

Off to Labrador with Wells Gray

Wells Gray Tours, which has a branch in Kelowna, is the first tour operator to take a big group into remote areas of northern Labrador.

Big, of course, is relative because the tour group from the Interior, Lower Mainland and Victoria was made up just 34 lucky souls.

Still, that's a big group for places like Battle Harbour — an island off Labrador that's only accessible by small ferry.

It was a 16-day tour of Newfoundland and Labrador in June, said Wells Gray director of sales and marketing Joan Niemeier.

"But Battle Harbour was the highlight for everyone. It was groundbreaking to get a group in there. Usually, only couples or families make the trip. Our group of 34 took up almost all the accommodation in town — a lot of the independent homes and the police station."

In fact, the group was the biggest Battle Harbour had ever seen and the community marked the arrival with a greeting party that included a Mountie in full red surge uniform carrying the flag of Nunatsiavut (what the Inuit call that area of northern Labrador).

Battle Harbour is historic because it was one of the communities that was considered so remote by the Newfoundland and Labrador government that in 1970 everyone from there was relocated.

The homes and civic buildings there stood empty for a long time before they were refurbished as guest houses for tourists to stay in — thus the group staying in a mix of homes and the former police station.

The tour came about because Destination Labrador has a push on to encourage tour operators to include the often overlooked, but historic and bleakly beautiful, chunk of land and coastline on itineraries.

Wells Gray was the first to develop such a tour.

The tour cost \$4,300 per person, including return flights, ground and water transportation in Newfoundland and Labrador, accommodation, meals and most tips.

Wells Gray will do the tour again next June.

Meantime, the company continues to take groups from southern B.C. on trips ranging from weekends to see shows in Vancouver to safaris in Africa.

Wells Gray also just celebrated its 40th anniversary with a Holland America



STEVE MACNAULL
Valley Views

Alaska cruise that 500 clients and staff sailed on.

Big White named Family ski resort of year

Australian magazine Snow Action has deemed Big White "family ski resort of the year" for 2012.

Snow Action has a circulation of 80,000 and is considered the snow travel bible Down Under.

The mag also listed 26 reasons A-Z why Big White deserves the designation from "awesome accommodation" to "mini Z snowmobiles" kids can ride.

"Our mission has always been to ensure that we do everything we can do to make the family ski resort experience a great one," said Big White vice-president Michael Ballingall.

"From our Ski School Kids Centre to the nightly games and events that we host including Carnival Night, Family Apres and our fabulous fireworks show each week, we have something for everyone of all ages."

Australia is a key market for Big White as Aussies like to leave their summer for a while to take in our winter.

Big White also heavily markets in Australia because the family that owns the resort — the Schumanns — hail from Down Under.

Big White is promoted as a one connection destination for Australians who can fly from Oz to Vancouver, Seattle or Los Angeles (starting Dec. 19) and then catch a flight right into Kelowna.

Kelowna's A Vista Villa gets award of excellence

For continual high rankings by guests, the world's largest travel website — TripAdvisor.com — has awarded Kelowna bed and breakfast A Vista Villa a certificate of excellence.

The certificate is in the specialty lodgings category, because A Vista Villa is a home with four ensuite rooms, pool and far-infrared sauna in a residential neighbourhood near Kelowna Golf and Country Club that bills itself as an all-inclusive couples resort.

To earn the certificate, businesses have to maintain at least an average of four out of five stars in ratings by guests.

"We strive to offer our



Photo contributed

A Mountie meets tourists from Kelowna in Battle Harbour — an island off northern Labrador — as part of a Wells Gray Tour that was the first to bring a group to the remote area.

guests the most memorable experience possible and to continuously exceed their expectations," said owner Sherry Cote.

"This accolade is evidence that our hard work and dedication to guest comfort is translating into positive traveller reviews on TripAdvisor."

Business professor wins highest employee honour

For being a heck of a teacher and setting up the award-winning Students in Free Enterprise program at Okanagan College, business professor Kyleen Myrah has won the school's highest employee honour.

Myrah was presented the President's Award by — who else — college president Jim Hamilton recently at the inaugural Employee Excellence Awards at the Kelowna campus.

Other award winners include culinary teacher and chef Geoffrey Couper (Teaching Excellence Award), education technology coordinator Mike Minions (Individual Service Excellence), facilities service workers Rich Montagnon and Dave Sandbert (Group Service Excellence), science technologies and health dean Yvonne Moritz (Strong Start Award) and

business professor Michael Orwick (Innovation Award).

Metabridge manager moving to Vancouver

After two years as Metabridge manager, Michael Blonde is moving to Vancouver to become chief operating officer at nuptials planning company Weddingful.

Metabridge is the economic development initiative that holds events in the Okanagan and California to link high-tech companies in both regions.

The new Metabridge manager is Donnie Ungaro, who was most recently the manager of the Okanagan Young Professionals Collective.

Upcoming...

— Sandler Training is offering its Why Clients Leave and What You Can Do About It seminar for free on Wednesday 1:30-3:30 p.m. at its Kelowna centre at 109B - 3677 Highway 97 N.

Call 250-765-2047 to register.
Steve MacNaull is a business reporter and columnist. Email: steve.macnaull@ok.bc.ca.



Photo contributed

Big White Ski Resort mascot Loose Moose hams it up with Snow Action publisher Owain Price in front of Harbour Bridge in Sydney to celebrate the magazine naming Big White "family ski resort of the year" for 2012.

Barclays ex-exec says he did nothing wrong

By The Associated Press

LONDON — A former top Barclays executive admitted ordering staff to submit false interest rates during the credit crisis in 2008 because he believed his action had been sanctioned by the Bank of England.

Jerry del Missier told the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee on Monday that he drew that conclusion from a conversation with the bank's chief execu-

tive, Bob Diamond in October 2008.

The Canadian-born del Missier insisted that he believed he had done nothing wrong, and said he would not have given the order if he believed it had not been sanctioned by the Bank of England.

Del Missier resigned as Barclays' chief operating officer on July 3, hours after Diamond resigned — a month after he had been promoted from head of Barclays Capital to chief operating officer.

Global economy weakening, but Canada continues to grow

By JULIAN BELTRAME
The Canadian Press

OTTAWA — The International Monetary Fund is calling for further government action amid signs the recovery is faltering in many countries, although Canada's outlook has held up better than most other advanced economies.

The 188-country organization said Monday it expects Canada's economy will grow modestly — by 2.1 per cent this year and 2.2 per cent next year. The 2013 projection is unchanged from the IMF's forecast in April while the 2012 projection has been increased by one-tenth of a percentage point.

That's not the case in many parts of the world.

The IMF's July outlook warns that, after a better-than-expected start to the year, growth is slowing in many parts of the world, shaving two-tenths of a point off of the IMF's 2013 estimate, which falls to 3.9 per cent.

The 2012 growth estimate has also been reduced, by one-tenth of a point to 3.5 per cent.

The expansion is mostly due to strong, if moderating, growth rates in the emerging economies and smaller advanced economies, such as Australia.

Overall growth in advanced economies is only expected to hit 1.4 per cent this year and 1.9 per cent in 2013, very weak levels, with some nations faring worse.

Some countries in the euro area are in recession and at best can expect minuscule growth next year, the IMF says.

The United States growth projected at 2.0

per cent and 2.3 per cent in 2012 and 2013, one-tenth of a point less than before and not enough to decrease unemployment.

Even emerging market expansion is moderating because weakness in Europe and U.S. is dampening demand for their exports.

But it is not a few percentage points of gross domestic product that has the Washington-based economic watchdog most concerned — it's the rising risk that Europe will go off the rails, and to a lesser extent, the U.S. as well.

It particularly singles out Italy and Spain, which it says must be prevented from collapsing.

"More worrisome than these revisions to the baseline forecast is the increase in downside risks," Olivier Blanchard, the IMF's chief economist, said in a webcast press conference.

"Italy and Spain have to succeed," he added. "They have to do what's needed to succeed, they have to do the adjustment in competitiveness, which is tough, they have to do fiscal consolidation, which is tough."

"But that's not enough, they are in a very deep hole (and) they need help from other euro members."

In addition, the IMF says the U.S. must avoid at all costs an abrupt withdrawal of fiscal stimulus.

And emerging economies should be on the watch for signs of trouble and prepared to take action.

The Canadian growth rates forecast by the IMF are below the Bank of Canada's call of 2.4 per cent both years, but in line with most private sector economists.

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