



*Photo: Nick, Doris Malaspina, Alex Malaspina at Puerto del Descans, Gabriola, June 22, 2005*

Although the name "Malaspina" is familiar enough to all of us on account of the famous galleries; the University-College across the water; and that would-be hotel on the Nanaimo waterfront; it wasn't until a few weeks ago (June 22, 2005) that Malaspina actually made it to Gabriola Island. Not the captain himself of course, he died in 1810, but a direct descendant of his proudly bearing the same name.

Not only was Alejandro Malaspina (the original) famous for his leadership of the Spanish Captain-Cook-style naval expedition to the Pacific in 1789-1794, he was also a philosopher, linguist, geographer, scientist, and politician. In Europe, especially in his birthplace Italy, there are research and study institutes set up in honour of this Age-of-Enlightenment thinker, but until the founding of the Alessandro Malaspina Research Centre (AMRC) in 1999, there were no equivalents anywhere in the English-speaking world.

Alex Malaspina (the modern one) was a guest of honour at the recent opening of the AMRC's facility in the new Malaspina University-College library building, and the day before that he and other relatives and foreign guests came over to Gabriola to see for themselves the landing places of the Spanish expedition of 1792, led by two of Malaspina's senior officers, Galiano and Valdes.

We visited *Puerto Descanso* (the real one in Pilot Bay, not the ferry terminal), *Punta de Casa Tilli* (Berry Point), the Native village site at Twin Beaches (in Taylor Bay), the place where the expedition found water (near Sea Girt Road), and of course, with the kindly-given permission of the RDN, the Malaspina Galleries, finally finishing up at Artworks as the guest of Kathy Ramsey.

It was an enjoyable afternoon for all, and we all agreed that it was far better that Malaspina had come 213 years late to Gabriola Island, than that he never came at all.



*Photo: Alex Malaspina opens the new Alessandro Malaspina Research Centre facility the following day.*

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