

VANCOUVER ISLAND

VICTORIA and the GULF ISLANDS

Kid Friendly



Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands offer a wealth of activities and accommodations that are perfect for families! To help you with your travel plans Tourism Vancouver Island has joined "kid friendly!", an organization of businesses that welcome and meet the needs of kids and families.

Victoria is a mecca for activities for the whole family to enjoy. For the family's nature lover Butterfly Gardens is an absolute must. At Butterfly Gardens you can witness not only the entire life cycle of 35 species of butterflies, but you can also marvel at the 250 tropical plants and over 40 birds. With an exhibition area of 11,750 square feet, the gardens offer a rare glimpse into the beauty and wonder of butterflies and moths. In Victoria's inner harbour you can check out some of the world's most extraordinary insects, arachnids and other creepy-crawlies at an attraction devoted to bugs. While many are satisfied just to look, you can ask one of the friendly tour guides for a chance to hold some of these fascinating creatures if you're brave enough!



Long Beach in Pacific Rim National Park

For a different change of pace, go to a museum where you can see your favourite celebrities and characters in wax! With over 300 models on display, every member of the family will find a much-loved personality to visit with.

Do you want to feel like a giant? Visit the attraction that boasts over 80 miniature displays including castles, dollhouses and an operational sawmill. You'll be entertained for hours!

In Sidney, just north of Victoria is one of the Island's most popular attractions, where children of all ages collect gems and shells, pan for gold and excavate real fossils. There is also an interpretive centre where more than 30 earth science displays are entertaining, interactive and educational. Also in Sidney, at the Port Sidney Marina, is a site focussing on the rich marine life of the area. It's actually a floating barge, which offers programs such as explorations of tidal life and bird watching tours or you can walk through the centre on your own and investigate microaquaria under dissecting microscopes or their many wall aquaria, which exhibits marine habitats that reside in the area.

Staying in Victoria and the surrounding area with the family is a piece of cake with "kid friendly!" properties such as the Airport Travelodge Victoria, Delta Victoria Ocean Point Resort, Harbour Towers Hotel & Suites, Laurel Point Inn, Travellers Inn, Royal Scot Suite Hotel and Shawnigan Shores Bed & Breakfast.

On Salt Spring Island, you'll find Island Escapades Adventures who specialize in outdoor adventure and offer youth and family expeditions such as kayaking, hiking and climbing.

Sixty kilometres (just under a one hour drive) north of Victoria is Duncan, home of the BC Forest Discovery Centre. You can enjoy interactive computer games, video theatre, live eco-system and equipment displays and you can even go on a train ride! The ride will take you through a lush forest and over a trestle bridge and is sure to be one of the many favourite memories of the vacation. Next, make a stop at a cultural centre that provides a superb insight into the way of life of the Quw'utsun' People. Visit the theatre for an exciting presentation highlighting origins, beliefs and legends, participate in a cultural tour, or join in one of the many activities available such as wood carving, pony beading or Spirit Rock painting.

In Nanaimo, a further 51 kilometres north of Duncan, there are more great activities for you to enjoy as a family. Cyber City is a deluxe play centre with dozens of games including laser tag, an arcade, mini-golf, go-carts a soft play area and best of all, a parents lounge! A short distance away is an indoor climbing centre, a great way to get some exercise and try a new activity in a safe and supportive environment. There are over 7,000 square feet of climbing walls plus a bouldering cave, all with the texture of real rock. The Coast Bastion Inn and the Days Inn Nanaimo Harbourview are two more excellent "kid friendly!" hotels for your time in the "Harbour City".

For a great family adventure that you can't get just anywhere, head to Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park, 60 kilometres north of Nanaimo. Families can enjoy caving, beginner rock climbing or



In 2004, readers of **Condé Nast Traveler** ranked Vancouver Island as the **Top North American Island** for the fifth consecutive year.

Suggested Minimum Travel Days

- Victoria—2 days
- Gulf Islands—1 to 3 days
- Cowichan Valley—1.5 to 2 days
- Nanaimo—1.5 to 2 days
- Parksville / Qualicum Beach—3 days
- Port Alberni & Pacific Rim—2 days
- Comox Valley—1.5 to 2 days
- Campbell River—1.5 to 2 days
- North Island—2 days

Special points of interest:

- BC Forest Discovery Centre, Duncan
- Butterfly Gardens, Victoria
- Cape Scott Provincial Park
- Coombs
- Cyber City, Nanaimo
- Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park
- Island Escapades Adventures, Salt Spring Island
- McLean Mill National Historic Site, Port Alberni
- Museum at Campbell River
- Pacific Rim National Park Reserve
- Strathcona Park Lodge
- Telegraph Cove



Otters can be seen throughout many coastal areas of Vancouver Island!

rappelling, wilderness skills programs or guided naturalist walks all at one spectacular location. Discover another world and learn about the fascinating geology and history of these amazing caverns. Camping is available nearby or go back towards Parksville and enjoy a restful evening at "kid friendly!" Tigh-Na-Mara Resort.

OPTION A Head over to the west coast of the Island following Highway 4. Start in Coombs, and be sure to check out a unique attraction that features an exotic garden with hundreds of butterflies. Of course, no visit to Coombs would be complete without a visit to the local country market to take pictures of the goats grazing on the roof!

Afterwards, keep following Highway 4 west to Port Alberni where the whole family can get a taste of history and ride a steam train and tour a sawmill. The train, pulled by a fully restored 1929 Baldwin ex-logging locomotive, will deliver you directly to the mill, which offers an opportunity to see the rustic beginnings of today's forest industry.

In the Tofino and Ucluelet area, 120 kilometres west of Port Alberni, you can participate in family activities such as beachcombing, nature walks, whale watching, storm watching, fishing and even surfing. Pacific Rim National Park is one of the most stunning in all of British Columbia and includes Long Beach, a 20 kilometre section of white sandy beach that provides hours of entertainment for everyone. The Best Western Tin Wis, Ocean Village Beach Resort and Pacific Sands Beach Resort are excellent "kid friendly!" accommodations during your stay in the Pacific Rim.

OPTION B Just over 100 kilometres north of Nanaimo, following the Oceanside route on Highway 19A, you'll come to Courtenay and the Comox Valley for ocean to alpine adventures. The museum in Courtenay will be one of your most exciting adventures as you take part in a fossil dig along the Puntledge River, where an 80,000,000-year-old Elasmosaur was discovered in 1998 (you can see the full life-size replica on display at the Museum). Any fossils you find during this exciting tour are yours to keep!

You can also hit the slopes and go downhill skiing, cross country skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, tubing and much more at the local ski hill. Summer activities including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and fly fishing are also available on the mountain, so no matter what time of year you visit, there's always something to do.

Keep going north on Highway 19A about 30 to 45 minutes to check out the Museum at Campbell River, which brings to life the people of northern Vancouver Island, from ancient cultures to recent history. With vibrant and interactive exhibits and outdoor historical interpretation, there is something here for everyone.

Snorkeling with salmon is one of the newest and most unique activities on Vancouver Island and is a fabulous escapade for the whole family. Experienced guides will help you safely navigate the river passageways to feel at one with the salmon. River rafting expeditions are another great adventure as you enjoy either a laid-back trip down the river or a white-knuckle thrill ride.

Ready for some more family friendly "extreme" adventure? Strathcona Park Lodge, 40 kilometres west of Campbell River, offers adventures specifically designed for families. Discover the joys of climbing a rock bluff, rappelling on a rope and swinging on a zip-line. This is a great opportunity for the whole family to learn new skills together and celebrate in each other's victories.

Just under 200 kilometres north is the small boardwalk village of Telegraph Cove, where you can see a wide variety of marine mammal bones and skeletons on display including full skeletons of a juvenile Orca and Pacific white-sided dolphin as well as the jawbones from a blue whale!

For a nice leisurely hike, head just past Holberg (about 110 kilometres from Telegraph Cove) to Cape Scott Provincial Park and walk the San Josef Bay Trail. This 45-minute walk along a stroller and wheelchair accessible route, will lead to you a beautiful sandy beach where you can walk for miles exploring the shoreline.

And no matter where you venture on Vancouver Island, whale watching is always a favourite activity. Popular

departure points are Victoria, Sidney, Sooke, Tofino, Ucluelet, Campbell River, Sayward, Telegraph Cove, Port McNeill and Port Hardy. Tofino and Ucluelet are the primary locations for grey whale watching while the South Island, North Central and North Island regions are most popular for Orca (killer whale) viewing. All locations also boast many other fascinating marine mammals including humpback whales, Minke whales, Dall's porpoises, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Steller sea lions and an amazing array of bird life.

With so many excellent opportunities for kids and adults alike, your family will always remember their vacation on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands! Pack your bags and come on over!



Historic boardwalk village of Telegraph Cove.



The skiing on Vancouver Island is awesome!



Whale watching excursions are always fun for everyone!

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Did you know?

- The goats at the Old Country Market in Coombs are airlifted onto the roof each spring when the weather warms up? They stay there throughout the summer and most visitors can't resist the chance to take their picture!
- Orcas (killer whales) can be found in all the world's oceans? In fact, humans are the only mammals that are more widely distributed than these famed whales.
- There are 1,421 known metallic mineral, coal and industrial mineral occurrences on Vancouver Island?