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Each year, on the shores of Vancouver Island's wild west coast, 20,000 grey whales migrate from the Baja Peninsula to Alaska's Bering Strait and beyond. During the month of March, in the shoreline communities of Tofino and Ucluelet, spring arrives with a big splash thanks to the Pacific Rim Whale Festival. More info at PacificRimWhaleFestival.com

Black Rock Oceanfront Resort is the perfect basecamp to enjoy all the festivities. Make your travel plans now to join the celebration for 2012! Info at blackrockresort.com

Words by Tracey Drake

STORM WARMING AT

BLACK ROCK OCEANFRONT RESORT

ONE OF THE MOST STUNNING
NEW OUTPOSTS ON CANADA'S
WILD PACIFIC COAST

One of the greatest winter treats in British Columbia is experiencing stormy weather on the west coast of Vancouver Island. One of the few places in the world where bad weather can be a really good thing, storm watching is a wondrous West Coast spectacle on British Columbia's Pacific Rim. All winter long, a low pressure system builds, delivering storm after storm of natural spectacle – raging waters, turbulent shorelines and mesmerizing storm watching. One of the best places to witness the angry winter seas is in Ucluelet, BC, and specifically from the viewpoints at Black Rock Oceanfront Resort.

The entire staff at Black Rock, starting at the top with general manager Adele Larkin, see storm season a little differently, and I was eager to experience their unique take – storm warming – firsthand. Deciding on the weekend girls' getaway experience, I brought along a very dear friend from Nanaimo, Karen Evans. What I hadn't realized was how great it would be to see the resort through the fresh eyes of a newcomer, as I have stayed at Black Rock on three previous occasions, and Karen had never been.



Above. The spectacular main lobby that exudes West Coast charm and sensibility.



Above. Oceanfront guest lounge at Drift Spa.

Black Rock Oceanfront Resort is a luxuriously laid back, oceanfront resort property on Vancouver Island's rugged Pacific Rim coast that everyone should experience at least once – especially during storm watching season. Built with an obvious respect for Mother Nature and the natural elements that surround the resort property, Black Rock effortlessly blends wood, glass, steel and rock into unpretentious architecture brilliance.

The oceanfront suite we checked into was the epitome of understated elegance. Our guestroom featured a large living area with fireplace, gourmet kitchen with separate dining room, splendid sleeping quarters, and spa-inspired bathroom with heated floors, soaker tub and rain shower, and a furnished balcony with the most remarkable views. If you come to the Pacific Rim to do a little storm watching, the private terraces at Black Rock are where you want to be.

Karen and I only see each other a few times a year so we had a lot of girl talk to catch up on. Given the extremely warm and cozy room, it would have been easy to stay put, with a few bottles of good wine, for the entire weekend.

I was beginning to understand why they called it storm warming here.

Later the first night, we headed to the resort's celebrated restaurant, Fetch, which is located in the main lodge building. The dining atmosphere is one of decidedly West Coast graciousness, with a touch of eclectic art and a wall of windows to the vast oceans below.

Internationally acclaimed Executive Chef Morné Van Antwerp, who joined the Black Rock team in June 2011, is a South African born chef who came to Ucluelet from The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts in Singapore. Chef Morné brings a level of international flair to the new menus at Black Rock, but never forgets to add the infusion of local flavours. "Our menus are created with locally sourced seasonal ingredients in mind."

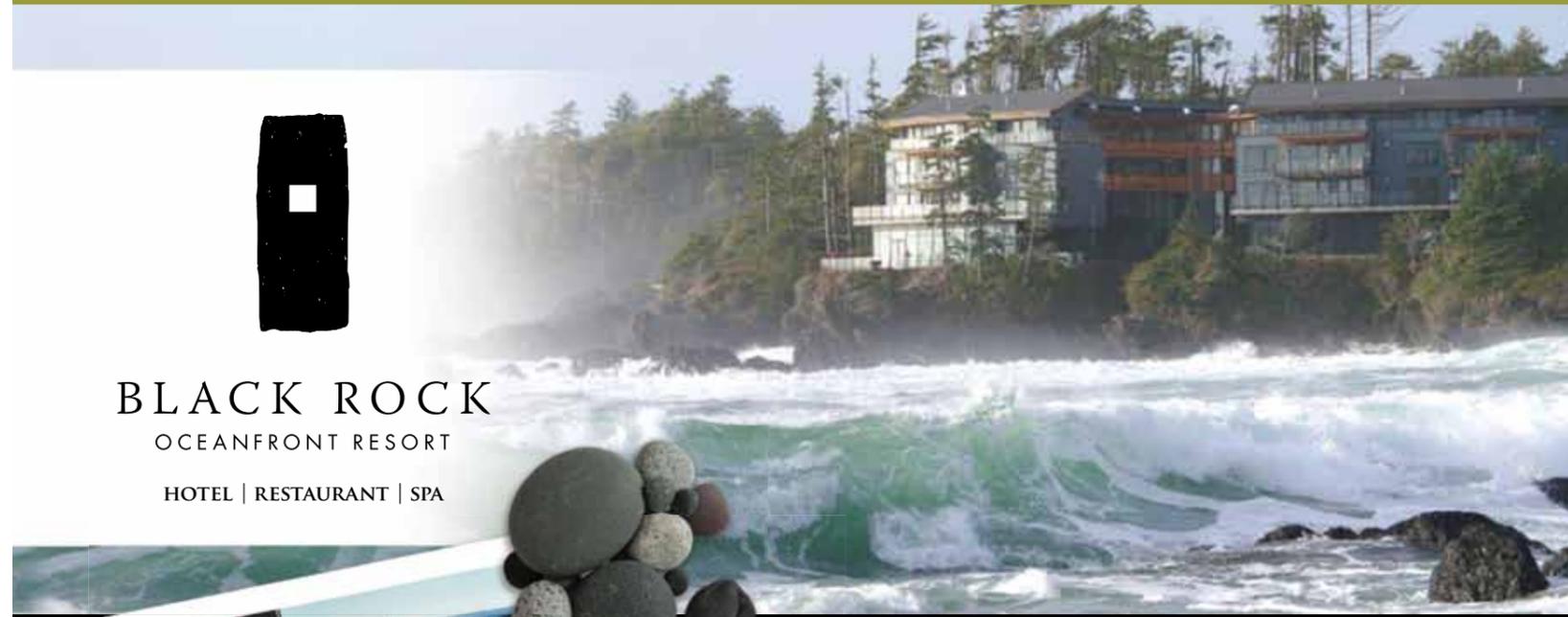
NATURALLY INSPIRING



BLACK ROCK

OCEANFRONT RESORT

HOTEL | RESTAURANT | SPA



Escape to the natural tranquility, beauty, and comfort of Black Rock Oceanfront Resort – an extraordinary retreat on Vancouver Island's rugged west coast. Our magnificent oceanfront resort in Ucluelet, British Columbia, combines contemporary comfort and quality service with the organic energy of Canada's western frontier for an enchanting vacation experience. Designed with a deep respect for the land and sea, Black Rock's innovative architecture contrasts the Wild Pacific landscape. Expansive spaces, natural light and breathtaking seaward vistas create a passionate connection to the freedom and serenity of Vancouver Island's magical coast.

Black Rock Resort is one of the most stunning new outposts on Canada's wild Pacific coast.

FETCH:

“The word Fetch is an oceanographic term referring to the distance a constant wind blows across a body of water without interruption of the generation of wave. The longer the Fetch length or distance, the higher the wave”



Above. Fetch Restaurant, with its awe-inspiring views is the ideal place to start the day.

Asking Chef Morné to choose the menu for us, Karen and I feasted on a magnificent dinner menu that included sampling two starters, four different main courses and a shared dessert. The dinner service was outstanding, the atmosphere was absolutely warming, and the food was simply sublime.

The ‘warming’ experience continued the next morning when we arrived at the hotel’s Drift Spa. As spa director Judy Berwick explained, “Drift Spa is a sanctuary with signature treatment rooms, including a private couple’s massage room overlooking the ocean, a hydrotherapy tub, and a serene oceanfront lounge for total relaxation.”

Karen experienced a thalassotherapy seaweed soak; a treatment that uses seaweed nutrients, marine minerals, sea salts and heat to nurture and purify the body; leaving you rejuvenated and relaxed.

I was treated to Drift’s signature Perfect Storm spa treatment which incorporates a thalasso seaweed gel wrap, Vichy shower, hot stones and aromatherapy massage to create an exceptionally unique spa experience. Drops of rain hit your body at a speed set to relieve sore muscles, revitalize the skin, and stimulate lymph circulation to rid toxins. The combination of the wrap, water shower, and massage was a wonderful treatment, which left me in a warm state of overall wellbeing for many days to follow.

FETCH MENU

STARTERS

OVEN ROASTED FALL SQUASH SOUP

Toasted pumpkin seeds, spiced crème fraiche and cariboo birch syrup

WEST COAST CHANTERELLE RISOTTO

Shaved black truffle, caramelized cipollini onion, thyme butter and parmesan tulle

MAINS

SEARED SCALLOPS AND CONFIT PORK BELLY

Parmesan liquid ravioli, red and yellow beet cured Uclulet sunchoke

SMOKED PACIFIC BLACK COD

Outlandish mussel and clam, lemongrass broth, shaved baby turnip and carrots, Du Puy lentil and rainbow chard

CANADIAN RANGELAND ELK TENDERLOIN

Soft herb crusted maple butter braised salsify, smoked blue potatoes and huckleberry jus

YARROW MEADOWS DUCK BREAST

Foie gras and duck rilette ‘bar’, Nanoose Edibles Farm quince paste, pickled beets, fingerling potato press and arugula puree

DESSERT

CINNAMON SUGAR DUSTED BEIGNETS

Maple whiskey toffee and crème fraiche



Chef Morné. Internationally acclaimed Executive Chef Morné Van Antwerp, who joined the Black Rock team in June 2011, is a South African born chef who came to Ucluelet from The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts in Singapore.

Just a few hours from Nanaimo, this has become a hot spot for islanders looking for a mini vacation. This stunning resort in Ucluelet is just minutes from some of the world’s best surfing, beaches, forests, restaurants and the unique village of Tofino.

Serious storm watching is one of those memorable life events that take your spirits to a deeper level. Black Rock simply adds elemental civility to the experience. 

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“IF ONLY HE KNEW HOW MUCH...”



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