



Places We Love

Sea Lion Pointe, Sonora Resort, Canada

Richard Nalley, 09.04.09, 12:00 PM ET

This just might be the best deal on an \$8,000-a-night (Canadian dollars) hotel accommodation in North America. Screened by massive firs, and set on a spit of land apart from the rest of the Sonora Resort in the northern Straits of Georgia, Sea Lion Pointe is a 10,000-square-foot, blow-out-the-jambs private lodge with a particular blend of cosmopolitan and local, British Columbia wilderness luxury. On the worldly side are, for example, the high-end electronics (home theater, stereo, wifi, worldwide free internet phone) in each of the five suites--with another bank of equipment in the library--the Viking outdoor grilling set-up off the dining room, and the massive vintage billiards table upstairs.

The B.C. part comes in with the two-storey high, stacked fieldstone pillars and fireplace wall, and the local timbers that frame the lodge's walls of glass and support its soaring, peaked roof. Then there are the art works, commissioned from 12 British Columbia artists, and clocking in an estimated \$2 million (Canadian). The art works, some impressive, some intriguing, some you might have done without, are not play-it-safe institutional pieces, but sometimes edgy contemporary works that in some way reflect the lodge's poster-perfect setting above the ocean straits. There are the striking, forged-iron "dragonfly" stair rails, the curly, kinetic "Kelp at Low Tide" hanging sculpture, the gnarled, rough-hewn, bubbled glass "Tidal Pool" glass sculpture, and the "story poles" carved by First Nations artist Philip Gray.

When they visit, Sea Lion Pointe is the private domain of the resort's owners, the Louie family, drugstore and aviation magnates from Vancouver. They began the multi-million-dollar (you can count that in Canadian OR American dollars) renovation of Sonora, a newly elevated Relais & Châteaux property, six years ago, with more investment to come. The rest of the time, Sea Lion Pointe is the well-heeled public's life-experience opportunity.

And September may just be the best month to visit. The crowds, such as they are up here, have dispersed, the whale and bear sightings most frequent, and the salmon--you fish from Sonora's fleet of sleek Grady-White's--the largest of the season. Assuming, that is, that you even want to go outdoors.

Sonora Resort, Sonora Island. 888-576-6672; www.sonoraresort.com