

CITY GUIDE

VANCOUVER



➤ **Why Go Now:** Outdoor adventures, visionary art, and First Nations–inspired fare are on the itinerary



"Vancouver is a wonder city," Canadian author Stephen Leacock once wrote. "It has the combined excellence of nature's gift and man's handiwork."

Today this statement rings truer than ever. The glittering glass metropolis—set against temperate rainforest, ocean inlets, and the Coast Mountains of British Columbia—keeps finding new ways to shine.

Over the past five years, the city has taken important steps toward reconciliation with the native Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh people, and a thriving indigenous tourism industry has grown along with it. More restaurants and bars are sourcing local ingredients—from foraged berries to Douglas fir infusions—and a booming brewery and distillery scene rivals that of Portland.

An ethic of sustainability permeates the culture of Vancouver, which brims with community gardens and farmers markets, plus LEED-certified buildings and more than 275 miles of bike paths. You can now pedal from the cedars of Stanley Park to the nudists of Wreck Beach. From there, mountains, islands, and wonder await.

—Serena Renner



In Vancouver's Coal Harbour, kayakers skim alongside city skyscrapers.



Chinatown's Rennie Museum offers visitors an artful eyeful.

Room Check

- TRENDY
- NEW
- CLASSIC

THE DOUGLAS

A star of the new Parq Vancouver casino complex, The Douglas mixes playful sophistication with Pacific Northwest earthiness. An illuminated, glass-enclosed Douglas fir tree presides over the check-in counter, and wood features in the decor throughout, along with mid-century furnishings and views of Vancouver. On the sixth-floor rooftop, The Victor restaurant sends out classic steaks plus regional seafood such as Dungeness crab and British Columbia king salmon.

EXCHANGE HOTEL

Unveiled in 2018, the EXchange Hotel occupies 11 floors of the 1929 Stock Exchange Building. During its LEED Platinum conversion, the first in Canada, the Edwardian facade was integrated into a modern tower. A Mediterranean restaurant, bar, and café—named after the Greek island Hydra—opened this spring.

ROSEWOOD HOTEL GEORGIA

The marble fireplace and grand staircase in the 1927 lobby hark back to the days when Nat King Cole stayed here. In 2011 the hotel debuted the indulgent Sense spa and sleek new rooms with soaking tubs. In the basement speakeasy, Prohibition, find a throwback haunt for live music, creative cocktails, and traditional pours of absinthe.

Modern History

New energy revitalizes one of Vancouver's oldest neighborhoods

When you spot the terracotta-tiled Millennium Gate and the dragon-topped red lampposts, you know you've arrived in Vancouver's vibrant Chinatown. For a primer on the neighborhood, join **HISTORICAL CHINATOWN TOURS** to venture inside 100-year-old clan houses, where Chinese elders play mah-jongg, and behind the scenes at **SAI WOO**, the modern rendition of a restaurant that first opened in 1925. The sign out front is a crowd-funded replica of the original, which pays homage to Pender Street's neon glory days. Other highlights include the **DR. SUN YAT-SEN CLASSICAL CHINESE GARDEN**, an oasis of flowering trees, koi ponds, and stone courtyards built in Ming dynasty style, and the **RENNIE MUSEUM**, showcasing one of Canada's biggest contemporary art collections (by appointment) in the district's oldest building. This summer the **CHINATOWN STORYTELLING CENTER** opens with displays detailing the arduous path from Chinese immigrant to Canadian citizen. After dark, get a taste of the dining scene that's redefining Chinatown. Opt for mantou buns and "kick-ass fried rice" at **BAO BEI** or Japanese-accented Italian fare at its raved-about sister spot, **KISSA TANTO**. For a nightcap, try the Opium Sour at **THE KEEFER BAR**, a sexy twist on a traditional Chinese apothecary.

Choose Your Adventure

Whether you're into art or the outdoors, there's a game plan for you



Nature Lovers

1 Walk through the rainforest of **Stanley Park** with Candace Campo, the First Nations owner of **Talaysay Tours**, and you'll start to see cedar bark as clothing, hemlock needles as the makings for tea. "The forest is our grocery store, our pharmacy," Campo says. Take that notion to **Deep Cove**, for a paddle up Indian Arm before checking out the **North Shore Spirit Trail**, a new greenway luring pedestrians, joggers, bikers, and in-line skaters.

Culture Vultures

2 The **UBC Museum of Anthropology** curates innovative programs and in 2017 opened the Gallery of Northwest Coast Masterworks. Led by **Vancouver Art Gallery**, the contemporary art scene has expanded with the new **Polygon Gallery**, dedicated to Canadian photography. Fans of Coast Salish art should stay overnight at **Skwachàys Lodge**, where 18 rooms were designed by indigenous artists like Richard Shorty, whose work is sold in the lodge gallery.

Music Mavens

3 Downtown's Granville Entertainment District is still one of the best spots to catch a show, thanks to a trifecta of historic venues—**Vogue**, **Orpheum**, **Commodore Ballroom**—that attract top talent. In other areas, discover hidden gems such as the **Rogue Folk Club**, which stages bluegrass and roots music in a churchlike hall in Kitsilano. Below the cobblestone streets of Gastown, **Guilt & Co** offers pay-what-you-can jazz, soul, and cabaret.

Craft Connoisseurs

4 **Vancouver Foodie Tours** will shepherd you to the tastiest treats at the **Granville Island Public Market**: Oyama sausages, Benton Brothers cheeses, Lee's honey donuts. The neighborhood of East Van, aka "Yeast Van," hosts breweries and distilleries including **Bomber** and **Off the Rail** brewing and **Odd Society Spirits**. Go behind the tanks with **Canadian Craft Tours**. Nearby, the semimonthly **Eastside Flea** is a hip gathering of indie makers.



The seawall trail encircling iconic Stanley Park draws cyclists and runners.

Go With Nat Geo

To book these trips: natgeoexpeditions.com/explore or 888-966-8687

FOR LANDLUBBERS

On the eight-day "Canadian Rockies by Rail and Trail," travelers visit Vancouver before boarding the glass-domed **Rocky Mountaineer** train for an epic journey to the stunning landscapes of Banff, Yoho, and Jasper National Parks.

FOR SEAFARERS

Passengers embark from Seattle for "Exploring British Columbia and the San Juan Islands," an eight-day cruise along the coast to British Columbia with island hikes, kayak paddles into hidden coves, and a final stop in Vancouver.

EAT IT VANCOUVER



Native Roots

A pioneer of First Nations-inspired cuisine, the indigenous-owned **Salmon n' Bannock** serves the namesake *bannock* (a traditional quick bread) with mushrooms, as well as maple-cured salmon and slow-cooked bison. **Mr. Bannock**, the city's first indigenous food truck, began offering Squamish-style smoked meats and clay-oven creations last year. Head to **Forage** for dishes made with wild ingredients, and belly up to **Botanist** for cocktails like Candy Cap Magic, which arrives in a cloud of wood-scented dry ice.



Standout Sushi

The restaurant that introduced flame-seared *aburi* and pressed *oshi* sushi to Canada, **Miku** makes its own sake to pair with the Aburi Prime platter of nine rice bites topped with everything from jalapeno-spiced sockeye to Japanese Wagyu. **Kishimoto** offers six types of *oshi*—rectangular rice pedestals for delicacies such as pickled mackerel and flamed eel. Be sure to arrive early at **Raisu** for the Oceans Offering: 12 multicolored *oshi* squares presented in a bamboo box. The izakaya makes only 10 orders each night.



Dumpling Trail

Dumplings reign supreme in Richmond, an epicenter of Asian cuisine. Start at **Su Hang Restaurant** with intricately pleated *xiao long bao* (Shanghai soup dumplings) stuffed with pork and broth. The nearby **Dinesty Dumpling House** serves eight types of soup dumplings, plus pan-fried *guo tie* and water-boiled *shui jiao*. In summer, stroll to **The Dumpling Master** at the Richmond Night Market, whose gyoza range from kimchi beef to vegan spinach. Korean dumplings, or *mandu*, are a popular side dish at **Samsoonie Noodle & Rice**.



Tea Time

The Vancouver version of a London fog means a frothy Earl Grey latte laced with vanilla syrup. Just about every café makes one, and the flavor has seeped into **Earnest Ice Cream**, baked goods, and local beers. **Granville Island Tea Company** supplies 12 loose-leaf varieties of Earl Grey for custom cups, while **Parallel 49th Café & Lucky Doughnuts** boils its own vanilla bean syrup. **Cartems Donuts** has created a London fog variety stuffed with tea-infused whipped cream and iced with Earl Grey glaze. It also sells tasty vegan options.

Tastes of the Place

Indigenous, Asian, and European influences flavor the melting pot



The Aburi Prime sushi platter at Miku (left) and head bartender Jeff Savage at Botanist