



Vancouver, Whistler & Vancouver Island

Includes ➔

Vancouver.....	374
Whistler	395
Sunshine Coast.....	400
Victoria	401
Cowichan Valley	412
Nanaimo.....	413
Pacific Rim National Park Reserve	416
Tofino.....	418
Southern Gulf Islands.....	423

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Forage (p388)
- ➔ Hudson's on First (p412)
- ➔ Araxi Restaurant & Bar (p398)
- ➔ Flying Pig (p388)
- ➔ Red Fish Blue Fish (p407)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Free Spirit Spheres (p415)
- ➔ Wickaninnish Inn (p420)
- ➔ Rosewood Hotel Georgia (p383)
- ➔ Nita Lake Lodge (p397)
- ➔ Fairmont Pacific Rim (p386)

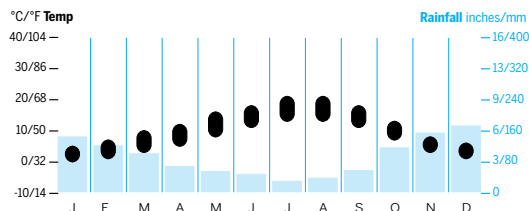
Why Go?

Visitors to Canada's westernmost province are never short of superlatives when typing their travel blogs. It's hard not to be moved by looming mountains, wildlife-packed forests and uncountable kilometers of pristine coastline that slow your heartbeat like a spa treatment. But British Columbia (BC) is much more than just a nature-hugging diorama.

Cosmopolitan Vancouver is an animated fusion of cuisines and cultures from Asia and beyond, while historic Victoria and resort town Whistler have their own vibrant, alluring scenes. And for sheer character, it's hard to beat the province's kaleidoscope of quirky little communities, from the rustic Sunshine Coast to the laid-back Southern Gulf Islands.

Wherever you head, of course, the great outdoors will always be calling. Don't just point your camera at it. BC is unbeatable for the kind of life-enhancing skiing, kayaking, hiking and biking you'll want to brag about to everyone back home.

When to Go Vancouver, BC



Dec–Mar Powder action stripes the slopes of Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains.

Jul & Aug Beaches, patios and a plethora of overlapping festivals enliven Vancouver.

Sep & Oct Great surfing and the start of storm-watching season lure many to Tofino.

Advance Planning

July and August make up the peak season for much of this region, so book hotels in advance during that time. The same applies in winter to popular ski-resort areas like Whistler, where the powder-loving peak is December and January. During the summer stretch, it's also a good idea to book for specific nights in top-end Vancouver restaurants and for seats at popular events like Bard on the Beach. BC Ferries services are often very busy on public-holiday weekends; if you're traveling on major routes with a car, consider booking ahead.

TRANSPORTATION

The sheer size of BC can be overwhelming. But while it's tempting to stick around Vancouver, the rest of the province will always be calling your name.

Driving remains the most popular method of movement here and you can plan your routes via the handy **Drive BC** (www.drivebc.ca). There are also dozens of scenic BC Ferries (p394) services worth checking into – many of them take cars as well as walk-on passengers.

If you're traveling without a car, **Greyhound Canada** (www.greyhound.ca) operates many services throughout the region, with major routes to Whistler and across Vancouver Island – check regional sections throughout this chapter for information on these services. There are also many additional buses operated by smaller, private operators to Whistler, between the mainland and Vancouver Island and from Vancouver to the Sunshine Coast.

VIA Rail (p395) currently operates two picturesque train routes in BC; one weaves inland from Vancouver and one trundles across the north of the province. These services connect in Jasper, Alberta. There is also a popular scenic train, the Whistler Sea to Sky Climb (p399), operated by Rocky Mountaineer. It runs from May to October between North Vancouver and Whistler.

But if you really want to see the region at its best, consider a highly scenic floatplane hop from the city to the Southern Gulf Islands, Vancouver Island or beyond. See regional sections for information on local services.

IT'S OFFICIAL

BC's provincial bird is the Steller's jay and its official mammal is the Kermode, a black bear with white fur.

For Kids

- ➔ Science World (p378)
- ➔ Ucluelet Aquarium (p418)
- ➔ Victoria Bug Zoo (p405)
- ➔ Ziptrek Ecotours (p396)

British Columbia Fast Facts

- ➔ **Population** 4.6 million
- ➔ **Area** 944,735 sq km
- ➔ **Capital** Victoria

Resources

- ➔ **www.hellobc.com**
Official Destination BC tourism site.
- ➔ **www.bcbeer.ca**
The BC beer guide.
- ➔ **www.discovercamping.ca** BC Parks' campsite booking engine.
- ➔ **www.surfingvancouverisland.com**
Profiling BC's surf scene.
- ➔ **www.cyclingbc.net**
All things cycling in BC.
- ➔ **www.winebc.com** Guide to BC's tasty wine scene.

What's New

- ➔ Robert Bateman Centre (p404)
- ➔ Townsite Brewing (p401)
- ➔ Hudson's on First (p412)
- ➔ Forbidden Vancouver (p382)