



# EXPLORING

» A search for the road less travelled





# HAKAI

BY JENNIFER & JAMES HAMILTON

**Top left:** Pruth Bay is by far the most popular anchorage in Hakai, with an awesome view east down Kwakshua Channel.

**Top right:** This tiny cove off Sans Peur Passage had a view out to the main channel, where the occasional boat went by.

**Bottom left:** In the Serpent Group we found an almost tropical setting, with a large white sand midden-shell beach that was perfect for paddling.

**Bottom right:** We tiptoed through the constriction in Spitfire Channel, which has a least charted depth of 1.9 m and is perhaps eight metres wide.



**T**he Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy Area is situated off the mainland coast just north of Vancouver Island. At 123,000 hectares it is the largest of British Columbia's numerous marine parks and comprises literally hundreds of islands and islets. This is the B.C. coast in all its glory, with something for everyone: mountains, rapids, wildlife, lagoons, lazy coves, ocean swells, windswept shores, white-sand beaches, and islet-strewn waterways to explore.

Due to its size, remoteness, and lack of facilities for visitors, boaters who make the journey north to Hakai will be rewarded by an endless choice of outstanding anchorages within a pristine and secluded wilderness.

**NORTH TO HAKAI** We crave solitude and love to explore new territory. Desolation Sound is much too busy for us, and even the North Island felt a little crowded. The next logical step was to continue north, across Queen Charlotte Sound, and into B.C.'s

central coast. We planned to spend a major part of our three-week trip in the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy Area (see sidebar). A popular destination for kayakers, Hakai seems virtually unknown to the average cruiser. We went for days without seeing another pleasure craft, let alone sharing an anchorage. But our first stop in the park was quite the opposite.

From Fish Egg Inlet on the mainland coast, we crossed Fitz Hugh Sound and entered the park via Kwakshua Channel at

the north tip of Calvert Island. The waters were calm and still, lit golden by the morning sun in a cloudless sky. We basked in the warm rays and our good fortune. Kwakshua Channel ends at Pruth Bay, which for

**Top right:** With a 360° view from the radio tower above Pruth Bay, we could see clear across the park to its Northern extreme.

**Right inset:** In Cultus Sound, we anchored between a rare pair of reversing waterfalls.

**Below:** A marvelous driftwood dock connected the resort at Sandspit Point to their float.



“BOATERS WHO make the journey north to  
CHOICE OF OUTSTANDING ANCHORAGES WITHIN a



## AREA



decades has been a popular haven for small-craft bound to and from Alaska. There were already a dozen vessels at anchor and twice that number by late afternoon. We instead anchored our 40' powerboat Dirona in an empty, unnamed bay just east of Keith Anchorage, and were joined by only one other vessel. We immediately set off on the moderate 3.2-km hike to the radio tower which sits 488 metres above Keith Anchorage. On that clear day, the 360° view from the summit was amazing. Fortunately, we brought bug repellent and could stay to

enjoy it—the resident insects were very hungry. Pruth Bay has an even more popular attraction: West Beach. An easy walk west from the head of the bay led to a magnificent white-sand beach with an endless view across the Pacific Ocean. It reminded us of Hawaii—ignoring the huge piles of driftwood blown in by winter storms—with gentle surf and talcum-soft sand that was almost too hot for bare feet.

**ADAMS HARBOUR** We travelled north to Hakai Passage the next morning and then turned southwest to test the waters. It was our first real exposure to ocean swell, which were running about 2-3 metres, as our passage across Queen Charlotte Sound had been almost disappointingly calm. I was initially somewhat alarmed to see those big waves coming towards us, but Dirona took them easily, and I soon relaxed. Our

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**pristine and secluded wilderness.**



Note: Green areas is Hakai Luxubalis Conservation Area.

## IF YOU GO

Although much of the park is not covered in detail in guidebooks, there are several excellent references that touch on the area, notably Iain Lawrence's *Far-Away Places* (1995), the annual *Waggoner Cruising Guide*, and the *Douglass' Exploring the North Coast of British Columbia* (2002). William Kelly's "Campbell Island to Calvert Island" (PY May, 2001) was helpful, and Edith Iglauer's *Fishing with John* mentions some anchorages. Between 2000 and 2002, CHS issued three new charts (3935-3937) and updated the *Sailing Directions* for the region. Our 1991 *Sailing Directions* was so full of corrections that anyone traveling here is well-advised to obtain these newer publications. The *Coast Recreation Maps* ([www.coastalwatersrec.com](http://www.coastalwatersrec.com)) for Bella Bella and Hakai Passage were handy as both take-along dinghy charts and in locating points of interest.

experience in more exposed waters during this trip gave us the confidence to travel up Vancouver Island's west coast the following year, something we would not have considered previously. While most of the region is protected, Hakai is a good place to gain open-ocean experience in small doses.

Turning back, we motored to Adams Harbour and tried to moor just east of Flat Island, but the anchor consistently dragged through the soft sand. We instead tucked into a small bight on the eastern shore. This was a perfect spot, with not another soul in sight. Humanity was nearby though. A private resort, invisible from the water, was

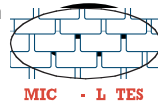
tucked into the trees at Sandspit Point. A marvellous driftwood dock connected the resort to their float. Farther south, a group of kayakers had set-up camp. The islands opposite our anchorage were excellent dinghy territory—the terrain was rugged and inhospitable, but very dramatic. The weather had gouged striking accordion folds into the rocky shores, while the swells on the west side were even more exciting in a small dinghy.

**SERPENT GROUP** When we awoke the next morning, *Dirona* was rocking gently in swell that reached in from Hakai Passage. This

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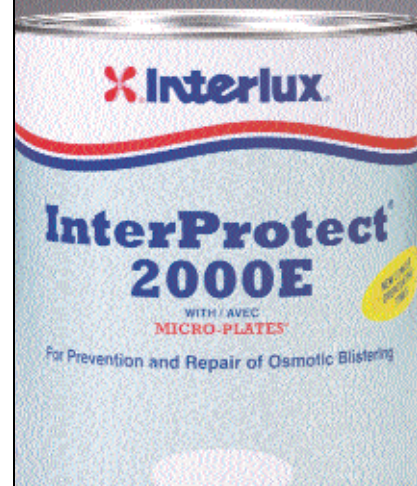
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## ANCHORAGE NOTES

(see charts 3935-3937)

**Adams Harbour:** Anchor north of Sandspit Point in 5 to 10 m in the bight formed by the south shore of a 38 m high islet, with a line ashore.

**Serpent Group:** Anchor in 5 to 10 m southwest of the 31 m high islet, with room to swing, in the one-boat cove formed by the eastern-most shore of the 57 m high island and an unmarked islet.

**Hurricane Inlet** (our name): Anchor in 10-15 m, with room to swing, at the head of the inlet which juts northward into Hurricane Island.

**Lane Rock Cove** (our name): Southeast of Lane Rock, anchor where 3.4 m is charted, directly west of the islet which blocks the lagoon entrance, stern tying to that islet.

**Sans Peur Cove** (our name), McNaughton Group: Enter through the channel north of the 61 m high island and anchor in 6 to 10 m in the narrow, one-boat cove at the southern extreme, using a stern line or anchor. There is about 75 m between the rock and reef on either side of the cove entrance—just stay centred outside the 5 m line as you enter. The charted rock at the western head is close to shore and visible in most tides.

**Abandoned Cove** (our name), McNaughton Group: Follow the southwest shore of the northern-most major island into a 13.8-m bay. The cove is directly to the east. Keep to the northern  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the entrance channel—the charted rock is close to the southern shore and visible only at lower tides.

waterway, exposed to the ocean, has a reputation for fierce weather. Although the weather was calm, the swell was fairly active when we later crossed. In sheltered Edward Channel, tree-covered islets were sprinkled liberally over glass-smooth waters. We tucked into Lewall Inlet on Stirling Island for breakfast—the entry was much wider than the chart implied. Afterwards, we continued north, taking Nalau Passage west to Kildidit Sound. We were planning to anchor for the night at the north end of Leckie Bay on Hunter Island, but Kildidit Sound's Serpent Group caught our attention. Here we found a cove in an almost tropical setting. It was exposed only to the north, with a large white-sand midden-shell beach at the head, and good swell protection, even at higher tides. The shallow water over the soft, hot sand was warm and inviting, perfect for paddling. We climbed over the rocks to have lunch on the wild, windswept northwest side. Here, the surf crashed against the shore and surged into small channels, while stunted trees struggled to grow, bent over severely by the wind.

**HURRICANE INLET** We journeyed west into Queens Sound the following morning, stopping for breakfast in the northwest cove

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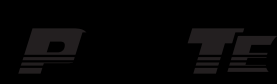




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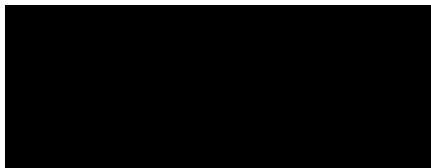
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of Triquet Island. The holding was good and conditions were calm, but the afternoon westerlies would certainly reach in, making it much less appealing. A deer came bounding across the beach to greet us, looking like a lost puppy, but quickly decided that we weren't who it was expecting. As we ate, a fishing vessel with its trolling lines down drifted slowly past through Queens Sound. When salmon were more plentiful, this was a busy fishing route. After breakfast, we continued north into Fulton Passage and through to Spider Anchorage. With a maze of protected waterways, this part of the park is very popular with kayakers. We anchored in a circular cove on the southwest side of Hurricane Island, dubbed Hurricane Anchorage by one of our guidebooks. Touring the area by dinghy, we found the perfect sun-warmed rock for a picnic lunch. We were surrounded on all sides by vibrant underwater life. When we returned to Dirona, two sailboats had joined us in the cove, the first pleasure craft we'd seen since leaving Pruth Bay. Spoiled for solitude, we raised the anchor and went off in search of another spot for the night, ending up at the head of the inlet which juts northward into Hurricane Island. We had an amazing view to the south under a clear blue sky, and our only cove-mates were huge sea-blubber jellyfish that drifted slowly by.

**LANE ROCK COVE** The next day we ventured through Kildidit Narrows and into

Kildidit Inlet (see "Exploring Kildidit Inlet," PY September 2003.) It was well-worth the effort—Kildidit Inlet was even more wild and pristine than the rest of Hakai. Returning a day later to Kildidit Sound, we followed Spitfire Channel along the south shore of Hunter Island and crossed Queens Sound to the Goose Group. Spitfire Channel was tranquil, save for the narrow constriction, perhaps eight metres wide, with a least-charted depth of 1.9 m. We tiptoed through on a four-metre tide. The cove at the southern end of Gosling Island was full of huge logs that had been thrown far on shore. It was intimidating even in calm weather. We stopped for breakfast at Goose Island Anchorage, where a huge flock of pied-billed grebes put on a diving show. Crossing back to Hunter Island, we followed Cultus Sound to the cove south of Lane Rock. Here an islet blocks a lagoon entrance, creating a rare dual reversing waterfall. We anchored west of this islet, with a waterfall on either side. When the tide levels reached equilibrium, we explored the lagoon, which seemed untouched by human hands. Inside the southern entrance, a deep, clear pool brimmed with colourful sea life.

**THE MCNAUGHTON GROUP** We explored Kinsmen Inlet the next morning. Nothing appealed to us at the outer entrance and we didn't feel like taking on the narrow channel, so we continued north into Sans Peur Passage. We anchored in a tiny cove off the



Hakai, this was crowded. Our final Hakai anchorage was at Abandoned Cove, which we named for the collapsed floathome at its entrance. From Sans Peur Passage, we circumnavigated the most northerly of the major McNaughton Group islands counter-clockwise to this almost-landlocked cove at its southern end. This was an idyllic spot: remote, protected from all winds, and with excellent holding.

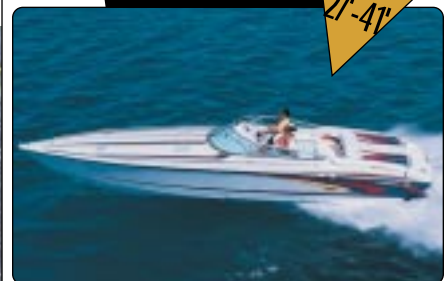
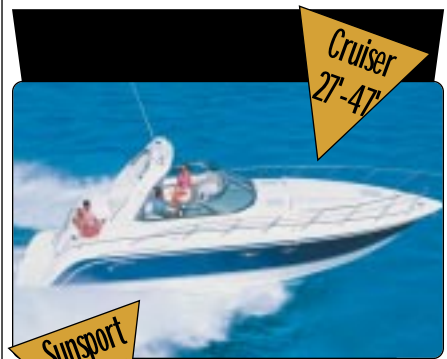
After eight days of adventure, in which we had seen many more eagles than pleasure craft, we finally left the park to refuel at New Bella Bella (Waglisa). Hakai was amazing, and we had only scratched the surface. We would definitely return.

west side, tucked in amongst several islets, with a view out to Sans Peur Passage. Even though it was pouring rain, we spent hours touring by dinghy through the complex waterways of the McNaughton Group. There are many excellent anchorages here, two of which contained pleasure craft. For

Jennifer and James Hamilton are correspondents for the Waggoner Cruising Guide and boat year-round throughout the Pacific Northwest. Jennifer is currently writing her fourth book, *The Story of the Broughton Archipelago and the North Island Straits*. 📖



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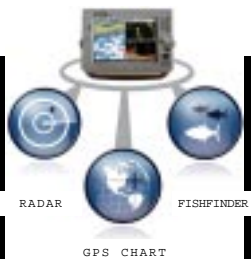
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