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## Come visit Cortes Island

April 7, 2016

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Taylor O'Byrne photo



By Stephen Moyse

***Cortes Island, the emerald of the Discovery Islands. Cortes Island, the gateway to Desolation Sound. Cortes Island, where dreams come true.***

The natives (The Salish) have lived here for thousands of years, and they still do. Since early times, here on the shores of the Salish Sea (named the Georgia Strait by European explorers in the modern era), their shellfish harvesting sites are still visible on some of the beaches of Cortes Island.

The island sits as a gatekeeper to the fjord-like waters of Desolation Sound, long renowned as one of the world's premier boating grounds. The island was named in 1792 during the expedition of Galiano and Valdés,

presumably after Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conqueror of Mexico. The island has been home and camp to four native clans for several thousand years.

There are three communities on the island: Manson's Landing is the main island settlement, and comprises a post office, the main community hall, a vegetarian store and cafe, and the island's main food market. Manson's (as it's known locally) is also home to the island health clinic; the island's only motel is situated a kilometer north of the community. Apart from the motel, the island is also home to many B&Bs and several fishing lodges, as well as a luxurious retreat and lecture campus. The Gorge Harbour Resort is a full service marina, and includes a store and gas dock, and is home to one of the island's fine restaurants (The Floathouse). The tiny settlement of Whaletown, whose name commemorates the Japanese whaling camp situated there briefly in the early part of the 20th century, is also home to the BC Ferries dock, which connects you with Vancouver Island.

The Squirrel Cove community centres itself on the store of that name, and is equipped with a high-tide-accessible gasoline pump and dock (as well as a government dock), and includes another of the island's fine restaurants, known as The Cove, and the Flying Squirrel Take-out (both summers only). The general store includes a liquor agency, a post office, a selection of groceries (fresh and dry goods), an excellent summertime ice-cream bar, and a very good hardware section, including many boating goods and supplies.

There are many public access beaches scattered around the island, and a freshwater lake next to Manson's Landing. Access to the island is provided by BC Ferries, connecting the island via adjacent Quadra Island to the city of Campbell River on Vancouver Island's east coast. Much local information can be found by reading the local on-line magazine Tideline; or by reading the Marketer, published by the Cortes Market, which gives you a taste of the culture of the island, as well as advertisements of island dances and entertainment.

The area between Cortes and Campbell River is well-known for its salmon fishing, and boaters can usually find at least a rock cod or two with a bit of patient jigging. The necessary fishing licences can be bought on-line from the issuer, the federal government. You'll need a licence for catching or harvesting any tidal water fish, including all finfish and shellfish. You must also buy a salmon stamp if you wish to catch and keep any salmon. Barbed hooks are not permitted.

Cortes Island is heavily forested, and very easy on the eye. The winter population of about a thousand swells to around three thousand in summer, as many visitors from other parts of BC and Alberta, as well as Washington and California come to the island either for a brief stay, or to visit their summer cottage, many of which have been owned by their family for decades.

Cortes Island is well known and well appreciated by boaters and cottage-visitors alike, and provides visitors with a well-supplied service community. You'll find a stay on Cortes Island a delight like no other. Many people who live or visit came first to the island several years ago, and have returned summer after summer.

Come to Cortes Island, and drop anchor for a while; you won't be disappointed.

- <http://hollyhock.ca/>
- <http://cortesislandmotel.com/>
- <http://cortescoop.ca/>
- <http://gorgeharbour.com/>
- <http://squirrelcove.com/>
- <http://www.cortesisland.com/tideline/>

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