



CANADA... CANADA... CANADA..

PET FRIENDLY PARADISE

QUESTION: What could be more perfect than soaking in a hot tub as you soak up the view of the inlet at Ucluelet on Vancouver Island?

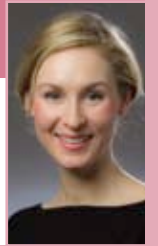
ANSWER: Soaking in a hot tub as your adorable pet shih tzu - the bundle of cuteness otherwise known as Miss Muggins - happily potters around the tub-side decking. Thankfully, more and more property owners are wising up to the fact that more and more clients who opt for a staycation want to take their furry best friends with them.

So we were delighted to discover that Reef Point Cottages at Ucluelet was happy for Miss Muggins to check out its pet-friendly property. Located where the West Coast Rainforest meets the mighty Pacific Ocean, Reef Point Cottages have over a dozen cottage styles, ranging from compact studio cottages to large two-bedroom waterfront cottages complete with hot tubs. Humans and canines alike enjoy the cosy intimacy that the Reef Point cottages provide, along with the nearby hiking trails and beaches that provide all manner of doggy quality time.

Miss Muggins certainly approved. And so did the homo sapiens that she took on the trip with her.



www.reefpointcottages.com



"Wonderstuck in my own backyard..."

Glass of BC chardonnay in hand, Trish Friesen boldly goes to discover the beauty in her own backyard...

It all started with a toast - and then choir-like 'OOHs' and 'AHHs' followed. BC and Alberta's peaks and creeks were on 'repeat', so I sat down and enjoyed the two-day show. Meandering past frothing rivers, glassy lakes and perilous peaks, I was briskly reminded that I live in a place fixated upon by travelers near and far who all pine for Canadiana: Salmon, bears and wild open spaces. Couple these sought-after sights with a happy hour that starts at 11am and doesn't end until early evening - and you'll find yourself on grizzly watch with a glass of chardonnay for two days solid. Mornings started with a steamy coffee and just-baked bannock (an Aboriginal scone-like recipe) in our seats, followed by a trip to the dining room downstairs for the full meal deal. Think fresh fruit and eggs with smoked salmon, caviar and creme fraiche, or granola parfait. Recuperating from the hearty breakfast, I rested while a reel of Discovery Channel-eque cinematography played in real time. A few hours later (I was still full!), lunch started with a BC bang with a glass of Sumac Ridge chardonnay or merlot and a plate of cheese and crackers - which I think were cut into

"You'll find yourself on grizzly watch with a glass of chardonnay for two days solid..."

the shape of mountain peaks for effect. In an ode to our Canadian journey, almost everyone ordered the dill-dusted salmon for our midday feast. Well, when in Rome...

Consuming the cuisine and constantly-changing countryside at a pace that our modern world associates with Old World, and studying it via 360-degree views, allowed me to view my Canadian surroundings through the eyes of a tourist - seeing snow, craggy peaks and 500-pound grizzlies as if for the first time.

On the Rocky Mountaineer, you're on a rail safari while dining on executive chef-prepared meals and drinking Okanagan chardonnay. At one point, I remember rushing to my coach's outside viewing area to snap the scenery - camera in one hand, wine in another. At that moment, a smile came to my face. I was relaxed, well fed and wonderstruck... In my own backyard.

• Book in the early season for the greatest possibility of wildlife viewing. As the season progresses, animals retreat into the alpine meadows • There are three classes of service on the Rocky Mountaineer: RedLeaf, SilverLeaf and GoldLeaf. Silver and GoldLeaf each enjoy glass-domed coaches for optimal nature viewing • Rocky Mountaineer offers four seasonal routes from April to October: The two-day First Passage to the West (Vancouver-Kamloops-Banff), the two-day Journey Through the Clouds (Vancouver-Kamloops-Jasper), the two-day Rainforest to Gold Rush (Whistler-Quesnel-Jasper), and the half-day Sea to Sky Climb (Vancouver-Whistler) • Prices start at \$850 per person for the two-day First Passage to the West. This includes the train journey and an overnight hotel. If you want to go for the GoldLeaf, prices start at \$1,900.

CLIENT TIPS

Trip stylist Trish Friesen is editor-in-chief at www.tripstyler.com

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