

# GREEN VANCOUVER

*Enjoy the rich fall colors of Stanley Park (p62), the lungs of the city*

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**It's hard to see Vancouver as anything but a green city. Its dense, majestic forests and verdant, rain-fed plant life make nature an ever-present fact of life here. But beyond the breathtaking visuals, how does the city measure up to its environmental responsibilities? And – just as importantly – what can visitors do to reduce their eco-footprints in the region without turning their vacations into monastic, fun-free zones?**

Wandering the city, you'll notice an active, outdoorsy populace that likes to celebrate the natural surroundings on foot, blade or bike whenever possible (and in all weathers). Many of these grinning, superfit locals are members of one of Vancouver's dozens of eco-active lobby groups. Their widespread concern for the environment means that large developments – whether improvements to Hwy 99 or new housing blocks at the University of British Columbia – are usually accompanied by plenty of hand-wringing and, more often than not, some determined protests.

As environmental issues become more pressing, Vancouver is rising to prominence as an important think tank for ideas such as livability, sustainability and urban density. City and provincial governments have gradually accepted that the area's green agenda has moved from the periphery to the political mainstream. In 2003 Vancouver's city council instituted a Climate Change Action Plan designed to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions in its operations by 20% before 2010. That target was met but the next ones include making all operations carbon neutral by 2012 and reducing emissions across the community by 33% by 2020. The birthplace of Greenpeace and the home of David Suzuki may finally be ready for its long-touted green leadership role on the world stage.

## PAINTING THE TOWN GREEN

Vancouver has an international reputation for being a green city, but that doesn't mean everyone here wears biodegradable socks and eats only elderly vegetables that have died of natural causes. In fact, if you stroll the Robson St boutiques or dip into a take-out coffee shop, it's easy to think that 'green Vancouver' doesn't exist at all. As with many of the city's best features – think arts and neighborhoods – you have to do a little digging to find the meat (or at least the tofu) of the issue.



*Temperate rainforest, North Vancouver (p105)*

LAWRENCE WORCESTER

## top picks

### VANCOUVER'S GREEN BOOKS

**The Legacy**, David Suzuki (2010) – distilling Suzuki's wisdom on the environment into a single tome, complete with a vision for the future.

**Greater Vancouver Green Guide**, UBC Design Centre for Sustainability (2009) – a showcase of green buildings, projects and initiatives around the city.

**Guerrilla Gardening: A Manual**, David Tracey (2009) – tips for greening your urban space, including where to find cheap or free plants and how to plant them without permission.

**100-Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating**, Alisa Smith and James Mackinnon (2007) – fascinating autobiographical story of what happened to a local couple when they tried to source their entire diet from their Vancouver doorstep.

**The Greenpeace to Amchitka**, Robert Hunter (2004) – firsthand account of the inaugural protest voyage from Vancouver that kick-started Greenpeace.