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IN-FLIGHT REVIEW

**15 SCINTILLATING
SPA TREATMENTS**

**CHRISTMAS
GLASS**

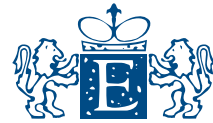
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IN-FLIGHT REVIEW
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008 VOLUME 01 NUMBER 05

- 04 EDITORIAL**
Serving Sustainable Communities
DANIEL SITNAM, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF HELIJET
- 06 DAYPLANNER**
Local Festivals & Events
- 08 CONVENTIONAL WISDOM**
Trade Shows, Conventions & AGMs
- 10 HELIJET PROFILE**
Employee Bio — Sean Inkster
BY GARTH EICHEL
- 11 FLIGHTPATH**
Helijet Update — Santa's Sweet Sled
BY SHELLEY MOTZ

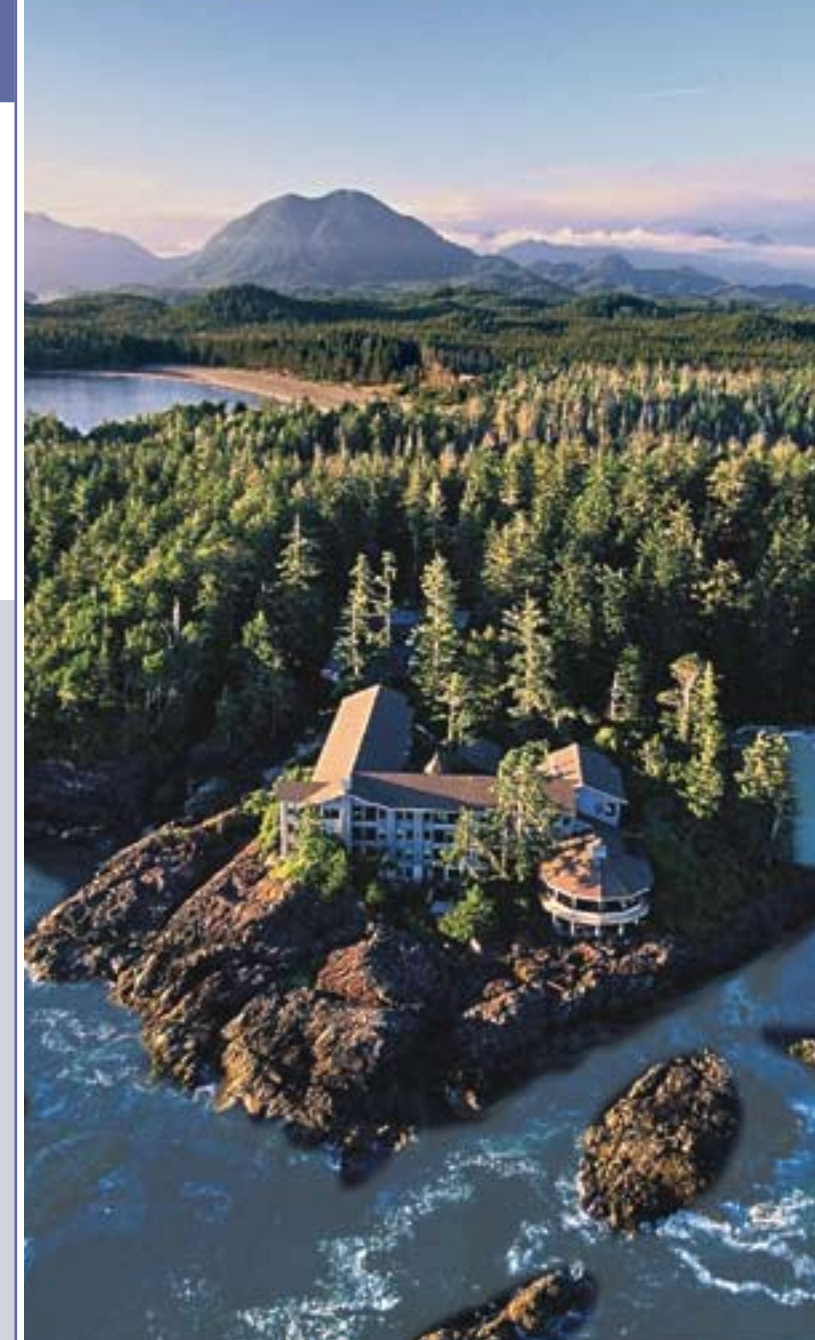
FEATURES

- 12 INTO THE FIRE**
Vancouver glass artist Malcolm Macfadyen makes Christmas magic and shares trade secrets with those curious to learn. BY KERRY SLAVENS
- 16 SCINTILLATING SPA TREATMENTS**
Signature treatments from local spas offer good medicine for the stressed, the sore and those simply in need of a treat. BY JULIE NIXON
- 23 BRIGHT LIGHTS, SWEET SEASON**
Butchart Gardens illuminates the dark days of winter with a popular seasonal tradition. BY STAR WEISS

- 26 DOMAINS**
Homes & Properties — Home Staging
BY ALISA GORDANEER
- 30 EPICURE**
Fine Dining — Kastamonitsa Olive Oil
BY ALEX VAN TOL

COVER PHOTO: *The luxurious mineral bath at the Willow Stream Spa*
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Serving Sustainable Communities

By Daniel Sitnam,
President and CEO, Helijet



WITH THE HOLIDAY SEASON FAST APPROACHING, there are some things I can always count on: an endless stream of Christmas gatherings; last-minute mall shopping; a few strings of tree lights that never seem to work; and, of course, watching the timeless 1946 film *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Watching Jimmy Stewart playing George Bailey is a nostalgic rite for just about everyone, but it is also a poignant reminder of responsibility to employees, family and society. As a businessman and employer, I hope I never get to a place where I miss the big picture in life. In keeping with that, we at Helijet make a concerted effort to support a number of community-minded initiatives throughout the year on a monthly basis, each catering to a specific organization, event or cause.

To that end, we recently participated in the Vancouver Sun's Raise a Reader program for the month of September, donating \$2 from each seat sold towards youth literacy. Our Helijet team and customers raised over \$8,000.

Switching gears in October, we were a proud supporter of the Canadian Cancer Society, highlighting Breast Cancer Awareness Month by making a donation for every passenger and giving each traveler a pink ribbon or a "Thing-A-Ma-Boob" keychain. (The keychain features pink beads of varying sizes, which

represent the size of lump that can be detected through various breast screening methods.) Additionally, we launched a tobacco-free workplace initiative to encourage our employees to kick the habit.

Now, as we head into November and December, we are turning attention to our annual winter clothing drive and the SOS Children's Villages Parade of Trees at Grouse Mountain. Going into the New Year, we have plans for a number of new programs and a particular focus on environmental initiatives.

As a businessman and employer, I hope I never get to a place where I miss the big picture in life

Ultimately, our company supports these and other sustainable community efforts not because management fears preternatural visits from arc angels. Rather, it is a reflection of our corporate philosophy that we have a responsibility to our employees and their families, our guests, and the communities we serve.

Happy Holidays to you and your loved ones from everyone at Helijet! 🍷

Wishing you the best for the holiday season



REMEMBER, WHILE YOU'RE AT HOME ENJOYING THE HOLIDAYS, OTHERS ARE STILL HARD AT WORK.

No doubt about it, this is a very special and very busy time of the year. With scheduled winter service as late as 6:30 every night, Helijet passengers can spend more quality holiday time with family and friends and not on the road. Helijet has transformed everyday air travel into scenic 35-minute excursions over some of the most scenic geography in the world. And for budget-minded travellers – including that special someone who racks up millions of air miles on a single night each year – Helijet offers their convenient QuickTicket packages. QuickTickets are the perfect gift solution for year-round business travellers, friends and family... and for those UBC or UVic students who just miss mom's home cooking.



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nov 11 **REMEMBRANCE DAY**
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nov 11 to 16 **HOPSCOTCH FESTIVAL**
Sample the stuff of myth at Vancouver's 12th Annual Hopscotch festival where more than 200 Scotch whiskeys and premium beers are available to delight and numb the palate. hopscotchfestival.com

nov 15 **2008 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS**
Make your mark in the City of Vancouver municipal elections at various polling locations throughout city. Seats to be filled on the Vancouver School Board, the Parks Board, as well as Vancouver City Council and the position of mayor. vancouver.ca

nov 19 **DOUGLAS DAY**
On November 19, 1858, Governor James Douglas read a proclamation in Fort Langley's Big House declaring the territory a British Colony. Now, 150 years later, the province celebrates its inception where it all began, at Fort Langley National Historic Site. pc.gc.ca

nov 19 to jan 04 **FESTIVAL OF TREES**
It's that time of year again when the lobby of the Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver transforms into a forest of decorated trees to raise funds for BC Children's Hospital. The public is invited to browse the holiday display and cast a ballot for their favourite tree. bcchf.ca

nov 21 to 23 **EASTSIDE CULTURE CRAWL**
Over 200 East Side artists of every stripe open their studios to the public for three days. eastsideculturecrawl.com

dec 01 to 23 **CAROL SHIPS PARADE OF LIGHTS**
Carol Ships "Parade of Lights" Society began over 48 years ago with one boat decorated with Christmas lights in Coal Harbour off the Bayshore Inn (now the Westin Bayshore Resort & Marina). Since then, this holiday tradition has grown to include more than 80 decorated vessels, illuminated with some 150,000 lights. carolships.org

dec 07 **ROGERS SANTA CLAUS PARADE**
Secure your spot along the parade route for the annual Rogers Santa Claus Parade, starting at 1:00 p.m. Best Santa viewing locations are expected to be both sides of Georgia Street on the slope between Bute and Broughton, the Vancouver Art Gallery and Robson Square on Howe Street. rogerssantaclausparade.com

Victoria

nov 11 **REMEMBRANCE DAY**
At a cenotaph in your community

nov 15 **2008 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS**
Have your say in the City of Victoria municipal elections. Electors are to choose nine school trustees, eight councillors and the top job of mayor. victoria.ca

nov 18 to jan 05 **FESTIVAL OF TREES**
Every year the Festival of Trees transforms the lobby and hallways of The Fairmont Empress Hotel into a lush forest of colourful trees, all decorated by local businesses and organizations to raise funds for BC Children's Hospital. Beginning with a kick-off decorating gala on November 18, the display is open to the public through to January 5. bcchf.ca

nov 22 **ISLAND FARMS SANTA LIGHT PARADE**
Santa is coming to town, courtesy of those productive bovines at Island Farms. More than 50 colourful floats in this evening holiday parade make for a perfect start to the holiday season. Spectators are asked to bring non-perishable food items for the local Mustard Seed Food Bank. tourismvictoria.com

nov 28 to 30 **THE NUTCRACKER, ALBERTA BALLET**
Participate in a timeless Christmas rite with Dance Victoria's world premiere performance of Edmund Stripe's The Nutcracker. Set in Imperial Russia, this unique retelling of E.T.A Hoffman's classic tale is perhaps the grandest and most opulent production in Alberta Ballet's history. dancevictoria.com

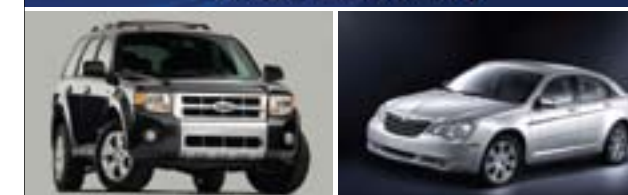
dec 07 **KIDS TEDDY BEAR PARTY**
Children age three to 10 are invited to bring their favourite stuffed animal and a grown-up for cookies, milk and magical fun at the Hotel Grand Pacific's annual Teddy Bear Party for the Kids. Activities and magical entertainment are capped by a special appearance from Santa. Tickets are available only in advance from the front desk, beginning November 29. All proceeds go to help the Queen Alexandra (QA) Foundation for Children. Crowning the Hotel's ursine theme for the holidays is Bear Wear 2008, the QA's signature fundraising event, where 50 of city's best-dressed teddy bears — adorned and donated by local businesses — will be on display in the lobby throughout the holiday season, and are available for purchase by silent auction. hotelgrandpacific.com



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Lower Mainland

oct 31 to nov 02 **CAN-FIT-PRO**
Best Western Richmond Inn Hotel & Convention Centre
Can-Fit-Pro is a group fitness and mind-body conference and trade show for those passionate about their health and wellness. canfitpro.com/vancouver

nov 01 to nov 02 **VANCOUVER TRAVEL SHOW**
Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre
This new event is an opportunity for the tourism industry to promote their offerings to thousands of Vancouverites suffering from incurable wanderlust. vcec.ca

nov 01 to nov 02 **WOMENS EXPO**
Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre
Leave your responsibilities behind and head to the Vancouver Women's Expo for a celebration of femininity that includes exhibitors, speakers and seminars addressing what matters to you. Oh yeah, there's also a \$1-million shoe blowout sale sponsored by the Bay. vcec.ca

nov 07 to nov 08 **B.C.'S CREATIVE EXPO**
Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre
The largest hands-on craft show in B.C. offers hundreds of opportunities to scrap, stitch and craft. bcscreativeexpo.com

nov 11 to nov 16 **CIRCLE CRAFT CHRISTMAS MARKET**
Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre
The 35th Annual Circle Craft Christmas Market is your chance to finish or start your Christmas shopping. Everything you can imagine from clay and wood artists, clothing designers and jewelry makers. vcec.ca

nov 15 **VANCOUVER PRIVATE SCHOOL FAIR**
Landmark Hotel
If you're contemplating the best education for your youngsters, consider spending a few hours at the Vancouver Private School Fair where you can meet with representatives from Canada's leading independent schools. ourkids.net/fairs

nov 23 to nov 25 **B.C. HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION**
Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre
Some 250 exhibitors and more than 4,000 professionals, representing all aspects of the B.C. hospitality industry, descend on the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre for three days of networking, buying and the latest in education development in the B.C. hospitality industry. vcec.ca

Vancouver Island

nov 01 to nov 02 **FIRST CHANCE CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR**
Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney
Presented by Tidewater Inspirations, the 19th Annual "First Chance" Christmas Craft Fair hosts over 85 artisans and crafters displaying their unique hand-crafted wares. And for those who miss the First Chance show, there is always the Last Chance Craft Fair, December 12th to the 14th. marywinspear.ca

nov 01 to nov 05 **ICCA CONGRESS & EXHIBITION**
Victoria Conference Centre
The International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) represents those specialists who organize and accommodate events worldwide. If you are in this industry, or want to learn more about it, you will want to circle these dates on your calendar. iccaworld.com

nov 16 **VICTORIA TOY SHOW**
Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney
Just in time for the holidays, the biannual Victoria Toy Show hosts over a hundred tables of collectible toys and dolls. victoriatoyshow.com

nov 20 to nov 23 **OUT OF HAND CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR**
Victoria Conference Centre
Victoria's premier showcase for contemporary crafts and artisan food from across Canada has a deserved reputation for presenting high quality, original work. This year marks the show's 20th anniversary and organizers are planning some special features to celebrate the milestone. outofhand.ca

nov 26 to nov 28 **BCSSA ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE**
Victoria Conference Centre
The British Columbia School Superintendents Association's annual fall conference brings school superintendents and senior executives from the province's 60 different school districts for three days of networking, seminars and discussion groups on how to better prepare B.C.'s youth for an ever changing world. bcssa.org

dec 04 to dec 05 **BC ROAD BUILDERS AGM AND SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS**
Victoria Conference Centre
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From the Ground Up

Like all ramp services agents, Sean Inkster proves his mettle in all kinds of conditions.

BY GARTH EICHEL



Above: Sean Inkster fuels a Helijet S-76 at the Downtown Vancouver Heliport.

WHENEVER A HELIJET AIRCRAFT LANDS or takes off from a heliport, it is surrounded by a collection of individuals who fuel and groom the machine, take care of your bags, and hold the door for you. These Ramp Services Agents — affectionately known as “Ramp Rats”, or “Rampies”— work day and night and in all kinds of weather, doing the grunt work essential to flight operations.

For most, ramp work is where new employees can prove their worth and learn about the company before rising to greater responsibility. One such “rampie” is Sean Inkster, a 26-year-old from Maple Ridge, who left his job in a steel foundry to pursue a commercial helicopter licence at Heli-College Canada in Langley.

“Flying is one of those things you work towards your whole life,” says Inkster. “My ultimate goal is to work my way up to first officer for Helijet.”

That said, Inkster recognizes there is a vetting process to go through before pilot selection, which includes

demonstrating professionalism and a strong work ethic. So far, he seems to be making a good impression. His boss, Carla Kovacs, Helijet’s director of passenger services, says, “Sean is an extremely dedicated employee who truly appreciates his job. He has a smile on his face all the time — rain or shine.”

Hired in 2006, Inkster spends most working hours attending to Helijet aircraft at the Downtown Vancouver Heliport. In between flights, he might be found in the Cargo Department handling shipments, or he may be the guy driving you to your Vancouver hotel in the company shuttle van. But if he’s not doing either, he is most likely tagging along with a Helijet captain on a repositioning flight.

At any rate, Inkster is paying his dues and learning on the job as he aspires to a cockpit seat. Till then, he says, “I work with a great bunch of people and the company is always doing stuff for us. It’s awesome!”

Santa’s Sweet Sled

Every year Helijet gives Santa’s reindeer a bit of a break by delivering St. Nicholas to children at the Royal Columbian Hospital. BY SHELLEY MOTZ



Above: Santa boards a Helijet S-76 with a sack full of gifts for children at the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster.

NO ONE WANTS TO SPEND Christmas in hospital, especially a child. But every year boys and girls at the Royal Columbian Hospital (RCH) in New Westminster get an early visit from Santa Claus, who trades his reindeer for the horsepower of a Helijet S-76 helicopter, operated for the B.C. Ambulance Service (BCAS).

The idea for this annual Santa flight to the RCH originated in 2004 when the planning committee for the Rogers Santa Claus Parade agreed the excitement and cheer of that event should extend to children at the RCH pediatric ward who are unable to attend the downtown Vancouver parade. To that end, Helijet ferries Santa from the Vancouver International Airport out to the hospital where he lands on the rooftop, bearing a sack full of presents from Rogers.

Accompanying him are three elves: Danny Sitnam, President and CEO of Helijet; Michael Essery, BCAS Superintendent of Rotary-wing Air Ambulance Operations; and Chuck van der Lee, President and CEO of Rogers Retail.

“It is such an honour to give Santa’s reindeer a break and bring smiles and toys to all of these children,” says Sitnam. “You should see the expressions on their faces when Santa steps out of the helicopter with a big bag of presents. Their joy is indescribable.” He adds, “It is so rewarding to know we can help them forget about their illness for a while and remember what it’s like to just be a kid — even if it is only for one afternoon.”

Indeed, the RCH may not have a chimney — but it does have a heli-pad.

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into the fire



I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED by glass, beginning with Cinderella's glass slipper. Who made it and how? Why didn't it shatter? I've meditated on blue glass vases in sunlit windows, collected shards of coloured glass polished by the sea, and been transfixed by the famous glassblowers of Murano, Italy. To me, glass is pure magic.

Naturally, I was thrilled to take part in a glassblowing class with Vancouver's Malcolm Macfadyen — an artist considered by many to be a Canadian master. Renowned for his originality and innovative use of technique, Macfadyen is a cornerstone of Canada's studio glass movement. His work is represented in a number of prestigious galleries, and his stained glass and architectural glasswork enhance the style and ambience of many B.C. homes.

If Macfadyen had been a glass artist in 15th century Venice, I might not have gained such easy access to his secrets. The Venetians considered their glass so precious that artists were forbidden to leave the Republic, let alone teach glassmaking to an outsider like me. Fortunately for us both, 21st century Vancouver is less possessive of its artists.

Macfadyen wasn't always a glass *aficionado*, though. He came to Canada from England in 1973 as a geological engineer. Unable to fathom a future on the corporate ladder, he co-founded a company which specialized in doing the challenging work no one else was qualified or daring enough to do, such as doing

geological fieldwork that involved mountain climbing. It was in the course of this work that his interest in glass truly began. On his regular expeditions he would find interesting flora and bring samples home that he then pressed between pieces of glass. This eventually led to a fascination with stained glass, which evolved into a preoccupation with hot glass. Ultimately, Macfadyen abandoned his career as a geological engineer to join the centuries-old tradition of glassblowers.

Nowadays, he works and teaches out of a charming, rustic studio situated behind his Dunbar neighbourhood home. At one point this wouldn't have been possible, but the 1962 discovery that glass could be heated in smaller furnaces at lower temperatures meant artists were no longer bound to large commercial facilities. Freed up to work from private homes and studios, thus began the studio glass movement, which gave birth to artistic greats such as Seattle's Dale Chihuly.

Along the backyard path to Macfadyen's studio, colourful glass balls float in a small pond and peek out from behind plants in the garden. A miniature glass bowling ball and pins tilt whimsically under a tree. A box of Macfadyen's "discards" — still beautiful, but not up to his own high standards — glitter in a cardboard box.

Walking into Macfadyen's studio, I feel a wave of heat on my face that is uncomfortable, but not

quite unbearable. The heat source is the orange "glory hole," emanating from a propane furnace where ferocious temperatures up to 1,100 degrees Celsius heat and reheat glass once it's in play. The heat is something all glass artists have to make peace with in order to craft their exquisite creations from the fire.

The other thing I immediately notice about the studio is the delicious, smoky smell of cherry wood, which Macfadyen explains is from the scorch of hot glass meeting a hollowed-out cherry woodblock used for shaping. The block is one of the time-honoured tools used by glassblowers.

The heat is something all glass artists have to make peace with

Amazingly, many glass tools — punty (or rod), bench, block, marver, jacks, paddles, tweezers and shears — are much the same as those used by the ancient Phoenicians and Romans who pioneered glass techniques in the Levant back in the 1st Century B.C. Then there's the human lung, which breathes form and originality into every piece.

Getting started, Macfadyen rotates a punty inside the mouth of the glory hole where the glass first softens and melts, eventually achieving a liquid state that can only be compared to ultra-thick syrup or molten honey. It's hard to

look into the furnace and believe this fiery mass is mostly sand in liquid form. It's like looking deep inside a live volcano at the shifting face of Pele, Hawaiian goddess of fire, who shapes the landscape with her ribbons of hot lava.

Watching Macfadyen pull the shimmering glass-tipped rod out of the hole, then twisting the mass with tweezers into a braided icicle, I feel like I'm being allowed to peek inside a magician's cupboard. This artist is more than happy to share his secrets, though. He loves teaching people about glasswork, and has shared his knowledge with hundreds of students, from ages eight to 80. Indeed, his travelling "Totally Amazing Glass!" show has been featured in local and national media, and was a hit when it made a stop at Vancouver's Science World. He also shares his time and space with apprentices, such as Amanda Kosciwk, who studied at Alberta College of Art & Design and is becoming a formidable artist in her own right.

When my turn comes to shape my first piece of glass, Macfadyen "gathers" the glass onto a rod from the furnace, kind of like scooping honey with a honey dripper, and reheats it in the glory hole. I wait nervously on the workbench as he lowers the rod onto the rails in front of me, turning it constantly to prevent the glass from dripping or congealing. Holding the jacks (great big tweezers), I grab the tip of the hot, molten glass and tease out a tongue of it, folding it over

Opposite: Author Kerry Slavens teases out a Christmas icicle of hot glass in the sultry studio of Vancouver artist Malcolm Macfadyen.

Bottom Left: Able to turn sand into molten glass, the fiery "Glory Hole" of a propane furnace can reach temperatures equivalent to that of an active volcano.

Bottom right: The author rolls her glass-tipped punty in an array of coloured shards, referred to as frit.

Vancouver glass artist Malcolm Macfadyen makes Christmas magic and shares trade secrets with those curious to learn.

STORY BY KERRY SLAVENS, PHOTOS BY GARTH EICHEL





Above: Garth Eichel, publisher of *Helijet's* on-board magazine, tries his hand at making a Christmas ornament.

on itself to form a loop. The clear liquid is like no substance I've ever worked with — it's at once softly vulnerable and ultra-resistant. It seems to dare you to fight with it, but fighting with glass can only result in a couple things: a burn, or broken glass. Rather, the key is to tease it, coax it and respect it. As Macfadyen spins and I pull, a brilliant spiral emerges. My reward is a fully formed, if slightly irregular, icicle ornament.

"Ready for some glass blowing, now?" Macfadyen asks.

Am I? I'm not known for my grace and I can't believe I've passed the first step without breaking or burning something. Macfadyen, however, has a natural grace honed by years of working around things that can scorch. He and Kosciuk move like a seasoned team, even though they've only been working together for a month. The body language of glassblowing is like a universal dance — apparently, once you know it, you can feel

comfortable in a studio just about anywhere.

Having succeeded with the icicle ornament, we progress to blowing a glass ball for my Christmas tree. Macfadyen pulls another gather of glass and hands me the rod. Because the glass cools rapidly, I insert the punty with its glass-laden tip into the glory hole, turning it constantly with my left hand, recoiling slightly as the heat blasts me. From here, it's a smooth move to the marver (a flat table), where I roll the glass in frit, which are little shards of pigment slightly reminiscent of cake sprinkles. I choose a pomegranate purple for my Christmas ball.

Macfadyen pours the frit on the marver, then, turning the rod, I roll the hot glass over it, the pigment sticking to the glass as I go. Then it's back to the glory hole to reheat my glass and melt the frit. I watch as the colour melts and bubbles. One more roll in the frit and I'm ready for the next step of creating swirls in the glass. Back at the bench, I push the tweezers slightly into the glass, twist and pull. I do this several times, watching the colours swirl. These patterns will remain, giving the finished product a dreamy look reminiscent of spun cotton candy.

I have to work fast, though, because the glass quickly hardens. Then it's back to the glory hole, and back again to the bench. When it's time for the actual glassblowing. I take my seat and place the rod on rails, still turning it. Macfadyen inserts a blow tube into the rod and begins to blow evenly. I watch wide-eyed as the molten glass bulges and begins expanding into a bubble, thick like Bazooka gum.

I fumble with the big jacks Kosciuk hands me, and then place them around the glass at the place where the rod meets the bubble. "Press them in, but not too hard," she coaches me. My goal is to

form a bit of a stem without sealing off the bubble. My first effort is a bit of a disaster. Because the molten glass is more malleable than I imagined, I press too hard and, sure enough, the bubble seals, prohibiting further blowing. Patiently, Macfadyen starts the process anew.

I admit to being a bit intimidated. Macfadyen's own work is dazzling, the result of decades spent honing his craft under the tutelage of glass maestros such as Andy Andrews at England's International Glass Centre, Loredano Rosin and Pino Signoretto of Seattle's Pilchuck Glass School, and Karen Willenbrink, Randy Walker and Ross Richmond at Red Deer College. Fortunately, he is a patient and soft-spoken teacher.

Guided by Macfadyen's easy manner and humour, I stop feeling like a klutz and my second effort at creating a Christmas ball is more successful. As Kosciuk shields my arm from the heat with a paddle, I begin to get the feel of the glass — pulling, shaping and squeezing it. At some point, she pulls a wet piece of hollowed-out cherry wood from a water-filled bucket behind me. Rotating the glass in this wood block helps it take on the ball-like shape it will eventually become.

"You've done it!" Macfadyen says, motioning towards the pomegranate purple Christmas ball at the end of the rod.

My ball is nowhere near the artistry of Macfadyen's ornaments, vases, windows and plates, but I'm still pretty proud of it. And it will look great on my tree this year.

"I love it," I say, meaning the entire process, from furnace to finish. As Macfadyen shears the ball off the rod, the glass stem makes a crackling sound. I marvel that just one day ago, I only knew the brittle breakable beauty of glass. Now I have seen its liquid magic, and I know for certain I'm not done with glassblowing yet. ✍



Above: A blown glass Christmas ornament in its finished form, ready to hang.

Editors note: Macfadyen's workshops can be taken solo, or in groups of two. Individual instruction is also available. For more information, e-mail malcolmmacfadyen@hotmail.com or call 778-834-2830.

MAKE YOUR OWN christmas ornament



You can enjoy live glassblowing demonstrations with Malcolm Macfadyen at two upcoming events:

- Every November, Macfadyen demonstrates glassblowing at a live show at the Circle Craft Christmas Market at the Vancouver Exhibition and Convention Centre. This year's theme is "Great Balls of Fire". Macfadyen's demonstrations take place on November 7th at 1:00 p.m. and on November 11th at 3:00 p.m.
- Canyon Lights is Capilano Suspension Bridge's winter celebration of light, featuring over 200,000 twinkling bulbs throughout the park. Enjoy carollers in historical winter costumes and learn how to make glass icicle ornaments with Macfadyen. Shows run from December 6th to January 3rd, 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily, except on December 24th and 31st. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children (6-12), or \$25 for a family of four.

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15 Scintillating Spa Treatments

These signature treatments from local spas offer good medicine for the stressed, the sore and those simply in need of a treat. BY JULIE NIXON

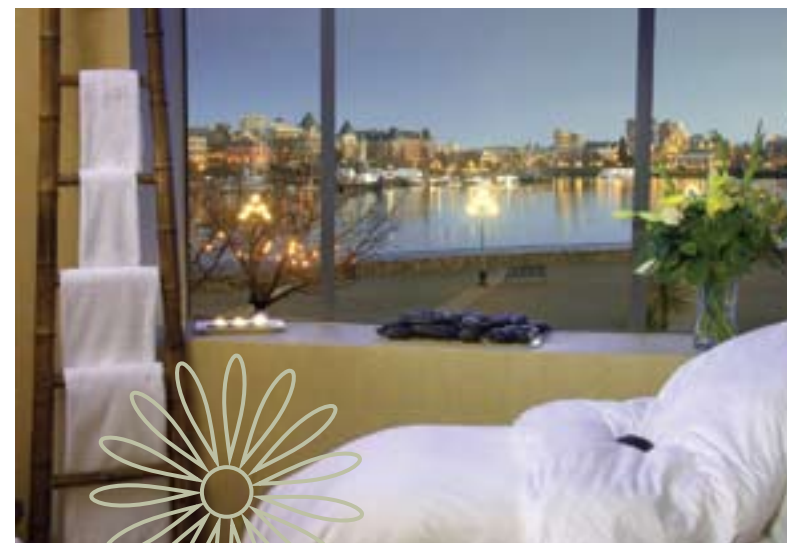
It's late autumn and the frosty days of winter are quickly approaching. We're bustling about, preparing for the holidays and snapping up the perfect gifts for friends and family. With all this activity, we sometimes forget that it's an important time of year in terms of nurturing our well-being. Fall and winter are seasons in which to reflect, to slow down and contemplate our lives. It's a good time to rebalance the body, mind and soul.

Locally, there are numerous health and wellness spas offering exceptional treatments that ease stress, detoxify the body, nourish the skin and restore energy. In this select guide, we highlight the signature treatments of 15 different local spas you may wish to consider experiencing over the holidays and into the New Year. After all, who knows what Santa may bring you and your loved ones.

Top: Guests of the Aerie Spa & Wellness Centre can soak in local Vancouver Island scenery while enjoying any number of unique body treatments, including their two-hour, head-to-toe "Serenity Package".
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AERIE RESORT AND SPA

Bottom left: The Willow Stream Spa's "Island Senses" package is a luxurious two-hour experience that stimulates the skin and invigorates the senses.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF FAIRMONT HOTELS & RESORTS

Bottom right: The Spa at the Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort offers a harmony enhancing "LaStone Ritual Massage" that can be experienced while overlooking Victoria's Inner Harbour.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF DELTA HOTELS



ABSOLUTE SPA

1115 BURRARD STREET, VANCOUVER
TEL 604.684.2775, TOLL-FREE 877.684.2772
absolutespa.com

[RARE WHITE GRAPEFRUIT MANICURE]

\$55 — 45 minutes

Absolute Spa offers the Rare White Grapefruit Manicure, which begins with deep inhalations of Breathe Essence oil to relax your mind and body. Sit back and close your eyes while your nails, hands and arms are given exclusive five-star treatment using rare grapefruit organic oil, loofah scrub and body lotion. All of the rare grapefruit products at Absolute Spa include organic shea butter, pomegranate, cranberry and blueberry, as well as tangerine, blood orange, rare white grapefruit and lemon essential oils. This uplifting, elegant manicure includes a cut and nail file, exfoliating and hydrating cuticle treatment, a loofah scrub on the arms and hands, as well as an arm and hand massage. Nails are buffed and polished, and you'll receive a nail file, orangewood stick, and buffer to take home.

Absolute Spa locations include the Century Plaza Hotel, Hotel Vancouver, the Fairmont Vancouver, and the Vancouver International Airport.

AERIE SPA & WELLNESS CENTRE

The Aerie Resort & Spa
600 Ebedora Lane, Malahat
tel 250.743.0125, toll-free 800.518.1933
aerie.bc.ca

[SERENITY PACKAGE]

\$275 — 2 hours

The Serenity Package at The Aerie Spa & Wellness Centre is a sensual two hours of head-to-toe delight. The treatment uses organic products with fruit and flower extracts from Eminence, a Hungarian line of natural skin care products.

First, the whole body is polished with an exfoliating and deeply hydrating cranberry pomegranate sugar scrub, which also supplies nutrition to the epidermis and stimulates skin cells. After a warm-water rinse, a Hungarian herbal marine mud is applied to the body.

Debra Win, Spa Manager, says the mud "gives a warm, cozy feeling, and it's a little bit tingly." That's because the Hungarian paprika added to the mud heats the skin, increasing the blood flow and aiding in detoxification, leaving the skin feeling healthy and revitalized.

Next up is a mini facial: exfoliant, massage and purifying facial mask. You can choose from chocolate cherry, blueberry soy, pumpkin latté or other delectable selections. Afterwards, enjoy a cleansing shower and savour a full-body, Swedish-style relaxation massage.

The Serenity Package is extremely relaxing, and afterwards the skin feels refined, smooth and youthful. It relieves aches and pains, and restores physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Win says the Serenity package is popular with both women and men, and the Spa accommodates couples.

ANCIENT CEDARS SPA

Wickaninnish Inn
500 Osprey Lane, Tofino
tel 250.725.3100, toll-free 800.333.4604
wickinn.com

[LOMILOMI MASSAGE]

\$175 — 90 minutes (one practitioner)
\$390 — 90 minutes (two practitioners)

In 2004 the Ancient Cedars Spa sent one of its practitioners to Hawai'i to study with a *kahuna lomilomi* — a master of the ancient indigenous art of *lomilomi* massage, developed by early Polynesian settlers in the Hawaiian Islands. *Lomilomi* is unique in that it is healing massage with a distinct spiritual dimension, incorporating chanting and mediation during the treatment. This intuitive practice is also unique for its long flowing strokes and the loving intent of the practitioner, who seeks to restore a deep sense of balance and harmony in the recipient.

"It's a spiritual escape, both mentally and physically," says Jane Ince, public and media relations manager at the Wickaninnish Inn. "You come out feeling very refreshed and alert — it creates a lovely natural awareness."

True to the practice, staff at the Ancient Cedars Spa can perform *lomilomi* in pairs, or one-on-one. For a superlative experience, the massage can also be enjoyed in the spa's Cedar Sanctuary — a private location situated on the edge of a rocky promontory overlooking the ocean (pictured at right).

BRENTWOOD BAY LODGE & SPA

849 Verdier Avenue, Victoria
tel 250.544.5111, toll-free 888.544.2079
brentwoodbaylodge.com

[ESSENCE OF LIFE MASSAGE]

\$175 — 80 minutes

The therapeutic rituals and techniques at Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa are intended to heal and energize. Only fresh, locally sourced ingredients are used in their Essence of Life signature treatment. These include Pacific Ocean seaweed, aromatic botanicals from the Brentwood Bay Lodge garden, pure essential oils and the smoothest West Coast rocks are used to nourish, nurture and strengthen the body. Gentle, flowing massage movements integrated with the elemental components leave you feeling grounded and refreshed. Heated basalt stones, fresh seaweed on the spine, and an exfoliation of the back and feet relieve stress and deliver a sense of harmony.

All the treatments at Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa are inspired by both the West Coast environment and practices from other cultures, such as Esalen massage and Polynesian foot rituals. The Spa has also created custom vinotherapies, using powerful antioxidants found in red wine and grapes to counteract cell damage caused by free radicals.



SKOAH

Vancouver & Burnaby
skoah.com

[FACIALISCIOUS]

\$100 — 75 minutes

Skoah's most popular "skin care workout" is their Facialiscious treatment. This includes deep cleansing, exfoliation, extractions, detoxification and an invigorating mask with just the right ingredients for your skin type. But that's not all: this facial also includes a lower leg, foot, arm and hand massage that leaves customers glowing and speechless.

SOLARICE

Whistler & Vancouver
solarice.com

[EXTREME MUSCLE RELIEF]

\$120 — 60 minutes

For maximum body relaxation, Solarice Spas offer their Extreme Muscle Relief treatment, which targets problematic areas: upper back, neck and shoulders.

After a dry-brush back exfoliation, a layer of Golden Moor Mud is applied. (This mud, extracted from an ancient bog near Ottawa, is an excellent anti-inflammatory, hormone balancer and detoxifier. The mud aids in cell regeneration and is rich in antioxidants.) A Thermophore heating pad is then placed over top to break up achy muscle tension. Enjoy a foot and calf massage before a warm-water rinse, followed by a juniper and eucalyptus aromatherapy massage of the back, neck and shoulders.

Karolyn Volbek, spa manager, says guests experience "a profound sense of relaxation." For many, she adds, "muscle tension seems to simply melt away."

Top: The Wickaninnish Inn's Ancient Cedars Spa is one of the few places on the West Coast offering traditional lomilomi massage, as practiced in Hawai'i. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE WICKANINNISH INN

Bottom left: The Spa at Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa has a distinct West Coast perspective and uses a variety of local organic products in its "Essence of Life Massage". PHOTO: COURTESY OF BRENTWOOD BAY LODGE & SPA

Bottom right: Susurrus Spa at Poets Cove Resort & Spa draws on the healing properties of smooth jade stones in its "Signature Jade Massage". PHOTO: COURTESY OF POETS COVE RESORT & SPA



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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SPA MAGNOLIA

MADRONA DEL MAR SPA

Galiano Inn
134 Madrona Drive, Galiano Island
tel 250.539.3388, toll-free 877-530-3939

galianoinn.com

[HEALTHY HEMP EXPERIENCE]

\$275 — 3 hours

The Madrona del Mar Spa's Healthy Hemp Experience is a divine way to spend three hours of your life. This treatment begins with a deep steam to open skin pores and then a hemp-sugar scrub to gently slough off dead skin. A unique blend of hemp seed oil, crushed hemp seed and organic cane sugar — formulated on Galiano Island — tones and purifies the skin. After a quick rinse, a detoxifying hemp-clay wrap is applied to the body. The organic hemp powder, high in essential fatty acids and gamma linoleic acid, is particularly therapeutic for the skin. While relaxing in this ultra-healthy wrap, all snug under warm blankets, you receive a soothing scalp massage. After a refreshing shower, this rewarding experience ends with a one-hour relaxation massage using a custom-made hemp and avocado body lotion, further hydrating your skin.

SPA AT THE DELTA VICTORIA

Ocean Pointe Resort
45 Songhees Road, Victoria
tel 250.360.5858, toll-free 800.575.8882

thespaatdeltavictoria.com

[LASTONE RITUAL MASSAGE]

\$145 — 90 minutes

For a truly memorable treatment, visit the The Spa at the Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort for their LaStone Ritual Massage. This hot- and cold-stone massage experience restores the body to a state of balance and overall well-being.

Over 50 basalt stones, locally collected, are heated and placed head-to-toe on your physical trigger points, releasing muscle tension and encouraging deep relaxation. The warmth of the stones and the fluid massage movement using essential oils encourages the opening and alignment of the seven chakras, thus inducing a sense of wholeness. Chilled marble stones are used for the cool treatment, providing a *yin* and *yang* energy experience like no other. The alternating temperature of the hot and cold stones also alleviates stiff muscles and promotes the body's self-healing process.

The Spa at the Delta Victoria has three specially trained stone practitioners on staff, and can accommodate LaStone massage for couples.

SPA AT THE GRAND

Hotel Grand Pacific
463 Belleville Street, Victoria
tel 250-380-7862, toll-free 800.663.7550

hotelgrandpacific.com

[TRADITIONAL THAI MASSAGE]

\$135 — 85 minutes
\$160 — 115 minutes

Visit the Spa at the Grand for the ancient healing tradition of Traditional Thai Massage. This Ayurvedic-influenced massage is gaining popularity for its dynamic bodywork, combining gentle stretching, movement of the body and limbs, deep massage, acupressure and reflexology. The movements and techniques improve energy flow, repair soft tissue damage and free the body of tension.

Spa Manager Carrie Rees says their Thai massage practitioner studied in Thailand for many years and has "the most brilliant intuition" for knowing what the client's body, mind and spirit needs for recovery. Many repeat clients find this particular Spa at the Grand massage to be nothing short of "life affirming".

THE SPA MAGNOLIA

Magnolia Hotel
623 Courtney Street, Victoria
tel 250.920.7721, toll-free 877.624.6654

spamagnolia.com

[SPA MAGNOLIA SIGNATURE TREATMENT]

\$175 — 90 minutes

As an Aveda Concept Spa, The Spa Magnolia offers a variety of Aveda genuine care products and services that are individually tailored "to each client's specific needs, skin type, and techniques best suited to him or her," says Spa Director Paula Veenema.

Based on Ayurvedic philosophy, treatments at The Spa Magnolia are all about finding the balance between the five elements through the power of touch. With The Spa Magnolia Signature Treatment, you begin with an exhilarating body scrub of Aqua Therapy, mineral-rich salts extracted from the Dead Sea that conditions skin and eases tension. Next is a cleansing water massage in the medical hydrotherapy tub to increase circulation and aid

in lymphatic drainage. Finally, you unwind as you are treated to a deep cleansing facial and full-body massage. Veenema says this treatment is truly wonderful because all of the body's systems are cleared and balanced, leaving you with a sense of clarity and peace. Visit for more information.

SPRUCE BODY LAB

1128 Richards Street, Vancouver
tel 604.683.3220, toll-free 877.683.3220

sprucebodylab.com

[SEAFLOTA BODY WRAP TREATMENT]

\$160 — 90 minutes

For complete head-to-toe treatment, visit Spruce Body Lab for their sumptuous Seaflora Body Wrap using Seaflora Wild Organic Seaweed Skin Care. The seaweed in Seaflora is hand-harvested in Sooke, on Vancouver Island, and used fresh in the products so all the trace elements, minerals, vitamins and amino acids remain intact.

The Seaflora Body Wrap Treatment starts with a full body exfoliation using Wild Rockweed, a natural antiseptic that hydrates and mineralizes the skin. Next up is the Therapeutic Firming Seaweed Gel that detoxifies, stimulates cellular renewal and prompts circulation in the tissues. To sedate the nervous system and restore energy, a strip of fresh seaweed is placed along the spine. You then luxuriate in the Nourishing Alaria Body Wrap, a mixture of wild organic seaweeds, natural oils and the nourishing rare-earth elements of B.C. glacial clay. While resting, enjoy a mini face treatment: a pressure-point massage and masque, as well as a foot or scalp massage. This generous treatment concludes by rinsing in the rain shower and water tile facility, and lathering on a seaweed body and face cream.

SUSURRUS SPA

Poets Cove Resort & Spa
9801 Spalding Road, South Pender Island
tel 250.629.2113, toll-free 866.604.5561

poetscove.com

[POETS COVE SIGNATURE JADE MASSAGE]

\$175 — 90 minutes

Susurrus Spa, located at Poets Cove Resort & Spa on South Pender Island, offers the Poets Cove Signature Jade Massage — a deep penetrating massage that uses warm, smooth jade stones to loosen stiff muscles and reduce pain, stiffness and inflammation. The stones also stimulate the circulatory system, aiding the body to flush out toxins and increasing vitality. Jade stones have gentle healing energy and are thought to bring good luck, protection and prosperity. They also balance *yin* and *yang*, leaving your body feeling refreshed and satisfied.

The Poets Cove Signature Jade Massage also draws on the aromatic strength of pure essentials oils: organic lavender, cedarwood, rose geranium and peppermint.



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VIDA WELLNESS SPA

Vancouver & Whistler
Tel 800.401.4018

vidawellness.com

[SWEDANA THERAPY]

\$175 — 90 minutes

Vida Wellness Spa's Swedana Therapy treatment involves a combination of steam and Ayurvedic massage that thoroughly regenerates the body's systems and promotes health.

Ayurveda is an ancient holistic system of medicine that aims to bring balance between the body, mind and spirit. "Ayurvedic treatments work from the inside out to bring your *dosha* [body composition] into perfect harmony, so you can enjoy perfect health," says Allison Hegedus, president of Vida Wellness Spa. She adds that Ayurveda treatments are becoming extremely popular due to their remarkable healing benefits.

After this restorative massage, you're cocooned in the West Coast Steam Cabinet where the body is detoxified and cleansed using steam that is aromatically infused with herbs selected for your specific *dosha*. A dry-flour body brushing to stimulate and exfoliate the skin completes this highly beneficial body treatment.

There are three regional Vida Wellness Spas, which can be found at The Sutton Place Hotel Vancouver, The Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel, and The Fairmont Chateau Whistler.

WEDGEWOOD DAY SPA IN VANCOUVER

Wedgewood Hotel & Spa
845 Hornby Street
tel 604.689.7777

wedgewoodhotel.com

[CINNAMON ENZYME FACIAL]

\$180 — 90 minutes

The Wedgewood Day Spa's most popular treatment, the Cinnamon Enzyme Facial, starts with a deep skin cleanse, exfoliation and extractions. A customized, all-natural aromatic cinnamon enzyme peel follows to draw out impurities. The cinnamon stimulates capillary flow, enhances circulation and increases oxygen levels in the skin. By absorbing dead skin cells, the peel also prepares the skin for the tree bark enzyme mask.

"The enzymes used on the face help to improve the metabolism and cellular memory of the dermal cells," explains Joanna Tsaparas-Piché, director of sales, marketing and public relations. Clients report that their skin feels clear, toned and lifted after this facial — akin to a non-surgical facelift. The Cinnamon Enzyme Facial also includes a calming hand and foot massage, and clients can access the fitness centre and Eucalyptus Steam Room before beginning treatment.

WILLOW STREAM SPA

The Fairmont Empress Hotel
633 Humboldt Street, Victoria
tel 250.995.4650, toll-free 866.854.7444

[ISLAND SENSES PACKAGE]

\$355 — 2 hours

The Willow Stream Spa's unique Island Senses Package treatment is all about full body and spiritual rejuvenation. "It's one of the most decadent experiences," says Spa Director April Barcham. "It enlivens the senses for complete energy renewal."

As an "authentic local treatment", this exclusive spa package focuses on ingredients and experiences you'll find in and around Victoria. As with all Willow Stream Spa experiences, guests are invited to relax in a thermal mineral pool or steam room prior to their treatment. Once the experience begins you enjoy a gentle exfoliating sea salt scrub, followed by a pine hydrotherapy bath in which the moving water heals and massages the body, while the fragrance of pine uplifts the spirit and detoxifies the skin. Next up is an earthy mud wrap, which draws out impurities and leaves you feeling fresh and revived all over. This sensuous treatment finishes with a restorative massage using local lavender oil, calming and balancing the senses after the invigorating bath and wrap. Afterwards, you can relax in a quiet reading room by the fire and put your feet up while you soak in the experience in sanctuary.

As a full-amenity facility, Willow Stream Spa's philosophy encompasses good health in all forms: emotional, spiritual and physical. Your experience is customized to your health needs and concerns so you can feel well and live well. ➔



Bright Lights, Sweet Season

Butchart Gardens illuminates the dark days of winter with a popular seasonal tradition.

BY STAR WEISS



FROM THE TIME MOLLY BUCHANAN was old enough to balance on her own two feet, the twinkling lights of Butchart Gardens have illuminated her Christmas experience. Her mother, Lorraine Buchanan, says she has been taking Molly and the whole family — "whoever was home" — to the Gardens every Christmas Day for years. The outing was, as she puts it, "our Christmas Day thing." Indeed, for many families like the Buchanans, a yuletide visit to Butchart Gardens over the holidays is a ritual event.

Above left: A light winter dusting of snow in Butchart's Japanese Garden.

PHOTO: BUTCHART GARDENS

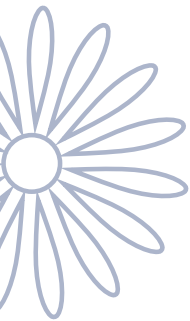
Top right: Workers spend months preparing the thousands of lights employed in the Butchart Gardens Christmas Display.

PHOTO: BUTCHART GARDENS

Bottom right: In 2007 the Butchart Gardens holiday display was designated a "Top 100 Event in North America" by the American Bus Association

PHOTO: BUTCHART GARDENS

November — December 2008





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Left: The ice skating rink at Butchart Gardens is one of the few outdoor rinks in Victoria. It can remain frozen in temperatures up to 12°C. PHOTO: BUTCHART GARDENS

Middle: Molly Buchanan prepares to perform on the ice rink at Butchart Gardens. PHOTO: COURTESY OF JOHN BUCHANAN

Right: LEDs account for 30 per cent of all Christmas lighting at Butchart Gardens. PHOTO: BUTCHART GARDENS

Molly, now 14, recalls childhood memories of wearing a blue-and-white fuzzy winter hat while wandering the grounds, before heading off with her family to the Blue Poppy Restaurant for steaming hot chocolate or spicy apple cider. For her, Christmas and Butchart Gardens go together like turkey and dressing.

As an up-and-coming figure skater and active member of the Juan de Fuca Skating Club, Molly now returns to Butchart Gardens during the holidays to glide gracefully on ice. These days, she and her club friends perform spins and jumps for crowds at the Gardens' outdoor skating rink, which was added in 2005. While she loves skating in any setting, she says it's even better outside: "It's pretty amazing at night, especially when it's been snowing all day and is still snowing with the lights on — it's a winter wonderland!"

Warren Carrie, director of arts and entertainment at Butchart Gardens, agrees. He says that, because outside skating rinks are rare in Victoria, the public loves Butchart's 307-square-metre rink during the Christmas season. He adds that theirs is designed to stay frozen in weather conditions up to 12°C.

Other Butchart crowd-pleasers over the holidays include the carollers in Dickensian costumes, a brass band, and the "Twelve Days of Christmas" displays located throughout the grounds. Visitors also love the wrapped trees: more than 100 strings of lights outline the form and branches of each tree against the night sky. Carrie says the dozen or so wrapped trees "take people's breath away" and are probably the most popular display of all.

The idea for the Christmas displays at Butchart Gardens originated 22 years ago when

the management team put their heads together to come up with a reason for people to visit at a slow time of year. The holiday theme idea was well received by former owner, Ian Ross, and the winter decorations started with lights in the sunken garden. The annual event has since become renowned throughout North America. In fact, the Butchart holiday display was designated a "Top 100 Event in North America" by the American Bus Association in 2007.

A lot of work goes into this annual undertaking. Preparations for The "Magic of Christmas" display begin in July when a crew of four start preliminary work on decorations. That number increases to eight in September, 12 in October, and by November a crew of 28 are dedicated to the Christmas event.

Staff members tie thousands of bows each year and arborists supervise the elaborate wrapping

of lights around the trees. Christmas wreaths of red holly berries and white winter berries, along with freshly cut evergreen swags, line the walkways and decorate lamp posts. The popular "Twelve Days of Christmas" displays are unpacked, occasionally redesigned, and carefully put in place. In recent years, staff have begun replacing the old light bulbs with new, energy efficient LED bulbs, which now account for more than 30 per cent of the thousands of Christmas lights illuminating the event.

"The highlight for me," says Carrie, "is that moment [before opening] when all the staff who have been working so hard stand back and smile, with a sense of pride and ownership." He adds, "It can't help but put you in the right spirit. For so many people, it is just part of their Christmas tradition." 🕯

Editor's note: The Butchart Gardens Christmas display runs from December 1 to January 6, 2009. If you wish to avoid big crowds, you're advised to come in the first two weeks of December.



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Eleven Seconds to Sold

Home staging gives realtors and sellers a competitive edge in today's market.

BY ALISA GORDANEER



Above: Home stagers Diana Barton (left) and Allison Howe prepare a bedroom for showing. PHOTO COURTESY OF HOME STYLE SOLUTIONS

ELEVEN SECONDS. That's the window of time it takes a potential homebuyer to decide not to buy a house when they first see it, according to home stager Diana Barton, of Home Style Solutions. And given today's real estate market, making a good impression in those precious first seconds has become the goal of many homesellers.

"When buyers pass through a door to a home, they are looking at it critically to identify reasons not to buy," explains Victoria Realtor Jane Johnston, who now uses home staging to ensure her listings make great first impressions. "I've found that staging minimizes [buyers'] objections."

By making simple changes to "neutralize" a home's look, staging is a way of making a house more appealing, right from the beginning. "Homes that are staged sell faster because the home is being set up to sell, rather than to live," says Johnston, explaining that a staged kitchen, for example, would have few appliances on the counter. "This is not practical for everyday living, but it allows the buyer to see the space clearly and decide how they want to use it."

Home staging has become a fast-growing business for Barton. After less than two years, her company's "First Impressions" service — which gives realtors and homeowners a to-do list of ways to spruce up a home for sale — has taken off, and Barton says Home Style Solutions has already staged more than 200 homes. Barton and business partner Allison Howe explain the challenge is to imagine how a home is best showcased, and then to help the seller make simple but effective changes. They even have an inventory of furniture, accessories and linens, which sellers can rent to dress up their space.

Often, it simply takes a few easy changes to get a house ready to sell. Moving furniture around, removing clutter and freshening paint colours are all quick, simple staging steps meant to improve the buyer's first impression.

Howe describes the staged look as "hotel chic" — with clean, fresh linens, neutral but appealing décor, and high-end furnishings that make buyers feel as though they could just move right in

Speaking Volumes

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but sometimes a "before & after" comparison simply says it all. At top right is a "before" photo taken of a dining area in a home listed by Victoria realtor Jane Johnston. At first blush, the room seems pleasant enough, but there are some fundamental problems that could turn off potential buyers.

"There's a lot of clutter in the 'before' photo," says Johnston, who hired Home Style Solutions to give the space a makeover. "You want to depersonalize your home and create little vignettes throughout the house where potential buyers can envision themselves." She adds, "Give them something to look at, but don't overwhelm them."

To that end, if you study the "after" photo at bottom right, you can see the bookshelf was largely cleared out and the personal memorabilia on the walls and shelf were removed, replaced by a wine rack that matches the art motif on the wall. As well, items are strategically placed to make it more spacious.

"The stagers opened it up a lot," says Johnston. "When you first went in the focus was on all the stuff. Now the room flows much better and looks more contemporary."

The space is also much brighter. Heeding the stager's advice, the owners painted the walls and installed lights in three corners, and a fixture over the kitchen table.

In all, the cost of staging and improving this room was approximately \$200, but this modest investment could result in thousands more dollars on the selling price.



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Top: Kitchen counters should be free of clutter so buyers can imagine how they might use the space. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PROPERTIES IN VICTORIA PROFESSIONALS™

Bottom: Crisp new linens make a tremendous difference for showing bedrooms. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PROPERTIES IN VICTORIA PROFESSIONALS™

explains, staging can often cost thousands of dollars less than sellers might think. "We're very realistic and sensitive to what the seller has the time and money to do."

staged homes are more likely to sell for closer to their asking price

Staging can also make a tremendous difference with estate sales and homes where the sellers have grown so accustomed to their furnishings they may not have considered how their home could be better displayed. In fact, even some people who aren't selling now use home use stagers to get fresh ideas for décor, and a growing number of realtors (including Johnston) are offering staging as part of their service to their clients.

For Victoria realtor Bill Ethier, staging is a way to help clients eliminate clutter and bring out the lines of an occupied house with carefully placed furniture, or show how a vacant home could potentially look. In either case, he says, "staging makes sense because it makes a home more appealing."

He adds, "in this market that gives you an edge on the competition." To be sure, if 11 seconds is the difference between "for sale" and "sold", there's no better investment in time. 🐦

and live an ideal life of quality and comfort.

Cost for an initial staging consultation is just over \$200, but the difference it can make can add up to thousands, as staged homes are more likely to sell for closer to their asking price. Plus, Barton



10 Quick Home Staging Tips

ELIMINATE CLUTTER AND PERSONAL OBJECTS

Prospective buyers want to feel as though they're buying a fresh house. They don't want to see slippers under the bed and toiletries on bathroom counters.

REMOVE FAMILY PHOTOS AND PERSONAL MEMENTOS

A potential buyer should be focused on the property, not trying to figure out who lives there.

INVEST IN FRESH FIBRES

Purchasing (or renting) chic linens for the bedroom(s) and towels for the bathroom(s) provides significant impact at an affordable cost.

TIDY UP

"When buyers go into a clean home they feel like they are getting something that has been well taken care of and is worth the asking price," says Victoria realtor Jane Johnston. "If it looks awful or unsightly, they'll just feel overwhelmed and walk away."

SHOW EACH ROOM'S INTENDED PURPOSE

If you've been using a bedroom as a home office, turn it back into a bedroom.

DON'T BLOCK THE WINDOWS

Move furniture away from windows so buyers have a clear view.

CHOOSE NEUTRAL, SOOTHING PAINT COLOURS

Make the home as universally appealing as possible. Now is not the time for bold pink fashion statement walls.

ALLOCATE RESOURCES WHERE IT COUNTS

If you have to choose just a few rooms to stage, focus on the front entry, master bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.

ENHANCE THE HOME'S CURB APPEAL

Power-wash concrete and exterior surfaces so potential buyers have a clean impression when they drive by. Also, consider whether your place needs some fresh paint.

LOOK AFTER THE GARDENS

Flowers don't last, so either replace them frequently or skip them altogether.

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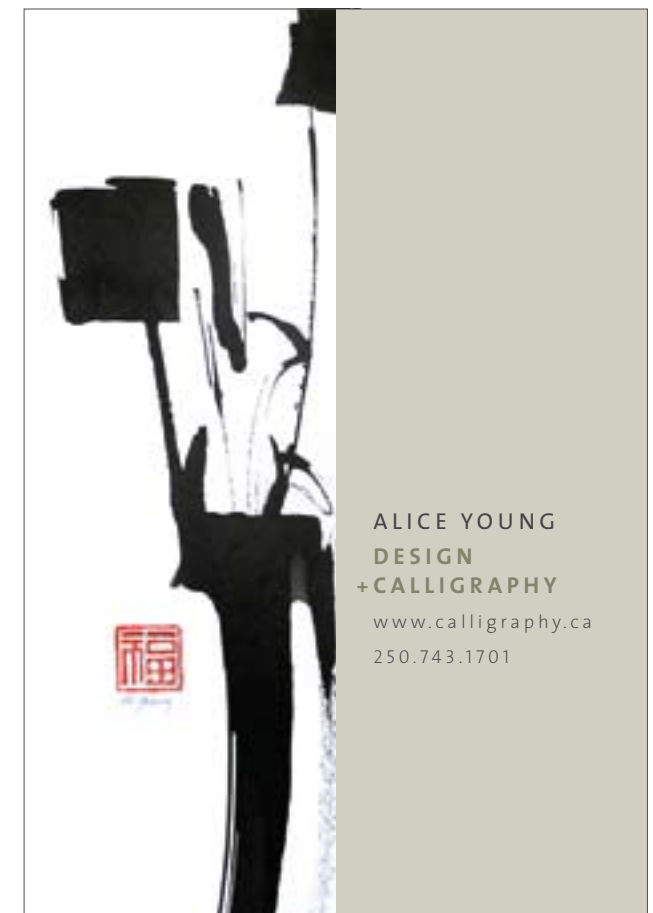
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Kastamonitsa Cure-All

With his homegrown Cretan olive oil, Restaurateur Paul Psyllakis is waking the world up to a delicious and healthy Mediterranean secret.

BY ALEXANDRA VAN TOL



Above: Paul Psyllakis, proprietor of the Black Olive Restaurant in Victoria, swears by the health benefits of olive oil. So much so that he imbibes a spoonful a day. PHOTO: GARTH EICHEL

IF I TOLD YOU SOMETHING could lower your cholesterol, control your diabetes, reduce your risk of colon cancer, sexy your stirfries *and* add years to your life – all for the price of a new trade paperback – I’ll bet you’d want a piece of it. Or a spoonful, as the case may be.

Paul Psyllakis, owner of The Black Olive Restaurant in Victoria, tells me such a thing exists. It’s called olive oil. Specifically, he’s talking about the slippery elixir of life that hails from his ancestral village of Kastamonitsa, on the Greek isle of Crete.

When Psyllakis began using Kastamonitsa olive oil several years ago, his customers noticed an immediate difference. Was it a new chef, they wanted to know? Well, no – nothing so complicated. Just a different oil. Since then, Psyllakis has been delighting gourmards across the continent with the golden oil he ships over from the Kastamonitsa co-op – including oil squeezed from the fruit of his own family’s 900-year-old grove. His distribution list is still growing.

Cretan olives produce some of the finest oil on the planet. The tough little trees that took root in this island’s mineral-rich volcanic rock thousands of years ago are still producing today, despite being burned black by German soldiers in the Second World War and despite growing at the uppermost limit of what olive trees can handle. (At 1,600 feet, Kastamonitsa’s trees risk losing the entire year’s crop if the temperature drops below -2°C.)

“We crush the olives before they ripen,” Psyllakis says. “It

produces less oil, but it’s a better quality — more fruit to it.” But it’s what happens next that separates Kastamonitsa olive oil from the crowd: cold pressed, the oil is left to sit in stainless steel tanks for up to 90 days. No heat. No filtration. Just a slow, delicate settling. “Then we take the top and bottle it,” Psyllakis says. He pours a bit onto a plate as he speaks. “See how it spreads so slowly. It’s like honey.” He urges me to swallow a tea-spoon of it – straight up – just like he does every morning. It’s deep and smooth, tasting less of oil and more of olives than I expect. I ask Psyllakis the best way to enjoy it. With bread, he says, and a dash of sea salt. Or drizzle it over poached eggs. “You’ll notice the most flirtatious flavours on your palate.”

Flirty *and* healthy. Psyllakis (and medical researchers) attribute Cretans’ low rate of heart disease to the Mediterranean diet, of which olive oil forms the backbone. In his village, dozens of oldsters have passed the 100-year mark. “They don’t know exactly how old they are,” Psyllakis says, “but they remember when the Turks were there.”

The Turks left in 1898.

So go. Get you to the nearest grocer’s (see below). Grab the green bottle and enjoy the fruity flavours of Kastamonitsa while you get healthy. 🐼

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