

Travellers' Tales

Tips and Tricks for Vancouver Island

I was lucky enough to spend ten days on Vancouver Island back in August last year – so still in the Canadian Summer. Thanks to Servas and their cool, friendly and 'out there' hosts I had a wonderful time. From visiting Tofino - a west coast beach resort on the island - spotting black bear, cute otters sunbathing on the surface of the water, to whales and hanging out in natural hot springs. Finishing the day off with Servas hosts around a camp fire, toasting marshmallows and singing songs. My other hosts on the east coast of the island, took me to all sorts of cool places, from recycling centres to buy bits and bobs for their houses, swimming at nearby beaches, to riding a bike (for the first time in decades) to lighthouses just out of Victoria (the capital of British Columbia). Oh and not forgetting the coolest Servas place, right on the coast, looking out over the ocean to the bright lights of Seattle in the distance.

Much more to add, but have to keep the word count down, so in a nutshell all four sets of hosts were fabulous, easy to talk with, took me to all their local haunts and made me feel so welcome, I didn't want to leave.

Virginia I-J, Auckland

Servas report 2010 Highlights in Southern England. (edited)

Many New Zealanders watch a TV show about British couples converting old barns into liveable homes. We had the pleasure of staying in a converted milking parlour (a cow shed in NZ.) It is now a delightful 3 bedroom home on a VERY narrow Devon lane. Each of the original farm buildings is now a delightful home.

Because I am a nurse I enjoy meeting people from the medical profession and we stayed with a nurse and union activist who is actively involved in United Nations. Her small town was first named ANZAC-ON-SEA but the name was changed to Peace Haven in the 1920s. Here the Meridian Line enters the English Channel.

A couple I phoned told me they would be delighted to host us as this was their 59th Wedding Anniversary and their family could not come to visit. They have visited NZ several times and were very pleased with my handcrafted Anniversary card with a NZ theme with flowering pot-plant in matching colours to adorn the table.

If you travel by car you can stay in villages and see a different side of life in England.

An Historic Places NZ membership card entitles you to visit National Trust properties such as the homes of Winston Churchill and Agatha Christie. One day we located the former Sling Camp, near Bulford Army Base, where 4,500 soldiers from NZ trained in WW1. Above the Camp site we saw the 100m tall KIWI carved into the hillside. As a child I recall my grandfather talking of this huge Kiwi. A thrill to see it in person.

We DO SO ENJOY our visits to lesser known villages. A big thank you to those that coordinate the Host Lists in every country.

Patricia and Keith J