begin to find the real "wild and remote" coast – where the population of wolves will likely outnumber the people staying here in tents.



9. Long Beach

It may seem odd to disparage Chesterman Beach as a 'best' choice then include nearby Long Beach, but you need only drive the highway into Tofino to understand why. There is a crev in the road as you get near to Tofino that offers the first stunning view of Long Beach stretching into the horizon, an expanse of sand flanked by surfing waves invariably capped by a self-generated mist. At that moment, it will hit you. You have arrived at the West Coast. For that reason Long Beach has come to define what that means.

Long Beach is a 16 km broad swath of sand, and though it may attract many surfers, it has the advantage among road accessible beaches that it is entirely within Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, so

there is no private property backing it, just miles of forest. You can stroll here, surf here, camp at Green Point Campground within the national park, stroll nearby adjacent beaches for more secluded getaways, or enjoy a viewpoint of it from atop Radar Hill.

There are many other good beaches nearby, such as the more secluded northwest neighbour Combers Beach, or the southern neighbour, Florencia Beach. Pocket beaches can be found at Wya Point, or in the resort areas of Tofino including Cox Bay and Wickinnish Beach. Take your pick or explore them all, but be sure to take some time looking out toward Japan from Long Beach. You'll miss an incredible location if you don't.

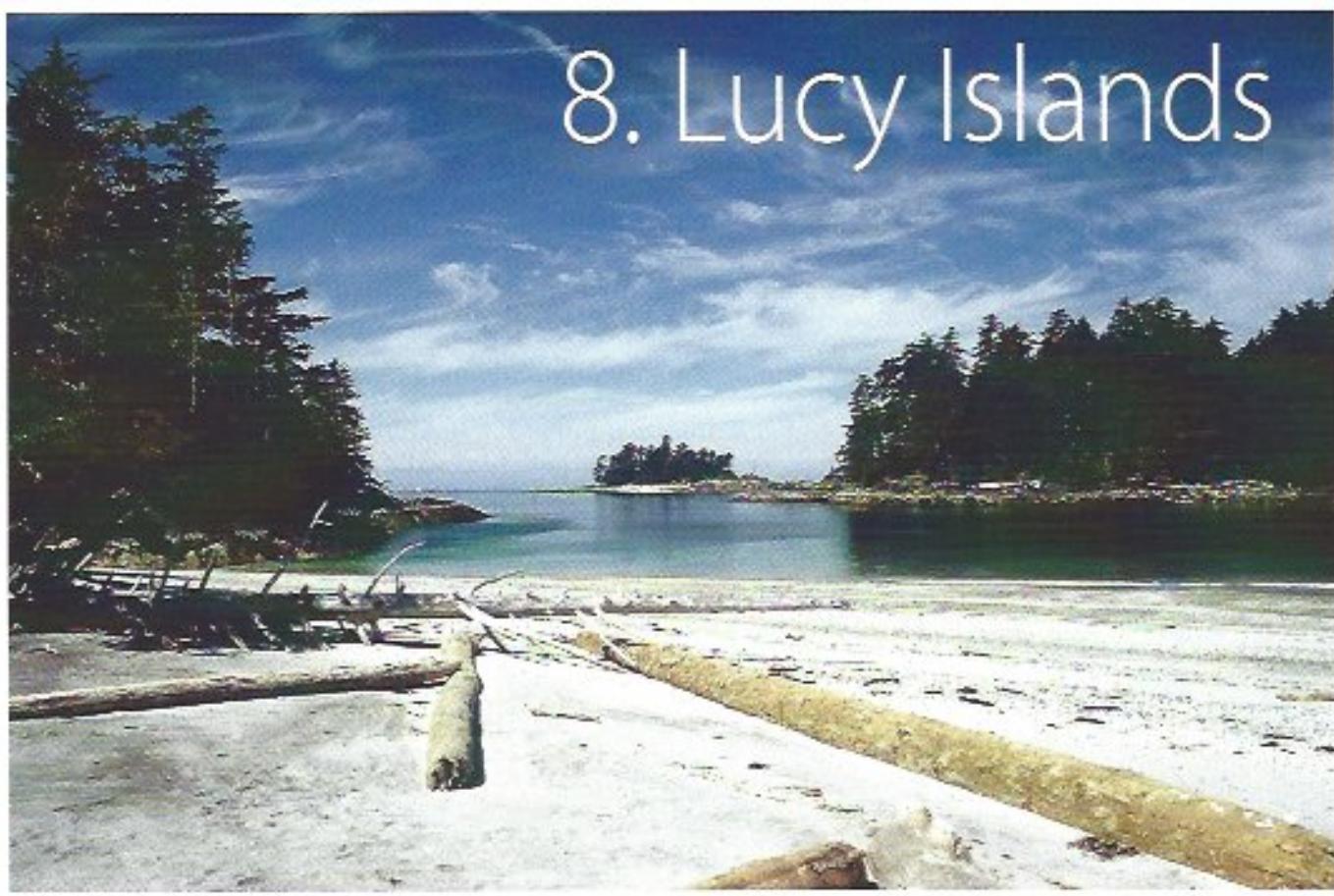
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8. Lucy Islands



Sometimes it's not just about the beach. It's about discovering the unexpected that goes with it. And few places are as wonderfully surprising as Lucy Islands.

Lucy Islands is a tiny dot of an archipelago set west of Prince Rupert in an open stretch of water between the Dundas Islands Group and the Stephens

Islands just off Dixon Entrance, one of BC's most notorious storm ridden waterways. So it is not a place to evoke images of sprawling sand.

But there it is, amid the cluster, this wonderful length of sheltered beach worthy of a tropical postcard. The nearby larger archipelagos provide most of the shelter,

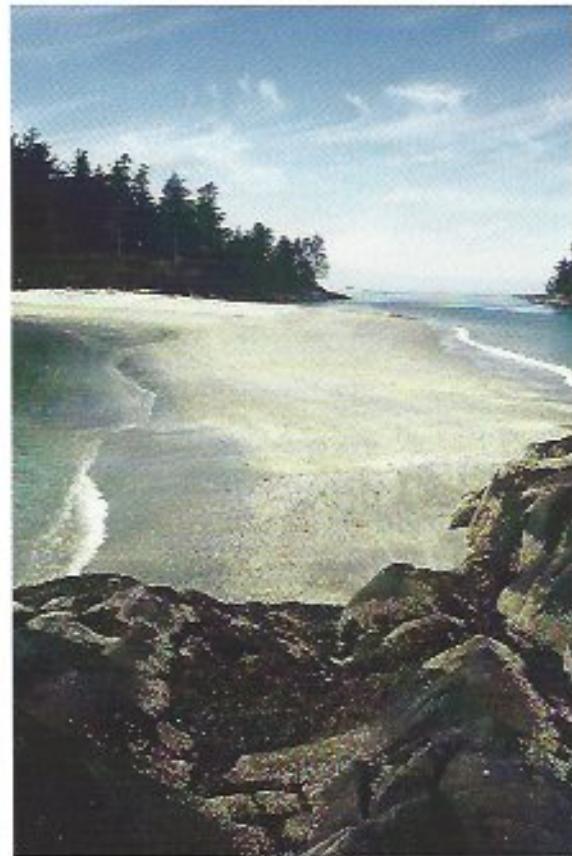


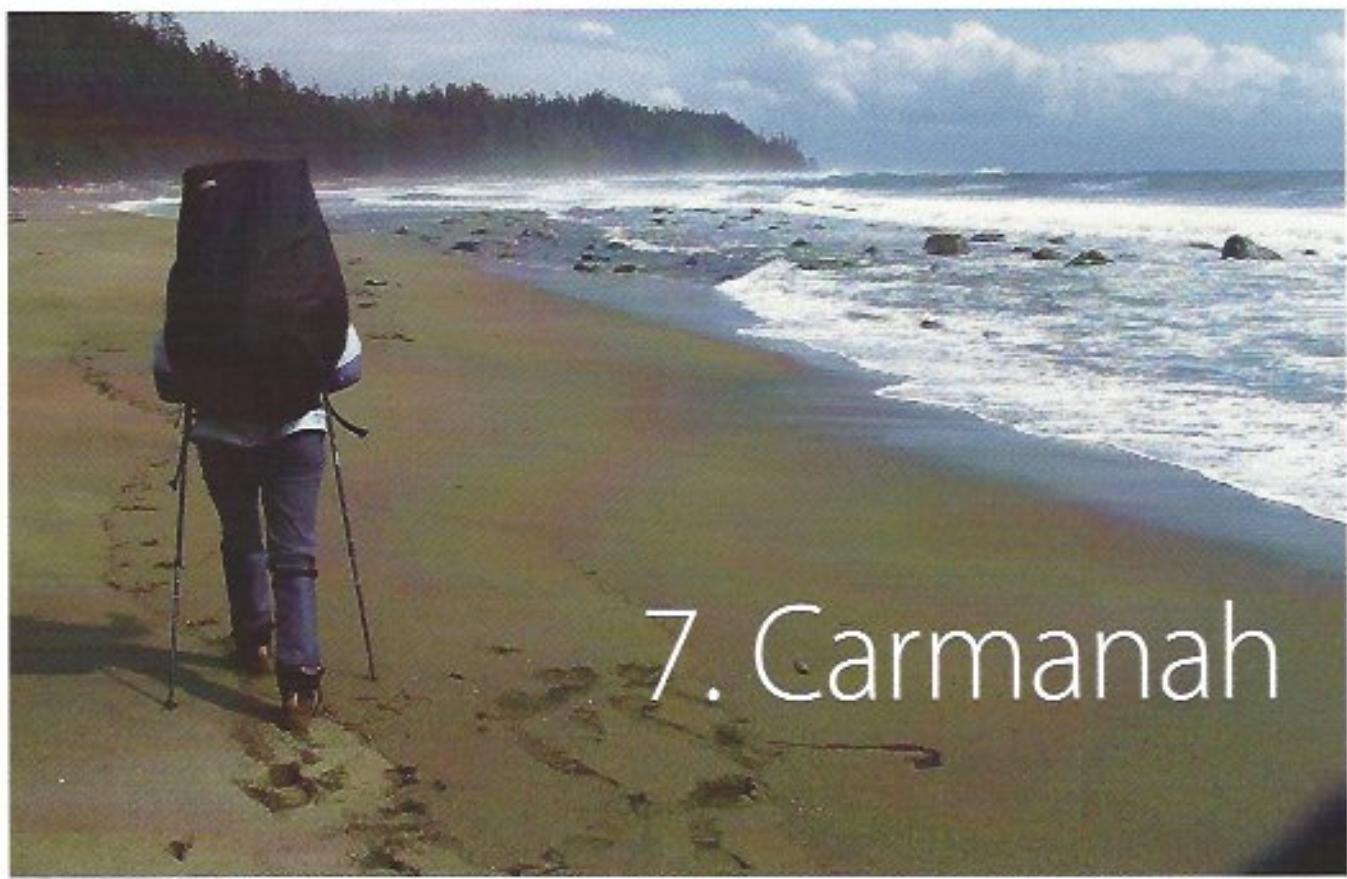
Dick Daniels

and what little of the open ocean they do allow through Brown Passage is further dissipated by the rocks, shoals and islets that surround the main central islands.

The sand, however, isn't the real star. It is the rhinoceros auklet. Lucy Islands is a globally significant breeding and nesting area for these odd seabirds, which choose to nest in burrows along the shoreline, making them vulnerable to disturbance.

For that reason, and for the heritage including Coast Tsimshian cultural and archaeological sites, the islands are an ecological reserve. Luckily access is allowed despite that, with a boardwalk and tent pad provided to avoid disturbing any nesting birds.





7. Carmanah



Haida Gwaii – the edge of the world

A trip to this archipelago is an adventure offering everything from off-grid surf-shacks on the beach to cozy B&Bs overlooking secluded inlets. Take daily flights from Vancouver or a ferry from Prince Rupert. Drive, rent a car, cycle or hire a charter to explore the natural and cultural attractions of traditional Haida territory. Museums, artists, accommodations and more welcome visitors year round, while summer is best for charters into the protected land and waters of Gwaii Haanas. Hike, fish, paddle, camp, surf or just relax – you're on island time now. "When you've reached the edge of your world, ours begins."

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For those who think they know the West Coast of Vancouver Island but have never seen Carmanah Beach, your education is not yet complete. Hikers of the West Coast Trail will likely remember Carmanah well, as it is one of the longest beach walks on sand on the 78-km route, even more famous for Chez Monique's, a restaurant set in the middle of nowhere on the beach's north end, serving beer and burgers to often amused but invariably thankful trail hikers.

It differs from Long Beach by being more remote, more rugged and several degrees more wild. Whereas Long Beach is famous for its surfing waves, the Carmanah Beach waves are in disarray, breaking over a long distance to create an white jumble of water that crashes onto half-hidden rock ledges and boulders. It is not a place to take lightly, as no true West Coast location should ever be.

Perhaps most impressive about the beach is the amount of work most people have to take to get here. For all the hardship of mud and ravines and uphill scrambles, this is the reward – the chance to breathe in the salt and witness the power of the ocean. It can be a cathartic, even a life-changing experience, to arrive at this point under your own power. It is a key reason to attempt the West Coast Trail and one of the features that keep it on a best-of-trail list, as well as a best-of-beach list.





6. Goose Group

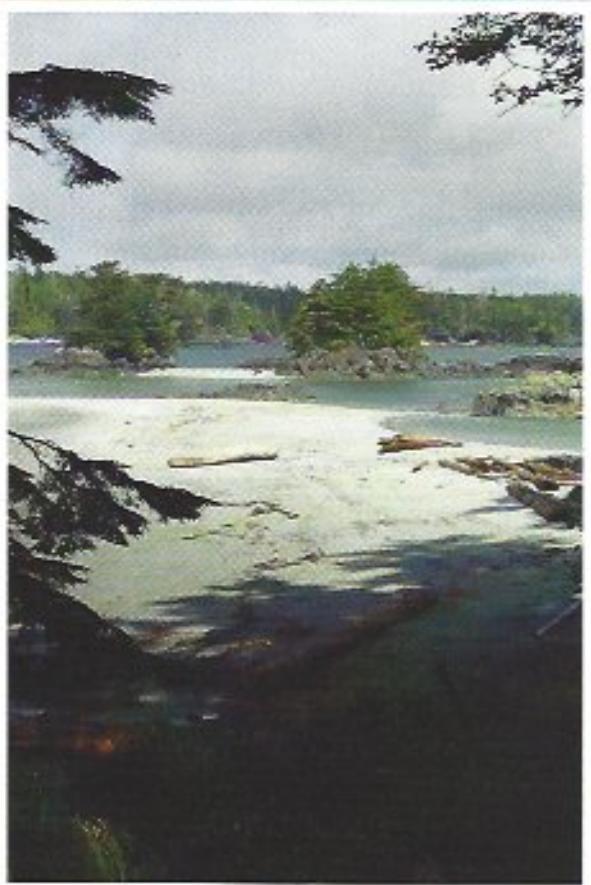
Beaches along the central coast of British Columbia can be as rare as sunshine, so when you encounter one during a visit, there is always reason to rejoice.

Most such rejoicing in BC's Central Coast will take place in or around the Hakai Conservancy, a large group of islands north of Vancouver Island. If you plan to go, a good way is by ferry to Bella Bella or Shearwater, then a kayak trip into the wilds of the Great Bear Rainforest's most remote coast.

Many of the province's most wild and remote beaches can be found here, such as Wolf Beach on north Calvert Island, or an enticing little spot on the McMullin Islands, a tiny offshore archipelago that is like a sand oasis in a setting of rocky islets, shoals and coves. It is amazing how these sandy locations develop in a sea of rock shoals and stark granite bluffs.

There is also Koeye River, a cove set into the mainland with a sandy shoreline on the protected inside waters. A very pretty spot.

Most stunning, though, is the Goose Group, set in its own archipelago with only Japan farther west. Wonderful expansive beaches can be found on the north end of Goose Island by the adventurous who don't mind risking the exposed water, or the inner southern shore for those who prefer to stick to shelter. There is also a good sand beach on tiny Snipe Island, but the low tide choice award goes to Gosling Island, pictured here. The island's sand spit extends northward from the island's north end, and there is no feeling quite like the luxury of dipping toes into the softest of soft sand after paddling long days along rocky crags and reefs to get here.



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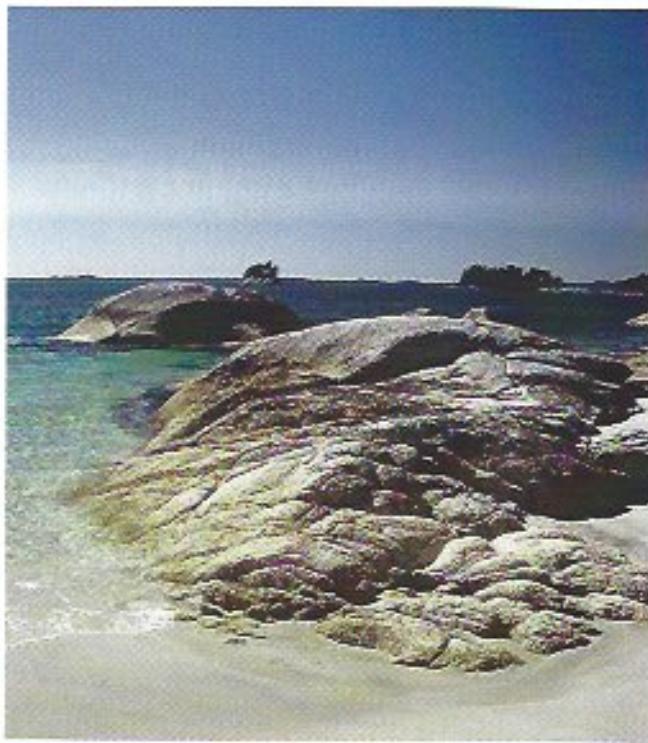
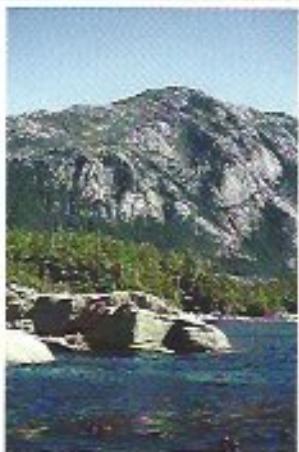
5. Campania



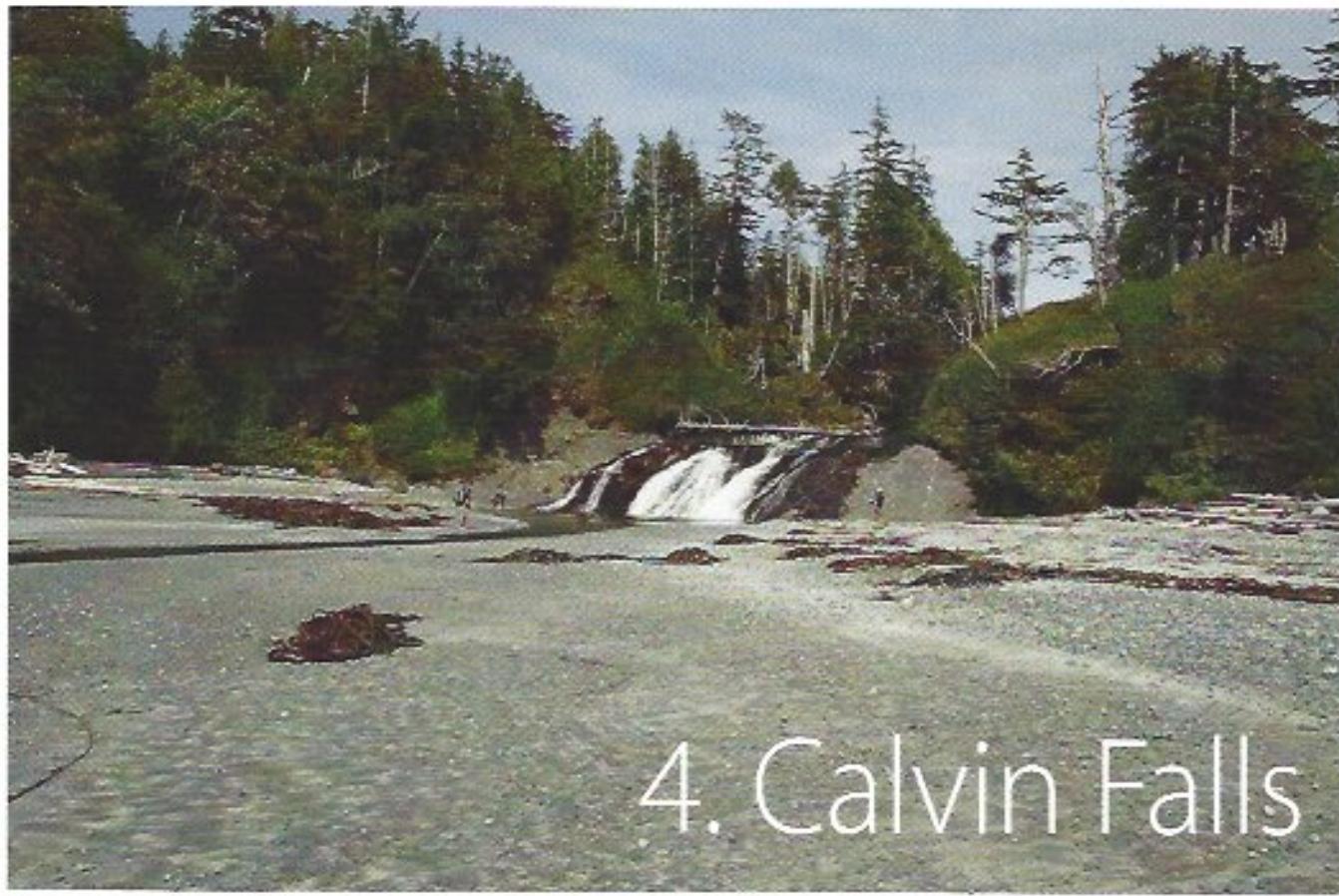
Campania Island excels on two levels. For one, the beach. There are few as tropical in appearance this far north, and if you discover it from the north you're in for an extra treat. You'll pass a long and thin peninsula separated from the main island by equally long and thin McMicking Inlet as you head south, so when you first see Campania Island's main outer beach it will suddenly come into view (the photo to the left shows passing the final rocks before the mouth of McMicking Inlet).

Not only is the beach wonderful, the island is just as stunning for exposed bedrock and sparse forest cover, making it a break from the uniform green of the surrounding hillsides. Credit the Milbanke Strandflat, a geological formation filled with many peatlands and shallow lakes, accounting for the scrub forest and open landscape on the island.

Campania is now part of the Lax Kal'gaas/Campania Conservancy that includes the Alexander Islands to the south. It is remarkable in one other aspect. There are three main northern communities — Kitimat, Prince Rupert and Bella Bella, and if you triangulate the three to find the location on the BC coast equally distant from all three, you'll be near the centre of Campania Island, making it by that measure the most remote location on the BC coast. Nowhere else is as far from all the main northern coastal communities.



The beach is problematic as it tends to disappear at spring tides, leaving campers scrambling to find a dry spot. But then again, if your goal is to visit the most remote of the most beautiful beaches in British Columbia, don't expect it to be easy.

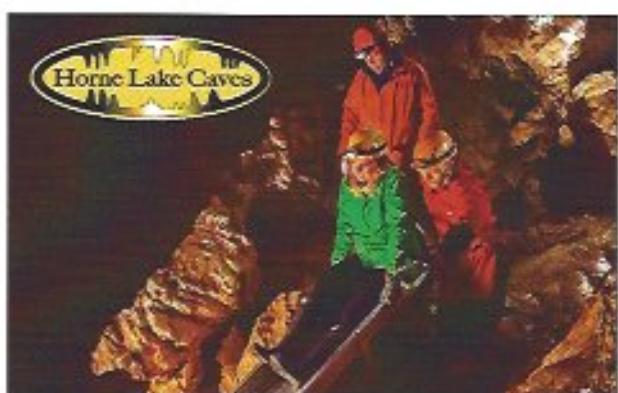
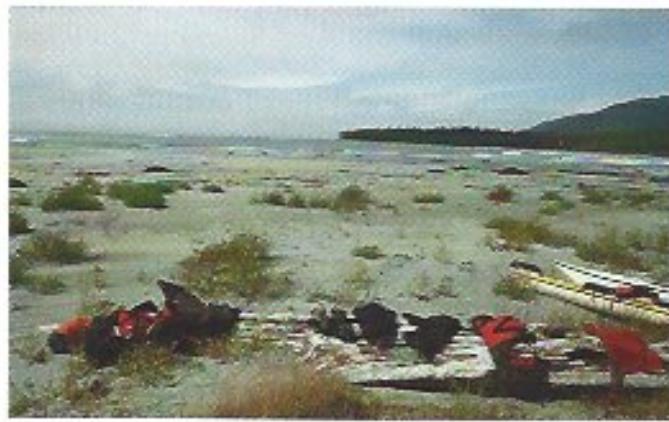


4. Calvin Falls

A surprise of British Columbia is how few waterfalls of any particular size or force drop directly into the oceanfront. Maybe such a grouping deserves its own Top Ten list (if enough exist to make a full list). But regardless of the number, the combination of best beach and waterfall has to go to Calvin Falls on Nootka Island.

It is set amid the Nootka Trail, a remarkable hike covered in detail in issue #1 of Wild Coast Magazine. It is a focal point and a must-stop location for any hiker – or even a kayaker, as there are decent all-weather landing spots thanks to rock bars to the north and south of the main cove overlooking the waterfall.

And yes, there was a strong contender for the best beach waterfall category. Tsusiat Falls on the West Coast Trail is an incredible combination of beach and waterfall. We suggest you visit both and decide for yourself which deserves the top honour.



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3. Jackobson Point



Listen for the gasps of disbelief:
"What? Jackobson Point is better than
Heater Point? Or Crabappable Islets? Or Spring
Island? Or Barney's Island?"

Well, suffice to say there are many

candidate "best" beaches near Brooks Peninsula on the outer north coast of Vancouver Island, and many readers will have their personal favorite, but the Wild Coast choice goes to Jackobson, mainly because it is on Brooks Peninsula, a favorite among wild and remote destinations on the BC coast (cause for perhaps another top ten list?).

Plus there is a choice of two spectacular beaches nearby to pretty well ensure you

have one to yourself. Plus there is a really cool shoreline trail leading to a really cool cave.

Oh, and an honorable mention goes to Nordstrum Creek, the beach on the outer west shore of Brooks Peninsula. It is spectacularly difficult to reach due to the reefs and surf, but magical if you get there on one of those elusively rare days. It also has a really nifty cave as well to explore.

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2. Cape Sutil



There is no set criteria to select the single best beach, but Cape Sutil excels in all of them regardless of what they are – plus it adds its own unique elements of charm just to raise the bar that much more.

For those expecting a torturous and unforgiving coastline at Vancouver Island's northernmost point – perhaps a place that lives up to the Cape Scott reputation of a storm-ridden Graveyard of the Pacific – Cape Sutil is not that.

Rather, it is a crescent of white sand set facing east – wide, white, soft and infinitely welcoming. It is set facing away from the prevailing westerlies, keeping the beach

nicely sheltered, with two pretty headlands – one mid-beach (crossed by a trail) and one at the point.

The point is an interesting aspect of Cape Sutil, it having been a fortified village deserted in 1851 after being shelled twice by the British Navy. The bombing was in retaliation for the killing of three British Navy deserters. Unable to find the actual culprits, HMS Daedalus shelled the whole community in 1850, then when the community was rebuilt, HMS Daphne returned to level it again. The community then moved to Bull Harbour on nearby Hope Island and never returned.

Whatever remains of the village is probably

gone within the dense forest, with the exception of a petroglyph that could make for a lengthy game of hide and seek if you set out to find it.

Previously reachable only by water, that changed in 2008 when the North Coast Trail opened, with Cape Sutil an official camping location that includes a yurt for a trail maintenance crew during the summer.

The trail has opened up the whole region to the adventurous, and a water taxi can even drop you directly here (see below). For more on the North Coast Trail and how to reach here, see issue #3 or grab one of our trail maps (below left).



Take us with you!

If you're planning a hike of the North Coast Trail or a kayak trip through North Vancouver Island, Wild Coast has a waterproof mapsheet perfect for you. It is the primary resource for hiking the North Coast Trail, but it also contains all the information you'll need for the North Island Circle Route from Port Hardy to Coal Harbour.

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1. Rugged Point



It may actually be impossible to step out of the forest trail at Rugged Point Provincial Park to face the outer beach for the first time and not stop dead in disbelief at what you see.

The inner beach is fine enough. This is where most people arrive, as the cove inside Kyuquot Sound protects the beach nicely and allows boats to anchor nearby.

The trail isn't long to the beach on the outer coast, but the landscape is worlds away. At the end of the forest is an expanse of white sand stretching as far as the eye can see.

The beach actually continues much farther. If you walk it, you will cross a multitude of sandy stretches and scramble over rocky ledges and headlands to eventually reach north Nootka Sound. This beach scramble ranks as one of the easiest and most rewarding beach hikes on the BC coast. (and yes, that would make another interesting top ten list for the future, no doubt).

You may see no other person if you attempt this hike, but you won't be alone, and the tracks on the beach are a great indication. Expect to see bear, wolf and cougar prints, and if you visit at low tide you'll get an idea of just how fresh they are. Yes, this is remote and very, very wild.

Rugged Point is yet at the south entrance to Kyuquot Sound, a fjord remarkable for being devoid of any communities at all. Instead there are just two launch points, one at Atilish River and another at Fair Harbour.

For those looking for just a hike, an option is a water taxi from Zeballos or Tahsis (try Tahsis Dive and Charters. See page 25). They can

drop you off at Yellow Bluff on the Nootka Sound side, so your walk would end at Rugged Point rather than begin there.

While Rugged Point is indeed the largest and most spectacular, people may actually prefer some of the many smaller options in the Kyuquot region. And maybe that's what The Guardian's list really means — the fact that any sand beach is a good beach.





The Best Beaches Where they are

Plus some
honorable
mentions

8 Lucy Islands

Oval Bay, Porcher Island



Deadman Inlet, Bar Is. Island

5 Campania Island



Goschen Island

The Goose Group 6



Wolf Beach, Calvert Island

McMullin Group

Wolf Beach, Calvert Island

Guise Bay

2 Cape Sutil

San Josef Bay

Nissen Bight

Raft Cove

Restless Bight

Heater Point

3 Jacobson Point

1 Rugged Point

Calvin Falls 4



San Josef Bay



Dick and Jane Beach, Vargas Island.

Deadman Inlet, Bar Is. Island



Kmeye River



Redsand Beach, Smith Sound.

Ahous Bay 1

Long Beach 9

Savary Island

Cow Bay

Goose Spit

Tree Island

Tsusiat Falls

Keeha Bay

Sidney Spit

7 Carmanah