



British Columbia

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Hawsworth (p133)
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- ➔ Flying Pig (p135)
- ➔ Red Fish Blue Fish (p173)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Wickaninnish Inn (p190)
- ➔ Rockwater Secret Cove Resort (p164)
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- ➔ Nita Lake Lodge (p160)

Why Go?

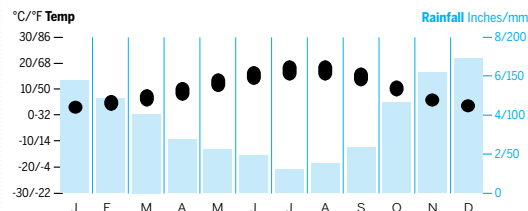
British Columbia visitors need a long list of superlatives when describing their trips – the words spectacular, breathtaking and jaw-dropping only go so far. But it's hard not to be moved by towering mountains, wildlife-packed forests and dramatic coastlines that slow your heart like sigh-triggering spa treatments. Canada's westernmost province is more than just nature-hugging dioramas, though.

Cosmopolitan Vancouver fuses cuisines and cultures from Asia and beyond, while vibrant smaller cities like Victoria and Kelowna are increasingly creating their own intriguing scenes. For sheer character, it's hard to beat the kaleidoscope of quirky little communities from rustic northern BC to the ever laid-back Southern Gulf Islands.

Wherever you head, the great outdoors will always call. Don't just point your camera at it. BC is unbeatable for the kind of life-enhancing skiing, kayaking and hiking that can easily make this the trip of a lifetime.

When to Go

Vancouver



Dec–Mar Best powder action on the slopes of Whistler and Blackcomb mountains

Jul & Aug Beaches, patios and a plethora of outdoor festivals in sun-dappled Vancouver

Sep & Oct Dramatic surfing and the start of storm-watching season in beach-hugging Tofino

Getting There & Around

The sheer size of BC can overwhelm some visitors: it's a scary-sounding 1508km drive from Vancouver to Prince Rupert, for example. While it's tempting to simply stick around Vancouver – the main point of entry for most BC-bound visitors – you won't really have experienced the province unless you head out of town.

Despite the distances, driving remains the most popular method of movement in BC. Plan your routes via the handy DriveBC website (www.drivebc.ca) and check out the dozens of services offered by the extensive **BC Ferries** (www.bcferries.com) system.

VIA Rail (www.viarail.com) operates two BC train services. One trundles across the north from the coastline to Jasper. Pick up the second in Jasper for a ride back to Vancouver. A third line on Vancouver Island may also reopen in the coming years.

PARKS & WILDLIFE

BC's national parks include snow-capped **Glacier** and the Unesco World Heritage sites of **Kootenay** and **Yoho**. The newer **Gulf Islands National Park Reserve** protects a fragile coastal region. Visit the website of **Parks Canada** (www.pc.gc.ca) for information.

The region's almost 1000 provincial parks offer 3000km of hiking trails. Notables include **Strathcona** and remote **Cape Scott**, as well as the Cariboo's canoe-friendly **Bowron Lake** and the Kootenays' Matterhorn-like **Mt Assiniboine**. Check the **BC Parks** (www.bcparks.ca) website for information.

Expect to spot some amazing wildlife. Ocean visitors should keep an eye out for orcas, while land mammals – including elk, moose, wolves, grizzlies and black bears – will have most scrambling for their cameras. And there are around 500 bird varieties, including blue herons and bald eagles galore.

Raise a Glass: BC's Top Five Beers

- ➔ Back Hand of God Stout by Crannóg Ales: a rich, java-colored brew with a cult following.
- ➔ Red Racer ESB by Central City Brewing: a smooth, malty ale with nicely balanced hops.
- ➔ Fat Tug IPA by Driftwood Brewery: BC's best and most hoptastic Pacific Northwest IPA.
- ➔ Old Jalopy Pale Ale by Powell Street Craft Brewery: Canadian Brewery Awards' Beer of the Year winner, made by a tiny Vancouver nanobrewery.
- ➔ Zunga by Townsite Brewing: the Sunshine Coast's favorite quaff is a beautifully balanced blonde ale.

GUILT-FREE FISH & CHIPS

Seafood is BC's main dining choice. Support the sustainability of the region's aquatic larder by frequenting restaurants operating under the Ocean Wise banner; see www.oceanwise.ca.

BC Fast Facts

- ➔ Population: 4.6 million
- ➔ Area: 944,735 sq km
- ➔ Capital: Victoria
- ➔ Fact: BC is North America's third-largest film and TV production center.

It's Official

BC's provincial bird is the Steller's jay and its official mammal is the Kermode bear, a black bear with white fur.

Resources

- ➔ Destination British Columbia (www.hellobc.com)
- ➔ Cycling BC (www.cyclingbc.net)
- ➔ British Columbia Beer Guide (www.bcbeer.ca)
- ➔ BC Government (www2.gov.bc.ca)
- ➔ BC Wine Institute (www.winebc.com)
- ➔ Van Dop Arts & Cultural Guide (www.art-bc.com)
- ➔ Discover Camping (www.discovercamping.ca)
- ➔ Surfing Vancouver Island (www.surfingvancouverisland.com)