

VANCOUVER ISLAND

VICTORIA and the GULF ISLANDS

Outdoor Adventure

If you've come to Vancouver Island, Victoria and the Gulf Islands looking for adventure, you've come to the right place! With a wide range of activities to choose from, there's something for everyone.

The North Island region offers tremendous remote wilderness opportunities where you can spend a couple days exploring, investigating and playing. On your first day, venture off to Cape Scott Provincial Park, 64 kilometres west of Port Hardy. Hike to San Josef Bay, a popular wheelchair accessible trail that is an easy 45-minute walk. At the end of the trail you'll discover a beautiful sandy beach that is perfect for exploring, walking and relaxing. San Josef is also a fabulous spot for wilderness camping – carry your gear in with you, pitch your tent on the beach, sit back and enjoy the scenery.



Kayaking is a favourite way to explore the islands.

On your second day, go to Telegraph Cove and take part in either a whale watching cruise or grizzly bear viewing tour. From late June through mid-October, Orca (killer whale) watching is at its peak, although you can participate in nature cruises beginning in late May. The waters surrounding Vancouver Island also offer a diverse selection of other fascinating marine mammals including Minke whales, humpback whales, harbour seals, Steller sea lions, Pacific white-sided dolphins and Dall's porpoises. Bear viewing, whether black or grizzly, has rapidly become one of the most exciting tours available. Black bears are plentiful throughout Vancouver Island but grizzly bears do not inhabit the area so tours depart by boat or float plane to Knight Inlet, a location on the mainland where sightings are common.

You can easily spend three days in the North Central region as well, where there will be plenty of time for fun on the water! On your first day, hire a guide to take you to the best fishing spots and discover why so many visitors flock to Vancouver Island for the fishing. Whether it's freshwater or saltwater fishing you're into, opportunities abound here. You can fish all year long, but the best time for saltwater fishing is from May to October when the salmon and halibut runs are at their peak.

The next day, get a different perspective of the salmon by going snorkelling with them! This is becoming an increasingly popular activity and is suitable for everyone. Experienced guides will lead you down the Campbell River and give you an incredible opportunity to see what the fish see.

On the third day head up to Mount Washington, located near Courtenay. Go hiking, mountain biking, play a round of disc golf or hop on a scenic chairlift ride to the summit of Mount Washington and enjoy the spectacularly scenic view. During the winter months, Mount Washington offers some of the best downhill and cross-country skiing you'll experience anywhere!

OPTION A In the Central Island region you'll find there's so much to do, it won't be difficult to fill two or three days. Find out why Vancouver Island is referred to by some as the "Island of Caves" at Horne Lake Caves, near Qualicum Beach. You can go through on your own or join a guided tour so you don't miss a thing.

On your second day, check out the amazing scenery that exists below the ocean's surface. Rated by the *Jacques Cousteau Society* as second only to the Red Sea for clarity and diversity of marine life, the waters encompassing Vancouver Island offer never-ending sites for exploration. Six-gill sharks, wolf eels, Pacific octopus, sea anemones, kelp greenlings and longfin sculpins are just some of the dramatic sights to behold among the walls, reefs and wrecks that exist in the pristine waters below.

Golfing is another great way to relax and with over 50 courses throughout the Island, you'll never tire of trying for that hole-in-one! Parksville and Qualicum Beach have some of the most beautiful courses around and with our mild climate, you'll be able to play no matter what time of year you visit.

OPTION B Spend three action-packed days in the gorgeous Pacific Rim region. Kayaking is one of the best ways to explore the scenic beauty of Vancouver Island. Rent a kayak or join a guided single-day or multi-day journey with an experienced guide. Paddle in the peaceful serenity



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:

- Galloping Goose Trail, Victoria
- Pacific Rim National Park
- Horne Lake Caves
- Strathcona Provincial Park
- Knight Inlet / Bute Inlet
- Cape Scott Provincial Park
- Tofino / Ucluelet
- Snorkeling with salmon, Campbell River
- Telegraph Cove



This starfish is just one of the many incredible creatures you may see during a dive around

that this area affords only to be disturbed perhaps by a surfacing whale or dolphin or maybe a bald eagle lunging into the water for a meal. Whether you're an experienced paddler or new to the sport, there are plenty of excellent companies who are ready to show you the splendour at our doorstep.

Whale watching is also a very popular activity here, with over 20,000 gray whales migrating through the area from March through October. The gray whales are so admired in fact, that the Pacific Rim Whale Festival, held every March in Tofino and Ucluelet, draws huge crowds coming to be part of the experience.

This region is also known for its astonishing hiking trails that are ideal for everyone from novices to the advanced trekker. Some of the picturesque trails include the Log Train Trail in Port Alberni, the Wild Pacific Trail in Ucluelet, the Ahousaht Wildside Heritage Trail in Tofino and perhaps the most glorified of all – the 75-kilometre West Coast Trail in the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. Wherever you go, make sure you've done your homework as many trails are not for beginners and reservations are recommended for some.

If you're in the Tofino and Ucluelet area during the winter months, storm watching is something you won't want to miss. Ocean swells of up to 12 metres (40 feet) make this an exhilarating vacation as you watch from the comfort and safety of an oceanside room. Mother Nature unleashes her fury upon the seas making storm watching one of the most exciting spectator sports around.

From either the Central Island or Pacific Rim regions, continue to the Cowichan region of Vancouver Island for a couple days. For the extreme adventurer, some of the best windsurfing in the world is available at Nitinat Lake, west of Lake Cowichan. This saltwater, tidal lake has gained much attention and acclaim from windsurfers all over the globe – come and find out why!

You can also hit the Trans Canada Trail for a great day of cycling! Southwest of Duncan is Glenora, a great starting point for the three-hour ride to the town of Lake Cowichan. If you're looking for an off-road trail for mountain biking, Mount Tzouhalem offers trails for relaxing rides or bike jumps for the more adventurous cyclist.

There are also great trails for horseback riding if you want to saddle up and let a new friend show you the beautiful Cowichan Valley. Cobble Hill, Mill Bay and Duncan are charming communities that offer lovely riding trails for you to enjoy and savour.

From Crofton, just north of Duncan in the Central Island region, hop aboard BC Ferries for the scenic trip to Salt Spring Island. The Gulf Islands offer yet more opportunities for incredible outdoor adventures where you'll want to spend at least two or three days. Cycling is an excellent way to tour through the area, and the relatively small size of the islands makes it an easy and enjoyable way to see the sights. Salt Spring, Galiano, Mayne, Pender and Saturna Islands are all easy to get to with frequent BC Ferries sailings and is an efficient way to transport bicycles.

Boating is one of the best ways to experience the outdoors and you can enjoy it on your own rented boat if you're an experienced mariner or with a guide who will show you the incredible sights. The sheltered waters between Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and the mainland afford spectacular vistas and the opportunity for cruising virtually all year-round.

In the South Island region you can easily spend several days exploring and finding new adventures. Horseback riding is a great way to investigate and there are dozens of breathtaking riding areas including the Galloping Goose Trail and Thetis Lake Regional Park.

The Galloping Goose Trail isn't just for horses though! It's ideal for hiking and cycling as well and with over 55 kilometres to travel along, you can go as far as you like. The trail stretches all the way from downtown Victoria to Leechtown, with plenty of access points along the way. The Galloping Goose Trail is part of the Trans Canada Trail and is one of the most picturesque you'll ever find!

The South Island region is also home to some spectacular beaches including French Beach Provincial Park, China Beach, Mystic Beach and Botanical Beach Provincial Park. Check out tidal pools, walk along the trails and sandy beaches, enjoy a picnic or just relax and work on your tan. This could be the perfect way to end your vacation!

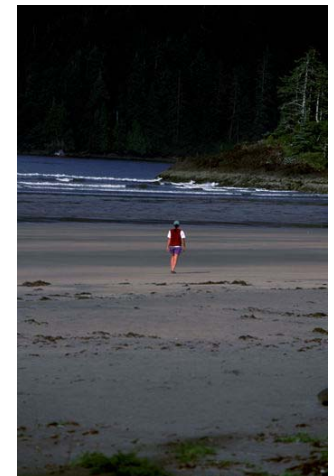
Every region throughout Vancouver Island, Victoria and the Gulf Islands offers amazing opportunities that just can't be duplicated anywhere else. Nowhere else in the world offers the incredible combination of action-packed adventure and spectacular vistas. Don't take our word for it though – you have to see it to believe it!



By land or by sea, the scenery is spectacular!



The perfect home away from home.



Take a little time for yourself and stroll along a sandy beach.

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Did you know?

- Hornby Island and Nootka Sound are two of the few places in the world where scuba divers can see primitive and elusive six-gill sharks?
- Nitinat Lake is the top windsurfing destination in North America?
- The West Coast Trail was originally built as a lifesaving trail for ship-wrecked mariners?
- There are over 1,000 recorded caves on Vancouver Island?
- There are approximately 100 Provincial Parks (including Marine Parks) and 50 Ecological Reserves on Vancouver Island?