

# INTRODUCING VANCOUVER



*Cameras at the ready for great sea-and-skyscraper city vistas*

Kayakers bobble past, waving at friends on the beach. A floatplane shimmies over the park, diving to its watery landing strip. A chattering hubbub bounces off the gleaming glass towers that forest the city like latter-day totems.

When the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games roll into town in 2010, there'll be no shortage of jaw-dropping visuals, instantly inspiring people around the world to check out Canada's immigration procedures. Vancouver is, after all, one of the cities that routinely tops those lists of the world's greatest places to live. But beyond the breathtaking snowcapped crags, city-hugging beaches and dense waterfront forests lies a comparatively young metropolis that's still trying to discover its true identity – less than 150 years after a 'gassy' Englishman rowed in and kicked it all off with a makeshift pub.

Covering the city's main outdoor, museum and gallery attractions will certainly keep you busy for a few days. After that it's highly advisable to start digging beneath the surface to find out what really makes this laid-back lotusland tick. You'll discover that the 'real Vancouver' is in the clamorous Commercial Dr coffee shops, the hipster hangouts of SoMa, the gay-friendly streets of the West End, the kaleidoscopic thoroughfares of Chinatown and the historic, re-invigorated old streets of Gastown, where that original pub once stood.

Of course, the rest of the world will know all about this in 2010. Why not beat them to it by dropping by for your own urban adventure – coupled with a giant doorstep of outdoor attractions.

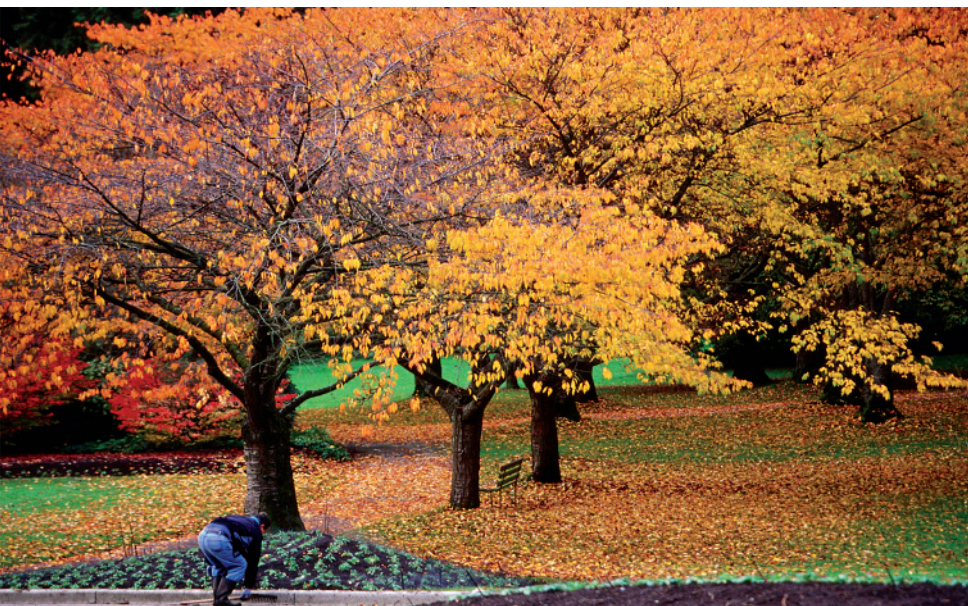
## CITY LIFE

Inspired by their stunning surroundings, Vancouverites have discovered more ways to interact with the outdoors than almost anyone – this really is a city where you can ski in the morning and hit the beach in the afternoon. But the locals are not just a bunch of rice-cake-noshing fitness freaks. The city is one of Canada's top dining towns, and is currently undergoing an Olympic-sized surge of new openings. The arts and nightlife scenes are similarly tasty – although you'll have to be a little adventurous to discover the highlights.

Wherever you end up rubbing shoulders with the residents, it won't be long before you've told them how much you love their city and they've replied that it's not all perfect. For every Vancouverite excited about the Olympics, you'll find another worried about how much it's going to cost. House prices have been rapidly rising in recent years, triggering angst among residents who can't afford to buy. And that's before you get onto the thorny topic of the Downtown Eastside, the destitute neighborhood that many feel should be a much more important funding priority than the Olympics.

But while the serious side of life is always bubbling beneath the surface, Vancouverites also know how to party. With its giant free fireworks displays, jazz, fringe and film festivals and dozens of year-round annual events, the 'city of glass' is more fun than it's ever been for visitors, who often come for the mountains and end up staying for the vibe.

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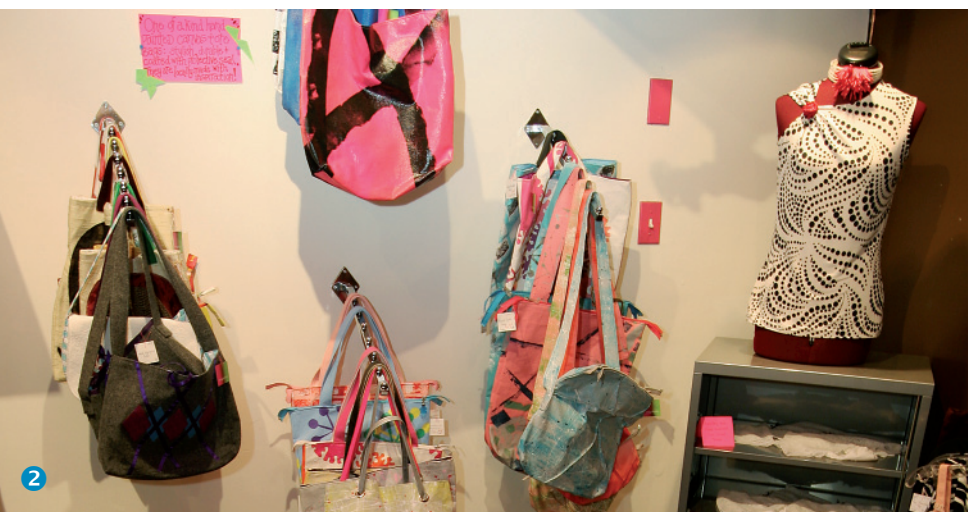
Stanley Park (p52) – postcard-perfect in the fall – is a sea, sand and forest spectacular dear to the city's heart

# HIGHLIGHTS



## DINING, DRINKING & DISTRICTS

*The lifeblood of the city is its distinctive districts, many worth a day of exploring. A rolling smorgasbord of great nosh will keep you fueled. While seafood is a good starting point, make sure you dip in to some finger-licking ethnic eateries and taste-trip at a night market.*





### 1 Commercial Drive

The Drive's coffee-fueled counterculture vibe keeps this area lively (p83)

### 2 SoMa

South Main's eclectic designer shops are dripping with hipster fashions (p116)

### 3 Gastown

Vancouver's once-grungy original 'hood is now alive with great bars (p152)

### 4 Vij's

Fusion is a Vancouver dining trait, pioneered at this contemporary Indian restaurant (p140)

### 5 Chinatown Night Market

Feasting at the alfresco market (p115) is the best way to dine and stroll





## ACTIVE VANCOUVER

*Vancouverites are born wearing Lycra, so you can expect to see plenty of muscle-stretching locals sweating their way around the city. Visitors can mix with the heavy-breathing fraternity on jogging and cycling trails, or at local ski, beach and kayaking hot spots.*



### 1 Grouse Mountain

Snowboarders and skiers hit the slopes at Vancouver's top winter playground (p183)

### 2 Kayaking

Hop in a kayak and admire the cityscape from the water (p180)

### 3 Stanley Park

Seawall cycling, jogging or blading is an ideal scenery-ogling activity (p178)





# CITY STYLE

Set amid mountains, sea and forest, Vancouver is a visual treat for camera-wielding visitors. But it's not just about the natural surroundings here: the city is stuffed with non-natural sights that complement the appeal of those well-known outdoorsy vistas.

## 1 City of Glass

Downtown's shimmering glass towers (p34) are Vancouver's modern-day forests

## 2 Totem Poles

The handsome Stanley Park totems (p55) are stirring reminders of the region's first residents

## 3 Public Art

The city challenges with some wild and wacky public art displays (p27)





1

## WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE!

*Surrounded by water on three sides, Vancouver is a port city that will always have a little sea salt running through its veins. For visitors, there are plenty of ways to enjoy this coastal undercurrent.*



2

### 1 Second Beach

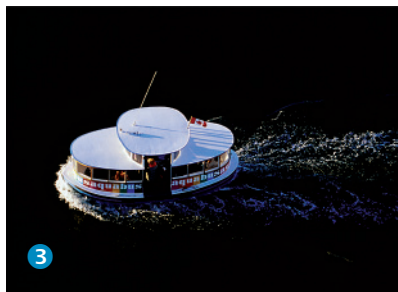
By day a sunbathing hot spot, but come dusk it's a sunset-viewing favorite (p54)

### 2 Granville Island

A waterfront view is the ideal side dish for coffee or a meal of fish-and-chips (p138)

### 3 False Creek

The city's colorful miniferries (p224) are the best way to hit the water



3

# THE AUTHOR

## John Lee



Born in the southern UK city of St Albans, John made his first transatlantic trip to Vancouver for the Expo '86 world's fair, where he remembers an English-style pub and a levitating Japanese train. Returning home to plot a

permanent move, he eventually finagled his way into British Columbia's University of Victoria, where he puzzled the Political Science profs with a determination to study utopian fiction. Finding an unexpected paucity of jobs in the utopian field upon graduation, he swapped his student visa for permanent citizenship and – after an inspirational trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway – jumped into a full-time freelance travel-writing career. John moved to Vancouver in 1999, and now lives just five minutes from Stanley Park. He has worked on 10 Lonely Planet books, and his journalism, recorded online at [www.johnleewriter.com](http://www.johnleewriter.com), has appeared in more than 120 publications, including the *Guardian*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and *National Geographic Traveler*.

### JOHN'S TOP VANCOUVER DAY

Even though I'm a tea-quaffing Brit, no day can really get rolling until a late-morning java, so I stroll to Caffè Artigiano (p149), snagging

the last patio seat while I peruse the latest *Georgia Straight*. Nipping across the road, I duck into the shop at the Vancouver Art Gallery (p46) for a birthday card, then amble along Granville St and down toward Gastown for lunch with a friend. We decide on Six Acres (p152) and tuck into a shared plate of German sausage, sharp cheese and a couple of bottled brews from Vancouver Island. Walking back along Water St toward Granville St, I pick up a bus and make for Granville Island (p86). The artisan stores and public market keep me occupied for a couple of hours before I decide to head west for a seawall stroll. Watching the tiny sailboats and miniferries bobbing around in the waters under the Burrard Bridge, I eventually arrive in waterfront Vanier Park (p97). The summertime Bard on the Beach (p174) tents cover the area and I can hear an energetic matinee performance percolating the air with some familiar (and not-so-familiar) lines. After picking up some tickets for a show later in the week, I retrace my steps and head for an alfresco late-afternoon snack at Go Fish (p139), a seafood stand on the waterfront. Checking my watch, I stroll up South Granville and catch a bus to Commercial Dr. I'm meeting a couple of buddies for a few early-evening beers. We settle on the Charlatan (p153), managing to finagle a window seat where we can sip some Big Rock Ales and watch the lively streetscape, accompanied by some 'wacky backy' aromas wafting sweetly along from a nearby apartment block.

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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# GETTING STARTED

Outside Vancouver's peak summer season, you should have little trouble accessing hotels, restaurants, attractions and events, even if you roll into town without any advance notice. But if sleepover location, daily budget and catching specific events – sporting or artistic – are important to you, it's worth doing some homework before you pack your bags and head for the airport.

## WHEN TO GO

Vancouver is definitely an all-season city but specific times of year are best suited to certain interests and pursuits. If you're determined to brush up on your snowsports before making a last-minute bid for Olympic glory, December to March is the ideal time to strap on your skis. If you want to bask on the beaches and stroll in shorts through the forests, you should bring your sunscreen to town in July or August. And if you're an arts buff and you just can't wait to get your next fix of live theater or classical music, the season kicks off in October and usually stretches to April. Summer is the hot season for festivals – especially outdoor ones – but the city stages large and small events throughout the year.

You can expect pleasant temperatures most of the time. In winter temperatures rarely drop below 0°C in the city and summer sees long, languid days with 25°C a common marker. It can rain here at any time, but the October to February period is the rainiest – remember that when it's raining here, it's often snowing in the hills. Peak season for hotels is midsummer, but there's good weather in late spring and early fall and these near-shoulder periods can be a good deal for budget-minded travelers.

## FESTIVALS

While July and August remain the peak months for Vancouver festivals, the city has a year-round calendar of events that should give most visitors a couple of options whatever time of year they're arriving. Tourism Vancouver's website ([www.tourismvancouver.com](http://www.tourismvancouver.com)) has a round-up of the larger fests; check the free newspaper *Georgia Straight* for up-to-date listings covering smaller cultural happenings.

### January

#### POLAR BEAR SWIM

☎ 604-665-3424; [www.vancouver.ca/parks/events/polarbear](http://www.vancouver.ca/parks/events/polarbear)

This chilly New Year's Day affair has been taking place on English Bay Beach (p65) annually since 1920, and it might just be the ultimate cure for a hangover. At around 2.30pm more than a thousand people charge into the ocean, the temperature of which hovers at a frosty 6.5°C.

#### PUSH FESTIVAL

☎ 604-605-8284; [www.pushfestival.ca](http://www.pushfestival.ca)

A three-week season of innovative new theater, music, opera and dance from around the world or around the corner. Adventurous performance-art fans will love this unusual showcase, staged at venues around the city in mid-January.

#### DINE OUT VANCOUVER

[www.tourismvancouver.com/visitors/dining](http://www.tourismvancouver.com/visitors/dining)

In mid-January the city's top restaurants offer two weeks of three-course tasting menus for \$15, \$20 or \$25, plus a selection of British Columbia wines. Check the list of participating restaurants on Tourism Vancouver's website and book ahead – the top spots always sell out. See p134 for other local food fests.

## February

#### CHINESE NEW YEAR

☎ 604-632-3808; [www.vancouver-chinatown.com](http://www.vancouver-chinatown.com)

Depending on the calendar, this multiday, highly festive celebration in and around Chinatown can take place in January or February, but it always includes plenty of color, dancing and great food. The highlights are the Dragon Parade and firecrackers.

#### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

☎ 604-876-4272; [www.vancouverstorytelling.org](http://www.vancouverstorytelling.org)

A three-day celebration of the art of storytelling, usually with a different theme each year, held in early February. Expect public readings and associated events. Staged at

the VanDusen Botanical Garden (p90), this is an ideal way to meet the local writerly community.

## WINTERRUPTION

☎ 604-666-5784; [www.winterruption.com](http://www.winterruption.com)  
Granville Island chases away the winter blues with a warming weekend of live music, theater and family-friendly events in late February. Dress warmly – many of the events are outside, and you'll enjoy the hot chocolate more.

# top picks

## COMMUNITY FESTIVALS

- Powell Street Festival (p15)
- Commercial Drive Festival (p14)
- Greek Day (p14)
- Taiwanese Cultural Festival (p15)
- Caribbean Days Festival (p14)

## March

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL

☎ 604-662-7441; [www.vidf.ca](http://www.vidf.ca)  
Local, national and international contemporary dance artists come together for this three-week-long spree of workshops and performances, most of which take place at the Roundhouse Community Arts & Recreation Centre (p70).

### CELTICFEST VANCOUVER

☎ 604-683-8331; [www.celticfestvanancouver.com](http://www.celticfestvanancouver.com)  
In mid-March downtown's annual St Patrick's Day parade and five-day Irish cultural fiesta attract those who like their beer to be green-hued at least once a year. Expect some shamrock-tinged shenanigans and a chance to mix with local and visiting Irish folk.

### SPRING BREAK THEATRE FESTIVAL

☎ 604-687-1644; [www.artsclub.com](http://www.artsclub.com)  
A week-long run of shows and events aimed at children. It's organized by the Arts Club Theatre Company (p174) and staged at venues around Granville Island in mid-March.

## VANCOUVER PLAYHOUSE INTERNATIONAL WINE FESTIVAL

☎ 604-872-6622; [www.playhousewinefest.com](http://www.playhousewinefest.com)  
With more than 500 reds and whites to sample, from 166 international vineyards, this late-March event is one of the largest wine shows in North America. There's a strong educational element and several events for neophytes. The main festival venue is the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre.

## April

### SUN RUN

☎ 604-689-9441; [www.sunrun.com](http://www.sunrun.com)  
This is one of North America's largest street races, attracting 55,000 runners and ambling wannabes for a fun day out in late April. A great way to see the city, the 10km route winds through Stanley Park and along the waterfront, and ends with a big party at BC Place Stadium. See the boxed text, p182, for more information.

## May

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL MARATHON

☎ 604-872-2928; [www.adidasvanmarathon.ca](http://www.adidasvanmarathon.ca)  
Smaller than the Sun Run (above), this one's for the serious hoofers. Strap on your running shoes and race through the city's streets in early May, along with hundreds of local fitness fans and athletes from around the world.

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

☎ 604-708-5655; [www.childrensfestival.ca](http://www.childrensfestival.ca)  
The red-and-white tents go up in Vanier Park (p97) on the third or fourth Monday of May and stay up for eight days. During that time, almost 50,000 people enjoy acts dedicated to keeping the young and young-at-heart entertained. Expect plenty of face painting.

### NEW MUSIC WEST

☎ 604-689-2910; [www.newmusicwest.com](http://www.newmusicwest.com)  
A slew of new and emerging pop and rock bands come to town and play live in various clubs over five days; you buy a wristband and jump from place to place. The festival's dates have been a bit erratic, but mid-May is the current favored time frame.

## June

### PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH

☎ 604-684-5876; [www.portuguesemonth.com](http://www.portuguesemonth.com)

This celebration of all things Portuguese brings the local expat community together for a month-long roster of arts and cultural happenings, including film, theater, dance, sport and culinary celebrations. The events are held at venues around the city.

### FRANCOPHONE SUMMER FESTIVAL

☎ 604-736-9806; [www.lecentreculturel.com](http://www.lecentreculturel.com)

Held in mid-June, this is a week-long celebration of Francophonic music from French Canada and around the world. There are performances at venues throughout the city, plus a weekend festival at W 7th Ave and Granville St.

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

☎ 604-872-5200; [www.coastaljazz.com](http://www.coastaljazz.com)

Into its second decade, Vancouver's biggest music festival takes place at an eclectic array of venues over 10 days in mid-June. It combines superstar performances (Oscar Peterson and Diana Krall are past masters) with plenty of free outdoor shows – especially in Gastown and Yaletown, and on Granville Island.

### GREEK DAY

☎ 604-738-7126; [www.greekday.com](http://www.greekday.com)

The local Hellenic community comes together for a rip-roaring showcase of Greek culture in mid-June. All are welcome to check out the one-day Kitsilano event (on W Broadway, between MacDonald and Blenheim Sts), complete with two performance stages, wandering street entertainers and lots of great food.

### ALCAN DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

☎ 604-688-2382; [www.adbf.com](http://www.adbf.com)

During the third weekend of June, about 2000 competitors from around the world take part in dragon boat races on False Creek, accompanied by music, theater and food pavilions at the Plaza of Nations.

### COMMERCIAL DRIVE FESTIVAL

[www.commercialdrivefestival.org](http://www.commercialdrivefestival.org)

Cars are barred from the Drive for two separate summer days (mid-June and mid-July),

enabling artists, street performers and food vendors – plus 35,000 locals – to wander in the sun and enjoy themselves.

## July

### CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS

☎ 604-775-8025; [www.canadayatcanadaplace.com](http://www.canadayatcanadaplace.com)

Downtown's Canada Place (p46) is the main location for celebrations marking the country's July 1 birthday. Expect music, food and fireworks, plus lots of people wandering around with maple-leaf temporary tattoos. There's also a smaller event at Granville Island.

### DANCING ON THE EDGE

☎ 604-689-0926; [www.dancingontheedge.org](http://www.dancingontheedge.org)

In early July top companies and dancers from across Canada gather for 10 days of world-leading contemporary dance. Expect some challenging but expertly executed performances, staged at venues around the city.

### VANCOUVER FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL

☎ 604-602-9798; [www.thefestival.bc.ca](http://www.thefestival.bc.ca)

Jericho Beach (p96) is the venue for this weekend festival in mid-July, which attracts about 30,000 people and has musicians performing on seven stages. Past headliners have ranged from Billy Bragg to Bruce Cockburn.

### TOUR DE GASTOWN

☎ 604-836-9993; [www.tourdegastown.com](http://www.tourdegastown.com)

In mid-July the city's most elite cycling race attracts top pedal-pushers from across North America with its 1.2km course through Gastown. Men ride 50 laps, women ride 30 laps and the purse is \$15,000.

### CARIBBEAN DAYS FESTIVAL

☎ 604-515-2400; [www.caribbeanaysfestival.com](http://www.caribbeanaysfestival.com)

Great music, dancing and food highlight these two days of fun held at Waterfront Park, Lonsdale Quay in North Vancouver in late July. One of North Van's most popular community events, it draws 15,000 locals.

### ILLUMINARES LANTERN PROCESSION

☎ 604-879-8611; [www.publicdreams.org](http://www.publicdreams.org)

On a late-July Saturday, hundreds of people gather at dusk with shimmering



paper lanterns shaped like serpents, birds and other flights of fancy; participants walk around Trout Lake in East Vancouver amid fire sculptures, music and fireworks. Lantern-making workshops take place beforehand.

### EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

☎ 604-732-1610; [www.earlymusic.bc.ca](http://www.earlymusic.bc.ca)

This celebration of medieval to baroque music stretches intermittently over three weeks in late July, as lute and harpsichord players roll into town to celebrate some of the world's most beautiful but lesser-known music. Expect plenty of chin-stroking musos listening intently to highly authentic performances, mostly held at UBC.

### POWELL STREET FESTIVAL

☎ 604-739-9388; [www.powellstreetfestival.com](http://www.powellstreetfestival.com)

This annual celebration of Japanese-Canadian culture is one of the city's most popular community festivals. Staged in East Vancouver's Oppenheimer Park in late July, it's a fascinating and colorful day of food, music, dance and theater.

### CELEBRATION OF LIGHT

☎ 604-641-1193; [www.hsbcccelebrationofflight.com](http://www.hsbcccelebrationofflight.com)

The world's largest musical fireworks competition takes place at English Bay (p65) over four nights in late July and early August. Three competing countries (which change each year) put on their most spectacular displays of fireworks over three nights, then come together for a dazzling finale on the fourth night, when the winning country – chosen by popular vote – is also announced.

## August

### PRIDE WEEK

☎ 604-687-0955; [www.vancouverpride.ca](http://www.vancouverpride.ca)

A week-long kaleidoscope of gay-, lesbian- and bisexual-friendly fashion shows, gala parties and concerts that culminates in western Canada's largest pride parade. Typically held on the first Sunday of August, the saucy parade draws 200,000 people to its Denman and Davie Sts route.

### FESTIVAL VANCOUVER

☎ 604-688-1152; [www.festivalvancouver.bc.ca](http://www.festivalvancouver.bc.ca)

In mid-August, more than 20,000 people come to hear national and international

artists perform a huge variety of musical genres, including orchestral, choral, operatic, jazz, world and chamber music. The venues vary throughout the festival's two-week span, but there's usually a free outdoor stage on the Georgia St side of the Vancouver Art Gallery (p46).

### ABBOTSFORD INTERNATIONAL AIR SHOW

☎ 604-852-8511; [www.abbotsfordairshow.com](http://www.abbotsfordairshow.com)

You'll need a car to get to this event – Abbotsford is 56km southeast of the city near the Canada–US border – but it will be worth it for what has become 'Canada's national air show.' The displays from world-leading aeronautical teams are thrilling; if you're in Vancouver during the mid-August event you'll likely see the Canadian Snowbirds team noisily buzzing the city before flying on to the skies above Abbotsford.

### BARE BUNS FUN RUN

[www.wreckbeach.org](http://www.wreckbeach.org)

The clothing-free Buns Run takes place – where else? – on Wreck Beach (p101). Among the prizes are those for 'best-decorated buns' and 'wackiest hat.' The run is usually held on a Sunday in mid-August and starts at 11.30am sharp, so get you buns in gear on time.

### PACIFIC NATIONAL EXHIBITION

☎ 604-253-2311; [www.pne.bc.ca](http://www.pne.bc.ca)

An old-school, two-week-long country fair that's evolved into a fairground with a kicking wooden roller coaster and an extensive program of family-friendly shows and music concerts from mid-August. Don't leave without downing a bag of mini donuts.

## September

### TAIWANESE CULTURAL FESTIVAL

☎ 604-263-9311; [www.taiwanfest.ca](http://www.taiwanfest.ca)

So successful it has now expanded to Toronto, this annual three-day event in early September allows the city's Taiwanese expats to celebrate the culture of their homeland. Food is a key delight at the festival, staged at venues around False Creek. Culinary displays (and plenty of samples) are offered, along with musical and theatrical displays.

# top picks

## QUIRKY FESTIVALS

- Bare Buns Fun Run (p15)
- Polar Bear Swim (p12)
- Push Festival (p12)
- Eastside Culture Crawl (right)
- Parade of the Lost Souls (right)

### DAVIE DAY

☎ 604-696-0144; [www.westendbia.com](http://www.westendbia.com)

The West End community along Davie St, between Broughton and Burrard Sts, invites the city (and visitors) to drop by for a day of live music, food and fun in early September. This is the center of the city's gay community, so you might notice a few drag queens added to the mix.

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL

☎ 604-257-0350; [www.vancouverfringe.com](http://www.vancouverfringe.com)

One of the city's biggest events, this lively 10-day roster of wild and wacky theatrics draws thousands to large, small and unconventional Granville Island venues in mid-September. Expect short plays, stand-up and comedy revues, and prepare to be adventurous.

### GLOBAL COMEDY FEST

☎ 604-683-0883; [www.vancouvercomedyfest.com](http://www.vancouvercomedyfest.com)

Nine days of rib-tickling mirth, with Canadian and international acts raising the roof at various venues around town in mid-September. Improv events feature heavily but there are tons of stand-up comedians doing their thing too.

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

☎ 604-685-0260; [www.viff.org](http://www.viff.org)

It lacks the star-studded glamour of its Toronto rival, but this film fest is much more of a Canadian affair. One of the city's most popular festivals, its 17-day calendar (beginning late September) covers hundreds of screenings of local, national and international movies, plus gala events and industry schmoozes. For other local film fests worthy of a look, see the boxed text, p170.

## October

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL WRITERS & READERS FESTIVAL

☎ 604-681-6330; [www.writersfest.bc.ca](http://www.writersfest.bc.ca)

Despite the mouthful of a name – with all those writers around, can't they think of something better? – this five-day mid-October literary event is highly popular. Local and international scribblers turn up for seminars, galas and public forums; past guests have included Salman Rushdie, Irvine Welsh and Douglas Coupland. Sign up early for an audience with the biggest scribes. It's held at venues around Granville Island.

### NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL

☎ 604-633-0861; [www.newmusic.org](http://www.newmusic.org)

Staged at downtown's Scotiabank Dance Centre, this three-day mid-October fest showcases an eclectic array of contemporary music that can range from indie guitar to free jazz. There are also workshops for visiting musos.

### PARADE OF THE LOST SOULS

☎ 604-879-8611; [www.publicdreams.org](http://www.publicdreams.org)

A spectral Day of the Dead celebration in late October, in which a torch-lit procession of spookily dressed performers moves through the streets around Grandview Park, near Commercial Dr. Highly atmospheric, it's a Vancouver Halloween tradition.

## November

### EASTSIDE CULTURE CRAWL

[www.eastsideculturecrawl.com](http://www.eastsideculturecrawl.com)

Dozens of eclectic local artists from Vancouver's Eastside area open their studios to visitors at this excellent three-day showcase in late November. A much better place to pick up a Vancouver memento than those tacky souvenir shops.

### SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Slightly less naughty than Vancouver's other main street parade, this relatively recent addition to the Christmas scene has quickly become a firm family favorite. Wrap up warm, watch the colorful floats glide along W Georgia St and wait for the arrival of the big man himself. It's held in late November.

## December

### CHRISTMAS CAROLSHIP PARADE

☎ 604-878-8999; [www.carolships.org](http://www.carolships.org)

A Vancouver tradition, where 100 boats of all sizes are lit up like Christmas trees to take part in a flotilla that sails along False Creek, English Bay and beyond. Many boats feature singing carolers, while others play taped music.

### FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

☎ 604-878-9274; [www.vandusengarden.org](http://www.vandusengarden.org)

VanDusen's (p90) enduring Yuletide tradition – and a clever way to keep the money coming in during the off-season – sees the botanical garden magically illuminated with thousands of fairy lights. Popular with families.

### WINTER SOLSTICE LANTERN PROCESSION

☎ 604-878-9274; [www.secretlantern.org](http://www.secretlantern.org)

In mid-December, as winter takes hold, six Vancouver neighborhoods continue the age-old Winter Solstice tradition by staging mini lantern parades at the same time throughout the city. Expect to see the lights flicker on in Yaletown, Granville Island, Chinatown, Strathcona, East Vancouver and the West End.

## COSTS & MONEY

While it's one of Canada's more expensive cities (Toronto is arguably the most damaging to the hip pocket), Vancouver will perhaps

### HOW MUCH?

Liter of gasoline \$1.05  
 Liter of bottled water \$1  
 Pint of Granville Island Lager \$5  
 Souvenir T-shirt \$10  
 Salmon sushi roll \$2  
 Movie ticket \$12  
 Tim Hortons donut 80¢  
 Metered parking \$2 per hour  
 Mt Seymour ski-lift ticket \$40  
 Overseas postcard stamp \$1.55

seem like a bargain to European visitors. No such luck for US travelers, whose currency was hovering at par during this book's production period.

Wherever you're visiting from, there are still some creative ways to keep your costs down. Families can take advantage of discounted admission at museums and attractions, and there are passes available that can save a considerable amount for those planning to see lots of attractions (see p229). For an even better deal, check the free attractions listed on p47.

It's also worth remembering that kids stay free at many Vancouver hotels. Some of these have kitchenettes where you can chef up your own nosh to keep your dining budget down. See p190 for hotel reviews.

If you're eating out, many restaurants will prepare half-orders for children, if they don't

### ADVANCE PLANNING

If you'd like your Vancouver vacation to be as eco-friendly as possible, plan your trip using some of the accommodation, transportation and dining tips offered in the Green Vancouver section (p62).

Most regional sights and outdoor activities don't require much advance booking, but during the summer peak it's a good idea to book specialized guided tours (p232) as far in advance as possible. The Vancouver Art Gallery (p46) occasionally runs blockbuster exhibitions that require timed-entry tickets – you can book ahead on its website.

The city's main cultural festivals (p12) – especially the Film Festival, Jazz Festival and Fringe Festival – often require advance booking for many of their events. Visit their websites before you arrive in town for purchasing information. The same is true of many theaters (p173), especially if you are on a tight schedule and want to be sure of getting tickets for a specific day. The hottest ticket in town, where booking ahead is essential, is the annual summertime Bard on the Beach festival (p174). Most sporting events are easy to get into, but catching a Vancouver Canucks game (p187) is a different story: book as far in advance as possible.

To see what's on in the city before you arrive, visit the [Georgia Straight](http://www.straight.com) ([www.straight.com](http://www.straight.com)) website for comprehensive listings. Also check [Tickets Tonight](http://www.ticketstonight.ca) ([www.ticketstonight.ca](http://www.ticketstonight.ca)) for ticket booking and late-breaking discount seats to local theater and sporting events. Finally, if you want to dip into the hot local dining scene before you arrive, read the reviews at [Urban Diner](http://www.urbandiner.com) ([www.urbandiner.com](http://www.urbandiner.com)).



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already have a dedicated kids menu. You can also save your dine-out dosh by dropping by the city's three cooking-college restaurants (see the boxed text, p129). You'll get a similar good deal at area drama schools (see the boxed text, p176), where professional-level productions are staged by aspiring actors for a cut-price ticket fee.

The most expensive item in anyone's budget is likely to be their plane ticket and, after that, accommodations. Sleeping at mid-priced hotels or B&Bs, eating at neighborhood restaurants or shopping-mall food courts, and stretching your entertainment budget with a few freebies will mean that two people traveling together should be able to keep costs down to \$100 or so each per day.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**City of Vancouver** ([www.city.vancouver.bc.ca](http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca)) Official city site with downloadable city maps.

**CKNW** ([www.cknw.com](http://www.cknw.com)) Frequently updated radio-station website with all the latest news from around the city.

**Discover Vancouver** ([www.discovervancouver.com](http://www.discovervancouver.com)) General traveler website for info on hotels, restaurants, events and attractions.

**Tourism Vancouver** ([www.tourismvancouver.com](http://www.tourismvancouver.com)) Official city tourism site, stuffed with user-friendly trip-planning resources.

**Urban Diner** ([www.urbandiner.ca](http://www.urbandiner.ca)) Up-to-the-minute listings and reviews of area restaurants.

**Vancouver 2010** ([www.vancouver2010.com](http://www.vancouver2010.com)) One-stop shop for official Olympics-related info.

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