

VANCOUVER ISLAND

VICTORIA and the GULF ISLANDS

First Nations

The entire Vancouver Island region is full of First Nations history and there is a lot to see and do to gain knowledge and a perspective of this important aspect of not only our history, but our present way of life as well.

The communities in the North Island region are home to the Kwakwaka'wakw people and are teeming with Native history and culture. Begin at Calvin Hunt's Copper Maker Gallery in Fort Rupert, just 15 minutes south of Port Hardy. Calvin Hunt, a member of the Kwakiutl people and one of the premier Native artists in the province, is known the world over for his stunning woodcarvings and paintings. In fact, he has been commissioned to create many works including full-sized Thunderbird Dance costumes for both the Scotland National Museum and Germany's Museum of Anthropology.

In Port McNeill, 30 minutes south of Fort Rupert, is Just Art Gallery, which features an impressive collection of Pacific Northwest Native art including masks, sculptures, jewellery and prints by over a dozen talented First Nations artists.

From Port McNeill take the 45-minute ferry to Alert Bay on Cormorant Island to visit the U'mista Cultural Centre. You can easily spend a couple hours wandering through the centre enjoying the incredible artefacts on display including authentic regalia and hand-carved masks used in ceremonial potlatches. Be sure to allow enough time so that you can enjoy a performance by the 'Na'nakwala Dancers in their traditional Big House. While you're in Alert Bay be sure to check out the world's tallest totem pole – an impressive 52 metres (173 feet)!

There are also tours you can participate in that will highlight the scenery and wildlife of the area in addition to the First Nations culture. Join Mothership Adventures for a kayaking tour throughout Johnstone Strait and the Broughton Archipelago with stops in Alert Bay at the U'mista Cultural Centre and on secluded islands to investigate Native middens and abandoned villages.



The native guardian of Village Island ('Mimkwamlis)

Nature's Best Pacific Wilderness Tours offers cruises that include visits to Alert Bay, Echo Bay and Village Island, where you will hear stories and legends that have been passed on throughout generations by the elders.

You can also join Village Island Tours for a tour with the Native guardian of 'Mimkwamlis, the

First Nations name for Village Island. Listen to centuries old stories of the connection between earth and its living creatures, the history of the Kwakwaka'wakw people before Europeans settled here and their current traditions.

In the North Central region, go to Campbell River to visit Wei Wai Kum House of Treasures and Gildas Box of Treasures Native Dance Theatre. Wei Wai Kum House of Treasures features masks, prints and other unique works of art by gifted Native artists. In the same building is Gildas Box of Treasures Native Dance Theatre where



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:

- Copper Maker Gallery, Fort Rupert
- Eagle Aerie Gallery, Tofino
- Gildas Box of Treasures Theatre, Campbell River
- I-Hos Gallery, Comox
- Judy Hill Gallery, Duncan
- Just Art, Port McNeill
- Maritime Museum of BC, Victoria
- Museum at Campbell River
- Nanaimo District Museum
- Quw'utsun' Cultural & Conference Centre, Duncan
- Royal BC Museum, Victoria
- Sooke Region Museum
- U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay
- Wei Wai Kum House of Treasures, Campbell River

you can enjoy performances featuring the cultural traditions of the Laichwiltach people.

The Museum at Campbell River also provides an excellent insight into First Nations history. Examine the displays and learn about ancient and modern fishing methods, causes of epidemics that devastated Native villages during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and much more.

While you're in Campbell River join a cultural tour with Aboriginal Journeys and explore Native sites in the Campbell River and Quadra Island areas. Discover ancient petroglyphs, historic villages and enjoy dance performances bringing legends and stories to life.

Further south in the community of Comox is the I-Hos Gallery, owned by the Comox First Nations band. The gallery has a superb collection of both traditional and contemporary Northwest Coast artwork and crafts including prints, jewellery, woodcarvings and clothing.

In the Pacific Rim region, the Eagle Aerie Gallery in Tofino features the work of internationally acclaimed artist Roy Henry Vickers. A multi-talented artist, you can find prints, carvings, books and clothing that bear his signature style. In addition to this gallery, which welcomes thousands of visitors each year, Roy Henry Vickers also has a studio in Brentwood Bay, near Victoria in the South Island region.

In Port Alberni, join Choo-Kwa Ventures as Hupacasath First Nations guide you on a tour of the Somass River or Sproat Lake and share traditional songs and stories. Be sure to include a visit to their gift shop as well, which features items including clothing, handmade baskets, jewellery, masks, red cedar boxes, beadwork and cedar bark hats.

In the Central Island region, the Nanaimo District Museum is an excellent place to learn about the Snunéymuxw (Nanaimo) people. Their history dates back 2,000 years and is depicted with several exhibits including a floor painting of an archaeological dig in 1992 that uncovered many artefacts, which are now on display.

In the Cowichan region, visit the Judy Hill Gallery in Duncan, which features Native art by over 100 artists representing five of the six ethnographically distinct Northwest Coast peoples. In addition to the many pieces that are available to purchase, you can also view Judy's private collection of trade beads, baskets and books.

Also in Duncan is the Quw'utsun' Cultural & Conference Centre. You can take part in interpretive tours, eat traditional Native food and examine artwork including masks, carvings, totem poles and clothing. A visit to the Quw'utsun' Cultural Centre will give you a truly authentic First Nations experience.

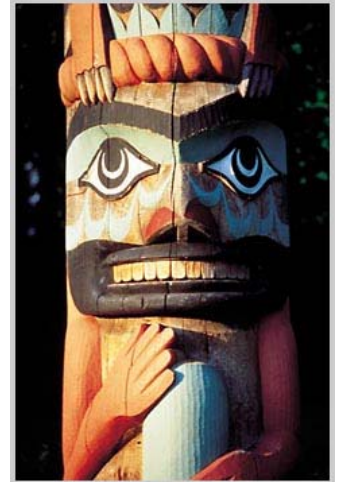
In the South Island region, there are several interesting museums that highlight First Nations culture. At the Royal British Columbia Museum, in Victoria's inner harbour, the First Peoples Gallery features canoes, basketry, totem poles, the interior of a Big House and even a model of a 19th-century Native village. A short distance away in Bastion Square is the Maritime Museum of BC, where you can learn about two very important aspects of First Nations culture - whaling and fishing. Artefacts of both industries are on display including a harpoon gun and scrimshaw. In the community of Sooke, 34 kilometres west of Victoria, is the Sooke Region Museum. Exhibits include pieces showcasing the history of the T'Sou-ke First Nations people.

Vancouver Island is very fortunate to be part of such a rich cultural background - visit us to discover how the First Nations people continue to be an integral and fascinating part of our society.

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Totem pole in Tofino
(photo by Tourism BC)



Alert Bay is home to world's
tallest totem pole.

Did you know?

- There is archaeological evidence showing that the Quw'utsun' people have inhabited southern British Columbia and upper Puget Sound for over 4,500 years?
- Artist Roy Henry Vickers was appointed to the prestigious Order of British Columbia by the provincial government in 1998?
- Potlatches are traditional ceremonial feasts sometimes lasting days? They provide an opportunity to sing, dance, pray and are meant to celebrate weddings, funerals, birthdays and naming ceremonies.
- The first recorded contact between the Europeans and local First Nations occurred in 1792? Capt. George Vancouver arrived on Quadra Island at, what is now the ancient village of Tsa-Kwa-Luten, which means "gathering place".