



Northern BC Tourism/F. Berggren photo

TRIP IDEAS

HOT SPRINGS IN BC

Natural hot springs in British Columbia offer many styles of bathing experiences, from resort swimming pools to wilderness basins. The most exotic hot springs sites rank as must-see destinations. Visit one and you'll be hooked on experiencing more, not just for the pleasure of taking to the water but for the beauty of the surroundings as well

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Radium Hot Springs

Year round, Radium Hot Springs' natural mineral pools radiate well-being in two open-air pools tucked beside cliffs in Kootenay National Park. Swim laps to tone up, or relax by the shallow "beach" where rock walls create the mood of bathing in a canyon. Leave relaxed either way.

For extra bliss, stop at the on-site Pleiades day spa for a massage, aromatherapy or wellness treatment. In winter, snow-sport enthusiasts can seek out sore muscle comfort in the super-heated (39°C/103°F) mini-pool beside the ice-encrusted lifeguard tower.

The hot springs are located in Kootenay National Park near the park's west gate, which is 3km/2mi from the town of Radium Hot Springs (a national park pass is not required to drive from the village to the hot springs).

Hot Springs Cove

A day trip to Hot Springs Cove in Maquinna Marine Provincial Park (near Tofino on Vancouver Island) is an all-round West Coast experience. These geothermal springs are only accessible by air or water, which makes getting there half the adventure (tours depart daily from Tofino during the summer). Upon arrival at the dock, follow a 1.5-km/0.9-mi boardwalk past rocky coves and through an old-growth cedar rainforest to reach the rock-lined hot pools.

The hot springs travel downhill and form a waterfall that empties into a series of natural pools sheltered from the Pacific Ocean by granite walls. Once accustomed to the heat, stand under the waterfall for a heavenly therapeutic shower.

Hot Springs Cove is located 37km/23mi northwest of Tofino, and is accessible via boat, kayak or floatplane. Several tour companies combine hot springs day trips with whale-watching tours and wildlife-viewing excursions.

Harrison Hot Springs

Harrison Hot Springs' lakeside pools with mountain views are some of the most popular in BC and have been attracting bathers since the late 1800s. Soak at either the day-use public municipal pool or Harrison Hot Springs Resort's private pools a block away. Both feature spacious indoor swimming in soothing settings; the resort offers a separate children's water play area and three outdoor pools as well. Cool down after a soak with a walk along the wheelchair-accessible path west of the town's beach to view the source of the spring, which is piped to both facilities.

Harrison Hot Springs is a 90-minute drive east of Vancouver near Chilliwack and Agassiz.

Lussier Hot Springs

Lussier Hot Springs' shallow, open-air, community-built pools are free-form wonders fashioned with boulders for backrests. Choose among three natural pools tucked into the mountainside at Whiteswan Lake Provincial Park in the Kootenay Rockies region. In summer, the top pool has an average temperature of 43°C/110°F and the bottom pool alongside the Lussier River offers the coolest water at about 34°C/94°F. Visit early in the day before the locals arrive and then relax with some birdwatching at Whiteswan Lake.

Lussier Hot Springs is just inside the boundaries of Whiteswan Lake Provincial Park, which is a two-hour drive north of Cranbrook.

St. Agnes' Well/Skookumchuck Hot Springs

In the Vancouver, Coast and Mountains region, pair mountain ambience with a slice of BC's Cariboo Gold Rush history at St. Agnes' Well's thermal baths, which are set next to the Lillooet River on the historic Harrison Lillooet Gold Rush Trail.

Three outdoor tubs and a sheltered A-frame bath house create an ideal setting to contemplate the beauty of the surrounding wilderness. May and October are the best times to visit as there are fewer crowds.

St. Agnes' Well/Skookumchuck hot springs are located about 56km/35mi south of the community of Mount Currie (near Pemberton) on the original road to the Cariboo gold fields. There is a narrow gravel road that leads to the campsite and the hot springs; access is difficult in winter due to the heavy snow conditions.

Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park

Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park in Northern BC contains one of Canada's largest natural hot springs systems. Follow the boardwalk to a rustic pool and take in the unique flora while watching for moose and other wildlife.

Water temperatures in the pool range from 42-52°C/107-125°F. For a special retreat, visit the hot springs during winter and relax in the steaming pool as snow covers the trees and marshland.

The campsites often fill up early during the peak summer travel season, so reservations are strongly recommended for those wishing to overnight in the adjacent campground, which includes a children's playground.

To get to Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park, turn off at kilometre 765 of the Alaska Highway, approximately 60km/38mi north of Muncho Lake Provincial Park and three hours north of Fort Nelson.