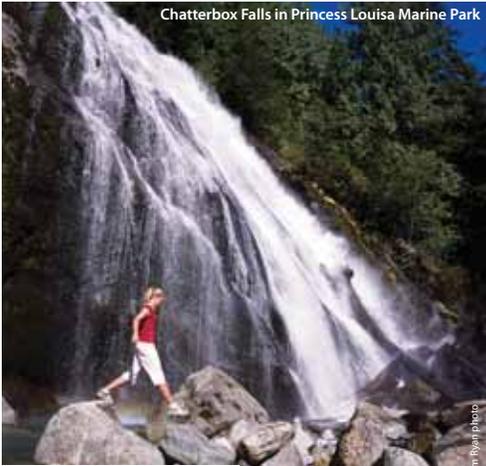


Chatterbox Falls in Princess Louisa Marine Park



Tourism BC/Don Ryan photo

TRIP IDEAS

THE SUNSHINE COAST

Paddle to an offshore islet, browse for locally made treasures or relax on a white sand beach: BC's Sunshine Coast, with its sheltered coves and artsy seaside villages, has all the scenic charm and laidback vibe of an island getaway. The difference is that this sunny shoreline is actually part of the mainland and just 40 minutes by ferry from West Vancouver.

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Gibsons

The first stop on a Highway 101 road trip is usually the funky little town of Gibsons, a seaside cluster of shops, galleries and cafés overlooking Howe Sound. Browse the artisans' studios, stop in at the Gibsons Public Art Gallery or the Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives, and see what's on the barbecue at Smitty's Oyster House, a chic eatery with a popular summertime deck.

If you're thinking: "I could live here," there's a reason for that. Gibsons was named the world's most liveable small town by the United-Nations-endorsed International Awards for Liveable Communities in 2009.

Just up the road, in the seaside village of Roberts Creek, 1920s/1930s cottages meet an enduring 1960s vibe. Admire the community mandala (an ancient Sanskrit word meaning "circle") – a communal artwork repainted each July. Stroll along on the driftwood-strewn beach, and grab some treats, including vegan options, at the Gumboot Restaurant and Cafe.

Art Gallery and Studio Tours

Is everything handmade here? Just about. Home to arguably more artists per capita than anywhere else in Canada, the Sunshine Coast is peppered with galleries, home studios, artisans' shops, and even an art farm: the purple banners show when they're open to visitors. A Purple Banner Route map from one of the Sunshine Coast Visitor Centres (located in Gibsons, Sechelt, Madeira Park and Powell River) will show the way.

Time your visit for a summer Saturday and browse the stalls at the Sechelt Farmers' & Artisans' Market in the main town of Sechelt, or make it a Sunday and visit the Gibsons Landing Sunday Market in Gibsons. And don't miss Deer Crossing near Langdale. It's an art farm, with artwork and performances on display in the same inspiring space.

Skookumchuck Rapids

At Skookumchuck Narrows Provincial Park, near Egmont, an easy 4-km/2.5-mi walk through the forest leads to an amazing natural phenomenon: Skookumchuck Narrows, where some of the world's fastest-moving tidal rapids surge through a narrow channel. When the tide turns, 200 billion gallons of whirling whitewater race through the narrows at speeds in excess of 30km/19mi per hour.

Check the tide tables first to catch the best show.

Princess Louisa Inlet

One of the most beautiful sights in BC – a province famed for its scenery – is Princess Louisa Marine Provincial Park, an eight-km (five-mi) long fjord at the head of Jervis Inlet. During the summer, dozens of waterfalls cascade down the fjord's sheer walls. The jewel in the crown is Chatterbox Falls, a year-round torrent at the head of the inlet. Sunshine Coast Tours, among others, offer day cruises into Princess Louisa Inlet.

The Powell River Historic Townsite

This company town, which began construction in 1910 and was designated a National Historic Site in 1995, is home to about 400 original homes from that period. Join historians for a walking tour of the beautifully preserved buildings, and catch a flick at the Patricia Theatre – thought to be BC's oldest continuously operating movie theatre.

Lund

At the northern tip of Highway 101, the Sunshine Coast Highway, is the tiny fishing village of Lund. Stroll the boardwalk, stock up on cinnamon buns at Nancy's Bakery (they're legendary among boaters), then cast off for a kayak or a boat tour into wildlife-rich Desolation Sound. Overnight at the Historic Lund Hotel; this gabled waterfront inn has hosted travellers since 1905.

Fancy a beach day? Hop a water taxi from Lund to car-free Savary Island. This tiny islet, just eight km by 800 m (five mi by 1/2 mi), is almost completely surrounded by sandy white beaches and warm clear water.

Sunshine Coast Accommodation

Discover "glamping" (that's glamorous camping) in one of Rockwater Secret Cove Resort's Tenthouse suites. These romantic safari-style tents come complete with a hydrotherapy tub and a private veranda. Cabins, suites and guestrooms are also options, as is a massage in one of the resort's waterside spa tents.

At the Painted Boat Resort Spa & Marina in Madeira Park, oceanfront villas have full kitchens and water-view decks. The restaurant is a memorable place to enjoy local fare.



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