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 Magical places away from
 the busy streets
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Big city charm
 Who knew that New York
 was full of B&Bs?
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TRAVEL

LATEST NEWS AT CALGARYHERALD.COM/TRAVEL

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 2011

TRAVEL NOTES

Google starts 'Hotel Finder'

WHAT'S NEW • Google, which purchased a leading flight software company earlier this year, has launched a new tool for finding hotels.

Hotel Finder is an "experimental search tool" designed to help users locate and book hotels, Google software engineer Andrew McCarthy said in a blog post.

Hotel Finder, which is restricted to the United States for now, lets a user refine their choice by geographic area using Google Maps and select hotels using various criteria including price, the number of stars and user ratings.

Users can create a "shortlist" of options before deciding to book a hotel directly or through online companies such as Priceline, Travelocity, Expedia or Hotels.com.

— Herald News Services

Banff National Park tops again

KUDOS • For those of us who live just a quick drive from one of our country's most beautiful national parks, this may not come as a big surprise.

We have the good fortune of living so close to the spectacular destination, which was recently selected as the country's top domestic attraction. Banff National Park — for the fourth year in a row — won the annual Canadian Travel Agents Choice Awards. It was selected by 4,800 travel agents across the country, who cast ballots in 24 different categories which range from destination, organizations and industry suppliers.

Boost your adrenalin in Europe

WHAT'S NEW • Sure, you can drive a Vauxhall Vectra on your next European holiday, but why not rent something a little sleeker and speedier like a Lotus Evora.

Hertz, the car rental agency, has partnered with Lotus to offer the Lotus Evora in several European countries as part of its Adrenalin Range in the Hertz Fun Collection.

Picture yourself zipping past vineyards down country roads in Bordeaux, leaving Mercedes-Benz



A mother grizzly grazes on the shoreline sedges of Kutzte Inlet midway along the Great Bear Rainforest coast.

Photos, Mark Sissons for the Calgary Herald

A great Grizzly voyage

Exploring
 the wild
 shores of B.C.'s
 Great Bear
 Rainforest

MARK SISSONS
 FOR THE CALGARY HERALD
 PRINCE RUPERT, B.C.

As dusk descends, an explosion of violence shatters the tranquility of the world's largest remaining tract of unspoiled ancient temperate rainforest. The chase is on.

A frantic deer bolts from the woods only metres from where our zodiac floats on the glassy calm estuary waters. On its heels races a sea wolf in a blur of black fur and fangs. Nostrils flaring, tongues flapping, predator and prey swim straight toward us, then veer off across the inlet.

Unable to overtake its swifter dinner on the hoof, the exhausted wolf abandons the chase and retreats to the rocky shore. There, it paces back and forth, eyeing us in frustration as hungry members of its pack



Wood carvings decorate the traditional Big House in Klemtu, a small Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nations village on B.C.'s spectacularly beautiful central coast.



A mother grizzly scans the area for unwelcome males as she and her cub graze on the shoreline sedges.

It wasn't until the 1990s that environmentalists coined the name Great Bear



Built in Vancouver in 1904 as a luxury racing yacht, the Maple Leaf also fished the Bering Sea for decades before being converted into a tourist-toting schooner in 1986.



Maple Leaf skipper Kevin Smith displays part of the day's catch of Dungeness crab, which chef Steve Letts later prepares for a buttery feast on deck.

drivers in your dust on the Autobahn or zipping by Rome's Coliseum.

The cars can be reserved — by people 30 years old and older who can show two credit cards. Non-European residents can reserve the cars for pick up at various airports in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the U.K.

What price for this kind of fun? About \$350 Cdn a day. Details at www.hertz.com.

— Calgary Herald



—Courtesy, Lotus

The Lotus Evora can be rented through Hertz rental agency in several European countries.

howl for updates from deep within B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest.

Named for the bears that inhabit its thickly forested islands and inlets — including grizzlies, American black bears and Spirit bears (a black bear born with a recessive gene that produces cream coloured fur) — this vast, mostly uninhabited archipelago twice the size of the Serengeti stretches from the northern tip of Vancouver Island to the Alaska border. It is also home to countless species of birds, marine life and other mammals, including coastal wolves that can hunt salmon from streams like bears and swim like sea otters.

"The Great Bear Rainforest is so remote that it's one of the few remaining inhabitable parts of the world that is completely black at night on satellite images," says Kevin Smith, owner and captain of the Maple Leaf, B.C.'s oldest operational tall ship. I'm aboard his 92-foot, two-masted, mahogany-lined schooner for a unique weeklong mid-summer nautical natural history tour.

Rainforest and began drawing public attention to the devastating logging practices that companies were inflicting on what they then called the Mid-Coast Timber Supply Area. In 2006, an agreement between the B.C. government and a coalition of conservationists, loggers, hunters, and First Nations established a 400-kilometre-long protected coastal area.

Today, only a handful of tourist-toting ships like the Maple Leaf operate along the coast of this magnificently rugged, rain-swept wilderness, where snow-capped peaks loom over precipitous, forested fjords that plunge into deep dark channel waters.

And what a ship the Maple Leaf is. Originally built in 1904 as a luxury racing yacht by Vancouver timber titan Alexander Maclaren, she began life as the queen of the West Coast sailing scene. Then resurfaced as the most legendary halibut longliner of her time, fishing the brutal Bering Sea for over 40 years.

Restored to her original glory in 1986, this maritime marvel has cruised the



A mother grizzly and her cub swim across an estuary near Khutze Inlet, midway along the Great Bear Rainforest coast.

coast from Bella Bella to Alaska ever since, introducing generations of eco-travellers to one of the world's last remaining truly wild places. Up here, mist often lingers in the tangy salt air like a primordial stage curtain, occasionally parted by rainbows to reveal a world of untouched natural beauty that Smith lovingly calls "a blueprint for how the world can repair itself."

During our voyage from Bella Bella to Prince Rupert, some days are blustery, and others gloriously sunny. But we are thankfully spared much of the pelting rain and gale

force winds that give this tempestuous stretch of the North Pacific such a stormy reputation.

Each day brings fresh adventures. We take frequent shore excursions, marching through boggy estuaries under the tutelage of the ship's naturalist, Briony Penn, searching for indigenous plants with names like queen's cup and dwarf dogwood, paintbrush and devil's club. There are soaks in hidden natural hot springs, forays in search of ancient petroglyphs, fishing off the Maple Leaf's stern, and sailing when weather permits. Most popular are

evenings on deck spent feasting on freshly caught giant Dungeness crabs and jumbo prawns, washed down with fine B.C. and international wines.

One brisk morning we stretch our sea legs following fresh wolf tracks along a deserted island's sandy white beach and hike through old growth forest, where we're careful to leave minimal traces of our passing. Another afternoon, we bless the ship at a thundering waterfall.

SEE GRIZZLY, PAGE 12



Photos, Mark Sissons, for the Calgary Herald

Maple Leaf first mate Greg Shea stretches to fill a tumbler from one of the many icy waterfalls during the ritual "blessing of the ship."

GRIZZLY: Magic all around in this ancient temperate rainforest

FROM II

This involves Captain Smith steering the Maple Leaf's bowsprit right to the spray-soaked edge of one of the countless waterfalls lining the route. Just close enough, it turns out, for first mate Greg Shea to fill an outstretched tumbler with arguably the purest H₂O on Earth.

Along the route we encounter few other traces of humanity until we pay a visit to Klemtu, an isolated Kitasoo and XaisXais First Nations village of 400 that's only accessible by boat or plane. Adorned with the clan emblems of the eagle, wolf, killer whale and raven, Klemtu's mammoth red cedar "Bighouse" hosts important cultural events — the naming of children, traditional potlaches and ceremonies to honour the deceased — that help to preserve Native culture all along this coastline.

Botany and cultural excursions aside, the most magnetic lure for most of the Maple Leaf's eight passengers is catching glimpses of whales, wolves, dolphins and, of course, bears. Since the elusive Spirit bear — estimated to now only number between 100 and 400 — rarely emerges from deep within the forests of Princess Royal and Gribble Islands until fall salmon spawning season, we pin our hopes on grizzly sightings, although Smith encourages us to lay our species checklists aside and simply "put ourselves in the path of the magic."

Turns out, the magic is all around us as we explore some of the same secluded bays, marshy inlets and swift flowing channels that Captain George Vancouver and other early European explorers once charted, and that First Nations peoples have called home for thousands of years.

Magic in the exuberance of white sided river dolphins and Dall's porpoises as they race alongside our ship, darting in and out of the water like aquatic bullet trains. In the friendly flicks of humpback tails, the slapstick routines of sea otters, and the precision-guided dive-bombing runs of eagles and sandhill cranes. And most powerfully, during our first close encounter with grizzlies in a waterfall-draped cove called Klutz Inlet.

Engine cut, our zodiac silently glides toward the inlet's shore, where we spot a 400-pound grizzly and her fluffy cub grazing on shoreline sedges and giant-leaved skunk cabbage. Everyone tenses with excitement, but not fear, because we're in good hands. With a decade of experience as a B.C. park ranger, Smith knows grizzlies



A bald eagle scans the water for prey from its perch high above the shores of the Great Bear Rainforest, the world's largest remaining tract of unspoiled ancient temperate rainforest.

If You Go

■ **About Maple Leaf Adventure:** Voted one of National Geographic Traveler's 2011 Tours of a Lifetime, Maple Leaf Adventures offers several small group, multi-day sailing cruises into the Great Bear Rainforest between April and October, as well as tours to Haida Gwaii, the Gulf Islands, Vancouver Island and Alaska's Inside Passage. For more information, visit mapleleafadventures.com or call 1-888-599-5323

■ **Getting there:** The Great Bear Rainforest trips start in Bella Bella and end in Prince Rupert, both of which are accessible by regular, daily commercial flights. Maple Leaf offers complete travel planning assistance and arranges for taxi or shuttle services to and from airports.

■ **Staying there:** Prince Rupert has a range of hotels and motels, including the Crest Hotel, which offers panoramic waterfront

presence, and let us drift closer. That's for two reasons, explains skipper Smith.

"With us nearby she knows that the male grizzlies will keep their distance because they are especially uncomfortable around humans," Smith says, pointing out that males may try to kill young cubs that are not their genetic offspring. "Mama bear is also relaxed because she knows that we're not here to shoot her," he adds.

Bear shootings have dropped dramatically since 2005, when the team of conservationists and scientists at Raincoast Conservation Foundation purchased the commercial hunting licence for a vast area here three times the size

views. In Bella Bella, no accommodation is necessary because guests of Maple Leaf Adventures arrive and depart for the Great Bear Rainforest on the same day.

■ **Things to do:** In Prince Rupert, explore the historic Cow Bay area, which is lined with interesting cafés and shops. From there, it is a short walk to the Museum of Northern B.C., which features traditional northwest coastal architecture and exhibits that explore the fascinating history of the area's First Nations. Also worth a visit is the Firehall Museum, which displays a rebuilt 1925 R.E.O. Speedwagon fire engine. Prince Rupert is also a world famous sport fishing destination.

■ **Conservation:** For more information about the Raincoast Conservation Foundation's efforts to protect the lands, waters and wildlife of coastal British Columbia, visit www.raincoast.org.

wolves — already threatened by loss of habitat and a declining salmon supply — from the crosshairs of high-powered rifles.

As our ursine neighbours munch their way toward the water's edge, they take turns rearing up on hind legs to sniff for danger and locate each other in the tall sedge. Then, as suddenly as the deer and wolf had plunged into the water, so do the bears. Startled by something (a nearby male?), they paddle past us like furry torpedoes, noses just clearing the water. Seconds later, they clamber onto the safety of the far shore. Then vanish into the dark woods.

No lingering like the frustrated sea wolf for this pair. Although the

Going your own way

Even happy couples need a holiday from each other

SARAH TRELAVEN
POSTMEDIA NEWS

I have never been in a relationship where I vacationed separately from my partner — though I have been in a number of relationships where I wished I had. I can recall sitting on a stoop in Paris not too long ago, eating a superb custard tart dotted with impeccable fresh raspberries, while my then-boyfriend complained about everything. All I could think was, "You are ruining this for me and I wish you would go away."

Some experts suggest that couples function better when they spend time apart, pursuing their individual interests instead of being attached at the hip. "The most successful relationships consist of two autonomous grown-ups who are able to be together, respect each other's autonomy and be apart, and trust when they are apart that the foundations are still solid," Kate Figs, author of *Couples: A History*, recently told *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper.

Plus, many couples simply don't share the same travel styles — I can't imagine loving anyone enough to go camping — and sometimes the obligations of life prohibit a couple from making simultaneous getaway plans. With summer in full swing, many couples are lining up their travel plans. But are separate vacations a good idea?

For Laurie Betito, psychologist, sex therapist and host of the Montreal radio show *Passion*, separate vacations are a necessity. Every year, the mother of two and her husband each try to get away for a week-long break; he goes golfing with friends and she goes to a professional conference, preferably in a warm locale. They both return to the family refreshed, relaxed and more appreciative. "I have my own bed and I do my own thing," Betito says. "I don't have to worry about feeding anyone — or getting up for anybody."

Carmen Findley, from Lower Nicola, B.C., and her husband of 38 years have never seen eye to eye when it comes to travel. "Early in our relationship, I learned his idea of vacation was to go to one lake and set up shop for two weeks; my idea was to get into the car and head across the country," Findley says.

Several years ago, while taking Spanish lessons, Findley decided to go to Mazatlan, Mexico — a destination that her husband had zero interest in.

So she struck out on her own for the first time, hopping on buses and finding cheap accommodation in the old part of town. "The very first night, I walked

to a restaurant, ordered my meal in Spanish, looked out at the sun setting over the Pacific Ocean, and I felt like I had the world by the tail," she says.

Separate trips can be a great chance to de-stress alone with your feet in the pool or catch up with friends whose everyday lives are similarly cluttered with work deadlines and the matching of freshly laundered socks. Furthermore, if you've always wanted to assume the lotus position with Buddhist monks on a mountaintop in Bhutan, but your partner would rather go to the Super Bowl, who says either of you has to give up that dream?

Of course, magic can happen when couples are lucky enough to have their travel dreams fall into sync. Jeremy Thomas and his wife, Niki, who live in England, spent 18 months travelling in Southeast Asia, China, New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, Fiji, the United States and Canada. While packing their bags, Thomas was nervous about spending all day, every day together. But they proved to be ideal travel companions. "In the whole of the trip I think we only had two arguments and they were probably both my fault," he says.

It can be tempting to read a couple's travel plans as some sort of relationship bellwether: If you really love your partner, why go paragliding in Turks and Caicos without them? But Beth Mares, a psychotherapist and marriage counsellor in Toronto, cautions against assumptions. "If a couple finds they don't like spending time together, then that's bad news," she points out. "But if they have separate interests they're happy pursuing, that suggests they're secure, mature and not overly dependent on each other."

I recently spoke with Figs, and she reassured her belief that one of the keys to a successful, sustainable relationship is pursuing independent interests and not wearing matching sweaters and turning everything into a "we" activity. "A good relationship is about accepting that you are always two different people," she says.

For some couples, travelling independently is a necessity. For others, having a big adventure without their partner is unimaginable. Of course, separate vacations and family vacations are not mutually exclusive; many couples do both.

Betito and her husband recharge their batteries individually, but family vacations are also a priority.

"We leave everything behind and make memories together," she says. "Like the time we all flew over the Grand Canyon and two of us puked our guts out."

Thomas says he and his wife recently toured Japan, Bulgaria and Egypt — and he doesn't anticipate doing any future trips separately. "I don't think I would enjoy a holiday if Niki wasn't there to help me laugh at the locals."

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of Yellowstone National Park, effectively blocking access to trophy hunters. This innovative approach has helped protect bears and other trophy hunting targets like coastal

can't resist glancing back at these colourful and curious creatures that have respectfully and peacefully entered the lair of the great bears.



A young coastal wolf patrols the shoreline looking for prey on one of the hundreds of coves dotting the Great Bear Rainforest coast.

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