

CANADA

18 UNIQUE THINGS TO DO IN VANCOUVER

BY PAUL JOSEPH | UPDATED JULY 17, 2019

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There are very few cities like Vancouver, where you can ski in the morning and hit the beach in the afternoon. The seaport city in British Columbia is studded with sites of natural beauty, including snow-dusted mountains, sandy beaches, forest trails, kayaking routes and green spaces, with opportunities to have plenty of unique travel experiences.



Downtown Vancouver at sunset (Photo: Magnus Larsson via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0)

navigate North America. The museum's outdoor exhibits include an impressive undersea research submersible called *Ben Franklin* and a workshop where craftsfolk build model ships, some of which are on display within the museum.

1905 Ogden Ave.



Vancouver Maritime Museum at night (Photo: Colin Knowles via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0)

Celebrate renewal and growth at Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival

In April each year, the cherry trees in Vancouver, as with Japan, become cheery with pink fluffy blossom. What better way to celebrate that annual renewal than with a festival that brings people together through music, dance, poetry and food. The festival aims to celebrate the end of winter in a lively, positive, social manner that brings the same kind of joy and harmony that blossom itself brings. Simultaneously it is an opportunity to remember that citizens of Vancouver hail from all corners of the earth from Hokkaido to Paris. Check online for the latest events arranged throughout April.

Check out a professional ice hockey match

But the people, too, are at the heart of what makes Vancouver such a special place. There is a creative and entrepreneurial spirit here, evidenced in a thriving local art scene and craft-beer industry that rival the best in the world. It's easy to kick back in style too, with winter sports, mountain biking and forest exploration some of the common pastimes that can be enjoyed there. Nocturnal attractions are also plentiful, with bustling bars and pubs dotted across the city and an impressive culinary scene.

But don't make the mistake of thinking that downtown Vancouver is where the attractions start and end. Walk or jump on some public transport and within minutes you'll be hanging with the locals in one of the city's distinctive suburbs. To whet your appetite, we've scanned the city to present you with 18 unique and diverse attractions available to you in Vancouver right now.

Head to the top of the Grouse

Grouse Mountain is the best choice of day-trip for lovers of the great outdoors. For the more active, it can perhaps even be done in half a day from Vancouver's downtown. The popular recreation site's slopes start to rise right from the northern edge of the city, with a network of ski trails slaloming down from the mountaintop during the winter. Most people gun for the top in summer up what is known as the Grouse Grind, a gruelling 2,830-step slog over 1.8 miles (2.9 km) through a pretty forest. The alternative, less sweaty, route is via the gondolas. There are numerous other hiking trails on the mountain here so you can make a quick trip of it, or embark on more of a multi-day hike.

Trail head: 6400 Nancy Greene Way



Looking down Grouse Mountain (Photo: Falco Ermert via Flickr / CC BY 2.0)

Get a taste for the city on a food tour

It is often said that to truly understand a country, you must eat its food. While it would be overstating things to say this is also true of cities, there is no doubt that sampling local delicacies and cooking techniques can enrich your experience of visiting unfamiliar places. In Vancouver, the food scene can be explored as part of a number of organised tours, taking you on a journey across the city's gastronomic landscape. One company offering such culinary excursions is Vancouver Foodie Tours, who offer a variety of choices, including tours of Vancouver's renowned Chinese and gourmet eateries, the hugely popular tourist attraction of Granville Island with its array of independent food producers, and the city's vibrant food truck scene. For a whole range of excellent guided food tours, including neighbourhood-specific explorations, take a look at the options guided by locals [at Getyourguide here](#).



Food-lovers enjoying macaroons (Photo: Foodie Tours)

Take a tour of a city neighbourhood with a local via Getyourguide

If you'd like to get to know a specific area of the city better through the insight of a local guide, then there are plenty of walking, bus and cycling tours available. Perhaps your aim is to better understand the history or architecture of an area, or simply to uncover some of Vancouver's hidden gems. Tours are an ideal option for larger groups and families, who prefer to let somebody in the know take care of the smaller details and planning. There's also the invaluable chance to get a unique local perspective on Vancouver that might not be garnered from the guidebooks. [Click here](#) to take a look at some of the many local tours available in Vancouver with Getyourguide.



Granville Street in Downtown (Photo: Cathy McKie via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0)

Find inner-city peace at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden

In recent years, Vancouver's Chinese population has grown at a rate of knots, and most of these arrivals will have quickly become familiar with the city's Classical Chinese Garden, which is named in honour of the founder of the Republic of China. To many visitors it is a somewhat lesser known treasure, but certainly worth a visit. Nestled within the city's Chinatown district, it was built in 1986 to enhance the understanding between Chinese and Western cultures. Dotted with covered walkways, tiny courtyards and pretty pavilions, its design and layout are modelled on the private gardens developed in the city of Suzhou during the Ming Dynasty. At first, it can seem like a maze of walls within walls, but once you've got your bearings it is a serene, relaxing and beautiful place to explore.

578 Carrall St.



The lush grounds of the Chinese Gardens (Photo: Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden)

Train you palate at Vancouver International Wine Festival

You might be surprised to learn that Vancouver has its own wine producing region, both in Fraser Valley and on Vancouver Island. While that may not put the city at the top of the global wine-production list, the city's International Wine Festival most certainly stake's the city's claim as one of the most discerning places for wine lovers to visit. In previous years, over 750 wines from 16 countries have been on show in the ever-popular tasting room, and the event has earned the accolade of Canada's best wine and hospitality event. International tastings and various other events, seminars and dinners mean that there are plenty of ways to find a new favourite tippie.



Wine flows at the festival (Photo: Courtesy of Vancouver International Wine Festival)

Delve into the city's craft scene on a brewery tour

Craft beer has become one of Vancouver's most vibrant cottage industries in recent years, with a vast number of small, independent breweries creating their own products to distribute around the city and beyond. Whereas traditionally brewery tours have involved traipsing around large-scale manufacturing plants, in Vancouver it is a more local and immersive experience. One of the best companies to offer such excursions is Vancouver Brewery Tours, who offer trips that take in the city's craft beer hotspots. The tours are held at a leisurely pace and with plenty of samples to taste along the way. There are a number of different tours on offer, including some that pair beer tastings with sightseeing. More information and a list of tours available [can be found here](#).



Tour guests enjoy a sociable beer sample session (Photo: Vancouver Brewery Tours)

Explore new frontiers at H.R. MacMillan Space Centre

When you take the kids on vacation it can sometimes be a challenge to think of ways to keep them entertained – especially on bad weather days. In Vancouver, one of the best options is the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, which provides an action-packed day out for the family. Whatever your age, there'll be something for you to enjoy, and as an educational experience it's not just for kids either, as there are plenty of exhibits designed to offer a wealth of knowledge about the mysteries of space. Some of the stand-out features include a planetarium and a theatre that puts on shows and live demonstrations throughout the day.

1100 Chestnut St.



A father and daughter learn about the wonders of space (Photo: H.R. MacMillan Space Centre)

Shed your worries (and clothes) at Wreck Beach

If there's ever going to be a time when you summon the courage to take your clothes off in public, it's on a naturist beach in a far-away location where there's little chance of bumping into Maureen from the post office. In Vancouver, such a place exists and it's called Wreck Beach. North America's largest Naturist beach, the internationally-acclaimed 7.8 kilometres stretch of golden sand has a clothes-optional policy, so if you're with others who prefer to retain their modesty, that's fine too. But a word of caution: in the summer months it becomes the busiest beach in Canada, averaging up to 14,000 visitors daily.



Vancouver Maritime Museum at night (Photo: Colin Knowles via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0)

Connect with nature at VanDusen Botanical Gardens

Stretching over 22 hectares, VanDusen Botanical Gardens is a former golf course that was converted in 1975 in order to exhibit and protect some of the world's finest flora. With the mild Vancouver climate, the gardens are able to display a collection of over 11,000 different plant species from across the world. There are organised tours and activities held within the park, and it is also possible to wander solo, or make use of the sitting areas that are set against the vibrant colours of the gardens. Art installations, a restaurant and a cafe also add to the experience.

5251 Oak St.

Take on the explorer's spirit at Vancouver Maritime Museum

Housed within a building inspired by the tempestuous sea, with its sharp angles representing huge waves, is the Vancouver Maritime Museum. Exhibits depict the history of Pacific and Arctic exploration, in all its glory and danger. The most impressive inclusion is the *St. Roch* an Arctic exploration vessel made from douglas fir wood, that remarkably withstood ice and waves alike as it became the first ship to circum-

navigate North America. The museum's outdoor exhibits include an impressive undersea research submersible called *Ben Franklin* and a workshop where craftsfolk build model ships, some of which are on display within the museum.

1905 Ogden Ave.



Vancouver Maritime Museum at night (Photo: Colin Knowles via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0)

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Check out a professional ice hockey match

Be it international competition, or the city's favourite team, the Vancouver Canucks, hockey is the national sport of Canada. The Canucks play at the highest level in the NHL, which also features teams from the US, so you are likely to see some top-level ice hockey if you decide to attend a game. The season runs from October through June and the pace and skill out there on the ice is electrifying. Tickets to big games sell out well in advance so be sure to book ahead if you plan on attending.

Rogers Arena, 800 Griffiths Way



The Canadian national team in action (Photo: s.yume via Flickr / CC BY 2.0)

Reach for the canopy in Capilano Suspension Bridge & Park

Fixed above the Capilano River, the suspension bridge gives visitors a chance to walk among the cedar treetops over the fast-moving waters of the river below. Built in 1888, the suspension bridge and surrounding park have become a popular way to experience Vancouver's forestry. As well as the 450-metre long suspension bridge, the park also offers a cliff walk, where cliff-face walking paths and a network of footbridges afford stunning views of the river and the park's cedar trees from high above the forest floor.

3735 Capilano Rd.



A dramatic view of The Capilano Suspension Bridge (Photo: Phil Marion via Flickr)

Shop for souvenirs at Lonsdale Quay Market

Unveiled over three decades ago to mark Vancouver's centennial as part of Expo 86, this carnival-style marketplace has remained a popular attraction within the city's north-shore district ever since. Exemplifying the area's transformation from an industrial hub to something more cosmopolitan, the market displays wares from a wide range of local artists, as well as several food vendors. If visitors are looking for what is new and exciting in Vancouver's culinary and artistic world, they are likely to find it here.

123 Carrie Cates Ct.



A neon sign for Longsdale Quay Market (Photo: Free 2 Be via Flickr)

Go green at Granville Island

Making use of its industrial heritage, this island peninsula in Vancouver's main shopping district has made use of old buildings and factories to create a vibrant marketplace and cultural hub. Granville Island features an eclectic mix of cultural attractions and artisans, such as sake makers and pottery studios. As part of its strong focus on sustainability, the island has implemented a zero-waste policy, so dining out on the exotic flavours from the butchers, fishmongers or food stalls can be enjoyed while doing your bit for the environment.



Entrance to Granville Island (Photo: Ruocaled via Flickr / CC BY 2.0)

Get a healthy dose of Shakespeare with Bard on the Beach

Over the course of three months in the summer (June-Sept), overlooking the waters of False Creek and English Bay runs one of Canada's largest Shakespeare festivals: Bard on the Beach. The festival's organisers have been running the event since 1990, and the range of events is impressive, with not only the celebrate of the great Bard's work, but educational workshops and other theatre performances gracing the boards throughout the summer. Opera, choirs and other cultural events complement the year's main selection of four or five different plays, which are usually derived from Shakespeare's complete oeuvre.

Vanier Park, 1000 Chestnut St.



Bard on the Beach (Photo: Maxine Bulloch courtesy of Bard on the Beach)

Learn about rural life at Maplewood Farm

Boasting more than 200 social farm animals and birds, Maplewood Farm offers an authentic rural experience, only 20 minutes' drive from downtown Vancouver. The converted dairy farm is home to horses, cows, goats, sheep, birds, rabbits and pigs, ensuring it brings a distinct country feel to the hustle and bustle of city life. Designed to be educational, the farm is highly family-friendly, offering visitors the chance to feed the animals, learn about animal husbandry and ride horses.

405 Seymour River Pl.



A curious piggy at Maplewood Farm (Photo: Mike via Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0)

Experience a different kind of herb

Sorry kids, this one is strictly for the adults. As of October 2018, cannabis use for both medicinal and recreational purposes became legal in Canada, with similar laws of use to those of alcohol. If you are already a user, or perhaps are curious to give it a try, then there are a couple of places that source their herb from local farms with official government licences to sell the product in various forms. One of the most popular is Village Bloomery. Please bear in mind that laws outside Canada are likely to be different and this should be considered a ‘when in Canada’ only experience, and most definitely not a souvenir.

Village Bloomery: Inner Courtyard, 206 – 1540 W 2nd Ave.

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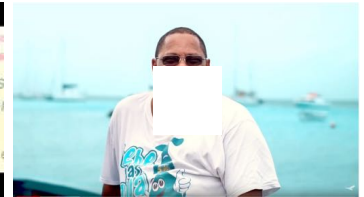


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