

# Understand BC & the Canadian Rockies

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# BC & the Canadian Rockies Today

Locals in Western Canada's big cities will tell you that rising living costs are increasingly bumping up against flat-lining wages. Vancouverites have seen house prices leap by double-digit percentage points in recent years while salaries remain unchanged. And while Alberta's economy has long been hitched to oil, British Columbia is also craving a bigger slice of the resource-sector pie, to the chagrin of those decrying the potential despoiling of wilderness regions. Optimism remains high, though, and rising house prices may yet turn out to be a historic blip.

## Best on Film

**The Grey Fox** (1982) Evocative Canadian Western covering the story of the country's first great train robbery.

**City of Gold** (1957) Delightful short film comparing gold rush Dawson City to 60 years later. Narrated by noted Canadian author Pierre Berton.

**Carts of Darkness** (2008) Documentary about shopping-cart races among Vancouver's homeless.

**Mount Pleasant** (2007) Gritty drama about family life in Vancouver.

## Best in Print

**City of Glass** (Douglas Coupland; 2000) Vancouver's most celebrated contemporary writer offers a quirky guide to his hometown.

**Craft Beer Revolution** (Joe Wiebe; 2015) Profiles the lip-smacking breweries and beer-makers of BC.

**The Call of the Wild** (Jack London; 1903) The story of a dog during the Klondike gold rush.

**Whistle Post West: Railway Tales from British Columbia, Alberta and Yukon** (Various authors; 2015) Riveting stories from the region's golden age of rail.

**The Jade Peony** (Wayson Choy; 1995) Poignant coming-of-age story set in Vancouver's 1930s and '40s Chinatown.

## Global Exposure

Vancouver's Expo '86 world exposition and its 2010 Winter Olympics were almost 25 years apart but they had similar effects on the city: each showcased the region's billion-dollar good looks and enticed the world to visit. But while tourism boomed, the benefits for locals were harder to grasp. Both events triggered real-estate stampedes that saw house prices leap beyond the reach of Vancouverites with everyday jobs. One result of this is that younger people, especially young families, are now looking far beyond the city for housing. Price spikes are taking place around the province in communities from Victoria to Nanaimo and from Cumberland to Powell River.

## Resource Rumble

Alberta had its own Winter Olympics back in 1988. But oil has been a far bigger influence on its economy, enabling it to sidestep global recessions better than most via its vast oil sands and its reputation as a low-taxation, big-business capital. But with oil prices declining, has Alberta erroneously placed all its economic eggs in one basket? The province is still seeking to build infrastructure to support its biggest industry, including a controversial mega-pipeline that aims to send bitumen oil through remote, sensitive areas of BC wilderness to a tanker terminal on the coast.

BC is dealing with its own resource controversies. Many locals are up in arms about the gigantic Site C hydroelectric dam being built in the province's remote northeastern region, while a proposed Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) terminal has also become a focus for environmental ire. It remains to be seen how BC will deal with the challenge of balancing potential economic boons against the danger of permanently degrading swaths of pristine environment.