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GOING PLACES

Alderbrook Resort: A Hood Canal Gem

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Alderbrook Resort at the Hood Canal is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. And boy, they've come a long way, baby.

Alderbrook opened for business in 1913 with little more than canvas tents, wood stoves, a creek to keep food and drink cold – and a canal-front view, of course. Fast forward to 2013, and you'll find a destination resort that features both fun for families and relaxation, first and foremost.



The centennial is the perfect time to visit the resort as you get to experience not only the splendid amenities at Alderbrook, but also some of what the greater Hood Canal community has to offer. Locals are getting on board to help celebrate, and the summer months are chock-full of activities geared toward children and families.

My family paid Alderbrook a visit this spring during "Extraordinary Oyster Month." It was extraordinary indeed. From barbecued oysters on the lawn (my 6-year-old daughter ate 15!), to learning about native oysters from the family-owned Hama Hama Oyster Co., to tasting them on the half shell, we had a great time experiencing this fascinating part of Hood Canal life.



Each week in July, August and September, families can enjoy free guided nature hikes, kayaking and art classes, local art vendors and seafood BBQs. Take a summertime cruise on the resort's 54-foot yacht – Lady Alderbrook – on weekdays (\$10 for kids, \$20 for adults). Hop on board to enjoy scenic views and learn about the history of the Hood Canal. Or, go for the gusto, and take a seaplane tour.



Alderbrook Resort has a mix of fully-equipped cottages and guest rooms in the cozy main lodge. Almost all have breathtaking views of the canal and the Olympic Mountains. (If there is snow on the mountains, be sure to have a staff member point out “The Traveler” of legend on the tallest peak.) The grounds are spacious, with waterfalls, fountains and a day spa to add to the serenity. The glass-enclosed pool warrants extra attention, with crystal-clear saltwater (no chlorine smell!) and optimal views. Also on site: a Jacuzzi, sauna, fitness center and steam room – my personal favorite.



But enough about what I liked. My kids, ages 6 and 8, had a blast at the pool, paddling around in kayaks, in the courtyard playing badminton and soccer, and exploring the treasure trove of sea life on the beach (bring boots – those oyster shells are sharp).



Upon arrival, we walked out on the resort dock and within 15 feet of a Great Blue Heron. My kids have never been up close to a bird as big as this before. “Our bird” graced our presence several more times over the next two days.

I recommend checking out the area by water – rent a kayak, stand up paddle board, the hydrobike or pedal boat for \$25 an hour. A word to the wise: If you are tall enough, the hydrobike really cruises; the paddle boat takes some brawn to get around. We also enjoyed hiking around the wooded trails of the 88-acre property, which open up to spectacular panoramas.



Some added bonuses: Four-legged furry friends are welcome at the resort, and there are free games and movie rentals. My youngest was obsessed with the resident kitties, Alder and Brook. My oldest was happy to retreat to the Xbox game room for an hour (no matter how much we try to unplug, it just doesn't quite happen).



Staying at the resort is a splurge: rates start at \$249 in the summer. You can save a few bucks by bringing your own food or ordering from the poolside menu, which is significantly less expensive than the restaurant (I'm quite sure your kids won't complain about staying at the pool). We had a lovely time at the restaurant, however, enjoying locally-harvested seafood.



While I fully planned to go out and enjoy more of the natural beauty and shops in the area, as I sat out with my cup of coffee, the view and my thoughts in the morning, watching the kids delight in finding mini crabs under rocks, I knew we'd stay put. After all, the most wondrous thing about vacation is having a chance to slow down.



Alderbrook offers a scenic getaway for a quality family experience. If the weather cooperates, there really is no better place to be.

<http://www.seattleschild.com/article/family-trip-hood-canal-alderbrook-resort>