
Spirit Bear Lodge

Media Kit

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Introduction

Spirit Bear Lodge is a 12 room lodge located in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest in the small First Nations village of Klemtu. The lodge offers all inclusive tour packages featuring the Great Bear Rainforest, wildlife and indigenous culture.

Architecturally, the exterior of the Spirit Bear Lodge pays homage to the traditional long houses built for thousands of years by West Coast First Nations. Inside, the atmosphere is modern and relaxing.



A Little Bit of Background...

The Tsimshian (Tsim-she-yan, meaning "People of the Skeena") of this part of BC's Pacific West Coast lived in small villages that were scattered along the rivers, bays, and inlets of the central coast before the major arrival of Europeans. They had created a flourishing culture and maintained their way of life for thousands of years, developing elaborate social and political hierarchical structures supported by highly organized and lavish ceremonies.

The Kitsoo/Xai'Xais Nation is an amalgamation of two distinct tribes. The Kitsoo, from the outer islands are part of the Tsimshian language family, and the Xai'xais, from the mainland inlets, are part of the Wakashan language family. The two groups began to settle in Klemtu (Klemdulxk), on Swindle Island around 1875 to take advantage of its strategic location on the inside passage for trade and the supply of cordwood to steamships travelling the coast. In the early 1800's the Kitsoo and Xai'xais tribes populations were impacted by exposure to new viruses transferred from colonialists. When the Canadian government established the reserve

system and moved what remained of “Indians” from the territory to Klemtu the two distinct groups formed one Nation.

Klemtu, like other First Nation communities along the coast, suffered extensive economic, social and cultural damage throughout this period.



Totems inside Klemtu Big House

For over a hundred years the natural resources of the tribal territories of the Kitasoo and Xai'xais were extracted in unsustainable ways, with no compensation provided for the use and occupation by non indigenous people. Klemtu, like other First Nation communities along the coast, suffered extensive economic, social and cultural damage throughout this period. In 1982, the Kitasoo Indian Band wrote a "Statement of Comprehensive Claim" to explain to Canada and the World who they were, where they live, and to lay claim to the

traditional territory of their ancestors. The First Nation Band Government wrote in this claim that...

"Since time immemorial, we the peoples of the Kitasoo Indian Band, situated in what is now called the Province of British Columbia, have been and remain the rightful owners, users and sovereign occupants of our tribal territories.

Our peoples have traditionally used, occupied and exercised jurisdiction over our tribal territories for countless thousands of years. We have never surrendered our tribal territories or jurisdiction through conquest,



Guests visiting historical Big House site which is slowly being taken back by the forest

treaty or any other means to the British Crown or its colonial governments or to the Crown in the right of Canada or to any other government or people.



The Pacific Salmon is a major resource of the area.

Nor has this original ownership, occupancy and use by our people and jurisdiction over our tribal territories ever been superseded by law.

Therefore, we assert our right and claim to our tribal area... to our land and to its preservation, development and management and to the benefits that have been and may be derived from all resources and development of resources within our tribal territories."

This "Statement of Comprehensive Claim" was presented to the Government of Canada and British Columbia on behalf of the Kitasoo/ Xai'xais Band members. In 2000, this was followed up by a "Land and Resource Protection Management Plan" , which explained how the community would look to its heritage for present day decision making.

"Our vision for our land and resources is based on the best definition of the term "sustainable". To us this means that the wealth of forests, fish, wildlife and the complexity of all life will be here forever. It also means that we will be here forever. To remain here as Kitasoo and Xai'xais people we need to protect and enhance our culture and protect our heritage. We also need to live in the modern world. We need jobs to sustain our families. We need revenue and economic development to sustain our community.



Black Bears in this area are known to carry the recessive gene that can result in a white Black Bear or Spirit Bear.

We invite other people and governments to work with us to implement the plan but we seek no permission. Our right to implement this plan comes from our aboriginal rights and title and from our connection to this land for thousands of years."



Klemtu Big House from above.

town in BC's Great Bear Rainforest will benefit from the abundant natural resources, like their ancestors before them.

In the 1980s and 1990s the Kitasoo/Xai'xais began to develop a community-based economy. By using revenue from a commercial herring spawn on kelp license, and securing additional community-owned licenses such as sea cucumber, urchin, prawn and others, the community was able to build a seafood processing plant. Soon after they began farming salmon which provided significant new revenues and jobs.

With that claim and land use plan, the Kitasoo effectively regained their rightful control of the land and resources within. This plan also protected 40% of their traditional territory and contained a "Protocol on the Environment", which governed future use and conservation of all the lands and resources for generations to come.

These historic steps by the Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nation Council and Hereditary Chiefs has allowed the community to grow economically for the long term as well as ensure that future generations of this small



Herring Roe harvested using hemlock branches.

Further inroads were made by asserting management over forestry harvesting in the territory which eventually led to acquisition of forest tenures and additional revenues.



Vern Brown leads a group of guests.

based approach to resource management.

Unlike the colonial, extractive industries that had operated in the region for decades, ecotourism was an industry that would use the natural resources of the territory in accordance with cultural laws, knowledge and values. Their traditional resource plan was guided by oral history and their rich cultural tradition and knowledge. The people, the land, and the sea care for and sustained one another.

And so, from a downturn in extractive economies like fishing and a desire to reassert control and ownership of their traditional territory, the business that would eventually become Spirit Bear Lodge was formed.

in 1999 and 2000, the Nation identified ecotourism (non-extractive tourism) as a new economic opportunity developing from the new protection of areas in their territory.

Despite initial concerns, the community began to see the potential of ecotourism to bring economic, cultural and environmental benefits to their territory. Larry Greba, who has been a director of the KITASOO Development Corporation since its establishment in 1994, says the community was able to see parallels between ecotourism and their own conservation-



Guests enjoying the rare Spirit Bear.

How Our Tours Differ

Indigenous Owned & Operated

Spirit Bear Lodge is owned by the Kitasoo/Xai'xais indigenous Nation and operates in the traditional territory of its people. This allows us to offer guests an exclusive experience in areas of the Great Bear Rainforest, that others may be restricted from, or have limited access to. Local guides and skippers offer a unique cultural and historic perspective on the lands in which their people have called home for time



Land Based Viewing

Due to our exclusive land access rights, the majority of our wildlife viewing is done on land in the estuaries. This can allow for an intimate eye level connection with the animals and spectacular photo opportunities. This is most popular with keen photographers and individuals looking for an immersive experience into the Great Bear Rainforest. May not be suitable for those with mobility issues.



Spirit Bears

Spirit Bears, found only in the remote parts of the Great Bear Rainforest and the traditional territory of the Kitasoo/Xai'xais people, are black bears with white fur, caused by a recessive gene. The Spirit Bear fascinates geneticist and wilderness lovers around the world. Scientists estimate there are less than 400 Spirit Bears along the British Columbia Coast.



Tour Package Information

- All-inclusive bear-viewing packages including round trip flights from Vancouver South Terminal to Bella Bella.
- Season runs from June 1st to October 10th
- Package Lengths from 3,4,5 and 6-night options

Everyday at Spirit Bear Lodge is unique, we visit many diverse and awe-inspiring locations in search of wildlife.

Tours vary depending on recent wildlife sightings, guest interests, and weather. Some days could be spent waiting patiently in one river system for wildlife to appear, while others could involve visiting several locations.

For the more adventurous, we offer hiking, kayaking, and canoeing options in some of nature's most stunning places.

Kitasoo Xai'xais culture is integrated into each day through spending time with local guides, visiting cultural sites, and learning the history of the Kitasoo/Xai'xais people.

Our staff share their intimate knowledge of traditional foods, medicinal plants, and stories passed down through generations.

Our goal is to deliver a transformative experience through complete immersion in nature by sharing our appreciation for the The Great Bear Rainforest .

Contact Information

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