

BEHIND THE WHEEL

GLIDING BACK IN TIME IN A 2021 ROLLS-ROYCE GHOST

The best way to explore historic Highway 7 is in the ultimate luxury sedan



The 2021 Rolls-Royce Ghost looks right at home outside the stately main house at Sandpiper Resort, which today is Rowena's Inn on the River. In addition to offering overnight rooms, the inn features monthly special dining events in the upper and lower drawing rooms.

PHOTO: ANDREW McCREDIE

By **ANDREW McCREDIE**

Heading east of Highway 7 with Dewdney a couple of kilometres in the rearview, it's not difficult to imagine you've travelled back to a time when Vancouver's rich and famous plied this historic route for some luxurious R&R at the summer estate of Charles Nelson Pretty, Rowena Elizabeth Peters and their four children.

Do the drive in a 2021 Rolls-Royce Ghost, with the iconic Spirit of Ecstasy hood ornament guiding the way, and the journey into the mists of time is even more complete. Squint just a little over the Ghost's seemingly endless bonnet and you can almost imagine Shaughnessy's elite road-tripping out to the Pretty Estate for a weekend of swimming, fishing and elegant dinner parties, complete with the occasional Hollywood A-lister having flown into the property's air strip.

No such pomp and ceremony was in the cards for our overnight road trip to Sandpiper Resort, the catchall name for the former estate's colonial house, cottages and first-rate golf course since new owners

purchased the property from Charles and Rowena's daughter Betty Ann in 2016. However, our conveyance for the occasion certainly fit the high-class bill.

Rolls-Royce unveiled the Ghost in 2009, its name paying homage to the Silver Ghost, a Roller legend that made its own debut in 1906, some 11 years before Charles and Rowena were married. In 2020, the second-generation Ghost appeared, with a number of improvements over its forebear. In addition to being built on the same platform as the eight-generation Phantom and Cullinan SUV, the new Ghost comes with an illuminated grille and a much more detailed interior than its predecessor. It is also the first Rolls other than the Phantom to have the "starlight headliner," which features fibre optic strands woven into the roof's interior leather to create a night sky appearance. Each "constellation" is unique to each vehicle and is said to take nine hours to craft.

Little wonder the base price of the 2021 Ghost is just a headliner or two over half-a-million dollars, and while it's hard to get your head around that price point, the ride,

What Highway 7 lacks in length, it makes up for in diversity and history

At just 118 kilometres, it might be one of the shortest designated highways in the province, but British Columbia Highway 7 surely is one of the most historic, particularly in relation to the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley.

It's also one of most diverse in terms of the scenery you'll see travelling from its start at the busy urban corner of Granville and Broadway in Vancouver through the rural farmlands north of the Fraser River to its eastern terminus at a junction with Highway 1 at Haig, just across the Fraser River from Hope, B.C.

British Columbia Highway 7 was commissioned in 1941 to connect Vancouver to Harrison Hot Springs, and by 1973 its eastern end had stretched to just outside Hope.

It might be the road less travelled connecting the heart of the big city with the wild edge of the Fraser Valley, but unlike Highway 1, B.C. Highway 7 has a soul, a history and a much more interesting story to tell.

It's worth the trip.

style and build quality of this vehicle is out of this world.

That said, as we enjoyed a bottle of wine on the private patio of our cottage that night, after an al-fresco dinner at the Sandpiper clubhouse, you couldn't put a price on the starlight twinkling above our heads.

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