

# SHOPPING

## top picks

- **Regional Assembly of Text** (p119)
- **Mountain Equipment Co-op** (p120)
- **Dutch Girl Chocolates** (p122)
- **Edie Hats** (p122)
- **Erin Templeton** (p118)
- **Granville Island Public Market** (p123)
- **Richmond's Summer Night Market** (p118)
- **Smoking Lily** (p119)
- **Gravity Pope** (p126)
- **Red Cat Records** (p120)

# SHOPPING

The joys of shopping in Vancouver used to be limited to selecting a thick winter coat (if you lived here) or picking up some maple-sugar cookies (if you were visiting). But the city's retail therapy opportunities have developed dramatically in recent years – and we're not just talking about more chain stores. Once you've visited Vancouver's main attractions and checked out the dining scene, it's well worth buying an extra suitcase and hitting the stores – just be sure not to limit yourself to the malls and explore a little off the beaten path in shopping hot spots like Gastown, South Main (SoMa) and Kitsilano.

You'll find cool independent fashion designers who can transform you into a pale and interesting muse; record stores where you can delve into the undiscovered pantheon of great local music; galleries where you can splash some cash on First Nations artists; and specialist bookshops that cater to every interest, selling everything from gay-lit to travel guides and kids' books. In fact, there's really no excuse for buying boring souvenirs at all.

Keep in mind that the strong Canadian dollar means Vancouver is not the bargain-hunter's paradise it has been in the past, especially when you factor in the taxes (see [below](#)) that will be mercilessly added at the checkout.

## OPENING HOURS

Typical retail shopping hours are 10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday, and noon to 5pm Sunday – some shops close on Sundays, though. The indie shops of SoMa and Gastown often open later – around 11am on weekdays – while downtown shops and malls sometimes close later, especially during the peak summer and Christmas seasons. In the reviews in this chapter, only shop opening hours that deviate dramatically from these standard times are noted.

## CONSUMER TAXES

The prices on most goods in shops do not include tax, which is added when you take the item to the cash register to pay. The old GST and PST taxes were replaced by the HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) in 2010; the current rate is 12% for the vast majority of items. See [p238](#) for more information on this tax.


## DOWNTOWN

Centered on lively Robson St – Vancouver's leading mainstream shopping promenade and the home of most major chains – the city's downtown core is a strollable outdoor mall of grazing shoppers moving between their favorite stores with an ever-growing clutch of bags. High fashion, shoes and jewelry are the mainstays here, and there are also plenty of coffee shops if

you need to stop and count your money. Head south along Granville St from the intersection with Robson St and you'll find an emerging enclave of fashionable urban streetwear shops: this is where you can pick up those limited-edition Puma runners you've always wanted. For luxe labels such as Tiffany, Burberry and Louis Vuitton, head to the area around the Burrard and Alborni Sts intersection.

**BIRKS** Map pp58-9

Accessories

[www.birks.com](http://www.birks.com); 698 W Hastings St;  Waterfront A Vancouver institution since 1879 – hence the landmark freestanding clock outside – Birks crafts exquisite heirloom jewelry and its signature line of timepieces. It's an upscale place, similar to Tiffany & Co in the USA, and ideal for picking up that special something in a classy, blue embossed box for a deserving someone back home.

## top picks

### SHOPPING STRIPS

- Main Street (p119)
- Water Street (p116)
- W 4th Avenue (p125)
- Robson Street (left)
- Commercial Drive (p121)