

Vancouver Island: Canada In A Nutshell

ITM London

Boats at Victoria



Vancouver Island, just over an hour's ferry ride from Vancouver (Horseshoe Bay terminal) is Canada in miniature with nature reserves, wildlife including the famous brown and grisly bears, fishing, water and winter sports, heritage delights and great cuisine.

Nestled along Canada's West Coast, the Vancouver Island region is a paradise of tranquil islands, pristine coastlines, and emerald forests, where the ever-present Pacific Ocean shapes the scenery and softens the climate. Lush old-growth rainforests where the trees form a cool canopy over hiking trails, sparkling wave-swept beaches that stretch for miles, majestic mountains with glittering glaciers and snow-capped peaks, crystal-clear rivers teeming with fish, sun-dappled lakes surrounded by parkland, alpine meadows filled with wildflowers, rolling vistas of

farmland greet visitors.

A holiday on Vancouver Island can be the jewel in the crown during a visit to Canada or a stand alone holiday which can be tailored to all tastes.

The two main towns are Victoria and Nanaimo. Victoria the capital of the province of British Columbia is located on the southern tip of the island. Nicknamed the Garden City for Butchart Gardens and much green space it is also said to lie within the world's most northern Mediterranean climate at a latitude of 48.5 North.



Abkhazi Garden



There are always things to do in Victoria. An urban oasis surrounded by ocean waters and mountainous wilderness, the city offers the best of both worlds: fabulous shops, restaurants, museums and city parks, complimenting golf courses, ski hills, hiking trails and fishing expeditions.

Open year-round, the world-renowned Butchart Garden occupies 22 ha (55 ac) with stunning floral displays. For the children there is the rose carousel

and children's pavilion. The Seed & Gift Shop carries many local artists' creations. Summer offers evening entertainment, Saturday night fireworks & eco-friendly electrically-operated boat tours of surrounding waters including historic landmarks of cement manufacturing days.

There is also the Abkhazi Garden - an exquisite heritage home and garden located. Prince and Princess Abkhazi began creating their garden in 1946. This was the year they married and settled in

Victoria, after living separate lives touched by both privilege and tragedy. They immediately began to develop their one-acre property, and continued to maintain and improve their wonderful garden throughout their lives together.

The garden is very discreet from the street, with only hints of what exists beyond the hornbeam hedge. What the visitor does find is a garden that embraces a natural landscape that is unique to Victoria. The garden is blessed

with dramatic glaciated rocky slopes, magnificent native Garry oaks and gorgeous vistas. The garden is designed to make the most of these remarkable features and it is the Abkhazis' response to their landscape that qualifies it as a stunning example of West Coast design.

Craigdarroch Castle is an imposing Victorian mansion completed in 1890 for Robert and Joan Dunsmuir, Scottish immigrants who made their fortune from



Craigdarroch Castle



Vancouver Island coal. It is an easy climb up the 87 stairs, stopping on all of the four floors to tour the various rooms and then to the tower for a panoramic view of Victoria, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the snow capped Olympic Mountains. There are volunteer docents (information providers) available throughout the Castle.

Craigflower was one of Vancouver Island's first European farming

communities, established in 1853 along Victoria's Gorge Waterway. The Puget Sound Agricultural Company, owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, established farms to reduce the need for importing goods from abroad, and to meet the Hudson's Bay Company's obligations to Britain to support colonization. On lands purchased from chiefs of the indigenous aboriginal people, Kenneth McKenzie oversaw construction of

a self-sufficient settlement.

The Kosapsom Nation's ancestors left behind ash deposits, the shells from the seafood they ate and used, and tools made from stone and bone. The oldest artifact found so far is a crystal quartz microblade (like a small stone razor blade) dating back approximately 2,500 years. Today, the original Georgian Manor house, partly built on the old H.B.C. post-and-beam design, still stands amid fields and gardens, and across the bridge, the oldest remaining schoolhouse

in western Canada gives children re-enactment opportunities to experience Victorian attitudes about schooling.

With an architecture described as both "San Francisco Victorian" and "English Gingerbread," the heritage Emily Carr House is on the must-see list of attractions in Victoria.

Centrally located only four blocks from Victoria's Inner Harbour and the Provincial Legislature buildings, Emily Carr House offers



Emily Carr House



its visitors a chance to gain an insight into Canada's first, and best known, independent artist and writer.

Emily Carr was born here in 1871, a scant six months after British Columbia moved from British colonial status to becoming a province of the world's newest nation. She used her brushes and pens to proclaim her pride in this part of Canada for the rest of her life.

The Maritime Museum of British Columbia is a principal maritime museum on the Pacific Coast of Canada, and one of the major maritime museums on the West Coast of North America. The museum is housed in the historic 1889 Provincial Law Courts building situated in Bastion Square in Victoria BC.

Visitors can explore an exciting world of BC maritime history, starting with permanent museum exhibits: explorers and navigation, pirates, the fort and the city, ship

building and fishing, shipwrecks etc

There is also The Royal British Columbia Museum. Through three unique galleries, the museum showcases the human and natural history of British Columbia, and features periodic exhibitions of international renown.

There are many other attractions in Victoria among them China town : Fisgard St. between Store St. and Government St. The street is decorated with Chinese ornaments including The Gates of Harmonious

Interest. There are some great Chinese restaurants, Chinese fruit and vegetable stores, bubble tea and coffee shops and Canada's smallest 'road', Fan Tan Alley!

In the summertime the Inner Harbour is full of artists, buskers and other entertainers. The music performers are not permitted to stay in one place for very long, so the entertainment is constantly changing. It still may seem too long with some of the Bagpipers. Many find it fascinating to watch the float planes taking off and

Happy shoppers in Nanaimo



Inner Harbour



landing also. In the springtime, the inner harbour is filled up with many beautiful flowers.

As the second largest city on Vancouver Island, Nanaimo promises a lively and unique urban

Inuit gallery



experience. Downtown along Commercial Street, Victoria Crescent, and Fitzwilliam Street is a thriving mix of restaurants, music venues, shops and galleries.

Home to events like the harbor's Bathtub Race, the city of 75,000 offers outdoor opportunities from full-moon kayaking to golfing. Boat-fresh seafood graces tables at an ever-increasing number of restaurants. This gateway to island adventures is easily reached by

fast ferry or floatplane from downtown Vancouver or by scheduled ferries from Horseshoe Bay and Tsawwassen.

Nanaimo's downtown boasts a half-dozen galleries, most representing local, Vancouver Island and B.C. artists. The urban core around Commercial Street, in fact, is officially known as the Arts District in reflecting the beehive of artistic activity found in these colorful haunts as well as at the

Maritime
Museum



The magical ferry ride



800-seat Port Theatre on the waterfront. The latter routinely hosts theatre, concert and dance performances.

Shopping options in Nanaimo fall roughly into two categories: downtown boutiques, independent

retailers and one-of-a-kind specialty shops; and suburban shopping malls, among them the largest of their kind Woodgrove Featuring over 140 stores and services including The Bay, Walmart, Winners, Old Navy, Pier 1 Imports, Sport Chek, Toys R Us,

Nanaimo
in 1945



Chapters and Avalon Cinemas.

At the foot of Commercial Street near Terminal Street are several excellent, bargain-packed bookstores packed with thousands of used and remaindered titles. Stylish men's and women's clothing outlets carrying Canadian designers, a marine maps specialty shop and a 6400sq ft/595sq m kitchenware, furniture and jewellery superstore known as Flying Fish are also in the downtown core.

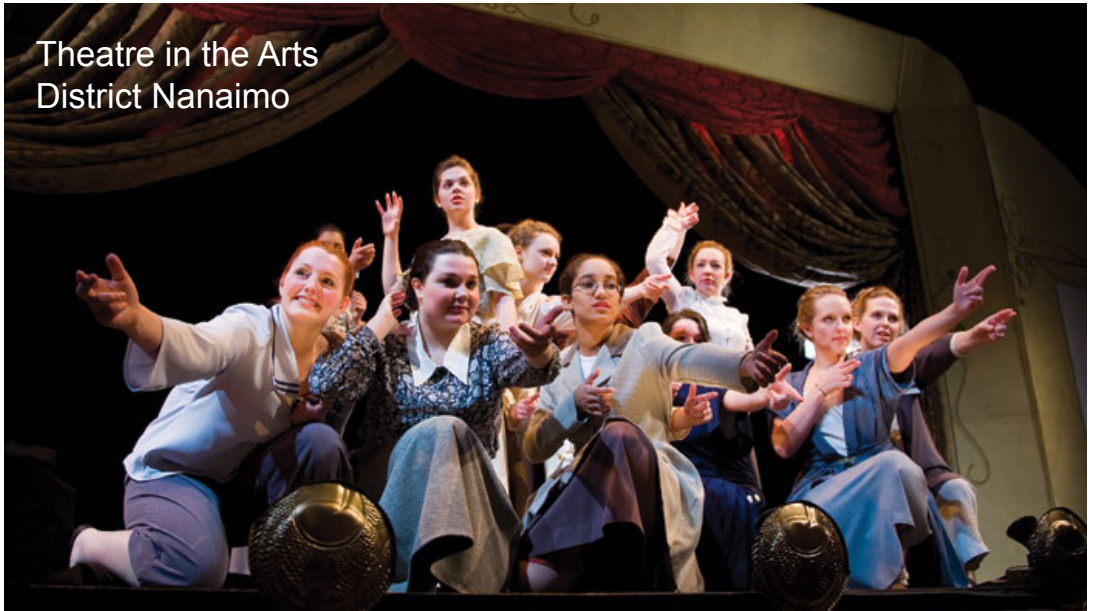
The Commercial Street area is officially tagged the "Arts District" for good reason. Gallery 223, a cooperative space is in a heritage

building where artists work in a warren of studios on the second floor. Another highlight: Hill's Native Art, carries masks, totems, talking sticks and Cowichan knit sweaters among other treasures.

The new look Nanaimo Museum captures the city's history with archival images, colorful memorabilia and state-of-the-art displays. Revitalized and relocated, the museum moved downtown in the summer of 2008 to a \$7.4 million ground-floor quadrant of the newly minted Vancouver Island Conference Centre.

But the cities are only half the story when it comes to an exciting

Theatre in the Arts District Nanaimo





Woodgrove
Shopping Centre

holiday on Vancouver Island. In delights of the countryside and issue 74 ITM will describe the wilderness on the island.



Woolly mammoth at the
Royal British Columbia
Museum