

Overview of British Columbia

Canada's most westerly province, British Columbia is sandwiched between the Rocky Mountains to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Its location on the Pacific Rim not only endows it with a diversity of topography but also ensures a rich blend of cultures, with cities and towns replete with both cosmopolitan ambience and indigenous heritage.

It is especially attractive to outdoor enthusiasts, who are able to access all of the province's spectacular wildernesses thanks to its great transport infrastructure of ferries, chartered boats, trains and well-maintained roads.

British Columbia is home to four national parks, seven provincial heritage sites, many nature reserves and the scenic Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, popular for its beautiful fjords and canoeing. The volcanic mountains of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park provide trekking opportunities, while the Kootenay Rockies boast some of the best skiing and snowboarding in Canada.

The provincial capital of British Columbia is the city of Victoria, situated on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. But its largest and most populated city is Vancouver, blessed with incredible vistas of forested mountains and staggering ocean views.

Key Facts

Language:

The official languages are English and French (spoken predominantly in Quebec).

Passport/Visa:

All visitors must hold a valid passport, and it's recommended that passports always be valid for six months after the intended period of travel. Visitors are required to hold onward or return tickets, all documents needed for the next destination and sufficient funds to cover the period of intended stay. Travellers from most visa-exempt countries arriving in Canada by air need to fill in an Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) form online prior to visiting Canada. This requirement is applicable to all but U.S citizens and travellers with a valid Canadian visa. Canadian citizens, including dual citizens, and Canadian permanent residents cannot apply for an eTA. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel documents to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA a valid passport will be required by immigration authorities.

Currency:

The currency used is the Canadian dollar (CAD). Banks and bureaux de change will change cash, as will some hotels. Major credit cards are widely accepted and ATMs are widespread. US dollars are widely accepted.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. American-style flat two-pin plugs and a plug with a third round grounding pin are standard.

Travel to British Columbia

Climate for British Columbia

British Columbia's climate is extremely varied due to its diverse topography. The coastal region has a comparatively mild winter climate, with lots of rainfall. November and February tend to be the wettest months, while May and September are probably the best times to visit the coast.

Vancouver enjoys a maritime climate, with relatively mild winters and warm summers. Although winters can be notoriously rainy, there are often long periods of continuous sunshine in the summertime when visitors come to explore the region's natural beauty. Snowfall is rare in the city, but is more than adequate for the ski slopes on the Coast Mountains to the north.

The interior to the east of the Coast Mountains has a much drier climate, with warm summers and cold winters. The Rockies enjoy a warm to hot summer from May to September, with heavy snowfalls during winter. The northern part of the province has generally much colder winters and cooler summers than the rest of British Columbia.

Health Notes when travelling to Canada

Travellers should be up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines before traveling to Canada, and should consider taking routine vaccines as a standard precaution. Medical care is excellent but expensive, so medical insurance is advised.

Safety Notes when travelling to Canada

While most visits to Canada are trouble-free, the country does share the common international risk of terrorism. The crime rate is low but travellers are advised to take sensible precautions to safeguard their belongings, as they would anywhere. Parts of Canada are prone to tornadoes between May and September.

Customs in Canada

Rowdiness and loud speech are inappropriate except under special circumstances or in places such as bars, as Canadians tend to be soft spoken, patient and almost apologetic in their public behaviour. They are generally tolerant of the complex network of cultural differences in public behaviour, particularly in cities where such diversity is more common place. Recreational cannabis is legally available throughout Canada, though local laws can vary depending on the province or territory travellers are visiting.

Duty Free in Canada

Travellers to Canada are allowed to enter the country with the following items without incurring custom duties: gifts to the value of C\$60 per recipient (excluding advertising material, tobacco and alcoholic beverages); 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or cigarillos and 200g of tobacco or 200 tobacco sticks; 1.14 litres of liquor or wine or 24 x 355ml bottles or cans of beer or ale. There are strict regulations governing the import of the following: explosives, endangered animal and plant species, items of heritage, fresh foodstuffs and weapons.

Doing Business in Canada

Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, and Montreal are the main business centres, and English is the language of business except in French-speaking Quebec, where all written material and business cards should be in French. Business cards are not traditionally exchanged during an initial meeting, but at some appropriate time thereafter; it is best to wait for the host to offer theirs first.

A firm handshake is used by way of greeting and punctuality should be taken seriously for meetings. Canadians dress conservatively and smartly for business and suits are the norm. Gifts can be given in conclusion to celebrate a deal, but should be understated; taking someone out for a meal is a popular way to conclude business dealings.

Canadians are reserved and frown on emotional outbursts. Business is based on facts and figures rather than relationships, so it is best to be as prepared as possible for meetings. Hours of business are usually 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Communication in Canada

The international access code for Canada is +1. The outgoing code is 011 followed by the relevant country code. The outgoing code is not necessary for calls to the US and the Caribbean. Hotels, cafes and restaurants offering free WiFi are widely available. As international roaming costs can be high, purchasing a local prepaid SIM card can be a cheaper option.

Tipping in Canada

A tip of around 15 percent is standard in restaurants, and hairdressers and taxi drivers are usually tipped at the same rate. Bellhops, doormen, porters, and similar service providers at hotels, airports, and stations are generally paid at the customer's discretion.

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Airports in British Columbia

Vancouver International (YVR)

Vancouver International Airport

www.yvr.ca/

Location: Vancouver The airport is located eight miles (12km) south of Vancouver.

Time: GMT -8 (GMT -7 from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November).

Contacts: Tel: +1 (604) 207 7077

Transfer between terminals: A courtesy shuttle is available to the Airport South terminal.

Getting to the city: The Canada Line connects the airport to downtown Vancouver in about 25 minutes. The service runs every 8 to 20 minutes. Scheduled buses are available to downtown Vancouver, Whistler, Vancouver Island and Washington State. Courtesy shuttles transport passengers to the Long-Term Parking Lot, South Terminal, local hotels and other destinations near the airport. Public bus services to Vancouver, Richmond and further afield are available at the Airport Station Bus Terminal.

Car rental: Car hire companies Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Hertz and National are represented next to the terminal building on the ground floor.

Airport Taxis: Metered taxis are available around the clock outside the terminals. Prices and journey times are higher during rush hour; a tip of 10 to 15 percent is expected.

Facilities: The main terminal has ATMs, bureaux de change, and a bank. There is a selection of bars, restaurants, and fast food outlets scattered throughout the airport, as well as a variety of shops, including duty-free, baggage storage, and a medical centre. Children's play areas are also available.

Parking: Vancouver International Airport offers a range of parking options in the parkade directly opposite the terminals.

Abbotsford International Airport (YXX)

Abbotsford International Airport

www.abbotsfordairport.ca

Location: Abbotsford The airport is located two and a half miles (4km) from Abbotsford city centre.

Time: GMT -8 (GMT -7, March to November).

Getting to the city: Shuttle services can transport passengers between the airport and the city centre. Shuttles can be booked in advance. Local bus, taxi, and limousine services are also available from the airport to the city centre.

Car rental: Car rental companies represented at the airport include Avis, Budget, Enterprise, Hertz, and National.

Airport Taxis: Taxi services are available between the airport and various points in southwestern British Columbia. Companies include Abby Taxi and Central Valley Limousine and Taxi.

Facilities: Airport facilities include a bar and bistro, shopping (including a duty-free shop), and ATMs.

Parking: Short-term and long-term parking is available at the airport. Short-term parking is available next to the terminal building and offers travellers easy access to the airport.

Kamloops Airport (YKA)

Kamloops Airport

www.kamloopsairport.com

Location: Kamloops The airport is located seven miles (11km) from Kamloops city centre.

Time: GMT -8 (GMT-7 from the first Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November).

Getting to the city: Taxis are available from the airport to the city centre. The Airporter Shuttle also offers a door-to-door service to and from the airport.

Car rental: Car rental companies represented at the airport include Budget, Enterprise, and National.

Airport Taxis: Taxis are available from the airport to the city centre and surrounds via Kami Cabs and Yellow Cabs.

Facilities: Airport facilities include a cafe, lounge, and parking.

Parking: Short-term and long-term airport parking is conveniently located near the arrivals and departures areas.

Vancouver

Vancouver is bustling, vibrant and diverse. This gem on Canada's west coast boasts the perfect combination of wild natural beauty and modern conveniences. Its spectacular views and awesome cityscapes are a huge lure not only for visitors but also for big productions, and it's even been nicknamed Hollywood North for its ever-present film crews.

Less than a century ago, Vancouver was barely more than a town. Today, it's Canada's third largest city and more than two million people call it home. The shiny futuristic towers of Yaletown and the downtown core contrast dramatically with the snow-capped mountain backdrop, making for postcard-pretty scenes.

Approximately the same size as the downtown area, the city's green heart is Canada's largest city park, Stanley Park, covering hundreds of acres filled with lush forest and crystal clear lakes. Visitors can wander the sea wall along its exterior, catch a free trolley bus tour, enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride or visit the Vancouver Aquarium housed within the park.

The city's past is preserved in historic Gastown with its cobblestone streets, famous steam-powered clock and quaint atmosphere. Neighbouring Chinatown, with its weekly market, Dr Sun Yat-Sen classical Chinese gardens and intriguing restaurants add an exotic flair. For some retail therapy or celebrity spotting, there is always the trendy Robson Street.

During the winter months, snow sports are the order of the day on nearby Grouse Mountain. It's perfect for skiing and snowboarding, although the city itself gets more rain than snow. Vancouver's ethnic diversity and ideal combination of mountains, sea and city offer visitors an endless supply of things to see and do, no matter the budget.

Getting around in Vancouver

The integrated Translink public transport system is both highly efficient and good value. The computerised SkyTrain (light rail) has underground downtown stops as well as an elevated track. Its latest addition, the Canada Line, now connects downtown to Vancouver International Airport.

The Translink system also includes buses; electric trolley buses; West Coast Express trains (weekdays only); and SeaBus passenger ferries that connect downtown to North Vancouver. The network reaches every part of the city, including the beaches and ski slopes. After midnight, the regular bus system is replaced by a limited night bus service on main routes. Fares are based on a zone system and tickets are valid for buses, the SkyTrain and SeaBus with transfers valid for 90 minutes from the time they are validated.

Taxis are easy to come by at taxi stands, hotels, or by telephone, but can be difficult to hail outside of the downtown area. Vancouver's traffic and road network is fairly well-ordered, but hiring a car is not necessary in the city because the public transport is more than sufficient.

Nightlife in Vancouver

With the stunning mountain backdrop and pristine wilderness on the city's doorstep, visitors may think the locals are too preoccupied with outdoor entertainment to cultivate much of an after dark entertainment scene.

But the nightlife in Vancouver is actually second to none. With plenty of pubs, clubs, lounges, and everything else in between, there is no shortage of entertainment when the sun sets on this vibrant city. Until fairly recently, city regulations forced bars and pubs to masquerade as restaurants, so you'll find many watering holes with token menus.

Vancouver's British heritage plays a part in it being a pub paradise, the heart of which is downtown with its countless pubs and bars tucked away and nestled in between shops, businesses, and bistros. The Irish Heather, the Diamond, and Chambar are names to remember in Gastown's cobblestone streets, which are reminiscent of Amsterdam and bring tourists flocking here to imbibe and socialise.

Most of Vancouver's clubs and discos can be found downtown around Granville Street and Water and Pender streets in Gastown. The Roxy in Granville is a must and is one of Vancouver's top nightlife spots. Another busy entertainment district is Kitsilano, while a third is the up-and-coming nightlife district of Yaletown, which is a more upscale bar and lounge zone.

Vancouver also hosts several large festivals, including the Vancouver Fringe Festival, centred on Granville Island every September; the Vancouver International Film Festival, the Vancouver Jazz Festival, and the Vancouver Folk Festival.

Dining in Vancouver

One of Canada's most cosmopolitan cities, eating out in Vancouver is something of an event and is a popular pastime for many local foodies. With eateries providing just about every kind of cuisine, you can be sure to find something to suit your taste while dining out in Vancouver. Many restaurants offer tapas-style tasting plates to share, so you can be adventurous.

With a strong emphasis on British, French, and Chinese cuisine, the food in Vancouver is generally quite international, with a few specialties waiting to be discovered. Fish like salmon, halibut, and Atlantic cod are popular, as well as wild game such as venison, which can be found on most menus.

Salt-cured fish, beef, and pork are also something to be experienced. Those with a sweet tooth should try the decadent Nanaimo bar, a local dessert which comprises a wafer crumb-based layer topped by a layer of custard or vanilla butter icing, covered in chocolate.

Most of Vancouver's best restaurants are situated around downtown, West End, Yaletown, and Gastown areas. Most restaurants require reservations and it is customary to tip waiters around 15 percent as no service charge is added to restaurant bills.

Brix & Mortar — \$\$\$

International

Offering a warm ambiance and a diverse menu to complement its urban environment, patrons at Brix can sample anything from a Four Cheese Cannelloni to Quebec Wentzel Duck. Accommodating night owls, Brix also offers a gratifying late night menu comprising spring rolls, Seven Spice Seared Ahi Tuna, and oven-baked pizza with loads of fresh toppings. Brix is ideal for dinner with friends or a romantic date. Open daily for lunch and dinner.

1138 Homer Street
Vancouver, Canada

www.brixandmortar.ca

Glowbal Grill and Satay Bar — \$\$\$

International

Situated in trendy Yaletown, the Glowbal Grill and Satay Bar serves inventive and delicious cuisine in a stylish yet sophisticated setting. With the option of formal fine dining on white linen tablecloths or more laid-back feasting, this restaurant caters to a variety of people. Try the Kobe meatballs with truffled spaghetti or the Seven-spiced rare Ahi tuna, and round off with the warm Brazilian chocolate coffee cake or the Maple Macadamia nut flan. Reservations are recommended.

1079 Mainland St.
Vancouver, Canada

www.glowbalgrill.com

Blue Water Café — \$\$\$\$

Seafood

Serving the largest selection of oysters, lobsters and prawns as well as delicious steak, the Blue Water Café is frequented by local and international celebrities alike. With elegant décor and flawless service, this is the place to be when trying to impress a date or business associate. Try the White Sturgeon with red beet agro dolce, pumpernickel crust, chioggia beets and cauliflower puree, or the Beef Tenderloin served with porcini mushrooms, green chard and macaroni gratin with blue cheese. Reservations are recommended. The restaurant is open from 5pm till 11pm, with the Late Menu available till midnight.

1095 Hamilton St
Vancouver, Canada

www.bluewatercafe.net

Lupo — \$\$\$\$

Italian

Nestled away in an old mansion located in downtown Vancouver's Yaletown district, this stylish Italian eatery evokes a 1930s charm and sophistication while serving delicious, inventive and expertly presented dishes. Try the ossobuco, filetto di salmone or the filetto di manzo con porcini. You won't be disappointed. Lupo is open daily for dinner. Reservations are recommended.

869 Hamilton St
Vancouver, Canada

www.luporestaurant.ca

Seasons in the Park — \$\$\$\$

Modern Eclectic

Wraparound windows afford stunning views of downtown Vancouver and the surrounding mountains at this sophisticated Canadian restaurant in Queen Elizabeth Park. Serving up tasty food at reasonable prices, Seasons in the Park is a Vancouver gem for both locals and foreigners. Try the Miso Soy Marinated Black Cod drizzled with pineapple chive vinaigrette and served with jasmine rice, and for dessert the much-loved Sunburnt Lemon Tart is a must. Dinner reservations offer views of the twinkling city lights and at lunch you can admire the leafy park and snow-capped mountains from the circular patio.

Queen Elizabeth Park. West 33rd Ave and Main Street
Vancouver, Canada

www.vancouverdine.com

Pasparos Taverna — \$\$

Mediterranean

A charming Greek restaurant serving good no-fuss Greek food, Pasparos Taverna is a great place to meet with family and friends. A family business operating since 1974, Pasparos offers a warm atmosphere and mouth-watering homemade Greek cuisine, just as you'd find in Greece. With warm fresh breads, dolmades, roast lamb, superb Tzatziki, Avgolemono soup and a selection of souvlakia (kebabs), patrons are spoiled for choice. Combine that with top-notch service and a good Greek winelist (wine by the glass included) and you have all the ingredients for a successful restaurant. Open Monday to Friday for lunch, and daily for dinner.

132 West 3rd Street
Vancouver, Canada

www.pasparos.com

Guu with Garlic — \$\$

Japanese

One of Vancouver's best dining experiences, Guu with Garlic is part of a unique Japanese tapas chain that is taking the city by storm. With a perfect ratio of small portioned dishes at affordable prices, patrons can sample a handful of different dishes without breaking the bank. The open kitchen and cheerful waiters add to the electric mood, as do the exotic cocktails and experimental drinks. Recommended dishes include the duck salad, assorted carpaccio, baked oysters, prawns and calamari, as well as its daily specials. Open daily for dinner, reservations are recommended.

1698 Robson Street
Vancouver, Canada

www.guu-izakaya.com

Shopping in Vancouver

Shopping in Vancouver ensures a diverse range of products and quality, with everything from haute couture to laid-back flannels, as well as jewellery and home accessories available in malls and shopping areas throughout the city.

Commercial Drive is known as 'Little Italy' and has very trendy, quirky boutiques, while Davie Village in the West End is home to great bookshops. Chinatown, encompassing Main Street and Keefer, trades in ginseng, green tea, silks, weekend summer markets, and exotic fresh produce.

Another Main Street also offers a wide selection of antique and home accessory shops. Granville Island Market sells fresh produce, meats, fish, and baked goods, and there are a diverse range of shops, stalls, and galleries in the area.

Downtown Vancouver and Gastown have shops offering high fashion, jewellery, shoes, and homewares, while the Sinclair Centre has upmarket fashion and art shops. Royal Centre is made up of a variety of underground stores and the Pacific Centre is home to the famous Holt Renfrew shop. Nearby Water Street is home to art galleries, antique shops, and native art stores, as well as souvenirs in the many speciality shops.

Note that a Goods and Services Tax is levied on most things, but Canada no longer offers a refund scheme.

Climate in Vancouver

The temperate Vancouver climate is classified as oceanic, with warm, dry summer weather (June to August) and cold, rainy winters (December to February). Summer temperatures reach an average high of 72°F (22°C), while winter temperatures can fall well below 32°F (0°C).

Sightseeing in Vancouver

Brimming in history and culture, Vancouver is one fascinating city and has plenty of sightseeing opportunities for everyone. From museums and historic and trendy neighbourhoods to botanical gardens and Granville Island, visitors will have no problem finding things to see and do in Vancouver.

Explore Chinatown and soak up the culture, colour and eateries, or visit the exciting enclave of Gastown famous for its cobblestone streets, antique gaslights and pulsing nightlife. Nature lovers should head to the VanDusen Botanical Garden, Stanley Park and Queen Elizabeth Park for an invigorating day out, and culture vultures will love the Museum of Anthropology and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

For a panoramic view of the city, climb 'nature's stairmaster' up to Grouse Mountain, or take the tram for a less strenuous trip. You can also ride to the top of Vancouver lookout for 360 degree views. The Capilano Suspension Bridge in North Vancouver allows visitors to walk from treetop to treetop on delicate walkways suspended dozens of metres above the forest floor.

Visitors should consider purchasing a See Vancouver and Beyond Card, which gives the bearer access to countless attractions in and around Vancouver as well as maps and travel tips.

Kids Attractions in Vancouver

Vancouver is a paradise for kids on holiday. Stanley Park is full of fun during the summer months, with fun attractions such as the Spray Park near Lumberman's Arch and the Children's Farm, a fantastic petting zoo for the younger tots.

Families can enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride through the park and kids will love the gardens, so much so that you may find yourself coming back on more than one occasion. There are plenty of other green lungs to enjoy in the city, including the lovely VanDusen Botanical Gardens and Queen Elizabeth Park.

Animal lovers will have a great time exploring the Vancouver Aquarium and the Greater Vancouver Zoo, while older kids should visit Granville Island's Water Park and Adventure Playground for a day of fun.

On rainy or cold days, when outdoor activities with kids are not an option, head to the Science World at Telus World of Science or the Space Centre for a fascinating day out, or visit the Richmond Go-Kart track for a day of racing. There are also plenty of indoor playgrounds available, such as the Kerrisdale Play Palace in the Kerrisdale Cyclone Taylor Arena, or Kid Zone at the Park Royal Mall South Shopping Center.

Vancouver Attractions

Stanley Park

Opening time: Open daily

The pride of Vancouver, Stanley Park covers 1,000 acres (405 hectares) and is one of the largest parks in any urban centre in North America. It's situated in the heart of Vancouver's densely populated West End and stretches out on a peninsula.

Stanley Park is at once a refuge for visitors seeking a brief escape from the urban jungle, a showcase for the natural beauty that surrounds the city and an entertainment centre. The park is criss-crossed through its dense rainforest interior by miles of wide gravel paths surrounding Beaver Lake and Lost Lagoon.

It is home to hundreds of migratory birds such as Canada geese, swans and ducks, and large populations of raccoons, squirrels, skunks and coyotes. The park has a miniature railroad, putt-putt course and an aquarium, as well as routes around the long sea wall perfect for a walk, jog, cycle or rollerblade.

Getting there: Translink bus #19

Address: Georgia Street, Vancouver

Website: www.vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley/

Museum of Anthropology

Opening time: Open daily, from 10am to 5pm (until 9pm on Tuesday)

Admission: C\$18 (adults), C\$16 (students). Free for children under 6, and other concessions are available

At the University of British Columbia on the cliffs of Point Grey, totem poles mark the way to the Museum of Anthropology, world-renowned for its displays of Northwest Coast First Nations art. One of its main features is the world's largest collection of works by internationally acclaimed Haida artist Bill Reid, including his famous cedar sculpture 'The Raven and the First Men'. In the museum's unique Visible Storage Galleries, more than 15,000 objects and artefacts from around the world are arranged according to culture and use. In the grounds of the museum are two Haida houses, showing the dramatic beauty of traditional Northwest Coast architecture.

Getting there: The University of British Columbia is served by buses 4, 9, 17, 25, 41, 43, 44, 49, 84, 258 or 480

Address: University of British Columbia, 6393 Marine Drive

Telephone: (604) 822 5087

Website: www.moa.ubc.ca

Chinatown

Vancouver's Chinatown is not only a strong, established ethnic community, but also a popular tourist attraction and prosperous commercial district. Its bustling streets are full of colour and commerce; even the pagoda-topped telephone booths add to the atmosphere. Shop displays spill onto the pavements, and tables groan with the weight of exotic foodstuffs and the strange wares of the Chinese apothecaries.

The Sam Kee Building in Pender Street is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as being the narrowest building in the world, at only six-foot (two metres) wide. This was the result of a local property owner reacting to the expropriation of most of his land in 1912 for the widening of the street: Chang Toy decided to build what he could on the remaining tiny strip.

Another main attraction in Chinatown is the Dr Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, enclosed behind high walls, that was built in 1986 at a cost of C\$5.3 million with the craftsmen and materials all imported from China. It is a quiet haven of walkways, pavilions, gnarled trees, water features, and natural rock sculptures. Next door to the Garden is the Chinese Cultural Centre with its elaborate gated entrance hand-painted in traditional colours.

Getting there: Bus or SkyTrain, to Main Street Station or Stadium Station

Address: Downtown Vancouver

Website: www.vancouver-chinatown.com

Gastown

Alongside Chinatown, the fascinating historic enclave of Gastown transports visitors back in time to envision the city as it existed in the days of old. Set in the central core of Vancouver, it has cobbled streets, antique gaslights, Victorian architecture, narrow alleys, courtyards, and hidden boutiques and restaurants. Jack 'Gassy' Deighton, Vancouver's first settler after whom the town was named, has been immortalised with a statue in Maple Tree Square in Gastown.

Another point of interest is the Lamplighter Pub in the Dominion Hotel, which was the first Vancouver inn to serve alcohol to women, while the Europe Hotel was the first fireproof building in western Canada, having been built just after the major fire of 1892. Gastown keeps time with the world's first steam clock, which plays the Westminster chimes every 15 minutes on five brass steam-whistles inside its cast bronze case.

Getting there: Gastown is easily accessible by Vancouver's Rapid Transit System, SkyTrain, and city buses

Website: www.gastown.org

Grouse Mountain

On Vancouver's north shore just a 15-minute drive from the downtown area across the Lions Gate Bridge, waits the year-round mountaintop playground of Grouse Mountain. Ascending the mountain is part of the adventure in the Super Skyride, a passenger tram that glides up the steep mountain slopes carrying visitors up 3,700ft (1,100m) above sea level in just eight minutes.

At the top, apart from magical views of the city below, is the Theatre in the Sky, which offers a high-tech presentation about Vancouver. There is also a cedar longhouse called the Hiwus Feasthouse that offers the chance to experience native West Coast culture with displays of dancing, storytelling and native cuisine.

There are hiking trails up the side of Grouse Mountain and on the east side one of them features the Grouse Grind, which is billed as one of the world's biggest stair-climbs. Mountain biking, skiing and snowboarding are also popular pursuits here.

Address: 6400 Nancy Greene Way, North Vancouver

Website: www.grousemountain.com

Queen Elizabeth Park

Opening time: Open daily 9am to 5pm. Conservatory open daily, from 10am to 5pm

The exquisite Queen Elizabeth Park in Vancouver boasts lush gardens bursting with flowers, live theatre and the Bloedel Floral Conservatory. The park receives about six million visitors annually who come to enjoy a 360 degree view of Vancouver from its highest point, 505 feet (167m) above sea level. The Bloedel Floral Conservatory, with its characteristic geodesic dome, is home to more than 100 species of tropical birds that roam free in the area, as well as hundreds of species of exotic plants and flowers.

Other highlights of the park include the Quarry Garden, J. Seward Johnson's sculpture 'The Photo Session', the Lions Clock and the arboretum, with its fine examples of indigenous trees from across Canada. Spring is an excellent time to visit the park as it becomes a riot of colour, with white and pink cherry blossoms on show.

Getting there: Bus to Main Street at 33rd Avenue

Address: 4600 Cambie St

Website: www.vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/queen-elizabeth-park.aspx

Granville Island

The entertainment district of Granville Island is easily accessible, located in the middle of Vancouver under the Granville Street Bridge on the south shore of False Creek. While it barely seems separate from the city, it's nonetheless a relaxing break from the main bustle. The public market is a sensory feast, complete with a riot of energetic colours, delicious local produce and intriguing craft stalls. The separate Kids Market is a must for children, with toy stores and games, while the Maritime Market is a showcase for boat builders, with a museum, supply stores and tours. The Granville Island Brewing Company offers tastings for thirsty visitors while the island's theatre provides cultural treats and art shows at the Emily Carr institute. To cool off during a hot summer's day, the island has the biggest free waterpark in British Columbia, open from May to September.

Getting there: Granville Island is accessible by car, bus, on foot, or by Aquabus or ferry. The #50 False Creek bus travels from Gastown in the downtown area, along Granville Street, stopping just off the island

Website: www.granvilleisland.com

Lonsdale Quay

Opening time: Market and retail: Open daily, from 9am to 7pm. Restaurants are open later.

Situated in North Vancouver, Lonsdale Quay offers spectacular views of downtown Vancouver, its harbour and the North Shore Mountains. There are also a variety of shops, restaurants and an excellent market. The best way to experience the quay is to catch the SeaBus from Waterfront Station on Cordova Street in downtown Vancouver. The fifteen-minute ride allows one to relax and enjoy the view, watch seaplanes land and spy cruise ships in the harbour.

The market boasts mouthwatering local produce, from seafood to pastries. There's also a wide range of restaurants covering Mexican, Greek and Asian cuisine among many others. Shoppers can indulge at a variety of stalls selling all sorts of arts and crafts, souvenirs and clothing, as well as plenty of boutiques, a kids play area and specialty kids stores, topped by the Lonsdale Quay Hotel.

Getting there: SeaBus from Waterfront Station; also accessible by bus

Address: 123 Carrie Cates Court, North Vancouver

Website: www.lonsdalequay.com

Capilano Suspension Bridge

Opening time: Varies according to season.

Admission: \$55 adults, \$30 children, other concessions available.

Built in 1889, the Capilano Suspension Bridge is one of Vancouver's oldest and most popular tourist attractions, with plenty of activities and sights in the park for visitors to enjoy. Stretching 450 feet (137m) across and perched 230 feet (70m) above the Capilano River, it's a sturdy construction of reinforced steel and concrete, though still not for the faint of heart. A recent addition to the park is the Treetops Adventure, where elevated suspension bridges allow visitors a bird's-eye view of the rainforest, while they walk along the canopy of Douglas fir trees. Other attractions in the park include a story centre; a First Nations Cultural Centre where visitors can see carvers, weavers and beaders at work; a large collection of First Nations Totem Poles; and guided tours of the rainforest.

Address: 3735 Capilano Road, North Vancouver

Telephone: (604) 985 7474

Website: www.capbridge.com

Vancouver Art Gallery

Opening time: Open daily, from 10am to 5pm (until 9pm on Tuesdays).

Admission: C\$24 (adults), C\$6.50 (children over five), free for children under five. Other concessions are available.

Established in 1931 and housed in a turn-of-the-century heritage building in the centre of downtown Vancouver, the Vancouver Art Gallery boasts thousands of national and international exhibitions by a host of artists, sculptors and photographers. National and international touring exhibitions take place regularly at the gallery, with works from masters such as Picasso, Rodin, Andy Warhol and others. Whether you prefer the Old Masters or more contemporary artists, the Vancouver Art Gallery is well worth a visit. Check out the official website listed below for details on current temporary exhibitions.

Getting there: Skytrain to Granville or Burrard Stations; any downtown bus

Address: 750 Hornby Street

Telephone: (604) 662 4700

Website: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

Vancouver Lookout at the Harbour Centre

Opening time: Open daily, from 8:30am to 10:30pm (May to September); 9am to 9pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 9:30pm Friday to Sunday (October to April).

Admission: C\$17.50 (adults), C\$9.50 (children aged 6 - 12). Concessions available.

Perhaps one of the best ways to begin one's visit to Vancouver is with a trip up the Harbour Centre Tower to the Lookout, where one can enjoy a 360-degree view of the city, the North Shore Mountains and neighbouring Vancouver Island on a clear day. A 45-second trip in the outdoor glass-fronted Skylift elevator delivers visitors to the Lookout and informative signs point out key attractions in the city and surrounds. Guests can enjoy a cup of coffee while watching the sun set from the Lookout or see the lights of the city begin to twinkle below. The tower is also home to the Top of Vancouver Revolving Restaurant, and visitors can enjoy the unique experience of dining above the city while the restaurant completes a full revolution every hour.

Getting there: Skytrain to Waterfront Station; SeaBus from North Shore to Waterfront Station

Address: 555 West Hastings Street

Telephone: (604) 689 0421

Website: www.vancouverlookout.com

VanDusen Botanical Garden

Opening time: Opening times vary according to season, with slightly different hours every month - check the official website for details.

Admission: October to March C\$8.20 (adults), C\$4.10 (children aged 5 - 12); April to September C\$11.50 (adults), C\$5.75 (children aged 3 - 12). Concessions available.

With 22 hectares (55 acres) and roughly 11,000 different plant species, VanDusen Botanical Garden is a spectacular showcase of the natural world, right in the heart of Vancouver. Landscaped gardens are laid out exquisitely and specific areas are cultivated to demonstrate botanical relationships or geographical origins, such as the popular Rhododendron Walk or the Sino Himalayan Garden.

One of the most popular events held in the garden is the annual Festival of Lights, when the beauty of the flowers is matched by over a million dazzling lights set up in order to celebrate the festive season. Choirs and carol singers, a Dancing Light display on Lake Island and the Golden Chain Walk are all part of this family favourite, running from 9 to 31 December each year. Daily walking- and cart tours are available in the garden from April to October at 2pm and also at 11am on Wednesdays.

Getting there: #17 Oak bus from downtown Vancouver to West 37th Avenue

Address: 5251 Oak Street (37th Avenue and Oak)

Telephone: (604) 257 8335

Website: www.vandusengarden.org

Commercial Drive

Commercial Drive is about as non-commercial as it gets, being one of Vancouver's most eclectic and increasingly trendy neighbourhoods. Starting out as a skid row for its lumber industry in the late 1800s, it evolved over time with a steady influx of English, Chinese, Italian and Eastern European immigrants fleeing both World Wars. Diversity and energy are still the hallmarks of Commercial Drive, and an afternoon is well spent exploring its various cuisines, chic boutiques and live music shows. Enjoy a delicious Italian gelato or espresso, or simply grab a table at one of the many bars or restaurants. There are always plenty of festivals and events going on too, such as the Parade of Lost Souls, the Stone Soup Festival in May and the Eastside Culture Crawl.

Getting there: Skytrain, to Commercial Drive or Broadway stations

Address: Commercial Drive (from Venables to Grandview)

Website: www.thedrive.ca

Gulf Islands

Tucked in the Strait of Georgia are the picturesque Gulf Islands. Home to artists and writers, many Vancouverites escape to holiday homes tucked away in the rainforest. Large parts of the islands have been designated as marine parks, preserving the land for the numerous endemic birds and animals that call the island home. Many of the islands host events and festivals each year, alongside a healthy art and shopping scene.

Bowen Island is only a 20-minute ferry ride from West Vancouver's Horseshoe Bay. Visitors can enjoy a stroll from Snug Harbour past the historic Union Steamship Company or take a walk in the Crippen Regional Park.

Galiano Island is the second biggest of the group and is about the size of Manhattan. Only 50 minutes away on the Tsawwassen Ferry on the Lower Mainland, Galiano Island draws all sorts of visitors who come to picnic in Bellhouse Park, take walks through the lush rainforest up to Bluffs Park or indulge in a spot of fishing, kayaking or a round of golf.

Website: www.gulfislandsguide.com

San Juan Islands

The San Juan Islands are a boater's paradise. Hundreds of islands are separated by nationality, but are part of the same scenic and rugged archipelago, located off the northwest coast of Washington State. Much of the area is in a rain shadow behind Vancouver Island, making a surprisingly dry and sunny reprieve in the northwest. Little island communities, great wildlife and the open water provide a real disconnect from the mainland.

Frequent government ferry services connect the mainland and larger inhabited islands to each other, but others can only be visited by smaller shuttle boats and yachts. Friday Harbour is San Juan's largest town and an enchanting tourist destination. Anchorages are bustling throughout summer, but largely empty in other seasons. Yacht charters are available out of Bellingham.

Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre

Opening time: Summer (21 June to 1 September): Open daily, from 9.30am to 6pm; Winter (6 September to 24 June): Open daily, from 10am to 5pm

Admission: Summer: C\$40 (adults), C\$32 (13-18 year olds) C\$23 (children). Other concessions are available

The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre is home to a vast array of aquatic creatures, ranging from otters, sea lions and penguins, to dolphins, sharks and whales. You'll find exhibits, displays and programmes geared towards kids, including Clownfish Cove, with small animals, play areas and costumes aimed at teaching children about the natural world and the importance of marine conservation. The aquarium features a gift shop, cafeteria and wheelchair access. Visitors of all ages enjoy a trip to this well-organised and large aquarium, which consistently receives rave reviews from travellers.

Address: 845 Avison Way, Vancouver

Telephone: 604 659 3474

Website: www.vanaqua.org

Greater Vancouver Zoo

Opening time: Summer Season (April to September): Open daily, from 9am to 7pm. Winter Season (October to March): Open daily, from 9am to 4pm.

Admission: C\$28 (adults); C\$21 (children). Concessions are available.

Animal lovers of all ages will have a fabulous time exploring the Greater Vancouver Zoo. It boasts more than 500 animals and 140 species, including lion, giraffe, black bear, bison, spider monkeys, coyotes, cheetah, hippo, lemurs and caracals, just to name a few. Children will simply love watching all the animals and naming the ones they know. Kids can enjoy meeting a selection of reptiles, take the safari mini train, listen to an educational talk or even watch the lions and tigers being fed. Refreshments are available from kiosks and restaurants so nobody will go hungry. Allow at least a few hours to explore the zoo properly.

Address: 5048 - 264th Street, Aldergrove

Telephone: (604) 856 6825

Website: www.gvzoo.com

Othello Tunnels

Home to the celebrated Othello Tunnels, the Coquihalla Provincial Park lies just outside the town of Hope and about an hour's drive east of Vancouver. This quintet of railway tunnels which traverse the steep-sided Coquihalla Gorge were built for the Kettle Valley Railway and today offer visitors a fascinating insight into the history of the area, as well as a wonderfully scenic and unique hiking experience.

While the Othello Tunnels themselves are dark and dank (flashlights are recommended), the two-mile (3.5km) railway trail also crosses above thundering rapids and cuts through impressive, nearly 1,000-foot (300-metre) granite rock faces. The Othello Tunnels are an accessible and highly rewarding day trip from Vancouver, offering visitors of all ages a great mix of exercise and adventure.

Address: Just outside Hope, BC – about 95 miles (150km) east of Vancouver

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/coquihalla_cyn/

Events in Vancouver

Vancouver International Jazz Festival

Saturday June 19, 2021 to Thursday July 01, 2021 (TBC 2021)

Where: Various

The International Jazz Festival is the most popular cultural event in Vancouver, with performances by more than 400 talented international blues and jazz artists. The programme is full of famous names that play at various venues throughout the city, from formal concert theatres to open-air stages and public squares. As one of the biggest celebrations of music in the world, the festival now attracts about 460,000 spectators every year and features world-class musicians. Lovers of jazz and blues will be spoilt for choice during this summer festival in Vancouver.

<http://www.coastaljazz.ca>

Bard on the Beach

Thursday June 10, 2021 to Sunday September 26, 2021 (TBC 2021)

Where: Vanier Park

One of Vancouver's most loved summer events is a picnic in Vanier Park followed by an evening performance of Shakespeare. Plays are performed in huge open-ended tents overlooking the picturesque English Bay with a mountain backdrop. Plays of past seasons have included Twelfth Night, King Lear, The Tempest and Titus Andronicus, and are consistently well performed and well received. The picnic setting makes it a laid-back and fun way to get to grips with Shakespeare, providing a good introduction for children.

<http://www.bardonthebeach.org>

Vancouver Folk Music Festival

Saturday July 17, 2021 to Monday July 19, 2021 (TBC 2021)

Where: Jericho Beach Park

Set in the heart of Jericho Beach Park and spread over seven stages, the annual Folk Music Festival is one of Vancouver's favourite events. For nearly thirty years, it has entertained both young and old. Day, evening and weekend tickets are available at varying prices, with early bird tickets on sale from April. Food stalls, a bustling market and a fantastic atmosphere all add to a wonderful weekend of entertainment.

For those who can't afford a ticket, the beach and the park on the edges of the fenced concert area are perfect places to picnic and still catch some of the music. People can browse the many stalls lining the beach, selling anything from corn on the cob to First Nations crafts and jewellery.

<http://www.thefestival.bc.ca>

Polar Bear Swim

Friday January 01, 2021 (1 January annually)

Where: English Bay beach

Icy winter swims may not be everyone's idea of fun; even so, the annual Polar Bear Race has been running for nearly 90 years in Vancouver. Thousands flock to English Bay every New Year's Day to take the plunge and celebrate the beginning of the year in this refreshing fashion. Outrageous costumes are the order of the day and many come to participate in the Peter Pantages 100 yard (90m) race, named in honour of the founder of the swim club in 1920.

Registration and participation in the event are free, and for those not brave enough, a good spot on the beach with a mug of hot chocolate is the perfect way to view the goings-on.

Vancouver Pride

Wednesday August 04, 2021 (TBC 2021)

Where: Pride Parade starts at Denman and Robson Streets

The Vancouver Pride Week is a colourful, vibrant affair, celebrating the city's LGBTQI+ community and its many supporters in a variety of shows, festivals, parties and the ever-popular Pride Parade. Each year, a special team comes up with a theme and specific image. In recent years, the focus has been on issues and battles faced by the gay community. For a week, beautiful Vancouver is transformed into a rainbow-coloured riot, fun is the order of the day and the more outrageous the costume, event or party, the better.

<http://www.vancouverpride.ca>

Airports in Vancouver

Vancouver International (YVR)

Vancouver International Airport

<http://www.yvr.ca/>

Location: Vancouver The airport is located eight miles (12km) south of Vancouver.

Time: GMT -8 (GMT -7 from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November).

Contacts: Tel: +1 (604) 207 7077

Transfer between terminals: A courtesy shuttle is available to the Airport South terminal.

Getting to the city: The Canada Line connects the airport to downtown Vancouver in about 25 minutes. The service runs every 8 to 20 minutes. Scheduled buses are available to downtown Vancouver, Whistler, Vancouver Island and Washington State. Courtesy shuttles transport passengers to the Long-Term Parking Lot, South Terminal, local hotels and other destinations near the airport. Public bus services to Vancouver, Richmond and further afield are available at the Airport Station Bus Terminal.

Car rental: Car hire companies Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Hertz and National are represented next to the terminal building on the ground floor.

Airport Taxis: Metered taxis are available around the clock outside the terminals. Prices and journey times are higher during rush hour; a tip of 10 to 15 percent is expected.

Facilities: The main terminal has ATMs, bureaux de change, and a bank. There is a selection of bars, restaurants, and fast food outlets scattered throughout the airport, as well as a variety of shops, including duty-free, baggage storage, and a medical centre. Children's play areas are also available.

Parking: Vancouver International Airport offers a range of parking options in the parkade directly opposite the terminals.

Vancouver Island

Dubbed Canada's 'Paradise on the Pacific', Vancouver Island is an exquisite combination of dense rainforest, pristine coastline, rugged mountains, glittering glaciers and crystalline lakes and rivers, all within an easy distance from the mainland of British Columbia.

The island is 285 miles (460km) long and 50 miles (80km) wide, with the Vancouver Island Ranges running down most of the island's length, dividing it into a drier, undulant east coast and a wetter, rockier west coast.

Known as the Pacific Rim, the rugged west coast is littered with bays, inlets and fjords, boasting beautiful landscapes and a diversity of wildlife. This makes it a popular spot for tourists, who come to indulge in hiking, fishing, kayaking with orcas, whale watching, and more. But the area does receive some of the heaviest precipitation in the world and visitors should plan activities around the possibility of heavy storms in winter and plenty of rainfall throughout the year.

Inland, one finds dozens of lakes (the largest of which is Kennedy Lake). Dominating the central part of the island is the popular Strathcona Provincial Park, home to the island's glaciers, including the largest, the Comox Glacier, as well an abundance of birds and wildlife that includes Roosevelt Elk, bears, cougars and wolves.

There are two ski resorts on Vancouver Island: Mount Washington in the central part of the island, and the smaller Mount Cain to the north. Mount Washington offers a range of downhill, cross-country, snowboarding, snowmobiling and winter camping opportunities, while Mount Cain is community-owned and offers a less commercial experience away from the crowds.

Victoria, on the southern tip of the island, is the capital of British Columbia, and home to just under 50 percent of the island's population. The city is a major tourist destination and visitors flock here to enjoy its many sights and sounds, including the Legislative Buildings, The Empress Hotel, Craigdarroch Castle and the famous Butchart Gardens. Vancouver Island is well worth a visit and with so much to see and do, visitors can hardly ever be bored.

Getting around in Vancouver Island

Vancouver Island is easy to negotiate and there are several transportation options. Ferry services operate from both Vancouver and neighbouring Washington State in the USA, as well as between points on the island and the neighbouring Gulf Islands.

Scheduled flights by major airlines, as well as helicopter and floatplane services, are also available. There is a rail service between several island communities along the east coast, from Victoria to Courtenay, and the island's highway connects all major points. It also has loops to scenic marine-side highways.

Climate in Vancouver Island

Vancouver Island has a temperate climate, and is in fact the mildest place in the country, with temperatures modified by the currents and winds of the Pacific Ocean. Summers, between June and August, are warm and sunny, and winters, between December and February, are temperate, though the Pacific Rim (the west coast of the island) receives the most precipitation in North America and can be battered by strong winds.

The average temperature on Vancouver Island in summer is about 70°F to 80°F (21°C to 27°C), with temperatures cooling in the evenings, while the average temperature in winter is just below 32°F (0°C). Snowfall occurs in winter, though more so in the higher altitudes and the east coast. November, December, and January are the wettest months, which is worth taking into consideration when travelling to Vancouver Island.

Sightseeing in Vancouver Island

Within Victoria, where many travellers choose to stay while exploring Vancouver Island, some quality sightseeing can be enjoyed. Notably, the British Columbia Parliament Buildings are hard to miss and well worth a tour.

The Inner Harbour is a tourist hotspot, with restaurants and shops aplenty; the Royal British Columbia Museum rates as one of the best small museums in the world among travellers; and the Butchart Gardens beg to be picnicked in.

Those in search of actual Victorian charm should visit Craigdarroch Castle, an imposing mansion once owned by a coal tycoon which boasts lovely views of downtown Victoria. For those travelling with families, there are a number of wonderful attractions for kids in Victoria, including the Victoria Bug Zoo, the Victoria Butterfly Gardens, and Miniature World.

The prime tourist sites on Vancouver Island, apart from the ski resorts, include the wine-producing Cowichan Valley, the Goldstream Provincial Park and Juan de Fuca Provincial Park, and the quaint town of Sooke on the southwestern tip of the island.

Vancouver Island Attractions

Butchart Gardens

With well over a million annual visitors, the more-than-a-century-old Butchart Gardens remain one of Vancouver Island's most popular attractions. Situated about 14 miles (21km) north of Victoria, the gardens were founded in the early 1900s by Jennie Butchart in an abandoned limestone quarry. Fifty-five acres are open to the public and visitors can wander the paths through exquisitely manicured gardens, including the Sunken Garden, a Japanese Garden, Rose Garden and Italian Garden.

The gardens become a riot of colour in the spring and autumn, although winter and summer hold their own delights. Every Saturday, from the beginning of July to the end of September, the Gardens are transformed by a dazzling fireworks show, as well as a recital on the self-playing, rare Aeolian Pipe Organ and the Night Illuminations light display.

Other attractions and events in the park include an ice-skating rink and Twelve Days of Christmas display in December, and afternoon and evening shows and concerts during summer. Opening times and admission costs vary according to season, so visitors should check the official website listed below for details.

Website: <http://www.butchartgardens.com>

Fairmont Empress Hotel

One of the iconic images of Victoria is the much loved and well-visited Fairmont Empress Hotel, a fully restored Edwardian treasure visited by both royalty and celebrities. Set on the banks of Victoria's Inner Harbour, the Empress is a grand and majestic building with a storied history. It retains its British air through its traditional afternoon tea, popular with tourists and locals alike since opening in 1908. Reservations up to a week or two in advance are essential and the dress code is smart casual. The Empress is centrally located, and also enjoys a spa and golf course. It's a definite highlight of any visit to Victoria and well worth a stay.

Website: <http://www.fairmont.com>

British Columbia Parliament Buildings

Built in 1893, the British Columbia Government Parliament Buildings were initially criticised as an unnecessary expense, but has since become a major tourist attraction in Victoria, and also serves as the legislative centre for the province. Designed by 25-year-old architect Francis Rattenbury (who also designed The Fairmont Empress Hotel), these beautiful buildings and exquisite grounds are situated at Victoria's Inner Harbour, close to many of Victoria's other main attractions.

Various performances routinely take place on the grounds and visitors can enjoy the spectacular sight of the buildings at night, when more than 3,000 lights outlining the buildings create a fairytale picture. Tours of the buildings are available daily at regular intervals throughout the year and visitors can observe the House in session from the public galleries.

Website: <http://www.leg.bc.ca>

Tofino

Tofino is swiftly becoming a popular holiday destination with international travellers. The resort enjoys natural beauty, a mild climate and plenty of outdoor activities, including kayaking, whale watching and fishing. In addition to hot springs and gorgeous beaches, it also serves as Canada's premier surfing spot.

Tucked away at the entrance of the Clayoquot Sound, Tofino is home to the Pacific Rim National Park and islands with ancient primeval forests. Home to only about 2,000 locals, it serves as an ideal spot to escape the hustle and bustle of city life. Hot Springs Cove, accessible only by air and sea, is open year round and visitors can soak in naturally hot rock pools.

Other popular sights include the Eik Cedar, an 800-year-old tree that was rescued by residents after it was condemned to be felled; the Tofino Botanical Gardens with acres of forest, shoreline and gardens; and the Whale Centre Maritime Museum housing fascinating artefacts. The Wickaninnish Interpretive Centre, containing interesting information about the region and the area's first inhabitants, the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations, is also well worth a visit.

Website: tourismtofino.com

Ski Resorts

The skiing in British Columbia is world renowned, largely due to the popularity of Whistler Blackcomb which is regularly voted as one of the best ski resorts in the world. That said, there are many other lesser-known resorts that offer exceptional skiing in British Columbia.

Vancouver's North Shore is where most locals learn to ski. The resorts at Grouse Mountain, Mount Seymour and Cypress Bowl may not have the most challenging runs, but they command a loyal following, partly because they are less than an hour's drive from central Vancouver but are also easily accessible by public transport. Vancouver Island also has its own ski resort: Mount Washington. After Whistler, it's British Columbia's most popular ski resort, with the most reliable snow conditions in the province.

However, Canada's undisputed skiing mecca is Whistler, an extensive ski area 60 miles (100km) north of Vancouver, hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics together with Vancouver. It is most popular for downhill skiing, but offers a full array of winter activities including snowboarding, heli-skiing and dog sledding. Whistler is within the Garibaldi Provincial Park, a popular area for cross-country skiing. North of Whistler, the Pemberton Icefield is also a popular heli-skiing destination.

There are many lesser-known ski resorts in the interior of British Columbia, including Apex Mountain, Big White, Sun Peaks and Silver Star, which also offer world-class skiing in the Thompson Okanagan region.

Big White has a growing reputation, and due to the dry air of the interior, it offers some of the best powder skiing in the world. The Kootenay Rockies have several resorts, including Fairmont Hot Springs and Revelstoke Mountain, and in northern British Columbia the heavy amount of snowfall allows for great skiing in many areas.

Whistler Blackcomb

Ski Resorts

Consistently rated as the number one ski resort in North America and among the best in the world, the resort of Whistler Blackcomb is just a two-hour drive from the city of Vancouver in the Coast Mountain range.

The village of Whistler lies cradled in a valley between two mountains, Whistler and Blackcomb, that rise up 5,280ft (1,609m) to provide more than 8,100 acres of prime mountain terrain, including 12 alpine bowls and three glaciers.

There are more than 200 marked ski trails to enjoy while on holiday at Whistler Blackcomb. In fact, the state-of-the-art facilities at Whistler provided the cross-country, biathlon, Nordic combined and ski jumping venues for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The resort offers cutting-edge lifts that can carry 60,000 skiers per hour to jump-off points throughout the area. With two million visitors coming on holiday to Whistler Blackcomb every year, such lift capacity becomes a necessity. Skiers and snowboarders flock here from the world over, not for the weather (which can often be wet and foggy), but for the exceptional variety of skiing.

The village of Whistler is set around a cluster of small lakes and is British Columbia's fastest-growing municipality. It boasts a quaint village atmosphere and offers shopping areas and après-ski restaurants bordered by squeaky-clean streets. In summertime, Whistler Blackcomb is a popular holiday destination when the focus shifts to outdoor activities such as mountain biking, hiking and fishing.

Snowfall is rare in the city of Vancouver, but is more than adequate for the ski slopes on the Coast Mountains to the north where Whistler is situated. As with all Canadian ski resorts, Whistler can get bitterly cold so go prepared for the occasional blizzard.

In general though, temperatures are moderate throughout the winter season, rarely dipping below 12°F (-10°C) in the valley and 5°F (-15°C) on the peaks during the coldest part of the year. The average daily alpine temperature during most of the winter months is 22°F (-5°C).

Mount Washington Ski Resorts

After Whistler Blackcomb, the Mount Washington Alpine Resort on Vancouver Island is the second busiest recreational winter holiday destination in British Columbia. It has an average snowfall of 30ft (9m) that usually lasts from early winter until after Easter. The resort has about 50 marked ski runs, snow tubing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing trails and a snowboard terrain park.

The resort is also set in a spectacular location, looking out across the Strait of Georgia with vistas of the Sunshine Coast and the peaks of the Coast Mountains. Nearby Comox Valley hosts many of the holiday visitors to Mount Washington in its variety of hotels, motels and B&Bs, all of which offer special ski packages during winter months. The ski resort is located 20 miles (32km) northwest of Courtenay on Vancouver Island, about three hours' drive from Victoria.

Fernie Alpine Resort Ski Resorts

Fernie Alpine Resort, in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, is one of the largest ski resorts in the country and highly popular with holidaymakers. Spread along the Lizard Range, Fernie boasts excellent powder, five bowls, picture perfect scenery and some extremely challenging skiing.

Its steep terrain has garnered a serious reputation and a certain mystique. It's the kind of resort that die-hard snowsport fans seek out to set their pulses racing. Tucked away as it is, over three hours from Calgary, perhaps the best part of Fernie is the lack of crowds with regulars trying to reserve its magic for themselves.

Skiers and snowboarders can enjoy uncrowded open runs and more than 2,500 acres (1,011ha) of skiable terrain. Those taking a break from the slopes can explore the picturesque town of Fernie, three miles (5km) from the resort, or indulge in some fireside drinks and a post-mortem of the day's runs.

Tofino

Vancouver Island

Once a fishing and logging town on the Pacific Rim of Vancouver Island, Tofino is swiftly becoming a popular holiday destination for travellers from all over the globe. Tucked away at the entrance of the Clayoquot Sound, the area is home to the Pacific Rim National Park, gorgeous beaches, swathes of ancient forests, hot springs and Long Beach, the premier surfing spot in Canada.

Tofino is home to only about 2,000 locals who enjoy year-round access to its mild climate and resplendent natural beauty. The area boasts plenty of activities for visitors, including kayaking, whale watching, surfing and fishing.

Accessible by air or sea, Hot Springs Cove is open year round and visitors can have a soak in its naturally hot rock pools. Other popular sights include the 800-year-old Eik Cedar; the Tofino Botanical Gardens with acres of forest, shoreline and gardens; and the Whale Centre Maritime Museum housing fascinating artefacts.

The Wickaninnish Interpretive Centre, containing interesting information about the region and the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations (the area's original inhabitants), is well worth a visit. Tofino offers visitors the perfect combination of a range of activities, as well as a chance to relax and put their feet up surrounded by unparalleled beauty.

British Columbia Attractions

Overview

British Columbia's tourist attractions are a hard-hitting combination of stunning natural assets and cosmopolitan cultural experiences. The province stretches between the Pacific Ocean and the Rocky Mountains, encompassing some magnificent landscapes and protected areas of great beauty.

Parks worth exploring include Glacier National Park, Yoho National Park, Kootenay National Park, Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park, and Mt Revelstoke National Park, to name just a few. Lakes, mountains, glaciers, epic walking trails, ski slopes, and hot springs await adventurous visitors.

The city of Vancouver attracts many travellers with its wealth of cultural attractions, fun nightlife, and spectacular setting. The historic hub of Gastown displays a Victorian character in this otherwise modern city. The capital of British Columbia, Victoria, draws visitors to Vancouver Island, which also boasts a number of quaint towns and the ubiquitous British Columbian natural beauty.

Ski resorts, like the famous Whistler Blackcomb, draw winter sports enthusiasts from all over the world, and there are also many friendly resorts with slopes for beginners, where the locals flock to learn.

Stanley Park

Opening time: Open daily

The pride of Vancouver, Stanley Park covers 1,000 acres (405 hectares) and is one of the largest parks in any urban centre in North America. It's situated in the heart of Vancouver's densely populated West End and stretches out on a peninsula.

Stanley Park is at once a refuge for visitors seeking a brief escape from the urban jungle, a showcase for the natural beauty that surrounds the city and an entertainment centre. The park is criss-crossed through its dense rainforest interior by miles of wide gravel paths surrounding Beaver Lake and Lost Lagoon.

It is home to hundreds of migratory birds such as Canada geese, swans and ducks, and large populations of raccoons, squirrels, skunks and coyotes. The park has a miniature railroad, putt-putt course and an aquarium, as well as routes around the long sea wall perfect for a walk, jog, cycle or rollerblade.

Getting there: Translink bus #19

Address: Georgia Street, Vancouver

Website: www.vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley/

Museum of Anthropology

Opening time: Open daily, from 10am to 5pm (until 9pm on Tuesday)

Admission: C\$18 (adults), C\$16 (students). Free for children under 6, and other concessions are available

At the University of British Columbia on the cliffs of Point Grey, totem poles mark the way to the Museum of Anthropology, world-renowned for its displays of Northwest Coast First Nations art. One of its main features is the world's largest collection of works by internationally acclaimed Haida artist Bill Reid, including his famous cedar sculpture 'The Raven and the First Men'. In the museum's unique Visible Storage Galleries, more than 15,000 objects and artefacts from around the world are arranged according to culture and use. In the grounds of the museum are two Haida houses, showing the dramatic beauty of traditional Northwest Coast architecture.

Getting there: The University of British Columbia is served by buses 4, 9, 17, 25, 41, 43, 44, 49, 84, 258 or 480

Address: University of British Columbia, 6393 Marine Drive

Telephone: (604) 822 5087

Website: www.moa.ubc.ca

Chinatown

Vancouver's Chinatown is not only a strong, established ethnic community, but also a popular tourist attraction and prosperous commercial district. Its bustling streets are full of colour and commerce; even the pagoda-topped telephone booths add to the atmosphere. Shop displays spill onto the pavements, and tables groan with the weight of exotic foodstuffs and the strange wares of the Chinese apothecaries.

The Sam Kee Building in Pender Street is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as being the narrowest building in the world, at only six-foot (two metres) wide. This was the result of a local property owner reacting to the expropriation of most of his land in 1912 for the widening of the street: Chang Toy decided to build what he could on the remaining tiny strip.

Another main attraction in Chinatown is the Dr Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, enclosed behind high walls, that was built in 1986 at a cost of C\$5.3 million with the craftsmen and materials all imported from China. It is a quiet haven of walkways, pavilions, gnarled trees, water features, and natural rock sculptures. Next door to the Garden is the Chinese Cultural Centre with its elaborate gated entrance hand-painted in traditional colours.

Getting there: Bus or SkyTrain, to Main Street Station or Stadium Station

Address: Downtown Vancouver

Website: www.vancouver-chinatown.com

Gastown

Alongside Chinatown, the fascinating historic enclave of Gastown transports visitors back in time to envision the city as it existed in the days of old. Set in the central core of Vancouver, it has cobbled streets, antique gaslights, Victorian architecture, narrow alleys, courtyards, and hidden boutiques and restaurants. Jack 'Gassy' Deighton, Vancouver's first settler after whom the town was named, has been immortalised with a statue in Maple Tree Square in Gastown.

Another point of interest is the Lamplighter Pub in the Dominion Hotel, which was the first Vancouver inn to serve alcohol to women, while the Europe Hotel was the first fireproof building in western Canada, having been built just after the major fire of 1892. Gastown keeps time with the world's first steam clock, which plays the Westminster chimes every 15 minutes on five brass steam-whistles inside its cast bronze case.

Getting there: Gastown is easily accessible by Vancouver's Rapid Transit System, SkyTrain, and city buses

Website: www.gastown.org

Grouse Mountain

On Vancouver's north shore just a 15-minute drive from the downtown area across the Lions Gate Bridge, waits the year-round mountaintop playground of Grouse Mountain. Ascending the mountain is part of the adventure in the Super Skyride, a passenger tram that glides up the steep mountain slopes carrying visitors up 3,700ft (1,100m) above sea level in just eight minutes.

At the top, apart from magical views of the city below, is the Theatre in the Sky, which offers a high-tech presentation about Vancouver. There is also a cedar longhouse called the Hiwus Feasthouse that offers the chance to experience native West Coast culture with displays of dancing, storytelling and native cuisine.

There are hiking trails up the side of Grouse Mountain and on the east side one of them features the Grouse Grind, which is billed as one of the world's biggest stair-climbs. Mountain biking, skiing and snowboarding are also popular pursuits here.

Address: 6400 Nancy Greene Way, North Vancouver

Website: www.grousemountain.com

Queen Elizabeth Park

Opening time: Open daily 9am to 5pm. Conservatory open daily, from 10am to 5pm

The exquisite Queen Elizabeth Park in Vancouver boasts lush gardens bursting with flowers, live theatre and the Bloedel Floral Conservatory. The park receives about six million visitors annually who come to enjoy a 360 degree view of Vancouver from its highest point, 505 feet (167m) above sea level. The Bloedel Floral Conservatory, with its characteristic geodesic dome, is home to more than 100 species of tropical birds that roam free in the area, as well as hundreds of species of exotic plants and flowers.

Other highlights of the park include the Quarry Garden, J. Seward Johnson's sculpture 'The Photo Session', the Lions Clock and the arboretum, with its fine examples of indigenous trees from across Canada. Spring is an excellent time to visit the park as it becomes a riot of colour, with white and pink cherry blossoms on show.

Getting there: Bus to Main Street at 33rd Avenue

Address: 4600 Cambie St

Website: www.vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/queen-elizabeth-park.aspx

Granville Island

The entertainment district of Granville Island is easily accessible, located in the middle of Vancouver under the Granville Street Bridge on the south shore of False Creek. While it barely seems separate from the city, it's nonetheless a relaxing break from the main bustle. The public market is a sensory feast, complete with a riot of energetic colours, delicious local produce and intriguing craft stalls. The separate Kids Market is a must for children, with toy stores and games, while the Maritime Market is a showcase for boat builders, with a museum, supply stores and tours. The Granville Island Brewing Company offers tastings for thirsty visitors while the island's theatre provides cultural treats and art shows at the Emily Carr institute. To cool off during a hot summer's day, the island has the biggest free waterpark in British Columbia, open from May to September.

Getting there: Granville Island is accessible by car, bus, on foot, or by Aquabus or ferry. The #50 False Creek bus travels from Gastown in the downtown area, along Granville Street, stopping just off the island

Website: www.granvilleisland.com

Lonsdale Quay

Opening time: Market and retail: Open daily, from 9am to 7pm. Restaurants are open later.

Situated in North Vancouver, Lonsdale Quay offers spectacular views of downtown Vancouver, its harbour and the North Shore Mountains. There are also a variety of shops, restaurants and an excellent market. The best way to experience the quay is to catch the SeaBus from Waterfront Station on Cordova Street in downtown Vancouver. The fifteen-minute ride allows one to relax and enjoy the view, watch seaplanes land and spy cruise ships in the harbour.

The market boasts mouthwatering local produce, from seafood to pastries. There's also a wide range of restaurants covering Mexican, Greek and Asian cuisine among many others. Shoppers can indulge at a variety of stalls selling all sorts of arts and crafts, souvenirs and clothing, as well as plenty of boutiques, a kids play area and specialty kids stores, topped by the Lonsdale Quay Hotel.

Getting there: SeaBus from Waterfront Station; also accessible by bus

Address: 123 Carrie Cates Court, North Vancouver

Website: www.lonsdalequay.com

Capilano Suspension Bridge

Opening time: Varies according to season.

Admission: \$55 adults, \$30 children, other concessions available.

Built in 1889, the Capilano Suspension Bridge is one of Vancouver's oldest and most popular tourist attractions, with plenty of activities and sights in the park for visitors to enjoy. Stretching 450 feet (137m) across and perched 230 feet (70m) above the Capilano River, it's a sturdy construction of reinforced steel and concrete, though still not for the faint of heart. A recent addition to the park is the Treetops Adventure, where elevated suspension bridges allow visitors a bird's-eye view of the rainforest, while they walk along the canopy of Douglas fir trees. Other attractions in the park include a story centre; a First Nations Cultural Centre where visitors can see carvers, weavers and beaders at work; a large collection of First Nations Totem Poles; and guided tours of the rainforest.

Address: 3735 Capilano Road, North Vancouver

Telephone: (604) 985 7474

Website: www.capbridge.com

Vancouver Art Gallery

Opening time: Open daily, from 10am to 5pm (until 9pm on Tuesdays).

Admission: C\$24 (adults), C\$6.50 (children over five), free for children under five. Other concessions are available.

Established in 1931 and housed in a turn-of-the-century heritage building in the centre of downtown Vancouver, the Vancouver Art Gallery boasts thousands of national and international exhibitions by a host of artists, sculptors and photographers. National and international touring exhibitions take place regularly at the gallery, with works from masters such as Picasso, Rodin, Andy Warhol and others. Whether you prefer the Old Masters or more contemporary artists, the Vancouver Art Gallery is well worth a visit. Check out the official website listed below for details on current temporary exhibitions.

Getting there: Skytrain to Granville or Burrard Stations; any downtown bus

Address: 750 Hornby Street

Telephone: (604) 662 4700

Website: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

Vancouver Lookout at the Harbour Centre

Opening time: Open daily, from 8:30am to 10:30pm (May to September); 9am to 9pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 9:30pm Friday to Sunday (October to April).

Admission: C\$17.50 (adults), C\$9.50 (children aged 6 - 12). Concessions available.

Perhaps one of the best ways to begin one's visit to Vancouver is with a trip up the Harbour Centre Tower to the Lookout, where one can enjoy a 360-degree view of the city, the North Shore Mountains and neighbouring Vancouver Island on a clear day. A 45-second trip in the outdoor glass-fronted Skylift elevator delivers visitors to the Lookout and informative signs point out key attractions in the city and surrounds. Guests can enjoy a cup of coffee while watching the sun set from the Lookout or see the lights of the city begin to twinkle below. The tower is also home to the Top of Vancouver Revolving Restaurant, and visitors can enjoy the unique experience of dining above the city while the restaurant completes a full revolution every hour.

Getting there: Skytrain to Waterfront Station; SeaBus from North Shore to Waterfront Station

Address: 555 West Hastings Street

Telephone: (604) 689 0421

Website: www.vancouverlookout.com

VanDusen Botanical Garden

Opening time: Opening times vary according to season, with slightly different hours every month - check the official website for details.

Admission: October to March C\$8.20 (adults), C\$4.10 (children aged 5 - 12); April to September C\$11.50 (adults), C\$5.75 (children aged 3 - 12). Concessions available.

With 22 hectares (55 acres) and roughly 11,000 different plant species, VanDusen Botanical Garden is a spectacular showcase of the natural world, right in the heart of Vancouver. Landscaped gardens are laid out exquisitely and specific areas are cultivated to demonstrate botanical relationships or geographical origins, such as the popular Rhododendron Walk or the Sino Himalayan Garden.

One of the most popular events held in the garden is the annual Festival of Lights, when the beauty of the flowers is matched by over a million dazzling lights set up in order to celebrate the festive season. Choirs and carol singers, a Dancing Light display on Lake Island and the Golden Chain Walk are all part of this family favourite, running from 9 to 31 December each year. Daily walking- and cart tours are available in the garden from April to October at 2pm and also at 11am on Wednesdays.

Getting there: #17 Oak bus from downtown Vancouver to West 37th Avenue

Address: 5251 Oak Street (37th Avenue and Oak)

Telephone: (604) 257 8335

Website: www.vandusengarden.org

Commercial Drive

Commercial Drive is about as non-commercial as it gets, being one of Vancouver's most eclectic and increasingly trendy neighbourhoods. Starting out as a skid row for its lumber industry in the late 1800s, it evolved over time with a steady influx of English, Chinese, Italian and Eastern European immigrants fleeing both World Wars. Diversity and energy are still the hallmarks of Commercial Drive, and an afternoon is well spent exploring its various cuisines, chic boutiques and live music shows. Enjoy a delicious Italian gelato or espresso, or simply grab a table at one of the many bars or restaurants. There are always plenty of festivals and events going on too, such as the Parade of Lost Souls, the Stone Soup Festival in May and the Eastside Culture Crawl.

Getting there: Skytrain, to Commercial Drive or Broadway stations

Address: Commercial Drive (from Venables to Grandview)

Website: www.thedrive.ca

Gulf Islands

Tucked in the Strait of Georgia are the picturesque Gulf Islands. Home to artists and writers, many Vancouverites escape to holiday homes tucked away in the rainforest. Large parts of the islands have been designated as marine parks, preserving the land for the numerous endemic birds and animals that call the island home. Many of the islands host events and festivals each year, alongside a healthy art and shopping scene.

Bowen Island is only a 20-minute ferry ride from West Vancouver's Horseshoe Bay. Visitors can enjoy a stroll from Snug Harbour past the historic Union Steamship Company or take a walk in the Crippen Regional Park.

Galiano Island is the second biggest of the group and is about the size of Manhattan. Only 50 minutes away on the Tsawwassen Ferry on the Lower Mainland, Galiano Island draws all sorts of visitors who come to picnic in Bellhouse Park, take walks through the lush rainforest up to Bluffs Park or indulge in a spot of fishing, kayaking or a round of golf.

Website: www.gulfislandsguide.com

Butchart Gardens

With well over a million annual visitors, the more-than-a-century-old Butchart Gardens remain one of Vancouver Island's most popular attractions. Situated about 14 miles (21km) north of Victoria, the gardens were founded in the early 1900s by Jennie Butchart in an abandoned limestone quarry. Fifty-five acres are open to the public and visitors can wander the paths through exquisitely manicured gardens, including the Sunken Garden, a Japanese Garden, Rose Garden and Italian Garden.

The gardens become a riot of colour in the spring and autumn, although winter and summer hold their own delights. Every Saturday, from the beginning of July to the end of September, the Gardens are transformed by a dazzling fireworks show, as well as a recital on the self-playing, rare Aeolian Pipe Organ and the Night Illuminations light display.

Other attractions and events in the park include an ice-skating rink and Twelve Days of Christmas display in December, and afternoon and evening shows and concerts during summer. Opening times and admission costs vary according to season, so visitors should check the official website listed below for details.

Website: www.butchartgardens.com

Fairmont Empress Hotel

One of the iconic images of Victoria is the much loved and well-visited Fairmont Empress Hotel, a fully restored Edwardian treasure visited by both royalty and celebrities. Set on the banks of Victoria's Inner Harbour, the Empress is a grand and majestic building with a storied history. It retains its British air through its traditional afternoon tea, popular with tourists and locals alike since opening in 1908. Reservations up to a week or two in advance are essential and the dress code is smart casual. The Empress is centrally located, and also enjoys a spa and golf course. It's a definite highlight of any visit to Victoria and well worth a stay.

Website: www.fairmont.com

British Columbia Parliament Buildings

Built in 1893, the British Columbia Government Parliament Buildings were initially criticised as an unnecessary expense, but has since become a major tourist attraction in Victoria, and also serves as the legislative centre for the province. Designed by 25-year-old architect Francis Rattenbury (who also designed The Fairmont Empress Hotel), these beautiful buildings and exquisite grounds are situated at Victoria's Inner Harbour, close to many of Victoria's other main attractions.

Various performances routinely take place on the grounds and visitors can enjoy the spectacular sight of the buildings at night, when more than 3,000 lights outlining the buildings create a fairytale picture. Tours of the buildings are available daily at regular intervals throughout the year and visitors can observe the House in session from the public galleries.

Website: www.leg.bc.ca

San Juan Islands

The San Juan Islands are a boater's paradise. Hundreds of islands are separated by nationality, but are part of the same scenic and rugged archipelago, located off the northwest coast of Washington State. Much of the area is in a rain shadow behind Vancouver Island, making a surprisingly dry and sunny reprieve in the northwest. Little island communities, great wildlife and the open water provide a real disconnect from the mainland.

Frequent government ferry services connect the mainland and larger inhabited islands to each other, but others can only be visited by smaller shuttle boats and yachts. Friday Harbour is San Juan's largest town and an enchanting tourist destination. Anchorages are bustling throughout summer, but largely empty in other seasons. Yacht charters are available out of Bellingham.

Tofino

Tofino is swiftly becoming a popular holiday destination with international travellers. The resort enjoys natural beauty, a mild climate and plenty of outdoor activities, including kayaking, whale watching and fishing. In addition to hot springs and gorgeous beaches, it also serves as Canada's premier surfing spot.

Tucked away at the entrance of the Clayoquot Sound, Tofino is home to the Pacific Rim National Park and islands with ancient primeval forests. Home to only about 2,000 locals, it serves as an ideal spot to escape the hustle and bustle of city life. Hot Springs Cove, accessible only by air and sea, is open year round and visitors can soak in naturally hot rock pools.

Other popular sights include the Eik Cedar, an 800-year-old tree that was rescued by residents after it was condemned to be felled; the Tofino Botanical Gardens with acres of forest, shoreline and gardens; and the Whale Centre Maritime Museum housing fascinating artefacts. The Wickaninnish Interpretive Centre, containing interesting information about the region and the area's first inhabitants, the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations, is also well worth a visit.

Website: tourismtofino.com

Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre

Opening time: Summer (21 June to 1 September): Open daily, from 9.30am to 6pm; Winter (6 September to 24 June): Open daily, from 10am to 5pm

Admission: Summer: C\$40 (adults), C\$32 (13-18 year olds) C\$23 (children). Other concessions are available

The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre is home to a vast array of aquatic creatures, ranging from otters, sea lions and penguins, to dolphins, sharks and whales. You'll find exhibits, displays and programmes geared towards kids, including Clownfish Cove, with small animals, play areas and costumes aimed at teaching children about the natural world and the importance of marine conservation. The aquarium features a gift shop, cafeteria and wheelchair access. Visitors of all ages enjoy a trip to this well-organised and large aquarium, which consistently receives rave reviews from travellers.

Address: 845 Avison Way, Vancouver

Telephone: 604 659 3474

Website: www.vanaqua.org

Greater Vancouver Zoo

Opening time: Summer Season (April to September): Open daily, from 9am to 7pm. Winter Season (October to March): Open daily, from 9am to 4pm.

Admission: C\$28 (adults); C\$21 (children). Concessions are available.

Animal lovers of all ages will have a fabulous time exploring the Greater Vancouver Zoo. It boasts more than 500 animals and 140 species, including lion, giraffe, black bear, bison, spider monkeys, coyotes, cheetah, hippo, lemurs and caracals, just to name a few. Children will simply love watching all the animals and naming the ones they know. Kids can enjoy meeting a selection of reptiles, take the safari mini train, listen to an educational talk or even watch the lions and tigers being fed. Refreshments are available from kiosks and restaurants so nobody will go hungry. Allow at least a few hours to explore the zoo properly.

Address: 5048 - 264th Street, Aldergrove

Telephone: (604) 856 6825

Website: www.gvzoo.com

Othello Tunnels

Home to the celebrated Othello Tunnels, the Coquihalla Provincial Park lies just outside the town of Hope and about an hour's drive east of Vancouver. This quintet of railway tunnels which traverse the steep-sided Coquihalla Gorge were built for the Kettle Valley Railway and today offer visitors a fascinating insight into the history of the area, as well as a wonderfully scenic and unique hiking experience.

While the Othello Tunnels themselves are dark and dank (flashlights are recommended), the two-mile (3.5km) railway trail also crosses above thundering rapids and cuts through impressive, nearly 1,000-foot (300-metre) granite rock faces. The Othello Tunnels are an accessible and highly rewarding day trip from Vancouver, offering visitors of all ages a great mix of exercise and adventure.

Address: Just outside Hope, BC – about 95 miles (150km) east of Vancouver

Website: www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/coquihalla_cyn/

Currency

The currency used is the Canadian dollar (CAD). Banks and bureaux de change will change cash, as will some hotels. Major credit cards are widely accepted and ATMs are widespread. US dollars are widely accepted.

Exchange rate for 1 CAD - Canadian Dollar

0.00 BMD Bermudan Dollar	0.68 EUR Euro	0.73 USD U.S. Dollar	0.58 GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	111.95 JPY Japanese Yen	0.66 CHF Swiss Franc
1.11 AUD Australian Dollar	28.83 UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	324.82 KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	68,104.49 LBP Lebanese Pound	3.55 LYD Libyan Dinar	5.02 BOB Bolivian Boliviano
0.00 NPR Nepalese Rupee	0.00 OMR Omani Rial	0.00 QAR Qatari Rial	0.99 SGD Singapore Dollar	7.92 SEK Swedish Krona	0.00 TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
0.00 VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	42.52 DOP Dominican Peso	0.00 HRK Croatian Kuna	12.41 MXN Mexican Peso	446.74 XOF West African CFA Franc	0.00 PGK Papua New Guinean kina
0.00 BSD Bahamian Dollar	0.00 FJD Fiji Dollar	0.00 HNL Honduran Lempira	97.95 DZD Algerian Dinar	0.00 MMK Myanma Kyat	0.00 BWP Botswana Pula
2.72 PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	686.67 CLP Chilean Peso	283.06 AMD Armenia Dram	17.04 CZK Czech Koruna	12.90 MDL Moldova Lei	102.36 ISK Icelandic Krona
9,206.75 UZS Uzbekistan Sum	2.72 ILS Israeli New Sheqel	0.52 JOD Jordanian Dinar	0.00 KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	27.92 UYU Uruguayan Peso	0.00 MUR Mauritian Rupee
0.00 NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	7.96 NOK Norwegian Krone	2.95 PLN Polish Zloty	2.74 SAR Saudi Riyal	0.00 LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	26.92 THB Thai Baht
2.68 AED U.A.E Dirham	3.73 BRL Brazilian Real	3.39 RON Romanian New Leu	5.72 HKD Hong Kong Dollar	446.74 XAF Central African CFA Franc	18,589.76 VND Vietnamese Dong
642.71 ARS Argentine Peso	0.00 XCD East Caribbean Dollar	0.00 GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	7.36 MAD Moroccan Dirham	0.00 BHD Bahrain Dinar	0.73 PAB Panamanian Balboa
1.24 AZN Azerbaijan Manat	2,868.33 COP Colombian Peso	64.70 KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	264.88 HUF Hungarian Forint	7.97 TJS Tajikistan Ruble	11,761.39 IDR Indonesian Rupiah
35.09 EGP Egyptian Pound	994.29 KRW South Korean Won	5,456.06 PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	3.47 MYR Malaysian Ringgit	371.94 CRC Costa Rican Colón	1.22 NZD New Zealand Dollar
203.32 PKR Pakistani Rupee	66.87 RUB Russian Rouble	13.54 ZAR South African Rand	2.29 TND Tunisian Dinar	0.00 BBD Barbadian Dollar	1.33 BGN Bulgarian Lev
23.66 TRY Turkish Lira	41.92 PHP Philippine Peso	23.64 TWD New Taiwan Dollar	852.33 NGN Nigerian Naira	0.00 XPF CFP Franc	0.00 GHS Ghanaian Cedi
0.00 JMD Jamaican Dollar	0.00 ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	0.00 BND Brunei Dollar	79.69 RSD Serbian Dinar	5.30 CNY Chinese Yuan	5.08 DKK Danish Krone
2.55 TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	61.04 INR Indian Rupee				