

HOLLYHOCK

By Lynsey Franks

Hollyhock is a 44 acre educational centre that is meant to recharge the mind and rejuvenate the soul

Located at the entrance of Desolation Sound and the top of the Georgia Strait, Hollyhock Educational Retreat Centre is nestled on the natural wonder that is Cortes Island.

The founders of the centre came together in 1983 to bring people a lifelong learning centre in a curriculum surrounded by nature, and as their mission statement says: "Hollyhock exists to inspire, nourish and support people who are making the world better."

"We have quite a spectacular wilderness setting," explains Greg Osoba, marketing manager with Hollyhock for 22 years. In his years working with the organization, Osoba says that he has seen a shift in its primary focus. "It used to be quite focused on personal development, but now there is much emphasis on social change and creating a better world."





[HOLLYHOCK]

For a truly unforgettable experience, climb onboard a kayak for a night paddle

The non-dogmatic centre was founded by a group of six visionary environmentalists, of which included Rex Weyler (one of the founders of Greenpeace International and renowned author) and Shivon Robinsong, who is currently uplifting the community choir scene in Victoria.

Some of the masterminds behind the creation of Hollyhock have since moved on, but their legacy and continual contributions to the centre helps it to flourish and expand its influence.

“We have over 100 programs to offer,” says Osoba. “The bulk of the programs are held here on Cortes Island, but there are a dozen programs in Vancouver as well.”

Programs cover a vast spectrum and fit into four main categories: arts and culture, wisdom teachings, well-being as well as leadership and professional development. Programs include meditation, personal development, relationships, communications and mediation to name a few.


“We are so eclectic,” says Osoba of the centre’s celebration of diversity. Every season, board members introduce new programs and fresh faces. “We have different teachers for every program. They come from all over the world and are often renowned in their fields,” says Osoba, estimating that Hollyhock is host to roughly 140 accomplished teachers.

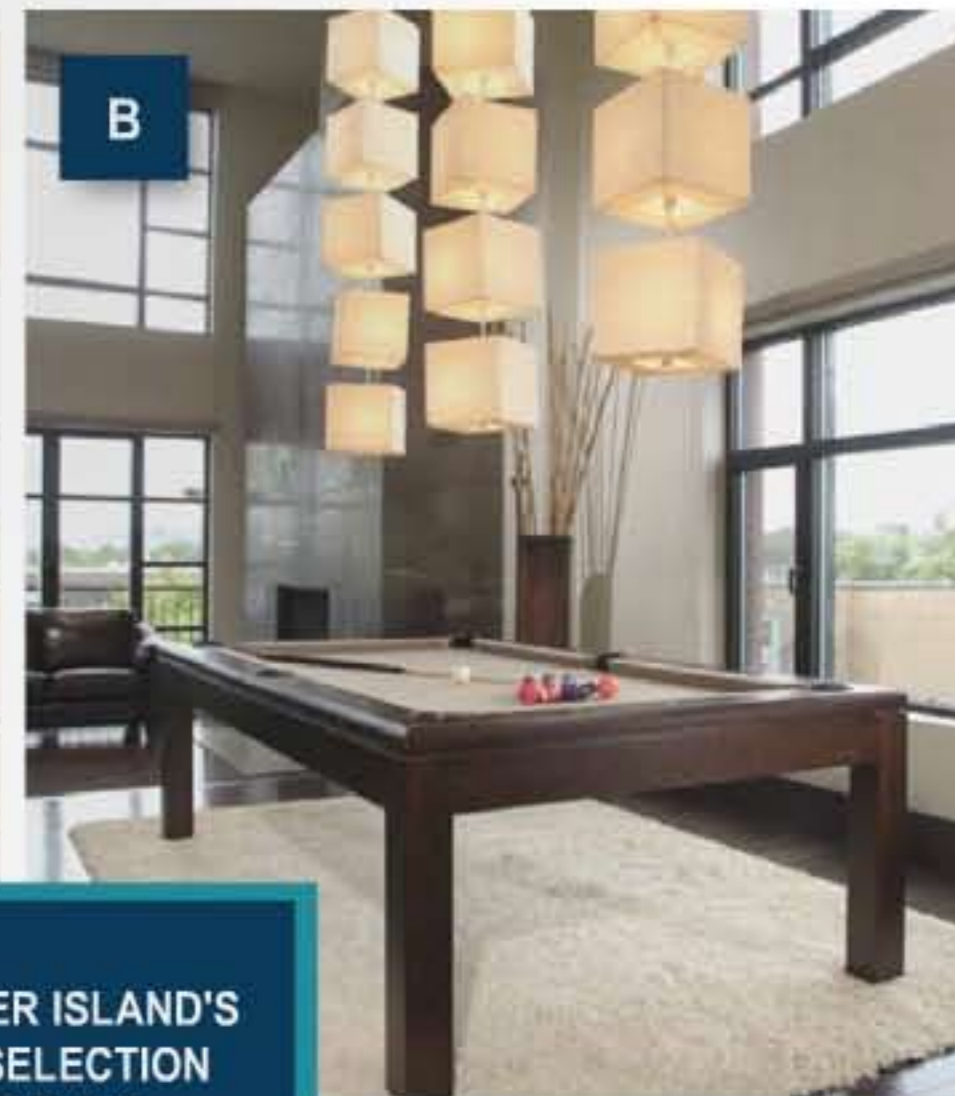
Open from March through November, Hollyhock sees visitors of all ages, though the majority of guests fall within the ages of 35 and 60. “We’ve had people at the centre in their 20s, all the way up to those in their 80s,” he says. The expansive beach, oceanfront property and beautifully forested escape cares not of the visitors’ age – all are welcome to experience Hollyhock. Whether guests come for a vacation, a mental cleanse or to learn something new, the hope is that they will depart with a true sense of wellness and rejuvenation.

For a truly unforgettable experience, climb onboard a kayak for a night paddle with Misty Isles Adventures — a company that

works closely with Hollyhock, providing guided schooner cruises, kayak trips and sailing programs.

“Bioluminescence paddles have been life-altering for a lot of people,” says co-owner Mike Moore of Misty Isles Adventures. “You put someone in a kayak at twilight, and head off into the setting sun. As you look down and wave your hand in the water, it’s a three-dimensional universe as the light given off by the agitated plankton is truly spectacular,” he says.

No matter the activity or program of choice, Osoba says that the hope for Hollyhock guests is that — “Number one, they are going to relax; secondly learn something new and ultimately connect with other likeminded people. We want them to reconnect with nature, eat fabulous local and organic foods and potentially get a glimpse into how they could transform and share their experience to their communities” — what Osoba calls “the ripple effect.” 



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