

Understand Vancouver

VANCOUVER TODAY 224

Learn about the locals and their city, from livability issues to gentrifying neighborhoods.

HISTORY 226

From Aboriginal heritage to the pioneer era, the lowdown on how Vancouver started and then developed.

GREEN VANCOUVER 232

Join eco-minded Vancouverites aiming to paint the city as green as possible.

ARTS & CULTURE 237

The inside track on Vancouver's flourishing, mostly grassroots artistic scene – including what the locals like to see and do.

Vancouver Today

Vancouverites are not just a bunch of bike-riding hipsters who quaff craft beer and commune with the nearby mountains. It won't be long before you've told the locals how much you love their beautiful city and they've replied that it's not all perfect. House prices have been shooting skywards here since the 1990s – those 'best places in the world to live' surveys routinely placing Vancouver near the top come with a hefty cost-of-living price tag that locals are having to deal with.

Best on Film

Carts of Darkness (2008)

Documentary exploring the 'extreme sport' of shopping-cart racing among local bottle pickers.

Double Happiness (1994)

Generational differences in a colorful Chinese-Canadian family in Vancouver.

Mount Pleasant (2006)

Gentrification-themed story about moving to a changing Vancouver neighborhood.

Delicate Art of Parking (2003)

Documentary-style comedy about local parking enforcers.

Best in Print

City of Glass (Douglas Coupland, 2000) Quirky, affectionate homage to the city by one of its leading artists and authors.

Live at the Commodore (Aaron Chapman, 2015) Entertaining look at the history of Vancouver's favorite live-music venue.

The Jade Peony (Wayson Choy, 1995) Immersive memoir about growing up in a Vancouver Chinese immigrant family in the 1930s.

Mister Got To Go (Lois Simmie, 2002) Delightful children's book about the adventures of a curious cat at an old Vancouver hotel.

Livability Issues

Get any two Vancouverites in a room and it won't be long before they're complaining about house prices. Many locals will tell you they've been priced out of the market in recent years and, with rental availability also at an all-time low, the millennial generation is increasingly talking about packing up and moving on. Whether many of them will actually do so remains to be seen. But when a disgruntled resident launched the Twitter hashtag #DontHave1Million to highlight the issue in 2015, thousands joined in and the national press covered the story.

It's sometimes said Vancouver has become the victim of its own success. It's reputedly one of the best places in the world to live – according to various global surveys – and was thrust into the international spotlight by Expo '86 and then the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Both showcased the scenic city to the world, triggering massive inward investment, large-scale development and sharp house and condo price rises.

The result is that lower-income areas are dissolving away faster than a bowl of artisan ice cream on a summer's day. Traditionally cheap and grungy neighborhoods such as Strathcona, Main St and Commercial Dr – areas that once housed the city's artists, bohemians and working classes – have become trendy, sought-after spots commanding eye-popping prices unheard of just a few years ago. The average price of a Vancouver single-family home was reported to be \$1.7 million in early 2016. At the same time, Canadian media was covering an international survey that claimed the city was behind only Hong Kong and Sydney for housing unaffordability.