



Gabriola Island's

Mañana Guest House & Hasta Mañana Charters

By David Morrison

Landlocked in a huge British city, I never made total sense of the environment I grew up in. Something personally vital was missing, but I came to recognize what it was. Quite simply, I always felt most alive when near a substantial body of water, so when spending vacation time in or on lakes or the sea, I was absolutely in my element. I guess I was born with brine in my veins and meant to live by the ocean.

I'm happy to have fulfilled this apparent predestination for the last 24 years... but now I want a boat! I love boats! One day, perhaps I will be able to afford the vessel of my dreams, but for now when the opportunity arises I'm content to take to the water with others at the helm. Folks like Gabriola Island's Doug Hamilton, for example.

Now, here is a man who shares my love of the ocean. Big time. Unlike me, however—although I fully understand the appeal—he is also a passionate, knowledgeable fisherman. This is not at all unusual in this part of the world, of course, but Hamilton's intrinsic *need* to spend as much time as possible on the water has led him to set up Hasta Mañana Charters, a business allowing him to do just that.

Hamilton and his 2007 25' Harbercraft, *Hasta Mañana*, amply serve the needs of anyone keen to sample the rich fishing local waters have to offer, as well as those wishing

to get on the water to explore our aquatic backyard on a scenic cruise. Considering fishing charters, Hamilton tells me that May and June are good months, as it is when the spring salmon summer run begins. The itinerary for the latter category of charter can be provided by clients, tailor-made by Hamilton, or put together on the waves in roll-with-it fashion. "The beauty of living around here is being able to go all around these islands," enthuses Hamilton. "Or you can go across to Gibsons, over to Sechelt, down to Victoria... there's so much out there, it's just fantastic! I could take you down to Salt Spring for lunch, or I could take you off to a beach somewhere and come pick you up later, or we can take the boat out and just bob around on the glassy water on a summer day."

My wife and I decided to leave our charter experience to Hamilton, and he kept it simple with a tour of the Flat Top Islands and islets off the south end of Gabriola Island, from *Hasta Mañana's* mooring at Silva Bay. Off we set in the cozy vessel, Hamilton's ongoing narrative explaining where we were, and headed, as well as educating us about the area and regaling us with tales of his eight years on these waters. We mooched about the Commodore Passage, our captain pointing out Vance, Gaviota, Sear, Acorn, Carlos and Tugboat Islands as we journeyed on. Past Drumbeig Provincial Park we went, out into Gabriola Passage for a



Photos: David Morrison

Doug Hamilton and Judy White with their children, Benson and Tess

close-up peek at the northern tip of Valdes Island, then a sweep around the entrance of Degnen Bay saw us headed back to Silva Bay at a leisurely rate of knots. It was a lovely cruise, the beauty of the surroundings underlined by sightings of circling bald eagles, sealions slipping through the clear green water, and seals lazing on log booms.

Hamilton has, ahem, *launched* Hasta Mañana Charters from his stunning family home, also the site of his and his effervescent partner Judy White's other business concern, Mañana Guest House. They live here with their two children Benson, 13, and Tess, 7, the dramatic dwelling—resplendent with swimming pool—having been designed and built over 2½ years by Hamilton, assisted by just one friend. As someone who would likely be defeated by the construction of a rabbit hutch, I find this *extremely* impressive. Offering panoramic views of the Coast Range mountains and Entrance Island Light Station, it has “dream home” written all over it, providing all the evidence you need of the heights Hamilton has scaled in three decades as a master house builder in Whistler.

While Hasta Mañana Charters can provide family-friendly accommodation for a party of 4-6, Mañana Guest House is expressly intended as a getaway for couples. Located in the basement as a separate suite with its own entrance, it has only been open since June 15 last year and is the epitome of compact luxury. One L-shaped space interrupted only by an angled kitchenette, it houses a bedroom area

with an unfeasibly comfortable bed in the main portion, directly facing the entrance. The bed is positioned so guests can watch either the pine cabinet-housed TV or, much more like it, the sunrise over the mountains without getting up, just as we did on our stay.

The wonderful view is opened up by six picture windows set in chunky pine frames, so can be further enjoyed over breakfast at the dining table next to the entrance. (I'd





'Captain' Doug Hamilton

recommend Hamilton's delicious goat cheese and blueberry crêpes.) Completed by a soaker tub, vanity and WC, the overall top quality of the suite is highlighted by the subtle décor and flooring. The colour scheme is all muted sages and earth tones, lending a rustic feel, while terracotta tiling runs across the dining and bath area until transitioning to antique wood floorboards for the bedroom. It's delightful.

White says she "loves to play house," so has applied some sweet and classy finishing touches to the accommodation. A true life-of-the-party hostess, this keen cyclist, kayaker and yoga enthusiast is also a natural for the hospitality business. Between her and Hamilton they have conjured up an imaginative, stylish, and romantic B&B with, in the shape of that swimming pool, an exclusive resort feel to it. That the package is topped off with the opportunity to join Hamilton gallivanting on the ocean is certainly appealing to a thalassophile like me. Therefore I'd say these guys named their new businesses very well, as guests will surely wish to return on a great many tomorrows. ●

For info about *Hasta Mañana Charters & Mañana Guest House*, including charter, accommodation rates and availability, visit www.mananagabriola.com, or 250.247.9970, or e-mail manana@telus.net



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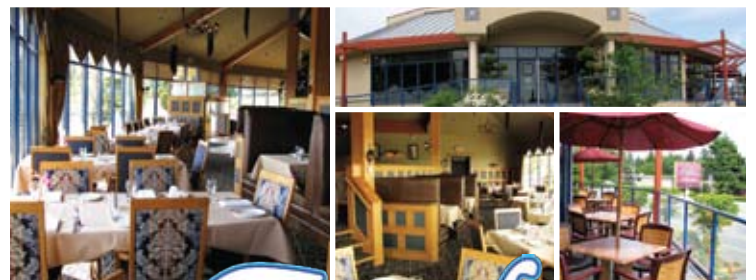
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