



Tourism Whistler/Steve Rogers photo

TRIP IDEAS

BC HIKING TRAILS

British Columbia's hiking trails lead to some of the world's most spectacular terrain, from the heights of the Rockies to the forests of the coast. Stride to the top of the Stawamus Chief, stroll along the beach on Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands) or dig into some fresh-caught seafood after hiking the West Coast Trail.

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The Grouse Grind

The Grouse Grind is just a few minutes from downtown Vancouver. Start at the base of Grouse Mountain and head up – way up. On the 2.9-km/1.8-mi trail, gain 853m/2,798ft of elevation and step up 2,830 stairs. The average time is an hour and a half – though hikers can try for the course record, which is just under 24 minutes.

But don't worry, the Grind isn't just a grind – the forest is gorgeous, and the trail leads to the mountaintop where stunning views make it all worthwhile. Dine in The Observatory or Altitudes Bistro, where a drink and city views await. Those with enough energy can hike down via a trail of meandering switchbacks or, for a small fee, hikers can ride the Skyride gondola all the way down.

Stawamus Chief

Drive an hour north from Vancouver to the outskirts of Squamish to see the sheer face of the Stawamus Chief, a 700-m/2,297-ft dome of ancient Cretaceous rock. There's no need climb straight up – that's for experienced rock climbers – so start at the trailhead and set out on the 1.8-km/1.1-mi trail that winds slowly to the top. Like the Grouse Grind, it's steep but rewarding, with panoramic views of Squamish, Howe Sound and the surrounding mountains. For a less strenuous hike, take a pleasant 20-minute stroll on the Shannon Falls Trail for spectacular views of Shannon Falls.

The High Note Trail

Travel to Whistler and stop in for breakfast at the retro-styled Southside Diner. Afterwards, take the gondola to the top of Whistler Mountain for a day on the High Note Trail. Stride through alpine meadows filled with wildflowers, and take postcard pictures of surrounding peaks. Return by the Musical Bumps trail to complete a 9.4-km/5.8-mi loop to Whistler's Roundhouse Lodge for an après snack in the alpine air.

Barkerville Trails

From Quesnel, drive east past Wells - a small mountain heritage community alive with the arts - and on to Barkerville Historic Town, the province's largest historic site. Explore the town's network of trails over rugged terrain that once hosted Gold Rush prospectors and pioneers. On return, step back in time with a stroll past the 1860s Gold Rush buildings. For a more demanding trip, tackle the Yellowhawk Trail, a 10.5-km/6.5-mi hike that leads to lovely outlooks over the Cariboo Mountains.

Berg Lake Trail

From Kamloops, drive four hours north to Mount Robson Provincial Park's Berg Lake Trail. Bring camping gear and head out into the Rocky Mountain backcountry on the 23-km/14-mi hiking trail. Bliss out in the rugged surroundings while trekking to the bright waters of Berg Lake, where a glacier tumbles into the water and the striking Emperor Face of Mount Robson soars high above. A reservation system is in place for camping spots on the Berg Lake Trail, so be sure to register before arriving. Check with the Mount Robson Visitor Centre for more information.

West Coast Trail

The West Coast Trail is a true once-in-a-lifetime experience. Serious hikers consider it to be one of the top wilderness trails in the world. To access the West Coast Trail from Victoria, drive west to Port Renfrew and the southern terminus of the trail.

Head north on the week-long, 75-km/47-mi trek, and climb steep headlands, ramble through temperate rainforests and walk along beaches strewn with driftwood. Watch for seals, sea lions, eagles and whales while hiking the waterfront sections. No reservations are required when hiking the West Coast Trail from May 1st to June 15th, and from September 16th to September 30th; during peak periods (June 16th to September 15th) reservations are recommended.

Schooner Cove Trail

From Nanaimo, drive three hours on winding roads to Tofino, a surf-crazed small town on the west coast of Vancouver Island. From Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (Long Beach), take a scenic walk on Schooner Cove Trail, a 2-km/1.2-mi round trip that features giant ferns, bridges and boardwalks, and ends on a secluded sandy beach.

Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands

For a really, really out-there experience, fly or take the ferry to Haida Gwaii, a chain of isolated islands far off the mainland coast. Near Massett, hike as far as the heart desires on North Beach's wide, untracked sands. Enjoy beachcombing, roaming past sand dunes and watching waves roll in from the north. For scenic views of Alaska, hike up Tow Hill, where an elevated view gives the feeling of being at the edge of the world. Before leaving the islands, stop at the cedar longhouses of the Haida Heritage Centre to see ornately carved works of traditional Haida art.



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