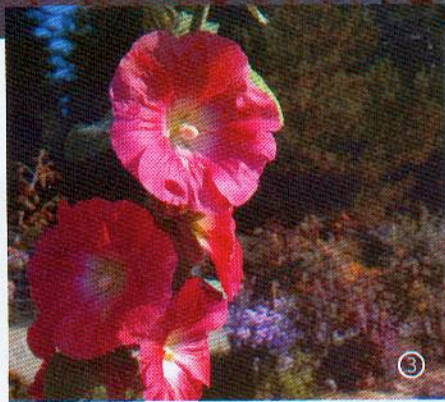


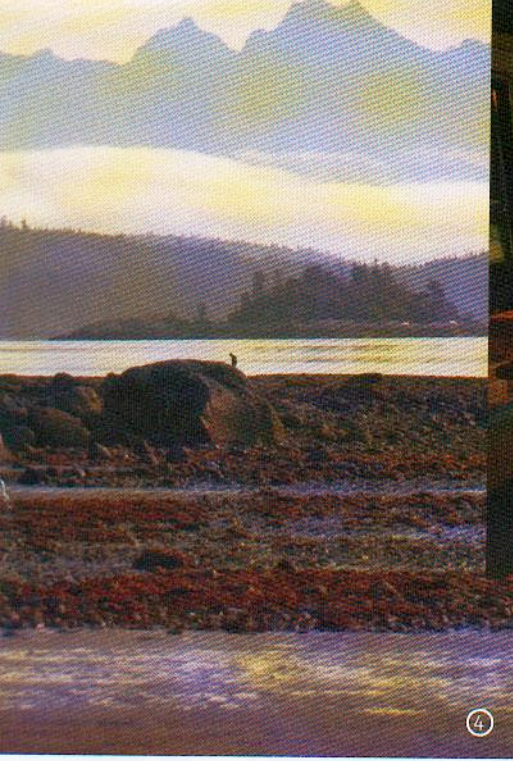
BY JENNIFER GRAY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER TWYMAN

# RETREAT TO CORTES

HOLLYHOCK CENTRE ON CORTES ISLAND OFFERS  
A GOURMET FEAST FOR THE SOUL WITH PROGRAMS  
THAT WILL RELAX, REJUVENATE AND RESTORE



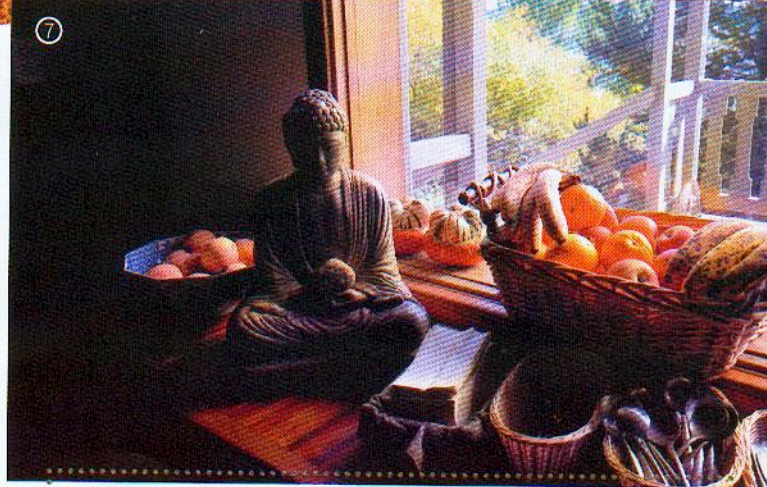
1. The guests of Hollyhock enjoy the view through an outdoor hallway leading to the rooms just off the tranquil beach.
2. Inukshuks which are Inuit symbols signifying safety, hope and friendship are scattered along the local beaches.
3. Bright red hollyhocks that are the centre's namesake grow in abundance around the centre.



4



6



7

**NAMED FOR THE** bright-red hollyhocks that have been growing in its central garden for more than 25 years, Hollyhock Retreat Centre on Cortes Island, B.C., brings the practice of rejuvenation to a higher level.

There are few places where it is possible to feel like you've entered another dimension; places where you can ignite your spirit, sit by placid waters and soak up an air of transformative tranquility. And there are even fewer where even the shyest among us would consider tossing off our bathing suits and indulging in a luxurious plunge into one of two communal hot tubs overlooking the Strait of Georgia. Although I'd never even gone topless — even on the famed beaches of the Cote d'Azur — parting with my swimming skivvies on the last day of a three-day holiday at Hollyhock felt completely natural.

Entering its 26th year of business as a non-profit society, Hollyhock continues to draw individuals and groups from around the world with an array of programs designed to fuel the mental and physical health of its guests.

Throughout the year, guests can participate in a variety of programs, with a distinguished list of guest speakers including that modern-day deity of well-being, Dr. Andrew Weil.

"Change can happen when different thinkers gather," says Dana Bass Solomon,

CEO and board chair for Hollyhock. "Within this homey atmosphere, we are providing the tools for change, cultivating a more sustainable vision and enlightened behaviour."

Hollyhock aims to provide the tools for both personal and professional growth and help individuals and groups function at their optimum level. Workshops and conferences

convene and uncover healthier ways to live in the world.

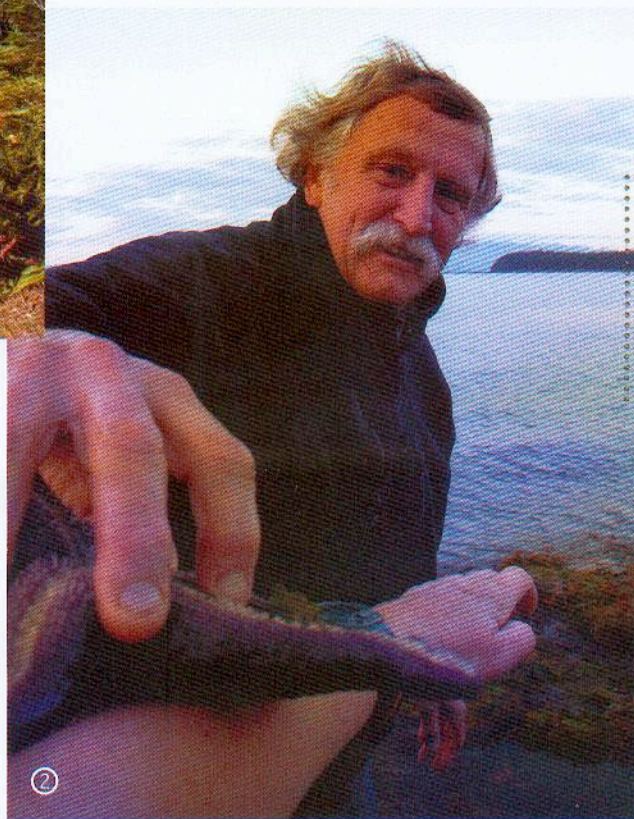
Perhaps you feel like kayaking amidst the spectacular scenery of B.C.'s islands and the Georgia Strait archipelago; or maybe you want to learn the power of Celtic song or African drumming; you may even participate in an Old Trout Puppet Workshop.

**IF THE GARDEN IS THE HEART OF HOLLYHOCK, THEN THE KITCHEN IS ITS SOUL; MEALS ARE ARTFULLY PREPARED AND PRESENTED IN A SACRED HOMAGE TO CREATION.**

cover a gamut of subjects but focus on five main themes: health and well-being, wisdom practices, arts and culture, business and leadership, and world change and service. Hollyhock provides many opportunities for individuals, families and companies to

Within moments of arriving at Hollyhock, I meandered through the French intensive organic garden that is the heart of Hollyhock. The garden has been lovingly created and nurtured for 24 years by Nori Fletcher. Fletcher supplies the fruit, vegetables, >>

- 4. The beach at Hollyhock at low tide affords breathtaking views.
- 5. A healthy dessert of apple crisp is set out for guests in the gourmet kitchen.
- 6. Bright yellow Doronicum are among the flowers grown in the organic garden that is the heart of Hollyhock.
- 7. The centre fuels the mental and physical health of its guests, serving wholesome foods that offer a simple formula for well-being.



1. One can find peaceful solitude in the yoga and meditation hut tucked in the forest.

2. Bill Ophoff visited the centre 12 years ago and liked it so much he stayed on as the resident naturalist.

across the landscape, is a sacred symbolic tribute to life. Along the sandy beaches, fallen beechwood provided handy benches and sculptural interest. The silence of a stroll through the area was disturbed only by the call of an eagle, the engine of a passing seaplane or the sounds of grazing deer

just at the forest's edge, emphasizing the remoteness of the centre.

Opting out of the daily yoga or meditation class one morning, the photographer and I decided to go on a 6 a.m. row with Hollyhock's resident naturalist, Bill Ophoff. Imagine the Marlboro Man meets Dreamy Hippy and you can picture Ophoff. Twelve years ago, Ophoff visited Hollyhock on a work exchange program and liked it so much that he decided to stay. He has been Hollyhock's resident naturalist ever since.

After cleaning the boat from a night of debauchery on the part of some local sea otters, Ophoff shepherded our group of eight rowers into the large wooden rowboat. Over the sloppy rhythm of oars on water, we learned about local biodiversity, natural history and cultural tales of the Kaloose Band. Upon landing on Long Tom Island, we were able to hold an array of spectacularly coloured starfish and eat a breakfast of coffee, tea, cookies and muffins — organic and free trade of course.

The third and final day arrived quickly. With it came new friendships, renewed energy and the sense of calm that comes with being amid such grandeur and grace. Despite my initial skepticism at being transformed within three days, I must admit that I've been Hollyhocked and I hope to make this trip the first in an annual pilgrimage to the centre. **F**

## STARTING YOUR ADVENTURE:

WITH FREQUENT FLIGHTS TO COMOX NOW AVAILABLE FROM CALGARY, GETTING TO A WORLD AWAY IS POSSIBLE IN APPROXIMATELY THREE HOURS:

Highly recommended is Ambassador Shuttle Services from Comox to Campbell River. Talk to the Ambassador himself, Ray, to make reservations at 1-877-339-5252.

Water taxi from Campbell River to Cortes Island: Discovery Launch Water Taxi. Book online at [discoverylaunch.com](http://discoverylaunch.com)

[hollyhock.ca](http://hollyhock.ca), 1-800-933-6339

cadence with the regular rhythms of breakfast, lunch and dinner — Hollyhock's simple formula for well-being.

Fresh-baked breads, fresh fruits and vegetables, and divinely spiced foods inspired by the flavours of India, Morocco and Greece were complemented by colourful edible flowers, fresh sea air and candlelight. These rituals were more than simple meals to hurriedly and absentmindedly consume — they became a much-anticipated ritual to relax, nourish and reconnect.

When I signed up for the "Hollyhock Massage" from the array of available bodywork treatments, I had no inclination that this would be the best massage that I'd ever had. I stepped into a serene hut infused with natural light, surrounded by lush forest and steeped in silence. This was no ordinary massage: I was in the capable hands of a healer.

A tour of the centre's buildings and grounds reveals that everything here, from a structure's design to the formations of Inukshuks made from local rocks scattered

flowers and herbs that go into the cuisine that is contributing to Hollyhock's international acclaim.

If the garden is the heart of Hollyhock, then the kitchen is its soul; meals are artfully prepared and presented in a sacred homage to creation. The dishes are infused with a weekly serving of local seafood (try the oyster barbeque on the beach). If you don't want the feast to end, you can try your hand at this culinary mastery with Hollyhock's own cookbook, *Hollyhock Cooks*, co-authored by the retreat's head chef, Moreka Jolar.

During my three-day stay, it felt as if time really did slow down. The mystical natural setting, the solitude of the meditation spaces, a class, massage and a walk by the beach were the building blocks of my day, interrupted only by three healthy meals. I felt as though I had fallen into synergistic

**A TOUR OF THE CENTRE'S BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS REVEALS THAT EVERYTHING HERE, FROM A STRUCTURE'S DESIGN TO THE FORMATIONS OF INUKSHUKS MADE FROM LOCAL ROCKS SCATTERED ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE, IS A SACRED, SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE TO LIFE.**