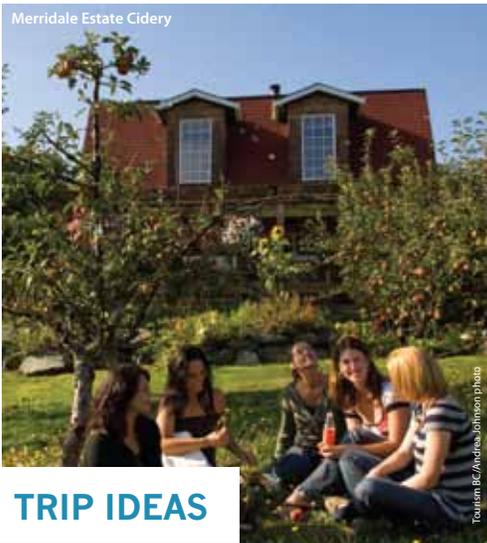


Merridale Estate Cidery



Tourism BC/Andrew Johnson photo

TRIP IDEAS

VANCOUVER ISLAND & GULF ISLANDS WINE REGION

The lifestyle is laidback. The food, fresh and local. The fun, never ending. Discover British Columbia's wine islands and enjoy the crisp Pinot Gris, flavourful Pinot Noir and some delicious surprises along the way. Visit wineries in the laidback Gulf Islands, or pair Cowichan Valley wines with locally grown ingredients. Cideries, kayak tours, golf courses and spas round out the trip.

For more great Trip Ideas visit HelloBC.com

Cowichan Valley Wineries

In Vancouver Island's Cowichan Valley, wineries nestle along twisting country roads next to forests, farms and quaint little villages. Visit Averill Creek Winery near Duncan, with its stunning view from the southern slope of Mount Prevost and its award-winning Pinots. Bring an appetite to the Bistro at Merridale Ciderworks in Cobble Hill, where the traditional apple ciders go well with hearty lunches like the overstuffed roast pork sandwich.

Also in charming Cobble Hill, try the blackberry port-style wine at Cherry Point Estate Wines. Don't miss Venturi-Schulze Vineyards, which is as well-known for its authentic balsamic vinegar as its blended wines like the aromatic white Millefiori.

Visit the funky coastal village of Cowichan Bay for some shopping or snacking – try the chewy ginger cookies at True Grain Bread and the island cheeses at Hilary's Cheese Company. Feeling energetic? Kayak in the harbour or hike through the hills. It's a good way to work off a feast of local seafood, foraged mushrooms and just-picked greens at Amusé Bistro in Mill Bay.

Saanich Peninsula Wineries

Vancouver Island also has a handful of wineries on the Saanich Peninsula near the famous Butchart Gardens. Pay a visit to Church & State Wines, which has been winning awards for bold, complex blends like Quintessential. For a taste of something different, Sea Cider makes crisp ciders from its own heritage apples, while Victoria Spirits produces wood-fired, pot-stilled gin, vodka and bitters from organic botanicals and is working on a handcrafted whisky.

Want to stay longer? Find luxurious relaxation at nearby Brentwood Bay Resort and Spa – its SeaGrille restaurant is excellent. Or enjoy fine steak-and-seafood dining in Panache Restaurant after playing one of two world-class golf courses at the Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort & Spa.

Gulf Islands Wineries

Across the Strait of Georgia between Vancouver Island and the mainland lie the idyllic Gulf Islands, which are also home to a growing number of young wineries. On Salt Spring Island (the biggest of the southern Gulf Islands), try the award-winning Pinot Gris from Garry Oaks Winery, the sparkling Karma at Salt Spring Vineyards or the Pinot

Rosé at Mistaken Identity Vineyards. Stay at the island's luxurious Hastings House Country House Hotel, which features gourmet goodies like local Salt Spring lamb and Dungeness crab, or fresh-baked pastries.

Take a short ferry ride to Saturna Island to sample the green-apple-and-melon flavours of the Chardonnay at Saturna Island Family Estate Winery. Enjoy the stunning views and lush gardens at the European-style Saturna Lodge.

Or head to Pender Island for a taste of Morning Bay Vineyards' big, bold reds. While on Pender, stay at Poets Cove Resort & Spa, where the Aurora Restaurant serves locally inspired, seasonal West Coast cuisine. It's perfect with a glass of island wine..

Gourmet Kayaking Trips

One of the most delicious ways to explore the Gulf Islands is with a gourmet kayaking trip hosted by Edible Canada. The weekend trips include gentle paddling among the islands with stops for lavish gourmet meals, BC wine and camping on peaceful beaches.

Wines in Victoria

Can't make it to the wineries? Get a taste of Island wines in Victoria, BC's capital and the main city on Vancouver Island. Try a glass of local Pinot Gris, Meritage or a dessert wine like Venturi-Schulze's lush Brandenburg No. 3 at restaurants such as Spinnakers Gastro Brewpub, Stage or Café Brio. Or stop by a downtown Vintner's Quality Alliance (VQA) shop like The Wine Barrel for a bottle or two to take home.

Vancouver Island Transportation

Victoria is a half-hour flight from Vancouver Airport or via floatplane from the downtown Vancouver harbour. It's also possible to reach Victoria by driving to Tsawwassen and taking the 90-minute BC Ferries trip that sails to Swartz Bay.

From Victoria, the Cowichan Valley is a 45-minute drive north on the Island Highway (Highway 1), while the Saanich Peninsula is about 20 minutes north on Highway 17. A variety of BC Ferries routes travel to the Gulf Islands, departing from both Swartz Bay (on Vancouver Island) and Tsawwassen (near Vancouver), or reach the Gulf Islands by floatplane.



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