

A Spa on the Edge of Canada's Wild Pacific Coast

The West Coast of Vancouver Island is renowned for remarkable fine sand beaches, year-round surfing in a wet suit, kayaking, hiking, sport fishing, and close-up wildlife watching. The world-famous winter storm watching season extends from November to March, and the Whale Watching season runs from March to May as 20,000 gray whales migrate north from Mexico passing close to Vancouver Island's coastline.

The annual Pacific Rim Whale Festival is in March each year. As a hub of all this activity, the charming eco-tourism and active adventure tourism town of **Ucluelet** (ucluelet.ca) is quite literally at the end of the road ... next stop out there across the world's greatest expanse of water is Japan!



Strategically-placed to share the sea view is **Black Rock Oceanfront Resort** (blackrockresort.com). You cannot get more “oceanfront” than a property gently bathed with sea spray amidst the surround-sound of waves and sea bird calls. And this year-round resort of self-catering studios, one- and two-bedroom suites and townhouses has assigned a front row seat on the Pacific rocks to its **Drift Spa** (blackrockresort.com/drift-home).

A brief time of relaxation in the spa's indoor lounge with its ceiling to floor picture windows or on the outside spa deck, weather permitting, is the first step in the revitalizing renewal of this spa sanctuary. I check in well ahead of my appointment to prepare for my “Seaweed Body Polish and Vichy Shower” ... but first ... a cup of mint and seaweed green tea which promises to be a nutritionally complete and calming beverage. As I soon discover, seaweed is a persistent theme of the Drift Spa experience.

My veteran spa practitioner, Tawnija, invites me to get comfortable in one of the spa's wet rooms where, later on, the Vichy Shower will be part of the treatment. She specializes in all aspects of massage and is patient with my questions. “Drift is a natural marine-based spa,” she explains, “so it is great to have Seaflores line of certified raw organic seaweeds harvested right on Canada's west coast. These are not farmed seaweeds,” she emphasizes.



Seaflora's products (sea-flora.com) are the first and only skin care line to have this certification. They have very limited processing and are nutritionally-acknowledged to be healing, with anti-inflammatory, anti-viral and antiseptic qualities, all found in abundance with wild west coast seaweed. Today I get to try out the Oil-free Seaweed Body Polish and the Wild Sea Kelp Body Lotion.

Tawnija explains that a body polish is like a facial for the body. It exfoliates and hydrates leaving the skin toned, soft and bright. Then and there, I resolve to take home a jar of Seaflora body polish with me!

Later, Drift Spa Director, Judy Bloedorn, shares that the spa is popular not only with guests of Black Rock Oceanfront Resort, but also with local residents and vacationers staying in other Ucluelet accommodations. Most clients are from Canada, the U.S. and Europe. Judy is Drift Spa's first director, opening it in 2009 and developing the signature treatments and a diverse menu of facials, body treatments and other spa services for both women and men. Massage makes up almost 70% of requested treatments which has led her to search out a very gifted team of expert massage and body work practitioners. "The Perfect Storm" is probably the single most requested menu item, and another perennial favorites are the spa's treatments for couples.

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"Our exclusive couples Ocean Room combines treatments such as massage, scrubs or seasonal specials with a fabulous view overlooking the surging Pacific Ocean," Judy says. "This creates a unique experience and a couples connection that builds wonderful memories."

Following my treatment, I relax in the lounge nursing another steaming cup of mint and seaweed tea, reluctant to re-enter the real world just yet. Looking through the spa menu, curiosity draws me to the "Perfect Storm", described as a two-hour treatment that incorporates an Aroma Hot Stone Massage, Thalasso Seaweed Gel Wrap and a Vichy Shower Massage to restore and re-mineralize the body. I am already making plans to return to Ucluelet during the storm watching season. How could I go wrong with booking a Perfect Storm?

By Alison Gardner

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