

# VANCOUVER OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Vancouver is ideal for blending outdoor activities with cosmopolitan culture. From hiking through soaring mountains to kayaking in saltwater inlets, here are a few ways to get familiar with the one of the world's greenest metropolises.

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Cross the Lions Gate Bridge and tackle the Eagle Bluff Trail in Cypress Provincial Park. It's a first-hand look at the rugged Coast Range environment – pass through stands of cedar and hemlock and stop for views of the ocean far below.

For more of a workout, run up the thigh-burning Grouse Grind – it's an essential Vancouver experience, and buckets of sweat are guaranteed. Prefer slow strolls? Walk the sand flats at Spanish Bank. This series of beaches near the western edge of the city is where Vancouver's harbour meets the open waters of the Strait of Georgia.

## **North Shore Biking**

North Vancouver is renowned for its network of mountain bike trails. Get a glimpse of the area's thriving bike scene by renting a bike and heading out on the singletrack. There's something for everyone here, so go easy or go gnarly. The North Shore Mountain Bike Association maintains trails and promotes sustainable riding, and numerous bike shops, clubs and operators offer various levels of instruction.

# Windsurfing and Kayaking

The beaches of English Bay are one of Vancouver's defining features. Pull on a wetsuit and windsurf along the waterfront – remember to bring a waterproof camera for self-portraits while speeding across the waves.

For a more meditative sort of adventure, kayak the calm waters of False Creek, where seals are often spotted. Or, for a dose of West Coast wilderness, drive to Deep Cove and paddle at the foot of the mountains on Indian Arm.

#### **Unique Outdoor Options**

Vancouver has some truly unique pursuits as well – chalk up for the climbing routes at Lighthouse Park, rollerblade the scenic Stanley Park Seawall, or stretch out with open-air yoga at Kitsilano Beach.

#### Places to Eat

- Vij's: Serves a fusion of Indian and West Coast cuisines and was described by the New York Times as "easily among the finest Indian restaurants in the world." The wine-marinated lamb popsicles in fenugreek cream curry are a revelation.
- Granville Island Public Market: A great place to stop for picnic food before heading out for the mountains. There's everything from fresh smoked salmon to authentic artisan bagels.

• Coffee: Need a morning caffeine fix? Stop in at one of the city's much-loved coffee shops. Independent cafés like 49th Parallel and Bean Around the World are bastions of Vancouver's barista culture.

# **Vancouver Accommodation**

Pan Pacific Vancouver's watefront location offers stunning mountain views. Relax in the heated saltwater outdoor pool or treat yourself to world-class dining at Five Sails Restaurant. The St. Regis Hotel, in the heart of downtown Vancouver, offers numerous dining and shopping packages. The St. Regis is a heritage hotel refurbished to reflect modern comforts in a boutique-style setting. Looking for an "art-full" experience? Check out the Listel Hotel, located in the trendy Robson Street shopping district. Each guestroom features work by a single artist. The hotel's bar and restaurant, O'Doul's, hosts live Jazz.

### **Local Secrets**

Known as "MEC Alley," the area around Mountain Equipment Co-op (close to downtown on West Broadway) features numerous stores for outdoor gear and advice. Some even offer rentals. Pick up the book 103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia for maps and details about the area's many scenic trails.

The historic fishing village of Steveston, south of Vancouver at the mouth of the Fraser River, is a great place for a run or a ride. For one of the area's best photo ops, visit the suspension bridge in Lynn Canyon Park, which is 50m/164ft above Lynn Creek's thickly forested mountain gorge.

For a different side of the city, check out the indie culture of Main Street and Commercial Drive. Find eclectic shops, galleries and cafés. The Cuban-inspired restaurant Havana (on Commercial) has a great patio for sipping mojitos in the afternoon.

## **Vancouver Transportation**

When flying in to Vancouver, book a window seat – the approach offers great views of the mountains, the Fraser River and distant Vancouver Island. Vancouver International Airport is just a short drive from downtown, or ride the rapid rail Canada Line from the airport to the city centre. The city is also accessible by bus, train or floatplane. A full range of taxi, transit, and car and bike rental options are also available.



