

[TRAVEL]



# Vision of “Vancity”

A LOVE OF NATURE AND VIBRANT CHINESE CULTURE IMBUE VANCOUVER WITH UNIQUE SUMMER GETAWAY CHARM BY AMBER GIBSON

**V**ancouverites are a relaxed, outdoorsy crew. It rains an awful lot here, so on clear summer days, it seems like the entire city is recharging—greedily soaking up rays for the cool stretches ahead.

My Harbour Air captain, for example, was bragging about how he went snorkeling, mountain biking, skiing, and kayaking in the same month. I was skeptical, but happened to know that Vancouver Island has stellar diving, especially if you’re looking for giant Pacific octopi to pull your goggles off. This access to nature attracts residents from diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds. The typical city experience disappears the moment one sets

foot in Stanley Park, for example, and a walk or run along the seawall is a must on a sunny day. Pacific Spirit Regional Park, on the west side of the city, is even larger and wilder, but stay on the trails, as there can be coyotes on the scene.

The cobblestone streets of the Gastown neighborhood are full of boutiques, cafés, bars, and art galleries, and the industrial brick former warehouses of Yaletown have been turned into a similarly hip stretch, home to great restaurants like Blue Water Cafe and Minami. Kitsilano, affectionately nicknamed “Kits” and just next to Kits Beach, is one of the city’s oldest residential nabes—the Craftsman-style row homes, once a hippie enclave, now constitute some of the most desirable real estate in the city.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

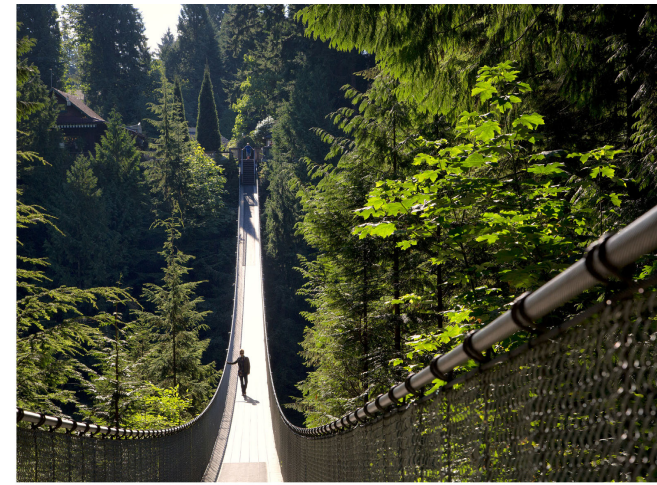
Vancouver International Airport (YVR) is actually located in Richmond, just a 20-minute drive from downtown. Rideshare apps like Uber are banned in Canada’s province of British Columbia, so you’ll need to take a taxi or public transportation. From the airport, the Canada Line rapid transit rail system is a great option, with stops at Yaletown, Vancouver City Centre, and the waterfront, and the YVR station is centrally located between international and domestic terminals.

Vancouver (“Vancity” to locals) is the most Asian city outside of Asia; in Richmond, ethnic Chinese people are actually the majority of the population (53%), and the Chinese fare here is deliciously authentic and the tea culture wonderfully sophisticated. Visit Silk Road Tea or Yuan Chuan Premium Tea Collection for a tasting and discover the nuances of raw versus fermented *pu-erb*, then buy a set of celadon porcelain and teak tea trays for conducting your own ceremonies at home.

## ATTRACTIONS

### CAPILANO SUSPENSION BRIDGE

Immerse yourself in an evergreen rain-forest just 15 minutes from downtown, then thrill to incredible canopy views from this bridge, built in 1889 (and updated frequently since) above the Capilano River, or follow a narrow cantilevered walkway along the edge of a granite precipice at Cliffwalk. Forest gazing reaches new heights in the Treetops Adventure, where seven bridges crisscross the canopy to observation platforms anchored by massive Douglas fir trees. The newest addition to the park is the Cliff House Restaurant, which just opened this year and serves local wines and sustainable seafood. **3735 Capilano Road, North Vancouver, capbridge.com**



Facing page: Harbour Air Seaplane Tour over Vancouver; Right: Capilano Suspension Bridge

### RICHMOND NIGHT MARKET

Each weekend, more than 100 vendors dish up mouthwatering Asian street food and other multicultural eats to thousands of hungry foodies under pink LED cherry blossom trees. There’s live music, silly carnival games, and an assortment of retail vendors, too, but the fare is the biggest draw. Come for the BBQ squid, fried crab claws, smoked pork belly, shaved ice, and mochi covered strawberries. One stand not to miss is Chef James Xin Jiang Man BBQ. His lamb skewers, grilled with red chili pepper and roasted cumin seeds, are divine. The market runs every weekend until October 8. **8351 River Road, Richmond, richmondnightmarket.com**

## WHERE TO STAY

### FAIRMONT HOTEL VANCOUVER

After a four-year renovation, including the building of a new lobby and restaurant, this “Castle in the City,” made famous for its gargoyles and green-clad copper roof, is once more the premier luxury accommodation in town. Its fourteenth floor heritage suites have been restored with romantic, gilded grandeur, including new carpeting, marble flooring, and restored millwork. Princess

Elizabeth stayed here during the hotel’s grand opening in 1939, and many heirloom design elements have been preserved from that era, including bronze gateways and English hawthorn guest room doors. **900 West Georgia Street, fairmont.com/hotel-vancouver**

### SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, VANCOUVER

One of just two Shangri-La hotels in North America, this Asian-inspired plush property is at once elegant and understated. Market by Jean-Georges serves light, healthy fare (including Ocean Wise seafood) alongside decadent treats like black truffle mashed potatoes. The health center is first rate, with an outdoor pool and yoga studio. Chi, The Spa is arguably the best such place in town, offering luxurious private suites and signature treatments rooted in traditional Chinese medicine, along with facials incorporating wild local seaweed. **1128 West Georgia Street, shangri-la.com/vancouver**

### THE DOUGLAS

Named for the majestic fir tree type that made Vancouver a booming lumber town in the mid 1800s, this new 188-room hotel in the Park Vancouver (and a member of Autograph Collection Hotels) brings the outdoors inside with



"The Den" at The Douglas

warm wood tones and a sixth-floor lobby that spills out to a rooftop terrace. Guest rooms are clean and modern, with industrial accents and smart design, a relaxing hideaway from Parq's vibrant entertainment and dining. Aesop bath amenities and a minibar stocked with locally curated sips and snacks are enticing touches. **45 Smithe Street, thedouglasvancouver.com**

### DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

#### RICHMOND

Just 20 minutes from downtown, Richmond is a suburb worth exploring for anyone interested in Chinese food and culture. Its International Buddhist Temple is a stunning example of imperial architecture modeled after the Forbidden City in Beijing. You'll find the best dim sum outside Hong Kong at restaurants like Chef Tony Seafood Restaurant and Sun Sui Wah. For incredible home cooking, book a reservation at Hoi Tong, where there are only eight tables and the 81-year-old chef

is in the kitchen every night serving roasted squab, sweet and sour pork and fried milk with crab and tofu. **visitrichmondbc.com**

#### HARBOUR AIR SEAPLANE TOUR

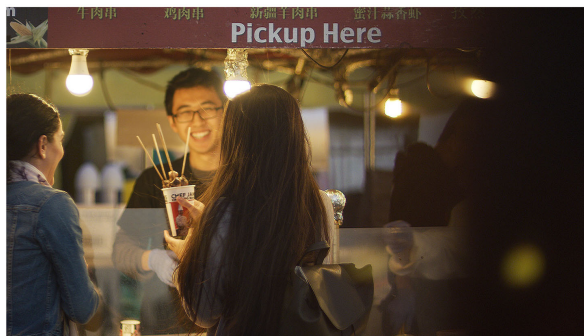
Take a panoramic city tour from the sky on the world's first fully carbon neutral airline. Try to spot your hotel before swooping northwest towards the Sea-to-Sky highway. Seaplanes take off just next to downtown, where cruise ships dock, and you can request to be co-pilot for

an up-close look at the Canadian-made De Havilland aircraft's controls. You can even charter a plane to fly over glaciers and land on a secret alpine lake for a romantic picnic. **Vancouver Harbour Flight Centre, 1055 Canada Place, harbourair.com**

### DINE AND DRINK

#### ROYAL DINETTE

This is the best restaurant in Vancouver's financial district, with consistently cre-



TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF AVENUE 10  
BOTTOM PHOTO: TOURISM RICHMOND



The Forage

ative dishes inspired by local ingredients. Chef Eva Chin isn't afraid to take risks, like topping a salad of foraged greens with garlic granola instead of typical croutons, tossing al dente spaghetti in fermented chili sauce, and making a verdant frozen yogurt from sorrel, a signature dessert paired with smoked honey Japanese sponge cake and lime meringue for summer. Cocktails here are complex and well-balanced, and pair poetically with food. **905 Dunsmuir Street, royaldinette.ca**

#### FORAGE

A leader in Vancouver's locavore movement, every ingredient at this shared-plates restaurant—from vegetables to fish, meat to cheese—comes from British Columbia. This philosophy extends to the drink list, which features exclusively regional craft beers, wines, and spirits. Vegetarians eat like queens and kings as well, with dishes like spruce-tip gnocchi and cheesy mushrooms on caraway rye, but the hay-aged pork loin and butcher's cut bison are a symphony for carnivores. Save room for the elderflower and *fromage frais* cream puff in a pool of gin-soaked blueberries. **1300 Robson Street, foragevancouver.com**

#### BLUE WATER CAFE

This Yaletown classic was a founding member of the Vancouver Aquarium's Ocean Wise program's commitment to sustainable seafood, and its seafood tower is truly a sight to behold. At any moment, there can be more than a dozen varieties of British Columbia oysters available, along with sustainably-farmed local caviar and live tanks filled with lobster, spot prawns, and king crab. Chef Frank Pabst has been leading the kitchen for more than 15 years, and his service runs like clockwork, precise and professional, with a hint of casual Canadian charm. **1095 Hamilton Street, bluwaterecafe.net**

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