



Instead of frittering away your vacation, get some inspiration. Try snorkelling with salmon in Campbell River. Paradise Found Adventure Tours photo. Or hit the surf at Long Beach. Tourism BC photo.

Getting off your booty never felt so good

> BY CAROLYN ALI

What do you want to do on your summer vacation? *Relax* is likely the first thing that comes to mind. You probably want to have some fun, enjoy the much-anticipated warmer weather and long evenings, and take a break from the workaday routine. If only summer stretched out before us like it does for schoolkids, with months of freedom to do whatever we pleased. But most of us must compress the lazy, hazy days of summer into a week or two of carefully hoarded vacation—or just a few precious long weekends.

When holiday time is short, it's tempting to just flop on a lounge in your back yard or park yourself on a blanket at Kits Beach instead of planning, booking, and venturing off into the unknown. But sleeping in the noontday sun, as appealing as it might sound when you're working through lunch yet again, isn't necessarily the best way to relieve all that accumulated stress.

Elizabeth Dunn, assistant professor in the psychology department at UBC, researches what makes people happy. According to Dunn, it may not be what you think. She's found that people underestimate how much they would enjoy activities that require more effort than just zoning out.

"People fully recognize that it feels good to just veg out and lie on a beach," she tells the *Straight* in a phone interview. "But they sometimes fail to anticipate how good it could feel to do something that requires them to actually use their minds or do something physically active." That is, people don't want to haul themselves off the couch, but when they do, they're glad they did and they enjoy it more than they expected to.

Dunn also says her research, which will be published in the June 4 issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, has shown that people underestimate how good it would feel to interact with strangers rather than their romantic partner. Many people go on holiday with their partner and spend most of their time away together,

she explains, but meeting other people could help elevate their mood.

Planning something adventurous to do together is also a good idea. Dunn points to research by Stony Brook University social psychologist Art Aron, which she says indicates that "doing novel, exciting activities" with your partner can be more beneficial for your relationship than equally positive but more sedate activities. That's because Aron found that people attribute the novelty and arousal of the activity to their relationship.

However, Dunn doesn't dismiss the value of passive relaxation, and notes that people achieve stress reduction in different ways. She says that vegging out "can be good when all our personal resources are just exhausted". But after a couple of days taking it easy, it's a good idea to get up and do something stimulating.

The question is, what? You could vacation anywhere, but let's narrow it down to our beautiful province. Many great B.C. getaways are close to home, reachable by car on a long weekend. It's better to visit those that are further afield when you have more time, but if you can afford to fly, you can fit a lot into three or four days.

Sometimes you just need a little inspiration. Here are 10 activities around B.C., listed roughly in order of increasing challenge. For more ideas, see Tourism B.C.'s Web site at www.hellobc.com/ or call 604-435-5622.

FIND YOUR QI (Kamloops) Relaxation, rejuvenation, and revitalization are the principles behind Sunmore Ginseng Spa, which uses ginseng as its stress-busting weapon. The herb is said to calm the body and stimulate blood flow. Sunmore grows its own ginseng in the Kamloops Valley and manufactures products for export as well as the day spa. Lie back and enjoy treatments ranging from ginseng facials to salt body scrubs to full-on detoxifying massage. Finish with a Chinese tea ceremony in the tea garden. Info: (250) 372-2814, www.sunmoreginseng.com/spa/.

RIDE THE RAILS (Whistler) Too tired to move? All you have to do is

sit in your seat aboard the *Whistler Mountaineer* and let the stunning Sea-to-Sky scenery come to you. The journey from North Vancouver to Whistler takes three hours and features a 1917 open-air heritage observation car, should you decide to get up to catch a bit of a breeze. Once you get to the Olympic city, chill out in the mountains for a couple of days or bond with your loved one over a bungee jump, which is guaranteed to get the adrenaline flowing. For more information, call 604-606-8460, or visit www.whistlermountaineer.com/. (Online B.C.-resident summer specials, \$149 return, must be booked by June 30.) Info: www.tourismwhistler.com/, www.whistlerbungee.com/.

FOLLOW THE ALE TRAIL (Victoria) Every trip needs a purpose, and it's time to legitimize "just here for the beer". Four breweries are located within walking distance in Victoria's downtown core, making for an easy pub crawl. Logical order? Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub at 308 Catherine Street; Canoe Brewpub, Marina and Restaurant at 450 Swift Street; Buckerfield's Brewery (in Swans Suite Hotel) at 506 Pandora Avenue; and Hugo's Grill and Brewhouse at 625 Courtney Street. Chat up the locals, compare oatmeal stout and cherry-blossom ale, and release some tension with a time-honoured tradition. Really, it's all in the name of research. Info: www.spinnakers.com/, www.canoebrewpub.com/, www.swanshotel.com/; no Web site for Hugo's, call (250) 920-4844.

TAKE A LONG WALK ON A LONG BEACH (Tofino) It's hard to find a better place for a walk than the 20-kilometre-long Long Beach. Actually made up of a string of beaches separated by rocky headlands, the sandy ribbon between Tofino and Ucluelet remains largely undeveloped. Its edge-of-the-world feel suits solo soul-searching or a romantic stroll à deux. Listen to the surf crash, build a sandcastle, breathe... Then on to some serious surfing; schools abound to teach you how. Info: www.vancouverisland.travel/, www.tourismtofino.com/, www.longbeachmaps.com/.

EXPLORE HAIDA CULTURE (Queen Charlotte Islands) It may be remote, but Haida Gwaii is worth the trip. This pristine corner of B.C. known for its old-growth forests and serious sportfishing launches its Haida Heritage Centre on July 1. Located at Qay'llnagaay in Skidegate, the series of interconnected longhouses fronted by six totem poles evokes a traditional Haida seaside village. The centre will house the contents of the old museum—which detailed Haida history and culture—as well as performance spaces, a Bill Reid exhibition, a carving shed with dug-out canoes in the making, and more. Info: (250) 559-4643, www.haidaheritagecentre.com/, www.qcinfo.ca/.

COOK UP A BEAUTIFUL DAY (Cowichan Valley) Fairburn Farm Culinary Retreat and Guesthouse is set in Vancouver Island's picturesque Cowichan Valley, between Victoria and Nanaimo, where it's easy to get into the pastoral lifestyle. The 52-hectare farm has its own water-buffalo dairy, which produces genuine buffalo mozzarella. Chef and slow-food adherent Mara Jernigan teaches five-hour hands-on cooking classes every Saturday to August 25, starting off with a tour of Duncan's farmers market and ending with a meal on the veranda. She tailors the menu to participants' preference and skill level, from beginner to expert. Info: (250) 746-4637, www.fairburnfarm.bc.ca/.

SNORKEL WITH SALMON (Bella Coola Valley; Campbell River) Adventure guides in both of these regions give you the chance to snorkel in nature's very own aquarium. Don a wet suit and join biologists in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park for a three- to five-hour, raft-supported swim down the Atnarko River, where you will float by pink and spring salmon. Kynoch West Coast Adventures operates this tour in July and August. Info: (250) 982-2298, kynochadventures.com/. In Campbell River, it's possible to spot coho, steelhead, chum, and spring salmon on one of Paradise Found's tours, which run from early July to late October. The whole thing takes

three to four hours, with an option of running the rapids after you're done snorkelling. Info: 1-866-704-4611, www.paradisefound.bc.ca/.

LOVE A LLAMA (Prince George) In Nepal, trekkers commonly hire porters to haul their gear when they hike through the mountains. In northern B.C., you can ease your load with a llama. From July to September, Prince George-based Strider Adventures runs small-group hiking and camping trips aided by llamas. Hikes range from several days in the McGregor Range of the Rocky Mountains north-east of Prince George to weeklong pack trips northwest of Mount Robson Provincial Park. If you'd rather get to know the animals first, try a gentle half-day hike instead. Info: 1-800-665-7752, www.strideradventures.ca/, www.northernbctourism.com/.

SKIM THE SEA (Salt Spring Island) The splash-splish of a paddle slicing through the ocean may be the only sound you hear as you glide through the protected waters of the Southern Gulf Islands. Salt Spring-based outfits like Sea Otter Kayaking (1-877-537-5678, seaotterkayaking.com/) and Island Escapades (1-888-529-2567, islandescapades.com/) rent kayaks to experienced paddlers and offer guided day trips to nearby islands for everyone. The hardy can take on a multiday group-camping expedition. More outfitters and kayaking options can be found at www.vancouverisland.travel/outdoor/kayaking/.

CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN (Revelstoke) You may not scale all the granite peaks of the Selkirk Mountains, but from July through September, experienced climbers can attempt at least one. Revelstoke-based Selkirk Mountain Experience helicopters people of all skill levels to its Swiss-style chalet, which sits at 1,940 metres above sea level. Its hiking holidays run for three, four, or seven nights and feature treks through alpine flowers at the Durrand Glacier. A higher-altitude chalet is the base for a week of advanced alpine rock climbing. Info: (250) 837-2381, selkirkexperience.com/.

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