

# Sunshine Coast Communities

## Hamlets to Call Home

by Tracey Rayson

Marina, Gibsons Landing. Photo: Tracey Rayson.

While most people look to escape to tropical resorts or fantasize about residing anywhere else but their day-to-day digs, some pack their passports and possessions and head for their annual retreat they call a holiday. However, residents on the Sunshine Coast are exactly where they want to be — living life in a destination that possesses all the sun-drenched attributes and highlights of a year-round vacation — a daily retreat they call home.

Within the 180-kilometre sculpted shoreline stretching from the ink-blue waters of Howe Sound to the deep cerulean recesses of Desolation Sound lays a wildly refreshing tonic of West Coast fusion. Separated by the Jervis Inlet, the Lower Sunshine Coast winds its way from Port Mellon to Egmont with the lively communities of Gibsons, Sechelt, and Pender Harbour just to name a few, while the Upper Sunshine Coast features Saltry Bay, Powell River, and Lund. The two regions are a scenic overload of exceptional wilderness (Saltry Bay is a trailhead for the 180-kilometre Sunshine Coast Trail, with sections of sub-alpine vegetation and old-growth temperate rainforest), and waterways that beckon the avid and novice boater alike. Ask any sea-

farer worth his weight in sea salt to name a favourite anchorage and Desolation Sound Provincial Marine Park will top the list (BC's largest at 8,256 hectares).

This eclectic verdant Coast seizes the myriad offerings of marine recreation, extreme and soft adventures, intimate spas, sporting activities the likes of golf, cycling and hiking, and for those with a cultural bent, a lively First Nations history, galleries, artisan studios, and a vibrant and contemporary arts community that is second to none.

Positioned as a year-round destination, these pursuits are enjoyed by over 27,759 locals according to the 2006 Census, an increase of 8.4 percent from 25,599 residents in 2001. The influx of people relocating to the Sunshine Coast is no surprise; a particular draw is the pleasing 2,400 hours of annual sunshine (an average of six hours per day), a desirable environment for those who are inclined to seek warmer climes without taking on snowbird status.

"The Sunshine Coast is a jewel that you have to experience to appreciate," says Jennifer Rhyne, communications director with Vancouver, Coast & Mountains Tourism Region. "It seems so close to the Lower Mainland (only a 40 minute ferry ride) and yet when you arrive you feel worlds away; It is easy to see why people who visit the Sunshine Coast for the first time, end up with summer homes and cabins located there shortly afterwards."

According to the 2007 MLS Housing Price Index for single family homes on the Sunshine



The Gumboot Cafe, Roberts Creek. Photo: Tourism BC/Dannielle Hayes.