



# OUTDOOR RECREATION

Tahsis is located on the west edge of Vancouver Island – a rugged landscape of lush rainforest and steep fjord-like mountains, swept by the fresh strong winds of the wild Pacific Ocean. This pristine coastal geography is the setting for some of the best recreation opportunities on Vancouver Island. A few new guiding operations offering adventure tours and businesses providing support services have established in Tahsis over the last few years.

With the historic setting, monuments, and natural beauty, just walking around Tahsis is an adventure; West Bay Park, the Leiner River Estuary Trail, and Leiner River Campsite are close by.

Hikers are discovering the uncrowded trails and dramatic vistas, including the internationally famous Nootka Trail. Kayakers are enjoying the sheltered

inlet waters, the rugged coastal scenery, and abundant wildlife. Strong inflow and outflow winds and the nearby Pacific Ocean create great conditions for Windsurfers & Kite Boarders in Tahsis Inlet.

Tahsis Inlet, Nootka Sound, and Esperanza Inlet offer areas of strong tidal activity and diverse marine life, conditions which attract divers who have the best chance in BC to view the prehistoric species of deep water 6 gill sharks.

Surfers are attracted by the wild Pacific waves off Nootka Island and Brooks Peninsula — a climatic pocket that produces waters of the same temperature as those off the coast of Northern California. Climbers and cavers find the local areas of karst landscape and exposed rock to offer some of Vancouver Island’s best caving, climbing, and bouldering.

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## ◆TAHSIS – SHORT WALKS AND HIKES

### Tahsis Original Townsite

Just before the A-frame Church on South Maquinna is the foot of the Cardiac Climb stairs, a steep and demanding climb. Walking around this section of the old town site is very rewarding for those interested in architecture, as this area features old float homes from the 1940s (the oldest in Tahsis) and the heritage building housing St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church.

Continue on down South Maquinna Drive to Tipperary, then walk around the “town-site” to see homes from the 1950s plus a spectacular view of the inlet from Tipperary

Park at the top of Princess Victoria View.



*St Joseph’s Church*

As South Maquinna heads down toward the Public Boat Launch, there is a picnic table and sign marking Ubedam Trail... a short hike up to Discovery Crescent and a popular shortcut for residents. Don’t forget to drop by Captain Cook’s Pub at the Maquinna Resort to see the carved and painted murals created in the 1970s by local First Nation artist Art Nicolaye.

To learn about Tahsis heritage sites as you explore, pick up the Tahsis Historical Walking Tour brochure from the Tahsis Recreation

Centre, the Tahsis Chamber of Commerce Info Centre, or online at [www.tahsis.ca/guides](http://www.tahsis.ca/guides).

### West Bay Park

A short drive past the Maquinna Resort is the turnaround and parking lot for West Bay Park. There are washrooms, and stairs down to the rock beach at West Bay. This sheltered little bay is an exception to the deep waters of Tahsis Inlet; it is shallow and southwesterly facing, catching the sun and warming up to comfortable swimming temperatures. Locals frequently come down here to swim, sunbath and walk the short trails in this area.



*Leiner River Campsite*

### Tahsis Heliport and Tahsis River Bridges

Back at the head of Alpine View is the Tahsis Heliport, and a very walk-able waterfront section that is popular with locals walking their dogs. There is an expansive panorama view of the head of the Inlet, lots of local marine bird life and convenient parking. The bridge close by is a great spot to view spawning salmon going up the river in the fall. Stroll down North Maquinna to the second bridge over the Tahsis

River, another great spot to view wildlife, bird life, and spawning salmon.

### Leiner River Campsite

3 km (2 miles) out of Tahsis towards Gold River and just before the Leiner River Bridge is the Leiner River Campsite. Walk around and explore this section of the Leiner River, where the river expands out into a picturesque little swimming hole with a swing rope.

### Leiner River Estuary Trail

This 2 km long trail — under construction in the winter of 2004/2005 — provides excellent wildlife viewing opportunities right on the doorstep of Tahsis. This route is a level trail with boardwalks and viewing platforms on the salt marshes and along the Leiner River where it meets the sea. Wildlife often seen here include Trumpeter Swans, hawks, eagles, seals, salmon and bears. Many birds stop over here on their annual migrations. A riverside walking trail will link the boardwalk to the Leiner River Campsite. The trail access is from the Tahsis road, just 500 metres short of town and is well marked. There is a parking lot and washroom at the trail head. This makes an easy afternoon stroll close to the village.

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## ◆HIKING TRAILS NEAR TAHSIS◆

### Leiner Bouldering Trail

This short loop trail wanders along a scenic stretch of the Leiner River where rock climbers can practice their skills on the numerous house-sized boulders that litter the slopes of the narrow valley. At one point the trail passes through a short ‘cave’ between boulders. The Leiner’s deep azure pools are alive in the fall with spawning salmon.

Access to the trail is 30 metres east of the Leiner Bridge off the road to Tahsis, 3 km from town, on the upstream right bank. There is ample parking across the road. The loop walk is about 30 minutes long but is strenuous with some rocks to climb over.

### Coral Cave and the Lookout

A great place to start a more extended hike is from West Bay Park, just past Maquinna Resort at the end of town. There are shorter trails accessed from the



*View from Lookout to Nootka*

turnaround at West Bay, or you can backtrack and go up the logging road (only during weekends when there is no active logging taking place) and head for the Coral Cave or The Lookout. Either destination is about 3 to 4

hours to reach for an experienced hiker, and both spots offer breathtaking views of the Tahsis Inlet. For more detailed directions check out Caving and the directions to Coral Cave.

### Maquinna Trail

This rugged route was immortalized in the book “White Slaves of the Nootka” as the ridge that ancestral Chief Maquinna sojourned on. It follows



the ridge that rises between the Leiner and Tahsis River valleys directly east of the village.

Bushwacking will be necessary as this is a seldom used trail. While the first part of the hike is moderately steep, one is rewarded by increasingly spectacular views of Tahsis Inlet and the surrounding peaks. The lower section is forested with Douglas Fir with some Dogwood, rare on the west coast. Above 450 metres the ascent is more gradual and the route is mostly a semi-open sub alpine environment. Water is rare and should be carried. For the most intrepid mountaineers, an 8 km (5 mile) hike along the gently undulating ridge brings one to two small lakes below Mount Leiner which are 1,456 metres (5,000 feet) high.



To find the trailhead, leave Tahsis (toward Gold River) but stop where the road leaves the inlet and heads inland, within sight of town. The trail entrance is flagged and heads up hill from here. The route is flagged up to the 800 metres elevation (2,600 feet), and can be followed further in clear weather by staying on the obvious ridge line.

### Woss Lake Grease Trail

This ancient trade route was used by First Nations and crosses Vancouver Island from its southern terminus in Tahsis. The route followed the Tahsis River to its headwaters and over a pass to Woss Lake, where the natives paddled the lake and then down the Nimpkish River to the ocean on the northeast side of Vancouver Island. Although not maintained as a marked route, this trail begins at the north end of the Tahsis Dump,

follow N. Maquinna Street to the north end of



*Nootka Trail - Maquinna Point*

town and over the bridges. The route follows the flat valley bottom, often following the Tahsis River or its dry (in summer) watercourse. Occasionally it follows old remnants of a logging road left from when the valley was logged in the 1940s. Much of this road has been obliterated by river erosion since then. Spectacular views of Rugged Mountain (1,875 metres, 6,151 feet) greet the visitor as they pass the base. Mountaineers may want to use this route as an access to the aptly named Rugged and its glacier, the largest on Vancouver Island. The glacier is a steep hike of 1,000 metres (3,200 feet)

elevation west of the highest point on the trail; there is no marked route up, refer to a topographical map. The Woss Lake trail ascends steeply only at the headwaters and reaches a high point of 550 metres (1,800 feet) before descending to Woss Lake at 140 metres (500 feet). There are no roads from this end of the lake (still within Rugged Mountain Provincial Park) but the other end is road-accessible from Woss. Arrange for boat pickup from this end of the Trail.



The total trail length from Tahsis Dump to Woss Lake is about 12 km (7.5 miles).

Water is available along *Nootka Trail - Beano Cliff* much of the route and there are some nice wilderness camping spots in the upper reaches of the Tahsis River. There are opportunities for trout fishing in the river pools here. The trail is moderate in difficulty.

### Nootka Trail

Hugging the west coast of Nootka Island, the Nootka Trail provides an unsurpassed wilderness hiking experience featuring long beaches, secluded bays and spectacular headlands jutting into the Pacific Ocean. The trail is not in a park and is maintained by volunteer efforts but is a relatively easy hike which never rises more than 50 metres above sea level. It is not uncommon to see whales including Greys, Humpbacks and Orcas close

to shore; bears, cougar, elk and wolves are some of the larger forest creatures although rarely seen. Old native sites are found along these shores, often marked only by old shell middens or whale bones. The forests are mostly old growth stands of spruce, hemlock and cedar.

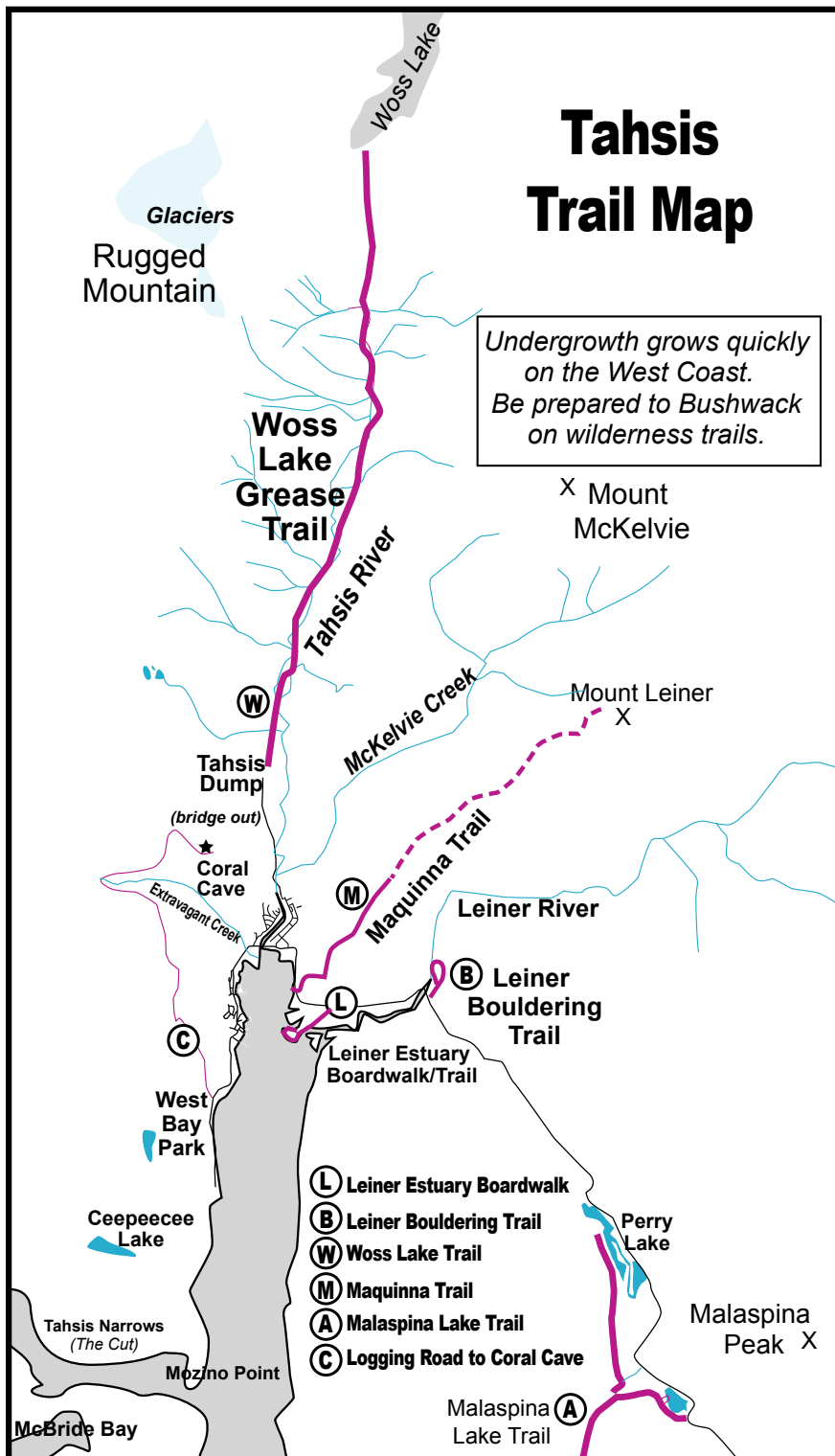
Hikers can take a water taxi to either trail head (Louie Bay or Friendly Cove) from Tahsis or can arrive by float plane from Gold River. Purchasing

a tide guide before your trip is mandatory as you can use low tides to follow beach flats which are otherwise inundated, making hiking much more difficult. Most people take five days or longer to complete the walk. Recommended footwear are hiking boots and a sturdy pair of sandals with wetsuit booties for wading in the cooler weather. Some creek crossings also require low tide to cross and a sturdy pole can be useful for balance if the water is high. At places where the route leaves

beaches, hanging fishing floats mark the trail egress. Bring your own potable water, as drinkable sources can be infrequent.

The northern end of the trail is accessed by walking the south side of Louie Bay at low tide. Be prepared to wade through a channel to the west coast. The south end is from the dock at Friendly Cove or Yuquot. Yuquot is the site of an old native village and the church is worth a visit for a bit of the local history. There is generally a charge to cross the reservation at this end of the trail but camping is included with the fee. The north end of the trail features low headlands and sandy coves, while beaches dominate the central portion. A popular camping spot and swimming hole is Calvin Falls, a 12 metre high cascade dropping directly onto the beach. The southern third is dominated by a series of spectacular headlands formed of volcanics mixed with marble, often with large sea caves and beaches tucked into tiny coves.

There are no facilities along the trail although there are some private cabins at Beano Creek (do not disturb) and close to Friendly Cove (the latter are available to rent). It is useful for hiking groups to carry a VHF radio or Sat-phone for emergencies. The route can become dangerous in severe storms, mostly in winter. Guidebooks are available for this trail and a good historical book to read on the way is "White Slaves of the Nootka", written about native life in Yuquot and Tahsis in the late 1700s.





## ◆ KAYAKING ◆

### **Tahsis Inlet**

Tahsis Inlet has many attractions for even short excursion kayaking and canoeing from Tahsis. During high tide the Tahsis River and the Leiner Estuary open up, and both rivers feature striking scenery and splendid wildlife and bird viewing opportunities. Both rivers offer particularly excellent wildlife viewing during the fall, when spawning salmon attract eagles and bears.

### **Kayaking Tahsis Inlet, Nootka Sound and Yuquot**

When kayaking Tahsis Inlet and Nootka Sound, it is best to work with the winds and tides. On most days there are outflow and inflow winds down Tahsis Inlet to Nootka Sound. The wind flows out from Tahsis to Nootka Sound starting at daybreak, and then reverses around 11:00 AM and then flows inward from Nootka Sound to Tahsis till about 4:00 or 5:00 PM. Ideally, you would kayak out in the morning with the outflow winds and an outgoing tide, and on return voyages come back in the late afternoon inflow winds and the incoming tide. Be prepared for a slower journey back, in the event of weather changes that override this daily pattern.

To kayak to Friendly Cove (Yuquot) allow an all-day paddle. Eight miles south of Tahsis on the eastern shore is a sandy beach with fresh water. Further along in Bligh Island Marine Park are rest/camping areas with fresh water. Camping spots are also available in Friendly Cove. This whole area where Tahsis Inlet, Kendrick Inlet, Tlupana Inlet and Muchalaht Inlet converge is particularly suited to exploration by kayak, though care must be taken in crossing the open waters between Bligh Island and Nootka Island.

Friendly Cove (Yuquot) provides sheltered kayaking and calm water docking. There is a \$10 landing fee to visit this historic site where Captain Cook first navigated to the West Coast of British Columbia and met with Chief Maquinna and the Mowachaht Tribe. Visit the Yuquot Church and the Friendly Cove Lighthouse for a tour.

For experienced Kayakers, the outer edge of Nootka Island offers extreme kayaking with surf, heavy seas and dramatic weather conditions.

### **Kayaking Esperanza Inlet**

To explore Esperanza Inlet and Nuchaltlitz, allow a day for your paddle out. The same wind patterns affect the Esperanza Inlet as Tahsis Inlet and Nootka Sound — see previous description of kayaking to Friendly Cove.

After leaving Tahsis, take 'The Cut' (Tahsis Narrows) after you pass West Bay, and head to Esperanza Inlet. To stretch your legs, stop at Esperanza, a small religious community and First Nations retreat with dock and tackle shop.

Continue on to Garden Point and Rosa Island just off Nootka Island, with good camping spots above the high time mark. Take your own potable water, especially in the summer.

There are also excellent camping spots on Catala Island and Yellow Bluff on the North Shore, but access to both requires crossing open water when the tides are good and water is calm. Fresh water is not always available at either camping spot. From Rosa or Garden point, kayaking in Mary Basin up to Ferrer Point has many advantages. There are lots of little streams, safe protected kayaking, sea otter families, eagles, bears, and marine birds. Mary Basin



*Kayaking Tahsis Inlet*



*Kayaking Nootka Island*

also has an historic area with a former First Nation reservation, and many interesting trails, especially in the eastern part of the basin. Please be aware of changing tides and weather conditions as you approach the open ocean past Ferrer Point.

Nuchatlitz is a scattering of small islands surrounded by protected waters located between Rosa Island and Nuchatlitz Inlet, and is the traditional home of the Nuchatlaht First Nation. Nuchatlitz is an increasingly popular kayaking destination. Many Kayakers now

choose to be dropped off to this area of Esperanza Inlet by Kayak transport from Tahsis or Zeballos.

### **Brooks Peninsula**

For longer and more extreme kayaking excursions, further up the coast past Tatchu point is Brooks Peninsula Provincial Park with 51,631 hectares of pristine wilderness and a unique ecosystem. Please check park regulations as a permit may be required to visit this area.

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## ◆CAVING◆

In the past few years Tahsis has become known as the “Caving Capital of Canada” due to its vast networks of caverns in nearby hills, which attract caving clubs from around the world. Visitors are reminded that caving requires specialized equipment and experience, and it is not advisable to enter an unfamiliar cave without appropriate equipment and experience.

### **Upana Caves**

The Upana Caves are located along the Tree to Sea Drive, just before Bull Lake Summit coming from Gold River. Formed by an underground stream, the caves are 300 metres long with many entrances linked by good trails. It is also known as the caves used in the movie ‘Huckleberry Finn’. The large lower stream entrance is an impressive sight — don’t forget your camera. Bring lights and helmets. There is ample parking and a washroom on-site.

### **Coral Cave**

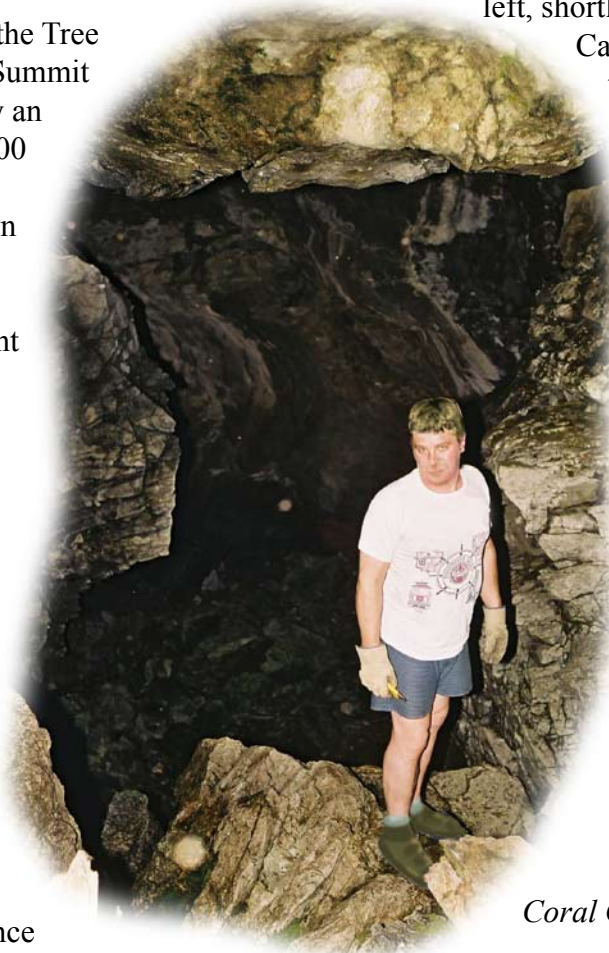
These are the most accessible caves near Tahsis. They are near the Lookout above town, accessed through logging roads just past the Maquinna Resort.

Drive the gravel road south of town past the turnoff to West Bay Park and take the first right turn up Extravagant Mainline (unsigned). This road is for 4WD or high clearance vehicles and snakes its way uphill over 6 km (4 miles). There are spectacular views of Tahsis Inlet

and the surrounding peaks as you climb to 480 metres (1575 feet). As you are driving over karst (limestone rock with caves and sinkholes), watch for holes that occasionally appear in the road. Where the bridge has been removed, park and cross the creek, following the old road for a short distance and take the right fork past a junction.

Look for a sign and trail to the cave on the left, shortly after the junction. Coral Cave is over a kilometer long, the main passage about the size of a subway tunnel as it descends gradually to a permanently flooded sump. Each caver needs warm clothing, a helmet and three independent light sources. There are some climbs; the worst can be bypassed in adjacent side passages. Watch out for holes in the floor.

This cave should never be entered during rainfalls as it may flash flood.



*Coral Cave entrance*



## ◆ SCUBA DIVING & SNORKELING ◆

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### Tahsis Narrows & Mozino Point

Tahsis is one of the best places on the BC Coast to view 6-gill sharks — a prehistoric species of deep-water shark that comes to shallower depths during summertime algae blooms. Tahsis Inlet is extremely deep, which allows the sharks to live in the darker depths most of the year, then come to shallower waters when the salmon return to spawn.

It is suspected that algae reduce light levels to a comfortable level for them. 6 Gill Sharks — a big, slow moving shark typically from 6 to 10 feet but can range from 4 feet to 16 feet long — are more numerous and more easily viewed in the Tahsis Inlet than in any other location on the



BC coast. You can shore dive to see these amazing creatures from the Municipal Dock or Maquinna Dock during the summer and fall, and they can be seen at depths as shallow as 30 feet.

Tahsis Inlet has a rare Gorgonian Coral Grove at Mozino Point in the Tahsis Narrows at diveable depths starting just over 100 feet. The local stand of Coral shows intense colour due to the ideal growing

conditions provided by the strong tidal current. The Cut — as locals call the Tahsis Narrows — also has carpets of pink strawberry anemones, Puget Sound King Crabs and Cloud Sponges.

### Snorkeling

Tahsis and Leiner Rivers provide excellent snorkeling opportunities in the late summer and early fall when the Salmon return to spawn. At that time the rivers are full of Coho and Chinook, as well as the occasional Pink, Chum, and Sockeye.



*Prehistoric 6-Gill Shark*

### Little Espinoza Inlet

Little Espinoza Inlet has remarkable biodiversity, and is also a favoured diving spot.



*Cloud Sponge and small Rockfish*

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## ◆ SURFING ◆

The outside edge of Nootka Island, the Brooks Peninsula, and Hesquiat Peninsula experience dramatic surfing waves, at temperatures identical to the waters of North California — the whole area occupies one of the most moderate climatic pockets in Canada. Nootka's outer reefs are known for their consistent wave action, all in a setting of spectacular beaches, waterfalls, and coastal mountains.

Brooks Peninsula is an ecological reserve area and Provincial Park. River mouth and reef breaks, combined with consistent offshore mountain downdrafts, provide an ideal surfing environment. Hesquiat Peninsula's profile allows it to catch most swell directions providing great surf spots.

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## ◆ WIND SURFING & KITE BOARDING ◆

Still in its infancy as a sport in this province, Wind Surfing & Kite Boarding are gaining in popularity as a recreational pastime throughout BC. Although extensive research into suitable locations has not been done, there are several spots that have suitable characteristics, including Tahsis Inlet and Muchalaht

Inlet. In summer and fall of 2004, Tahsis residents saw the first pioneers testing the inflow and outflow winds on the inlet.



*Surfing Nootka Island*

## ◆ WILDLIFE VIEWING ◆

### Birding

Migratory hummingbirds gather in great numbers in the Tahsis town site from March to late June or early July. Many Tahsis residents, charmed by these unique birds, plant hummingbird friendly

flowers and keep their hummingbird feeders well stocked during their stay.



Tahsis Inlet and area are home to some of

the most beautiful birds that inhabit North America: wild swans that winter in Tahsis Inlet, Bald Eagles present year round, various species of ducks, geese and other water birds, the vivid blue Stellar Jays, robins, crows and ravens, and such interesting species as the tufted puffin and great blue heron. The waterways and trails around Tahsis provide plenty of opportunities for the avid bird watcher to spot a variety of species.

The most commonly seen marine birds are: red-throated loon, common loon, marbled murrelet, western grebe, red-necked grebe, Leach's storm petrel, forked-tailed storm petrel, Brandt's cormorant, pelagic cormorant, great blue heron, Canada Geese, black brant, white-fronted goose, Trumpeter Swan, mallard, American Widgeon, green-winged teal, northern pintail, bufflehead, harlequin duck, surf scoter, white wing scoter, bald eagles, black oystercatcher, glaucous-winged gulls, common murrelet, Marbled Murrelet, Cassin's auklet, rhinoceros auklet, tufted puffin and pigeon guillemot.



Near shore and offshore locations serve as important breeding areas, summer and wintering areas, migration corridors and staging areas. The four breeding locations in the Nootka area identified by the Canadian Wildlife Service are Cameron Rocks, Ensanada Islet, Justice rock and White Island.

### Marine Life

Marine life in the Nootka area include Orcas (commonly referred to as killer whales), the harbour

porpoise, the gray whale and the humpback whale which migrate along the western coast of Vancouver Island, sea otters, sea lions and harbour seals.

The wide and plentiful variety of fish and shellfish allow for rich diets for sea otters, which are plentiful in Esperanza Inlet and Nootka Sound. Their smaller cousins, river otters have been known to come right up to the public boat ramp, checking out any visitors and then quietly ducking out of sight.

### Wild Life

Black bears are seen most often in the fall during the salmon runs, fishing along the rivers and streams. The black bears scavenge for dead fish and birds, forage on inter tidal plants and animals, and consume berries that grow along the shore. Black bears use large, old trees such as western red cedar as winter den sites. These sites are most abundant in mature and old forests. While for the most part they like to be left alone, they frequently wander into the town site in the late summer and early fall looking for fruit trees and berry bushes. While there is no known case in recent years of a bear harming a human being and they usually head for the bush or the nearest tree when approached, care should be taken with these strong wild animals.

Also in the area are cougars, wolf, deer, Roosevelt Elk, weasels, raccoons and mink – not to mention the odd squirrel or two.

In the spring and summer the majestic elk can be seen with their young ones, in singles or pairs, along the Tahsis road from Gold River. Be cautious and careful when driving to Tahsis as wildlife is frequently on the road.

