

The Cascade Times

HELP
WANTED

NEWS • OPINION • OUTDOORS • SPORTS • ENTERTAINMENT • BUSINESS

SuperPages Weather

Seattle

Today: 7/16/08

High 78°

Low 53°

Partly cloudy



Seven Day Forecast

SuperPages Weather

Snoqualmie Pass

Today: 7/16/08

High 76°

Low 29°

Partly cloudy



Seven Day Forecast

SuperPages Weather

Ellensburg

Today: 7/16/08

High 93°

Low 53°

Sunny



Seven Day Forecast



The Cascade Times

[About us](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Our staff](#)

[Submit a news tip](#)

[Write letter to editor](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Media kit](#)

[Online advertising](#)

[Contact a sales rep](#)

Today is July 16, 2008

Hollyhock, Cortes Island BC; Learn Softly Under the Sky

July 12, 2008

By Brent Bakeman

Our vacations are escapes from the cubicle, the desk, the wheel, the route, and increasingly the computer — you name it. We get to do something that feels good as opposed to something that feels like drudgery.

It used to be easier to get our *want to do* time, not to mention read a travel article! The batteries must be recharged folks, or they tend to run dry at the wrong time; not that there is a good time.

Enter Hollyhock Retreat. Since 1982 Hollyhock has served as a refuge for bewildered urbanites. The facility serves two purposes; a non-profit learning center that educates thousands in social leadership and change, and a place of beauty that provides relaxation and holistic comfort.

I was picked up at the ferry station by Bill Ophoff, the resident naturalist at Hollyhock. There is no better introduction to Hollyhock than he. Bill left the city-life in 1993 and rediscovered himself on Cortes Island; a place he will probably never leave.

Bill knows everything about the island, the people, the history, the flora and fauna — demonstrated intensely when joining one of his nature walks — more about that later. It is a short and very scenic drive from the ferry terminal to Hollyhock, and I was already feeling relaxed. The registration building greets guests entering up the short dirt road; a very friendly reception awaits inside, along with a small store selling health and wellness products, books, and finely crafted art pieces.

Though titles do not seem important to those who work on these 44 acres I was also met by Greg Osoba the Marketing Manager. Greg is a very enthusiastic and valuable steward of the retreat; has been for over 20 years. I immediately sensed the friendly folks of Hollyhock were really committed to the quality of their facilities and focused on the experiences of those who visit.

Hollyhock is comprised of a collection of wooden buildings that seem as though they were constructed from the driftwood that lines the beaches of the islands here. There are about 10 cottages and 28 rooms scattered around the heavily forested area, there are even 14 campsites for the more down to earth. My room was incredible, just a hop across a little greenbelt and I was standing on the beach. Hollyhock rooms purposefully do not have phones or TV's, and like everything else in the retreat, are Eco-focused. Mine featured a nice deck with an incredible view of the beach and the islands across the

Homes &
Condos
for Sale
or Rent

PERSONALS

CARLINK



water. One of things that impressed me about the resort was that fact that I was not issued a key to my room when I checked in. I never locked my door the whole time I was there nor did I feel the need to do so.

So it was work time for me, time to explore and absorb. Heading up from my room and the beach I initially arrived at the lodge, the nerve center of Hollyhock. The lodge is where everyone eats and relaxes on the deck while admiring the pristine view and socializing. No shoes were allowed in the lodge and I was thrilled to find an extensive tea and coffee station, self serve and well stocked with a wide variety of organic and non, teas and coffee. Just in front of the lodge is the garden. Incredibly colorful, incredibly organic, and incredibly loved, this garden serves as a source of beauty as well as food. The fantastic and creative fare at Hollyhock begins here in the garden. Amongst the vibrant colors are the namesake of Hollyhock, the Hollyhock flowers that add a scarlet splash to the over 50 varieties of organic herbs, vegetables and other flowers.

While on a tour with Greg I circled the property and visited various buildings and vistas throughout. Many of these buildings are "classrooms." A primary mission of Hollyhock is health and wellness education, such as meditation, yoga, personal and spiritual development, plenty of art courses, and an emphasis on "social leadership for positive changes and a better world." The folks at Hollyhock truly walk the walk; the very operation of most facets of Hollyhock is geared toward positive energy while leaving a very small footprint.

As we passed this mix of educational spaces intermingled with cottages, larger buildings with multiple rooms and even dormitories; I could not escape the quiet, no matter where I ventured I was surrounded by utter peace and quiet.

Back at the lodge we ran into Dana Bass Solomon, Hollyhock's CEO for over 9 years – again titles were not particularly important at Hollyhock. I initially guessed I was encountering yet another cheerful guest. Her demeanor personified the personalities of the staff at Hollyhock. They seemed to enjoy escaping to their work at the resort as much as the guests enjoyed venturing to the San Juan's for relaxation.

At 6:30 p.m. it was dinnertime. We were summoned by a bell that sounded more like a gong. Everybody lined up in anticipation for a buffet style feast in the lodge. Now I am not a vegetarian but the vegetarian cuisine at Hollyhock will receive no complaints from me. Understand this from a sworn carnivore: I found myself hovering around the lodge long before each meal in anticipation of the incredibly creative, fresh and delicious meals. Beginning with fresh fruit, granolas and breads for breakfast, and finishing with dinner combinations of salads and casseroles that I would never have imagined.

We dined on fresh local seafood; in this case fresh halibut in a lemon herb sauce. I could taste the freshness in everything there, often I saw people picking vegetables in the garden that I would be eating a few hours later. And the thing about Hollyhock is that it is all-inclusive, the rate you pay for your room includes those meals and many activities. In other words: no keys, no wallet, and no worries.

After dinner I decided to use the spectacular deck outside of my room. I just sat and watched an occasional bald eagle, the very still water, and soaked in the silence. There were a lot of things I could

have been doing — kayaking, walking along the beach, joining a painting class, gardening, receiving a massage, or challenging someone in the lodge to a game of chess — without even taking into account the educational courses and seminars. But instead I just sat, and absorbed. It was perfect.

After more discussion Greg I became more and more impressed with my hosts. Hollyhock Retreat operates as a not-for-profit business and was co-founded by Rex Weyler, one of the co-founders of Greenpeace International. The resort accommodates singles, couples, families with children, and even large groups such as church retreats. Beside my favorite pastime of just absorbing the silence there is everything and anything to do — most of my fellow guests were there for an educational seminar or bodywork retreat, a schedule of which can be found on their web site — www.hollyhock.ca.

There were also many visitors focused on the healthy lifestyle of the cuisine, and many others completely enamored with the surrounding landscape, including nature hikes and rowing with resident naturalist Bill, and the ability to roam 700 feet of oceanfront. Some fellow guests and I went on a hike guided by Bill up to a place called Green Bluff, which afforded awesome views of the island. Of more interest was Bill stopping every 50 yards or so with an arsenal of information about surrounding trees and animals. There is a lot to learn, Cortes is an island of veritable Eden-like natural diversity.

When I was checking out I realized I had an afternoon of leapfrogging ferries ahead of me before I would arrive back to Seattle. In expectation of this journey I suddenly realized how beautiful the landscape was between my home and my more beautiful destination. Hollyhock is a hard place to leave, and one that is not soon forgotten. Most that go come back; the author can be included in that number.

If you go:

Best way:

By Air:

Kenmore Air, around \$350. Approximately 3 hours each way from Seattle

By Ferry:

Victoria Clipper, then connect with BC Ferries

By Car:

About 10 Hours

(Check out the Rideshare Board on the Hollyhock site)

By Bus:

Fine but plan for a night's stay in Vancouver BC, end in Campbell River and take Ferry from there

(Again check out the Rideshare Board on the Hollyhock site)

Brent Bakeman can be reached at: brentbakeman@gmail.com

[NEWS](#) ••• [OPINION](#) ••• [OUTDOORS](#) ••• [SPORTS](#) ••• [ENTERTAINMENT](#) ••• [REAL ESTATE](#)

[About us](#) ••• [Subscribe](#) ••• [Our Staff](#) ••• [Submit a news tip](#) ••• [Write letter to the editor](#) ••• [Media kit](#) ••• [Online advertising](#) ••• [Contact a sales rep](#)

©2007 Cascade Times Media Group