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Brotherhood of Camels

We are frequent visitors to the Queen Charlotte Islands. It is one of the best kept secrets in Canada. It draws few visitors and those who do go there for a vacation are usually eco-tourists enjoying the fishing, kayaking and the island's natural wonders. Those of us who have visited return often because it is far away from the madding crowd. It has not been discovered by the Americans, the float and bloat crowd or the oversized motorhome traveler. It has no fast food chains, midget golf, wacky tourist attractions or ostentatious hotels. For that reason it does not appeal to most people. Thank God!

About six years ago Sue and I planned a hike that took us from the Tlell River mouth, up to Rose Spit and ending up at Tow Hill, a distance of about one hundred and twenty miles along the sea shore of the Naikoon Provincial Park. This really was an ambitious project considering we seldom hiked anything over fifteen miles.

It was also rather daunting as it is rarely hiked, and once having embarked, we would see no signs of humans or civilization until we got to Tow Hill. We had to take all our food, emergency medical aid, tents, sleeping bags, cooking equipment, clothing including fowl-weather gear, fishing rods and enough water for at least forty-eight hours. Accompanying us would be two very close friends, Roger and Katherine, who were considered fitter than we were.

We started training by hiking five to fifteen kilometres a day and culminated with a twenty-six kilometre hike from the farm to Water Valley Saloon a week before our departure. I prepared dried food and started putting aside the rations we would need for the trip.

Food and I have a very special relationship. I will eat almost anything provided that it has been prepared properly and seasoned correctly. Now to most people seasoning comprises of salt and pepper and maybe a ubiquitous sauce of sorts. I, on the other hand, consider seasoning to mean something different for each dish that I am preparing. My kitchen has shelves and shelves of different condiments, spices, an assortment of salts, dried herbs, many different oils, a staggering selection of vinegars and that is just for starters. Our restaurant has a walk-in cooler with more seasonings as well as fresh herbs.

By the time I had selected what I thought we would need for the six-day hike, I had three apple boxes filled to the brim with food and beverages. We still needed to take water with us for at least two days as there were not too many streams with potable water available on the hike. It was obvious that I would have to make some adjustments to the culinary load or hire a couple of mules just for the food alone.

I confess to being an unabashed romantic and a somewhat unrepentant hedonist. My idea of a simple picnic includes table cloths, wine glasses and simple five to seven course meal in the woods accompanied by soft romantic classical music and the absence of any other human with the exception of those sharing the picnic with me. Our little group would savour fine wines, enjoy a delicious repast and share intelligent conversation while enjoying the natural surroundings. It never works out that way but the imagination is half the trip.

In all the flurry and scurry of preparing for this trip I was trying to imagine what it would be like. Naturally my romantic notions had led me to a Shangri-la. After a hard days hike along the beach soaking in the sea, we'd arrive at the ideal camp spot for the night, set up our tents, refresh ourselves with a glass of Beaujolais and I would prepare the evening meal for the party. Replenished and satiated we gather around a campfire to discuss the events of the day, plan the next day's hike and philosophize about the glories of the wilderness whilst listening to the waves crashing on the shore. I couldn't wait.

However, the reality I was facing was what to sacrifice in the tuck box or where to rent mules, donkeys, camels or horses. I was told to lighten the load.

First to go was a modest selection of wines, truffle oil, raspberry vinegar, fleur de sel and about ten pounds of condiments. We were now down to two boxes. In the next selection process we eliminated a Single Malt, smoked oysters, Cars crackers, melba toast, Scotch Whiskey marmalade, a bottle of gourmet Greek olives, smoked Spanish Paprika and a bunch of other stuff. That left one and a half boxes. I could not be persuaded to leave anything else behind.

On the night before we left, the load was distributed amongst the four of us, with Sue taking the lightest load. The bags were methodically packed with special attention to weight distribution and accessibility. It is amazing how much you can get in those bags and how benign they look on the table, especially after a glass or two of wine.

When the packs were finally fully assembled, I remember almost going arse over tea kettle as I attempted to swing it onto my back. Instead of registering this as a potential problem I blamed the third glass of wine for my lack of strength and unsteady feet. After all, Sherpas could manage loads of well over one hundred pounds, so what was eighty-six pounds fully rigged?

The trip to the Charlottes took three days. Our first night was Prince George, the second at Prince Rupert, and then a seven-hour ferry trip across Hecate Strait to Skidigate and on to the Tlell River campground. The mood was jocund as we all shared a similar romantic notion about the trip and the leisure hours we would enjoy at the end of each days hike.

The first night at base camp played out like we imagined it. There was the sound of the sea, a gentle breeze, lamb chops perfectly seasoned and grilled on the campfire and served with baby vegetables and new baby potatoes slathered in butter, sprinkled with Five Peppercorn mix, Maldon salt and finished off with a few drops of fresh lemon juice. This medley was wrapped in tin foil and placed on the fire so that it cooked to perfection.

To accompany this meal was an excellent vintage of South African Pinotage. We finished off with hot chocolate and a dram Ardbeg Single Malt. Now, not all of these little luxuries were to accompany us on the trip. They were destined to stay behind in the vehicle and to be used after the hike.

The next day was perfect. The sun shone, there was not a cloud in the sky and no wind. The bags, rods and the ladies were dropped off while Roger and I drove the Jeep to the Ranger's station about a mile down the road and walked back to the drop off point to begin the hike.

The first real inkling that this was not going to be a cake walk was when I had to be helped into my backpack. There were no glasses of wine to blame this time, as I staggered around like a drunken fool trying to adjust to the punishing weight on my back and keep from falling either head first or on my back.

To add insult to injury we started the hike by following a trail through an old growth forest that twisted and turned, went up and down sharp slopes and was littered with dead fall that had to be either climbed or circumnavigated when, all the while, if we had just walked down to the Tlell River bank we would have had an easy walk along a flat broad path to the ocean. This tortuous route was nearly my undoing as I was certainly struggling to accommodate my load and yet be of assistance to Sue who was having a harder time than I was.

Eventually we arrived at the beach and headed north to Little Cape Ball Creek where we were to make our first stop. The perfect day, weather wise, was deteriorating pretty fast. There was a stiff breeze blowing and clouds forming on the horizon.

Fine Dining Saturday Evenings

March 15 & 29 ↻ April 12 & 26
May 3 & 31 ↻ June 7 & 14

Please note an important change to our Fine Dining:

We serve the following courses for **\$65.00**

Starter
Salad or Seafood
Soup
Sorbet
Entrée
(Choice of beef, lamb, fish or vegetarian)
Accompanied with vegetables in season.
Dessert
Tea or Coffee

There is an abbreviated version of this for the conservative diner for **\$45.00** per person. Choice of any three of the above plus a sorbet, which amounts to a four-course meal. It is essential to have your choice ahead of time. Menus will be published on our website,

www.pasu.com

Restaurant News

During the week

We are open Tuesdays to Saturdays for lunch and afternoon tea.

On Sunday

We will serve our Carvery Buffet or plate service if there are fewer than 15 reservations

Fine Dining

will commence in March.

Check our website for times and for any new information that will be posted.

Please remember

that we book up very quickly for Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day

Also

Remember that reservations are essential for the restaurant and recommended during the week.

The first obstacle came when we had to cross a creek that, at low tide would have been a trickle but now was engorged by the high Spring Tide. By now the packs felt as if they had increased weight to two hundred pounds and gaining an extra ten every mile traveled. To cross the creek we had to take off the packs, disrobe from the waist down, lift the packs over our head, roll up our shirts as far as possible and wade across this tidal creek.

That was the easy part. However, to consciously allow yourself to be loaded up like a beast of burden gave me a clear insight as to how camels must feel.

About twelve miles and four hours later we arrived at Cape Ball and a respectable grassy meadow perched on a little escarpment overlooking the ocean. To drop my pack knowing that I would not have to be harnessed up again for the rest of the day was the singular most blissful moment I can remember.

The weather had deteriorated and was definitely ominous. Roger and Katherine chose to set up their tent near the edge of the escarpment overlooking the ocean while we conservatively chose a more sheltered spot under giant conifers.

Supper consisted of rehydrated curry, Basmati rice and hot chocolate all prepared and consumed in relative silence. Amongst the four of us there was little energy to spare for casual conversation and what reserves we did have was spent silently contemplating whether we would advance or retreat.

As for that imagined romantic philosophical discussion around the campfire? Well we did not have the energy to collect wood and light a fire never mind look at each other and try to have an intelligent conversation. Besides which, large dark moisture-laden storm clouds were being carried in on gale force winds and the sea was wild and quite alarming.

This was not a romantic moment. This was one of those moments where you definitely felt insignificant and very vulnerable to the forces of nature. I have subsequently learned from an officer on BC Ferries that Hecate Strait is considered one of the most dangerous passages in the world.

That night torrential rain pelted the tent and gale force winds howled and shrieked and threatened to rip the fabric to shreds. In all this I slept feeling a little more secure under my tree and only giving a fleeting thought to Katherine and Roger baring the full brunt of the storm's fury perched with their little tent on the edge of the escarpment.

To be continued...



Loading the camel

Complete Store-Wide **SALE**

(Does not include consignment merchandise)

BUY ONE

and get the second of equal
or lesser value at

HALF PRICE

Applies to all regular-priced merchandise.

February 1 - 24

Mother's Day



Saturday Lunch Buffet

12 noon  \$24.95

Sunday Lunch Buffet

12 noon  \$24.95

Book early!

We fill up fast!

SEAFOOD EVENING

MARCH 8TH

A gourmet 7-course meal including fresh oysters, lobsters, prawns & other succulent seafood delights.

Our seafood is flown in fresh from Granville Island, therefore this will be a pre-ticketed event which includes GST and service.

\$80 PER PERSON

*Let us host your
**Private Function
or Wedding***

Valentines Erotic Gourmet Evening

♥ (Adults Only!) ♥

Once again by popular request we are having our special Valentine's Dinner menu where the food is daringly arranged and selected for its aphrodisiacal properties. If you are sensitive to amorous issues this is not for you! It has been so successful in the past that we are having two evenings planned.

Reservations are absolutely essential and this is a ticketed evening.

♥ Warm Intimate Atmosphere ♥

♥ 8 to 9 Gourmet Courses ♥

♥ Flowers on the Tables ♥

♥ Lamb as Entrée ♥

♥ Plate Service ♥

♥ Soft, Sexy Music ♥

...and a Night to Remember!

Arrive between 6:00 pm and 6:30 pm

♥ Dinner starts promptly at 7:00 pm ♥

Friday, 15th and Saturday, 16th February

♥ \$70.00 per person ♥

(GST and Service included)

IMPORTANT

We are listing some fun evenings that we want to do starting in March...

Seafood Night

8th March. See ad in this letter \$70

Spanish Gourmet Evening

Includes Tapas • Sat. 19th April..... \$65

Curry Night

Buffet Style • Sat. 24th May \$40

South African BBQ

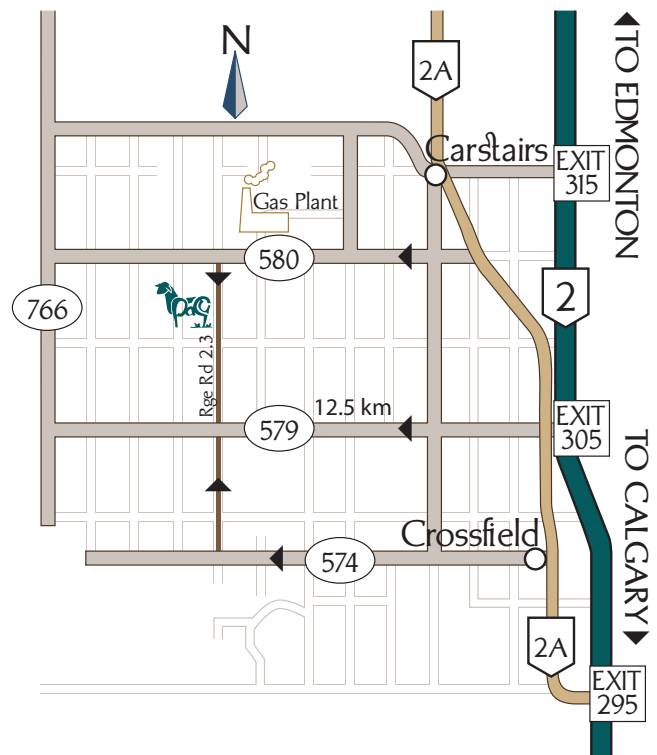
Steak, lamb, chicken, boerwors
& traditional trimmings • Sat. 28th June \$35

Sheep Manure

Dress your fall garden with Sheep Manure, ready for the spring and have a few bags in the potting shed for a great mix with potting soil. Phone first to make sure that bags are available or that there is a tractor operator if you are buying by the truck load.

Price \$5.00 per bag
6 bags for \$25.00

Never been to PaSu Farm?
Need directions?



Keep our map handy for your next trip down QE2.
We're easy to find, and would enjoy seeing you here!

Coming soon to www.pasu.com

- Sign up to receive notices of sales and web-only specials, along with handy tips and delectable recipes via our new email newsletter, tentatively dubbed "Sheep Sheet"!
- Online shopping available April 2008
- ...and much more!

Stay tuned as we continue to build our new site!

Shop Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday: 10 am – 5 pm MST

Sunday 12 pm – 5 pm MST

Closed Mondays

Restaurant Hours:

Tuesday to Sunday: 12 pm – 4 pm MST

Closed Mondays

Saturday Evening Fine Dining

Reservations Essential

Phone Toll Free: 1-800-679-7999