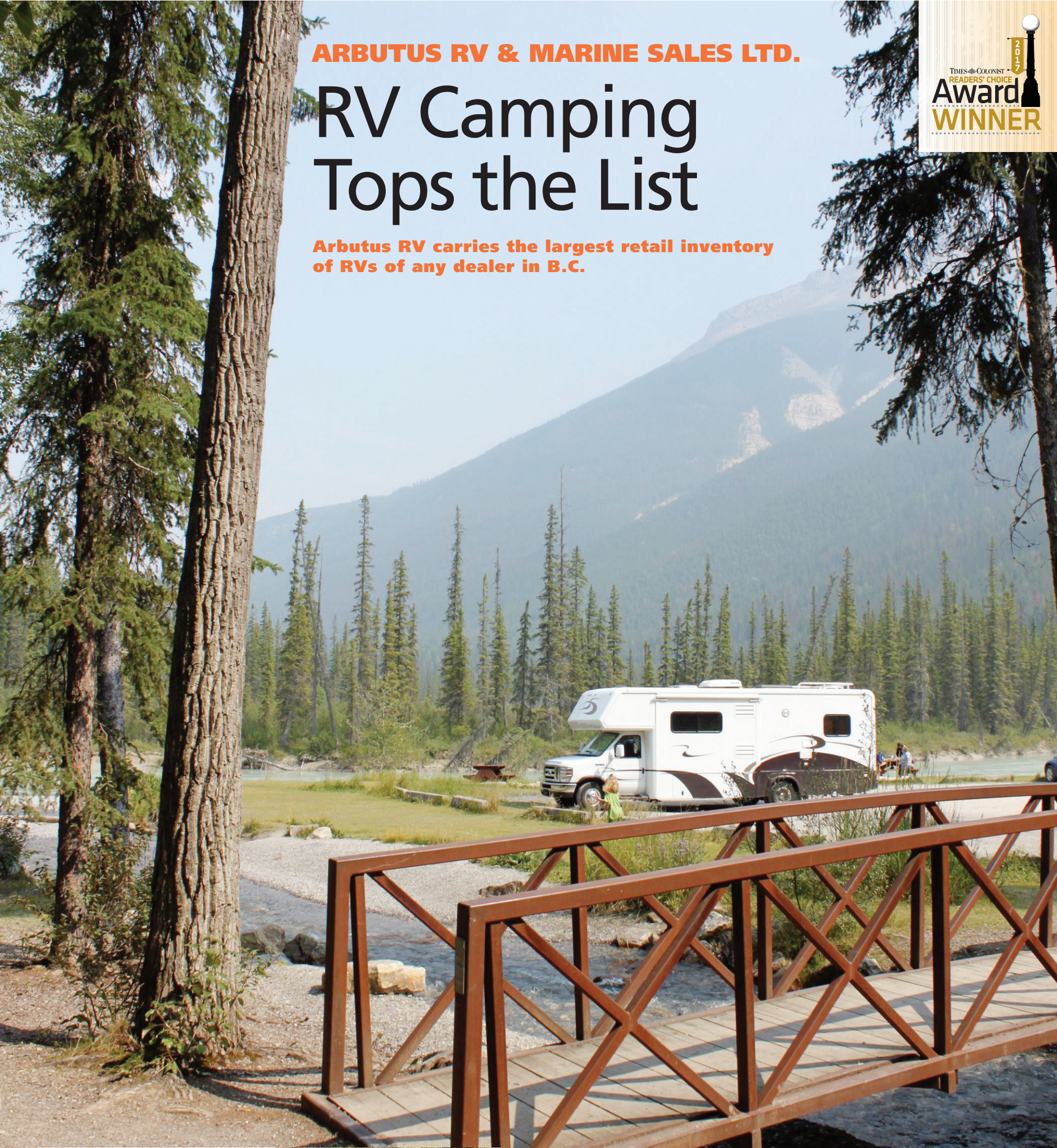


**ARBUTUS RV & MARINE SALES LTD.**

# RV Camping Tops the List

**Arbutus RV carries the largest retail inventory  
of RVs of any dealer in B.C.**



**The Arbutus RV & Marine Sales Ltd. story began over 29 years ago with Craig Little purchasing his first sales location in Mill Bay in 1988.**

This location was just down the road from where he has lived for over 60 years, and where he now lives with his wife Rose, daughter Brynn, and their pet dog, Sophia.

Craig knew he wanted to be in business for himself and chose Recreational Vehicle and Boat Sales and Service as his primary focus because he believed it was a good fit for Vancouver Island. The business was very well received by the community. As the years went by, the focus of Arbutus shifted increasingly to RVs, and the growth continued.

In 1994, the addition of the Nanaimo location occurred after Craig met a couple who were developing an RV Park as well as selling Park Model RVs near the Nanaimo Airport. They approached Craig and asked him if he would like to help them out with sales. After consideration, Craig determined that he would be happy to forge ahead and eventually took the location over. He immediately expanded it, added a service department and the business took off.

A short 18 months or so passed, and Craig was approached by another dealer in Sidney. By 1996, he owned three locations. "I was shaking my head a few

times wondering what had happened," Little says. "I'd have been happy just having the one dealership and now I suddenly had three!" He expanded the lots at all three dealerships and began to bring in exclusive product lines to Vancouver Island from Thor Industries, the number one manufacturer in the world.

In 1998, he was successful in convincing his wife, Rose, who had several years of marketing experience in newspaper and radio, to head up the marketing for the company. This included taking over the publishing of *The Island RV Guide* – a 56-page magazine that Craig had launched which needed attention and expertise. Rose focussed on creating a marketing strategy that included the development of a website and [arbutusrv.ca](http://arbutusrv.ca) was created.

In December 2002, the Littles were invited to Calgary to research the RV rental franchise business as an avenue for expansion of their own rental division. They decided it was not for them and flew back home, landing at the Comox Valley Airport. Since they were in the neighbourhood, Craig wanted to show Rose a piece of property outside of Courtenay (in Merville) that he had been interested in back in 1997. As fate would have it, when they arrived, there was a 'For Sale' sign on the corner – immediately across the road from the property Craig was originally

interested in. They purchased the property and opened their fourth location in March of 2003.

**"It's about having the right people and offering the right service – friendly, courteous service with compassion. We listen to the customer's needs and offer old-fashioned services to fill them."**

They reasoned that because they had such a large customer base from the North part of the Island, it would make sense to have another dealership close to service those customers. This thinking proved to be completely on target, and the Courtenay location has grown into one of Arbutus's busiest. Customer demand prompted the expansion of the service facilities in the spring of 2007. They now boast an additional three service bays to accommodate the needs of the RV-ing public. In 2011, the property next door was purchased, enabling continued growth and selection of RVs being offered.

2003 saw an expansion of the original Mill Bay Sales and Service location to include the property formerly known as Ruby's Ridge Campground.

In December 2004, Craig found another desirable property in Port Alberni. The reasoning was

the same as for the Comox Valley location, Little says, "We have a large client base in the Alberni Valley and Tofino/Uclulet and outlying areas, and we wanted to offer Port Alberni its first full service RV dealership." Arbutus RV opened its doors in July 2005 and sold their first unit before the telephone lines were even installed.

Arbutus RV currently employs over 120 people and continues to thrive far beyond expectations. 2016 was a record sales year and 2017 is once again exceeding expectations and breaking records. Little says they carry the largest retail inventory of RVs of any dealer in B.C. Craig is quick to spread around the credit for the success of Arbutus RV.

It's probably the same basic formula as any successful business," he notes. "It's about having the right people and offering the right service – friendly, courteous service with compassion. We listen to the customer's needs and offer old-fashioned services to fill them."

The company website is hugely successful as is their marketing strategy, which includes the successful RVing lifestyle website, **IslandRVGuide.com**. The IslandRVGuide.com has become a go-to digital destination for information on all things RV-related, including tech tips, Island adventure videos, recipes and camper-friendly

cooking videos, RV tours, RV finance tips and articles submitted by RV readers.

"The Island RV Guide is filled with, not only product information, but editorial from our local Island RV-ing communities, recipes, RV news and more. It has been incredibly well received by Vancouver Island's RV enthusiasts and web-savvy RVers," says Rose Little.

A few years ago, Arbutus RV began to work with select manufacturers to produce exclusive brands of RVs. This private label line-up can only be found at Arbutus RV on Vancouver Island. A few current exclusive private label brands they offer are Island Trail, Island Wild, Island Trek, Island Vibe and the newest arrival - iTrek. They plan to expand that line of exclusives with some very exciting additions next year for their 30th Anniversary.

"With the growth we've experienced," Rose says, "we don't have as much down time as we would like, but we love to get out RVing on Vancouver Island as much as we can. It's an activity we share with our youngest daughter who is now a teen, our eldest daughter and son-in-law and our newest family addition, our grandson. Camping in an RV is at the top of the list of our families' favourite things to do!"

[www.arbutusrv.ca](http://www.arbutusrv.ca)