

Welcome to BC & the Canadian Rockies

Soul-stirring mountains, mist-shrouded forests and epic tooth-and-claw wildlife – this is Canada's grand outdoor wonderland. And it's served alongside a full menu of cool, ever-welcoming communities.

Great Outdoors

Deep sighs are the usual response when encountering this region's sparkling diorama of sawtooth peaks, ethereally colored lakes and crenulated coastlines whipped by dramatic ocean waves. But it's the vast scale of this seemingly infinite wilderness that strikes most, triggering a humbled response in the face of nature's grand scheme. There has never been a more persuasive argument for tree-hugging, although when it comes to the area's astonishing wildlife, from whales and grizzlies to wolves and moose, it's best to keep the hugging to a minimum.

Adrenalin Rushes

Steely calved locals have been discovering ways to interact with the outdoors here for decades and there are hundreds of operators that can help you do the same. From skiing and snowboarding on Whistler's spectacular slopes to hiking the alpine meadows in Banff National Park or surfing with the West Coast beach bums in Tofino, there are more ways to work up a sweat here than you can swing a paddle at. Which reminds us: these are prime kayaking waters, with tree-lined lakes and rough-and-tumble ocean routes calling your name.

Dining & Drinking

The West Coast offers a cornucopia of charming farmers markets, juicy locally caught seafood, velvet-soft ranchland steaks and feast-triggering fruit and veggies. Restaurants fall over themselves to showcase the finest local ingredients, but it's Vancouver, possibly Canada's top dining city, that leads the way. And alongside the grape-tastic Okanagan Valley and its wine-producing satellite regions, there's been a tasty tidal wave of lip-smacking new micro-breweries in recent years, making British Columbia a paradise for traveling beer nuts.

City Life

It's easy to be lured by the outdoors here but this region also has some great city action. Urbanites will enjoy the Edmonton arts scene and the Calgary cowboy vibe, but it's BC that offers the best city-based shenanigans with two very different approaches. Provincial capital Victoria frames its cool scene within a backdrop of historic buildings, while Vancouver, Western Canada's largest city, provides a full complement of distinctive neighborhoods ripe for exploration. From sophisticated Yaletown to hipster-haven Main Street and from cool-ass Gastown to the 'gayborhood' West End, you'll never run out of places to explore on foot here.



Why I Love BC & the Canadian Rockies

By John Lee, Author

Originally from the UK, my first visit to Western Canada included some spine-tingling sightings of deer, black bears and a gigantic moose that eyed me from the edge of a Rocky Mountains forest. I was smitten. And although I've now lived here for almost 20 years, I'm still deeply enthralled. Sliding along the coastline on a BC Ferries vessel; watching eagles whirl slowly overhead; or supping a craft beer in a tiny Vancouver Island town are constant reminders of why I live in the best place on earth.

For more about our authors, see page 336.