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The Great Escape: Sonora Resort

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I've always liked the island life. It's the sunburns and sandy shoes I can't stand, which is why I recently took an ideal getaway to my kind of island—Sonora Island, an evergreen oasis tucked in among the Discovery Islands of British Columbia, Canada. Private, plush, and prepared to grant your every wish, a stay at the all-inclusive

Sonora Resort is just the escape any hard-working jetsetter needs to unwind.

Your journey begins in a London Air helicopter gliding effortlessly through the air, leaving bustling Vancouver behind. Our friendly, professional pilots offered reassurance to this nervous flier, plus smooth sailing and descriptions of notable sights along the way. The Discovery Islands look like verdant, mountainous crumbs of land broken off of British Columbia. They dot Discovery Passage between Vancouver Island and mainland B.C., and the rushing water surrounding the islands is home to extremely powerful tidal currents and whirlpools. Tree lines stretch down to the water and peekaboo lakes sprinkle the high ground. Vast chains of logged trees float their way to sawmills, with private boats dotting the safer harbors. You've gone off the beaten path, if not off the grid, and plane or boat is only way in.



The descent offers a 360° view of the resort. Poised on the water's edge, Sonora Resort has 11 themed lodges, a spa, business center, and 32 hot tubs scattered throughout the property—not to mention its fleet of boats lined up at the dock. Upon landing, sip a glass of wine and nibble some cheese as you get a brief orientation. The rooms are spacious and comfortable, and the bathrooms alone make you want to curl up and stay in for the night. Ours had a fireplace, huge raised tub, and a dual-head rain shower. Turndown service is not the usual chocolates; that's what the well-stocked mini-fridge is for. Instead you might find a bit of fucus body scrub from Sonora's Island Currents Spa.



Shrug off your robe and slippers and shuffle over to the lodge for Sonora Resort's dynamite dining. Breakfast might be Homemade Chorizo with eggs and polenta, or Dungeness Crab Benedict with moist, meaty morsels of crab fresh from the live traps just off the dock. Lunch brought the best burger I've ever had—a ground sparerib

concoction with amazing flavor (In Canada, restaurants cannot serve a burger that's not fully cooked, so don't ask for rare, but they know how to cook theirs to perfection). It's hearty fare, perfect after a day on the water or on the trails.

The real show-stopper is dinner, when the chef prepares a different 6-course tasting menu each night. Tastes range from foie gras, to mussels, to squab, all garnished with fresh greens and local flavors. Ingredient quality is paramount here. One staffer regaled us with a tale of a beautiful, but frozen, shipment of just-caught salmon that arrived at the resort. The high standards of the kitchen meant only fresh salmon would do, so another shipment was ordered and the staff tucked into some amazing salmon dishes that week thanks to the mix-up. If a tasting menu isn't your style you'll enjoy à la carte entrees like T-bone steak and a dessert menu with treats like lavender-sugar donuts.



Visitors originally stopped at Sonora Island for its unparalleled fishing opportunities. Go salmon fishing on Sonora Resort's state-of-the-art Grady White fleet with an expert guide. Or try catch and release fly fishing in surrounding lakes and rivers teeming with trout. Beginners can stay close to home and take fly fishing lessons in a 100,000-gallon trout pond stocked by the resort. Staffers box and transport your fish so it's as fresh as the day you caught it. The resident joke is that often guests care more about getting their fish home than their loved ones.

Beyond the reach of a fishing line the resort has much more to offer. You'll find family-friendly fare like full-sized virtual golf tees, video game consoles, a 9-foot pool table, tennis court, fitness center and a small putting green. Adults can relax at the bar, where creative cocktails are expertly mixed with fresh ingredients. Hiking trails are relatively new to Sonora Resort, and as such are a work-in-progress. Expect a rough-hewn, choose your own adventure trail. You're in bear country, and keep an eye out for cougars as well.



The waterways and islands surrounding Sonora Resort offer up some of the best wilderness adventures you can find. An Eco-Tour gave us a guided introduction to the area, complete with a bit of wake-hopping that got the blood pumping. While we didn't catch a glimpse of the dolphins and Orca whales often seen in these

waters, we saw over a dozen bald eagles flying above us, taking advantage of the prime feeding ground created by the tide in the churning channels. Take a helicopter ride along rivers and over waterfalls to a massive glacier or remote inlets for a private picnic. In certain seasons, Grizzly Bear Tours are offered, allowing you to view grizzlies in the wild from 10-foot high viewing stands.

After a day on the water, spend one relaxing in it at the Island Currents Spa. I recommend a 15 minute dip in the hydrotherapy tub. Its 252 programmable jets had me so blissed out that afterward I put on my bathrobe inside-out. Relax your travel-weary muscles with a tension-relieving massage. My masseuse took the time to find out I hunch over my laptop constantly, and worked to ease the right aching, posture-poor muscles. The spa also offers couples massages, warm stone massage, facials, mani-pedis, and more. Additionally, the mineral pools, steam room and sauna are open to all guests throughout the day.



From all-inclusive to à la carte, Sonora Resort offers up the perfect mix of activities for both play and relaxation. When in doubt, just find a hot tub to soak in or lounge in the sun watching the harbor seals play in the cove, and let nature come to you.

Sonora Resort

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