

FAVOURITE PLACES

Gambier Island Sea Ranch is a place away from regular life

BY KAREN SANDER

Just half an hour from Horse-shoe Bay, I can stand on a grassy meadow that's bound on one side by classic West Coast beauty – ocean, mountain and forest – and on the other by a storybook farm.

My husband first took me there 15 years ago, but it is my kids that have reminded me that Gambier Island Sea Ranch is my favourite place in B.C.

Gambier is the largest of the Howe Sound Islands but is sparsely populated.

The Sea Ranch is unique because it is a strata of 66 cabins on 350 acres of land, sitting in the valley between 614-metre Mount Artaban and 350-metre Burt's Bluff at the head of Long Bay. All that remains of the farm that was first run here in the early 1900s is the farmhouse and dozens of fruit trees. Now it is run as a hobby farm.

Gambier Island Sea Ranch's unique fun begins when we arrive at our dock and the Sea Ranch Express is there to meet us. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on the property so the old blue tractor, trailer in tow, meets the water taxi and carries our bags to our cabins.

My kids love to race up to the farm to see how much the animals have grown since our last visit, feed our food scraps to the pigs and see if there are any eggs to collect.



Gambier Island Sea Ranch is a place where children can run free (above) and pose for a photograph (below) on some of Gambier Island's 350 acres of land (above, right).

The sheltered warm bay, the forest trails, the open grass fields and all the animals make this a stunning spot. But there is something more here. There is a real separation from regular life; there is a slowness, a simplicity and a community feeling that is rare. Everyone knows one another and comes together both to celebrate – Canada Day

and the like – and to work, building a fence or shed.

The children are able to run free, shirtless and shoeless, in little packs with endless playmates. And we are all able to focus on what's important: family and being a good neighbour.

Special to The Sun.

