

VANCOUVER ISLAND

VICTORIA and the GULF ISLANDS

7 Days / 6 Nights

After a relaxing week on Vancouver Island you may never want to go home again! Spend the next seven days discovering why so many people love Island life.

Begin your adventure in the beautiful garden city of Victoria at the Royal British Columbia Museum in the inner harbour. Here you can discover the rich natural and human history of the province. Next door is Helmcken House, the oldest house in British Columbia on its original site, which is steeped in history and has many interesting medical artifacts on display. Afterwards, visit the self-described "casual and opulent" Empress Hotel in the inner harbour for their famous afternoon tea. Other nearby attractions include Emily Carr House, the Maritime Museum of BC, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and Craigdarroch Castle.



Totem pole on Newcastle Island, near Nanaimo

On day two, before heading over to Salt Spring Island, spend some time at the world-renowned Butchart Gardens in Brentwood Bay, which is 21 kilometres north of Victoria. Follow Blanshard north, which will turn into Highway 17A; keep going along this route and turn left onto Keating Road, which will become Benvenuto Avenue. Spend a couple hours strolling through the Japanese Garden, Italian Garden, Rose Garden, Sunken Garden and many others that are on display here.

From here, go back to Highway 17A and head north following the signs for the Swartz Bay ferry terminal. Check with BC Ferries for current sailing times; the crossing to Salt Spring Island takes 35 minutes. Drive north to the community of Ganges to visit the Pegasus Gallery of Canadian Art, which is on the boardwalk that surrounds this seaside village.

Then drive 10 minutes north of Ganges to the Salt Springs Spa Resort for a relaxing afternoon of spa treatments. Choose from mud baths, reflexology, body wraps, massages and facials – just to name a few! Afterwards, check into your private chalet for a luxurious night of watching the sun set on another fabulous day.

On your third day, make your way to Vesuvius Bay for the 20-minute crossing to Crofton, back on Vancouver Island. Again, check with BC Ferries for their most current schedule. From Crofton make the short drive to Duncan and visit the Quw'utsun' Cultural & Conference Centre. Just follow Highway 1 south to Duncan, and turn left onto Cowichan Way – you can't miss it! Participate in a cultural tour and listen to discussions on topics such as the significance of totem poles, the construction and use of canoes, the construction and purpose of longhouses and fishing techniques.

Next, follow Highway 1 north to the "Harbour City" of Nanaimo, the second largest city on Vancouver Island. With some of the best diving that Vancouver Island has to offer, there is an overabundance of excellent dive sites to check out – so many you'll want to come back for more!

After your dive take the 10-minute ferry to Newcastle Island, a beautiful Provincial Marine Park with lots of room to walk and enjoy the sights of Nanaimo from the other side. Take the ferry from Maffeo-Sutton Park, which is located behind the Civic Arena



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

Travel Distances

Day 1	Victoria
Day 2	Victoria to Salt Spring Island <i>35 min. ferry crossing</i>
Day 3	Salt Spring Island to Crofton <i>20 min. ferry crossing</i> Crofton to Nanaimo <i>~45 km/28 mi</i>
Day 4	Nanaimo to Parksville <i>36 km/22 mi</i>
Day 5a	Parksville to Tofino <i>171 km/106 mi</i>
Day 6a	Tofino to Port Alberni <i>122 km/76 mi</i>
Day 7a	Port Alberni to Victoria <i>195 km/121 mi</i>
Day 5b	Parksville to Campbell River <i>117 km / 73 mi</i>
Day 6b	Campbell River to Port Hardy <i>238 km / 148 mi</i>
Day 7b	Port Hardy to Nanaimo <i>391 km / 243 mi</i>

Special points of interest:

- Butchart Gardens, Victoria
- Chinatown & Fan Tan Alley, Victoria
- Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria
- ArtSpring, Salt Spring Island
- Quw'utsun' Cultural & Conference Centre, Duncan
- Newcastle Island, Nanaimo
- World Champion Bathtub Race, Nanaimo
- North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre, Errington
- Butterfly World & Gardens, Parksville
- Rath Trevor Provincial Park, Parksville
- Eagle Aerie Gallery, Tofino
- Pacific Rim Whale Festival, Tofino
- Alberni Valley Museum, Port Alberni
- McLean Mill, Port Alberni

on Comox Road. Upon your return from Newcastle Island make your way to the Nanaimo District Museum, which is located in Piper's Park. You can also enjoy a stroll along the Harbourside Walkway and if you're visiting during the last weekend of July, be sure to check out the legendary bathtub races! This evening enjoy a night of entertainment at the Port Theatre, located on Front Street overlooking the water.

On your fourth day enjoy a leisurely morning as you make your way north along Highway 19 to the oceanside community of Parksville. In August, head to the beach to watch the Sand

Sculpting Competition and see the numerous works of art built in the sand. The Milner Gardens & Woodland and the North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre are a must-see before heading west on Highway 4 to the village of Coombs. Here you can visit Butterfly World and Gardens and the local country market with goats on the roof!

On day five, you have a decision to make. You can either head west on Highway 4 to the Pacific Rim region to visit Tofino, Ucluelet and Port Alberni or head north on Highway 19 to the North Central and North Island regions of Campbell River, Telegraph Cove and Port Hardy.

OPTION A If you head west, go into Tofino and make sure you visit the Eagle Aerie Gallery, Tofino Botanical Gardens and of course, Long Beach – 20 kilometres of white sandy beach! There are also excellent opportunities for gray whale watching, storm watching, surfing and kayaking in Tofino and the neighbouring community of Ucluelet. On your way into Tofino, be sure to stop at Cathedral Grove in MacMillan Provincial Park and walk through this awe-inspiring rainforest.

After spending a relaxing night in Tofino, make your way back towards Port Alberni and spend the day investigating the Alberni Valley Museum, Maritime Discovery Centre, McLean Mill and Sproat Lake Provincial Park. Spend the night here before heading back to Nanaimo or Victoria on your last day to make your way back home again.

OPTION B If the northern regions of the island are calling you, follow the scenic Oceanside Route on Highway 19A from Parksville to Campbell River. Known as the "Salmon Capital of the World", Campbell River offers plenty of activities to quench your appetite for excitement. Fishing is of course, one of the most popular activities in this area and there are plenty of experienced guides who will take you where the fish are biting. Or, if you want to become one with the fish, you can have an up-close and personal experience by snorkeling with the salmon.

The next day, continue driving north along Highway 19 to Telegraph Cove – one of the last remaining boardwalk villages in the province. During the summer months, visitors flock to this tiny community for the astounding fishing, whale watching, kayaking and bear watching adventures. Be sure to stop at the new and ever-expanding Whale Interpretive Centre too, which boasts an impressive display of marine mammals bones and skeletons.

After visiting Telegraph Cove, continue to Port McNeill for more fishing or whale watching opportunities and to check out the Port McNeill Heritage Museum, which focuses on the rich logging history of the area. Then, continue to Port Hardy, the largest community on the North Island for a relaxing evening. Fresh seafood is offered at many restaurants here, which is a fabulous way to cap off a trip on the Island.

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Vargas Island, near Tofino



There are still lighthouses remaining on Vancouver Island that you may see during your travels.

Did you know...?

- During the spring and summer, there are approximately 900 hanging flower baskets in Victoria's downtown core?
- Salt Spring Island is named for the salty mineral springs located on the north end of the island?
- Nanaimo, a mecca for diving adventures, is home to the world's largest artificial reef, which was created when the *Cape Breton* was sunk in 2001 in close proximity to the *Saskatchewan*?
- Cathedral Grove is the location of some of the largest Douglas fir trees on Vancouver Island, including one estimated at 800 years old?