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Pillar Rock, a 100-foot column of sandstone and conglomerate rock, topped by trees, is a prominent landmark off the coast of Graham Island, southeast of Langara Island.

# Sport Fishing off British Columbia

by Mary L. Peachin

**D**ouble, double, eagle. I'm not talking golf. No, I'm talking about sport fishing off the coast of Langara, the northernmost island of Haida Gwaii ("islands of the people"), an archipelago in British Columbia, Canada, about 28 miles south of Alaska. The historical home of the Haida Nation, the archipelago was formerly officially known as the Queen Charlotte Islands and was formally renamed in 2010.

Aboard a 22-foot Boston Whaler, Tucsonan Lori Mackstaller and I were fishing for Chinook salmon. When I had told our fishing guide that we wanted to hook our own fish, he replied, "All [our] anglers are required to hook their own fish." How unique and refreshing not to have a guide hand over a rod with the hook already set. (For you nonanglers, a hook is "set" after the angler feels the first tug on the line; a "set hook" secures the fish to the hook and line.)

Lori and I experienced a double header—each hooking a fish at about the same time. Chaos ensued as our respective fish circled the boat, forcing us to follow along on deck, maneuvering around the boat's center console, trying to keep our fishing lines from tangling.

Our efforts ended abruptly when a

2-ton sea lion grabbed my fish before going after Lori's. While the sea lion was beating the 20-pound-plus salmon against the water, devouring it bite by bite, a bald eagle swooped down and picked up the remains of the salmon's head floating in the water. The experience gave us a close-up view of the area's food chain in action.

We were so busy with the salmon, the sea lion, and the bald eagle that when an announcement was made on-board that a pod of 20 orcas had been seen swimming through Parry Passage,

not far from us—between Lucy Island and Graham Island—we were unable to break away quickly enough to motor the short distance and see these largest members of the dolphin family.

Luckily, those orcas swam by us several hours later, giving us a second chance to witness their graceful antics. The bull, displaying his supersize dorsal fin, and his mate swam some distance from the rest of the pod. During our four days of fishing, we would also observe several lone humpback whales.

On the day we headed to the west



Mary Peachin

Mark McAneeley, a guide with Langara Fishing Adventures, poses with a 20-pound Chinook salmon.



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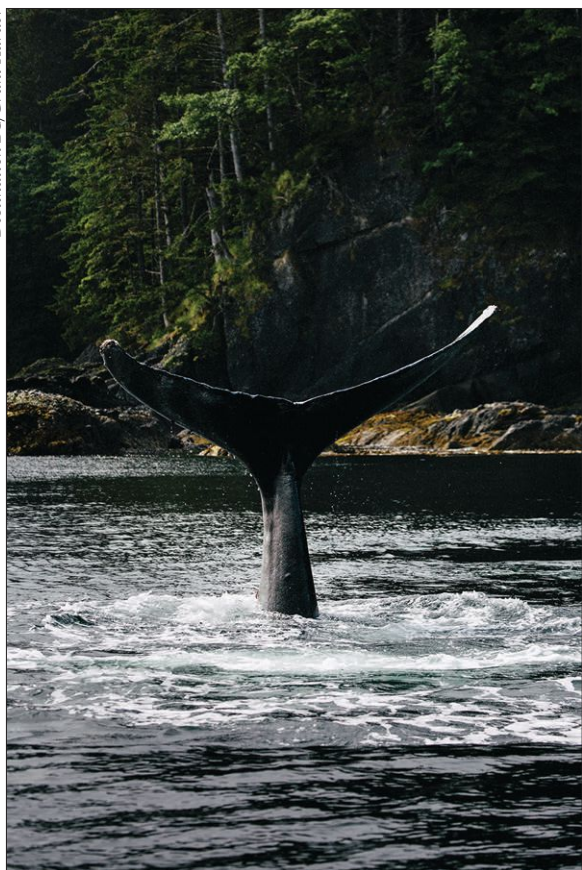
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A humpback whale dives near Langan Island Lodge.

stomach churning, but the sun shone down on us, and the seas were calm.

Lori and I caught and released salmon while fishing off Lacy's coast and in the calmer lee waters near Coho Point and Andrews Point, along the east coast of Langan. We enjoyed seeing wildlife, including pigeon guillemots and numerous bald eagles. And we observed the beautiful landscapes—uninhabited beaches and pinnacles along the northern coast of Graham Island and the southern coast of Langan Island, including the iconic Flowerpot Rock. We were transfixed by bull kelp, white-sided dolphin, and numerous jellyfish.

British Columbia's Department of Fisheries has es-

side of Lacy Island, off the west coast of Langan, good fortune stayed with us: the water and wind there can be a real

established new limits on the number of daily catches allowed and the number

*continued on next page*

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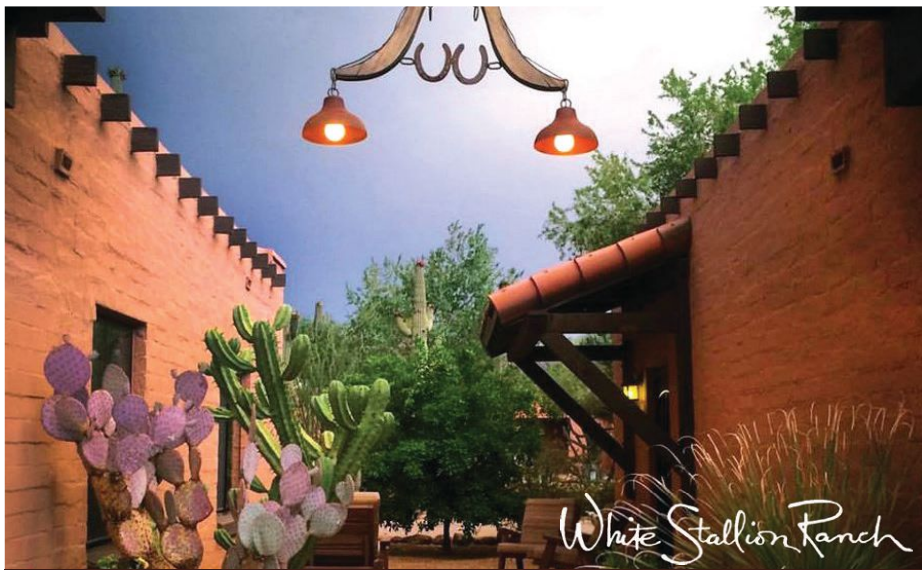
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Hikers explore the forest near Kiusta, an ancient Haida village site on the northwest coast of Graham Island, just south of Langara Island.

Destination BC/Grant Harder

of fish that can be kept flash frozen and packaged. Before day three of our trip, after limiting out on salmon, the only choice left for us was halibut fishing.

Halibut are very tasty fish, but they aren't a lot of fun to catch. Then again, some folks—not I—may enjoy hauling what feels like a dead weight 200 feet to the surface. We were grateful that we caught “chickens,” which are the smaller and better-tasting halibut.

As we were returning to Langara Is-

land Lodge, our home base for this fishing adventure, a humpback exploded out of the water. Following his breach, he started finning. It was as if he was waving to say “so long.” It may have signaled the completion of our fishing journey, but we took our memories with us.

**DL**

*Mary Peachin is a local freelance writer. Comments for publication should be addressed to [letters@desertleaf.com](mailto:letters@desertleaf.com).*



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