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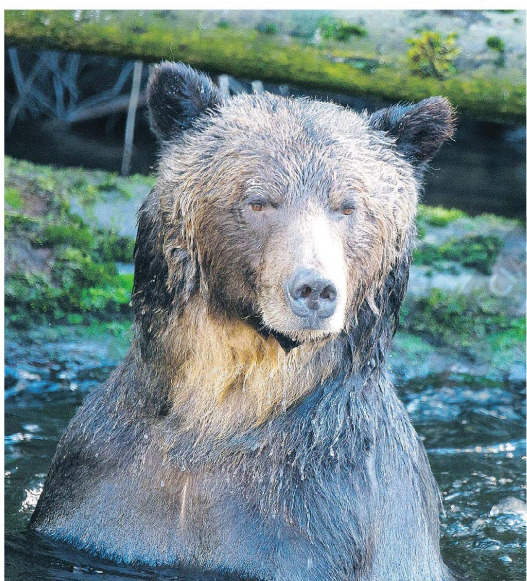
VANCOUVER SUN SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019 SECTION 6



The Great Bear Rainforest stretches some 400 kilometres from Knight Inlet to the Alaska Panhandle. PHOTOS: DESTINATION B.C.



Khutzeymateen Wilderness Lodge is one of many tour operators in the Great Bear Rainforest.



Above, the Nuxalk Nation has their homeland and territory in and around Bella Coola. Left, a bear spotted from a boat tour. Below, bald eagles and other wildlife are popular in the Great Bear Rainforest.



B.C. GETAWAYS

THE GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST

View rare wildlife, explore glacial fiords, soak in natural hot springs — choose your adventure

CAROLYN ALI

The Great Bear Rainforest — It's the only place in the world where you can spot the elusive white Kermode bear, also known as the "Spirit bear."
 A subspecies of black bear, the Kermode bear has naturally white fur. About 10 per cent of the black bears born in this area carry this recessive white gene.
 A vast area of pristine wilderness about the size of Ireland, the Great Bear Rainforest stretches some 400 kilometres along the central and northern coast of British Columbia from Knight Inlet to the Alaska Panhandle. With very few roads, the Great Bear Rainforest is accessed mainly by boat or float plane.
 It encompasses a quarter of the world's coastal temperate rainfor-

est and is the perfect place to soak in the silence and lush green surroundings.
 Bear-viewing season runs from June to October. The best chance to see bears is during the annual salmon run from late August to October as they come to gorge on fish.
 Set off from the village of Klenmtu to see the bears on their home turf of Princess Royal Island.
 Local cultural guides conduct tours to areas where there have been sightings. You can reserve waterfront accommodation in Klenmtu at Spirit Bear Lodge, a community-based ecotourism venture owned and operated by the Kitasoo/Kitanias First Nation.
 Need more? Wildlife viewing abounds, from eagles to grizzly bears, sea otters to dolphins and whales. There's kayaking and fish-

ing along the coast, and hiking through old-growth forests.
HOW TO GET THERE
 You can approach the Great Bear Rainforest in several different ways: roads get you only so far in the wilderness. One of the area's main gateways is Bella Coola in central B.C. Highway 20 from Williams Lake leads to Bella Coola, or fly there on scheduled flights from Vancouver. Other points of entry include Bella Bella, Klenmtu, and Prince Rupert. Or, venture into the Great Bear Rainforest by sailing. You can depart from Northern Vancouver Island on daytrips or multi-day trips. You can experience the area by ferry through BC Ferries' Inside Passage route and the Discovery Coast Connector.
 For a more intimate environ-

ment, take a small-ship cruise that offers on-board chef service, such as Maple Leaf Adventures or Outer Shores Expeditions. Alternatively, you can fly or sail into a remote lodge on the coast, such as Farewell Harbour Lodge, Nimmo Bay Resort or Knight Inlet Lodge, and base your adventure there.
WHAT TO DO
 From Bella Coola, head out on a wildlife-viewing safari with Bella Coola Grizzly Tours, or go on a boat ride through glacial fiords to a natural hot springs, where you can have a soak before tucking into a barbecue lunch.
 From Tweedsmuir Park Lodge, go heli-hiking in the Bella Coola Valley, take a guided nature walk, go birdwatching, or simply float down a river and take in the maj-

esty. At the Talleho Cannery watch salmon and trout spawning in late August and learn about this history of the salmon-processing industry.
 From Prince Rupert, you can head out on the water with Prince Rupert Adventure Tours to the Khutzeymateen, which boasts the largest population of grizzly bears on Earth. You could also see humpback and grey whales from late July to September.
 If you're keen on whale watching, the Johnstone Strait and the Broughton Archipelago (between mainland B.C. and northern Vancouver Island) are two of the best places in the world to spot orcas.
 Or, for a sport-fishing vacation, head to a fly-in lodge such as Central Coast Adventures near Bella Bella.
Provided by Destination B.C.

G4 SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019 VANCOUVER SUN

TRAVEL



The Lodge at Edgewood Tahoe occupies 95 hectares of pristine lakefront straddling the California-Nevada state line. MARK SISSONS

SNOWBOUND IN THE SIERRA NEVADA

Lake Tahoe ski resort destinations exceed their snowy reputations

MARK SISSONS

I'm in no danger of making any downhill enemies on this blistering mid-February morning at Northstar California Resort near Lake Tahoe.

After several days of non-stop blizzard-like conditions, more than enough fresh "pow" was fallen for everyone on this popular hill located midway between one of North America's funkier mountain towns and one of the world's most picturesque alpine lakes.

So much fluffy white stuff, in fact, that this February was the snowiest on record in the

Sierra Nevada, with well over six metres recorded in some Lake Tahoe ski areas, including nearby Heavenly Mountain Resort.

Good news for peripatetic ski bums like me.

Fat skis pointed down the fall line of a run off Northstar's peak called Springboard, I launch into what I expect to be an epic schuss of S-shaped turns while chairlift riders watch enviously from above.

Straddling the California-Nevada border, Lake Tahoe's ski areas receive reliably massive amounts of winter snowfall,

with some reporting over fifteen metres during a typical season.

Featuring nearly two thousand hectares of skiable terrain, Heavenly claims to enjoy more than 300 days a year of sunshine. On those blizzard days, the views of nearby Lake Tahoe are stunning, with its topaz water ringed by snow-capped peaks. Heavenly is also famous for its lively après scene that includes casinos on the Nevada side. Smaller and mellow, Northstar is a family-friendly hill offering plenty of cruiser-friendly corduroy and a swishy purpose-built village at its base dominated by the ultra-luxurious ski-in, ski-out Ritz Carlton South Tahoe.

Both resorts are members of Vail Resorts' Epic Pass, which offers unlimited, unrestricted

access to 19 mountain resorts—including Whistler Blackcomb.

Arriving in Reno on an Alaska Airlines flight from Vancouver, I catch a shuttle to the Lodge at Edgewood Tahoe—a new five-star resort nestled at the water's edge on Lake Tahoe's south shore—just before a blizzard descends upon the region.

Across the road are late-night temptations at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Lake Tahoe, Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Mont-Bleu Resort Casino and Spa.

But I only have eyes on tomorrow's promise of a Heavenly powder prize.

The next morning as I exit Heavenly's main gondola I'm facing a near white out, my guide steers us into the trees, where the visibility is still relatively

good. Renowned for its advanced gladed skiing, this mountain more than delivers, and soon I'm slicing through gloriously deep powder amid nicely spaced giant pines.

A successful ski day ends with me watching fat snowflakes evaporate in the steaming water of the Edgewood's outdoor hot tub.

'RITZAWAY'

My next destination is Northstar, which I reach just before the same snowstorm that has been stalking me now closes all roads in and out of the area. I'm only in danger of overexerting while snowed in at the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe, a five-star ski-in/ski-out mid-mountain gem offering deluxe accommodation, a 16,000-square-foot full-service spa, heated outdoor pool and Jacuzzi open year-round, a ski concierge and plenty of very fine dining.

SEE SIERRA ON G5

TRAVEL BRIEFS

France's Marseille to get image makeover

France's much-maligned second city is to get a major makeover in an effort to throw off its image as a dirty and crime-ridden. Hundreds of trees will be planted and several streets will be turned over to pedestrians under the US\$90-million, three-year project. The first phase, which includes pedestrianizing the lower part of the famed Canèbre high street, is to be completed by this summer, according to the Made in Marseille website. In all, 72 hectares of streets and open spaces will be made off-limits to cars as civic officials try to increase retail sales and draw visitors to the gritty port city, which has "deteriorated over time."

With a diverse population in excess of 850,000, Marseille has taken strides to improve its appeal, with a redeveloped waterfront and new museums and galleries, but it has been unable to shake its reputation for gang crime and urban deprivation.

U.K. e-gates to benefit Canadian travellers

Britain is making it easier for Canadians and several other nationalities to travel through U.K. airports. British finance minister Philip Hammond announced in his spring statement that citizens of Canada, as well as the U.S., New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, will be able to use electronic gates at British airports, and at Euro-sch terminals, starting in June. As Britain prepares to exit the European Union, Hammond said the move sends a signal that the U.K. remains "open for business." He said the e-gates will eliminate the need for landing cards and significantly reduce lines, improve passenger flow and speed up the processing of travellers arriving in Britain.

Aussie tourism slogan is too edgy for some

A deeply offensive slur, or a childish but savvy marketing gimmick? That's the debate raging in Australia after the unveiling



Marseille hopes to refurbish its image by planting more trees and turning streets over to pedestrians. FILES

ing of a provocative new tourism slogan. The Northern Territory sparked outrage when it unveiled the tag—"CU in the NT"—in an apparent reference to one of the most taboo of swear words. It has divided the community, the Sydney Morning Herald reported, with some loving the cheeky campaign and others loathing it. The

paper said the C-word is a feature of the vernacular in Darwin, the territory's capital, but "many city dwellers don't want it showed in their faces." The city has enacted bylaws restricting where the slogan can be displayed after receiving numerous complaints.

Compiled by Andre Ramshaw
Postmedia News

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TRAVEL



Northstar California Resort is home to meticulously groomed runs and award-winning terrain parks. PHOTOS: MARK SISSONS

Dining at the Ritz and taking on massive amounts of powder

SIERRA FROM G4

Mid-afternoon snacks at the Ritz include a Charcuterie board and raw bar of chef favourites like chilled shrimp cocktail and oysters on the half shell—all served with Moët & Chandon champagne. Après cocktails in the lofty lobby ringed by giant windows offering sweeping views of Marin Valley are followed by dinner at on-site restaurant, Manzanita. It's signature dish is a 70 oz. rib-eye Tomahawk share plate served with truffle, black garlic aioli, heirloom potato and Swiss chard.

The next morning, the storm has subsided but Northstar and Heavenly are still closed due to lightning strikes and high winds.

With the roads finally open, I set out to explore the nearby ski-bum town of Truckee. A logging and railroad crossroads in the 19th century, Truckee retains an Old West vibe, especially along its carefully restored main street, lined with historical sites, galleries, cafés and boutiques.



Truckee's popular eatery, Jax At The Tracks, serves American classics in an old-school diner setting.

Back at the Ritz, fresh snow promises an epic morning to come. Up early, I'm one of the first skiers up the chair, first tracks bound and ready to play in what Tahoe locals fondly call Sierra cement.

Which brings me to Spring-wood, and its promise of un-groomed glory. Plowing into its

powder so deep that I immediately sink to my thighs, I barely make it halfway down the run before coming to a halt, unable to continue on downward momentum alone.

Laughing at the irony of getting more 'pow' than I could ever wish for, I do end up thankful for friends on a powder day after all.

Friends like the ski patroller who follows me on even fatter skies, enabling her to float higher and break trail, creating a path all the way to the chairlift for me to follow. Given the insane amount of snowfall I've experienced across the Lake Tahoe ski area these past few days, second tracks are just fine with me.

IF YOU GO

Air Canada flies non-stop from Vancouver to Sacramento, Calif. From there, it's a 2.5-hour drive to Heavenly. Alternatively, you can fly to Reno-Lake Tahoe International Airport via Seattle or Portland, then drive or take a shuttle for just over an hour. Northstar and Heavenly are about an hour apart by car.

WHERE TO STAY

■ Featuring ski-in/ski-out access to Northstar, this luxurious Lake Tahoe resort offers a spa, 2 outdoor swimming pools and 8 restaurants. ritzcarlton.com/en/hotels/california/lake-tahoe

■ Located on the shore of Lake Tahoe and surrounded by a world-class golf course, the recently opened Lodge at Edgewood Tahoe offers luxe accommodation within 3 km of Heavenly. edgewoodtaho.com

■ Epic Passes for winter 2019-20 are on sale and offer an Epic Day Pass option for those who don't want to commit to a season pass. epicpass.com

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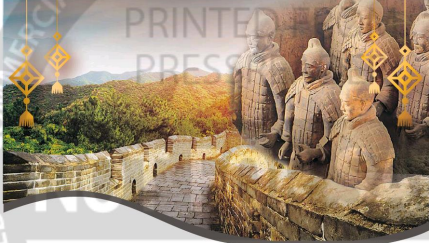
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