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Photo Credit Denay Piatka, Roger Creek

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Photo Credit Megan Warrender

P♥RT ALBERNI

The Heart of the Island



Photo Credit Sharlene Patterson



Vancouver Island is such a spectacular place to call home. We are blessed to live in such a beautiful place, with unique communities. We want to take you on a journey through our amazing Island. Let's get exploring!

We start our journey at home in Port Alberni. You may have heard the term "Heart of the Island" when describing Port Alberni, and it's true on many levels. Not only are we surrounded by 360° mountain views, spectacular waterfalls, old growth forest, and a beautiful community, we're also quite literally located in the Heart of the Island. Port Alberni is located on the traditional territories of the Tseshaht and Hupacasath First Nations of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, where for time immemorial, people have prospered on these lands. Most well known for the Alberni Inlet, Sproat Lake, Great Central Lake, Mount Arrowsmith, and it's connection to Vancouver Island's West Coast, Port Alberni offers the Island lifestyle to all.

Nestled in the Alberni Valley, an outdoor lifestyle is a given. Drive 10 minutes in any direction and you'll find yourself surrounded by old growth forest, creeks, waterfalls, and trails to explore the area. If you're looking for an easy stroll, check out Maplehurst Trail, located up Kitsuksis Creek with varying difficulties of trails; stay on the upper loop for an easy walk, or head down to the creek for a slightly more challenging loop. Roger Creek is a popular family trail located off of the Port Alberni Hwy, with many trails to choose from, you'll quickly find yourself so deep in the forest that you forget you just got off the highway. If it's a challenge you're after, the Alberni Inlet Trail offers the best of the West Coast; phase one has a spectacular view point overlooking the Valley and town of Port Alberni after a bit of a challenging trek, phase two takes you through China Creek and along the Inlet, and phase three continues along to Franklin River, for a total of 20km. All the trails in the Valley are full of magnificent ferns, lanky Arbutus trees, tall Sitka's, and lush Cedar trees.

Ever since 2004, Port Alberni has been designated as the Salmon Capital of the world and the World



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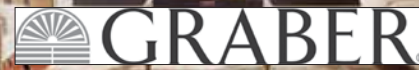


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Fishing Network's - 'Ultimate Fishing Town'. For good reason, every year the salmon travel up the Inlet to make their trek up the fish ladder at Stamp Falls. Stamp Falls Provincial Park is a breathtakingly beautiful park located about 30 minutes from Port Alberni down Beaver Creek Rd; the park offers campsites along the river, hiking trails, and powerful waterfalls. From August to early December, salmon can be seen swimming up the river and falls as they prepare to spawn in the Stamp River. Stamp Falls is a beautiful year-round destination, camping and swimming are popular in the summer when the river runs low, the Salmon run in the fall, the falls rage intensely in the winter, and spring brings wildflowers. Bears are very common in the area, especially during salmon season, so always remember to be bear aware.

Port Alberni is rich in history, starting off with the McLean Mill National Historic Site. What began as a logging town in 1925 can still be seen today. McLean Mill is a year round exhibit on not only Port Alberni's history, but that of Vancouver Island. Logging has been a major part of Vancouver Island's history and the McLean Mill National Historic Site gives us a look back into the early days of settlement. Take a self-guided tour through beautiful forest, check out the living quarters of early loggers, original logging equipment, vintage cars, before taking a walk along the historic Log Train Trail.

Port Alberni has two beautiful harbours, both a must see, Harbour Quay and Victoria Quay. At the entrance of the Quay is a beautiful mural, "Building Relationships, Brick by Brick" depicting the scenes of our First Nations history. Across the street of the mural is the original Port Alberni Train Station, which was built between 1911-1912, connecting Port Alberni to the east side of the Island by rail. One of Harbour Quay's most defining features is the Clock Tower, which after 40 years, is currently undergoing a facelift. The new design of the Clock Tower will showcase traditional Tseshaht art, as well as new structural elements. Walking along the dock of Harbour Quay is a unique experience; with many walking docks that follow the waterfront, Fisherman's Harbour, Tyee Landing, or the Quay's boardwalk and pier. Surrounded entirely by mountains, with Mt. Arrowsmith at your back, the Inlet can either be smooth as glass or choppy and windy.

The Rotary Arts District spans from the historic Rollin

Arts Centre at the top of Argyle down to the Harbour Quay. Home to the Community Arts Council of the Alberni Valley since 1977, the Rollin Arts Centre building has been a prominent feature to the Valley since 1914. It began as a simple two story home for Fred and Ellen Rollin, who spent their time growing a spectacular garden full of unusual species of trees, shrubs, and flowers. Now, the Rollin Arts Centre serves as a gallery for local artists and a gathering place for art enthusiasts who are determined on keeping arts alive in the community.

The Alberni Valley Museum, our local museum, showcasing the history of the Alberni Valley with spectacular Indigenous displays and interactive post colonialism exhibits. What appears to be a rather small space upon entry, the Alberni Valley Museum is home to a large collection of artefacts and 17,000 historical photographs. The museum has a unique visible storage system which allows visitors to truly experience history. Explore local Indigenous culture, original logging tools, and clothing throughout the years.

Victoria Quay is home to traditional Nuuchahnulth Welcome Figures and stunning Whalers Canoe Exhibit. This lifesize structure depicting the strength of the whalers that travelled into open waters in a wooden canoe with spears, was originally housed at

the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, before being brought to Port Alberni. Victoria Quay is popular for boat launching, walking, and bird watching. Eat your lunch in your car or under the Rotary Gazebo overlooking the inlet as eagles soar above. This is the perfect spot for a quick break to enjoy a moment of nature before going about your day.



Photo Credit Denay Piatka

Sproat Lake is probably what Port Alberni is most known for, especially in the summer months. Sproat Lake offers 90km of shoreline, nestled in the mountains, with three breathtaking Provincial Parks. Fossil

Provincial Park is ideal for family hikes through ferns, moss, and old growth forest, with secluded beach and creek access. Sproat Lake Provincial Park is home to prehistoric petroglyphs left by Hupacasath First Nations and the Martin Mars water bomber. Sproat Lake Provincial Park has beautiful campsites, stunning

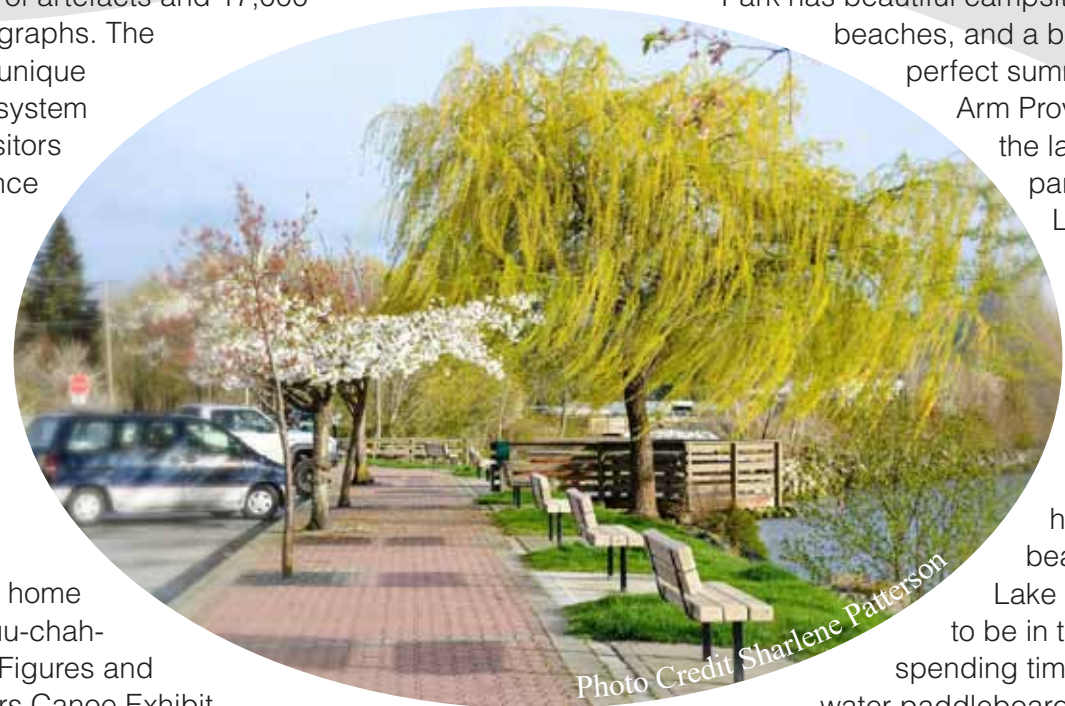


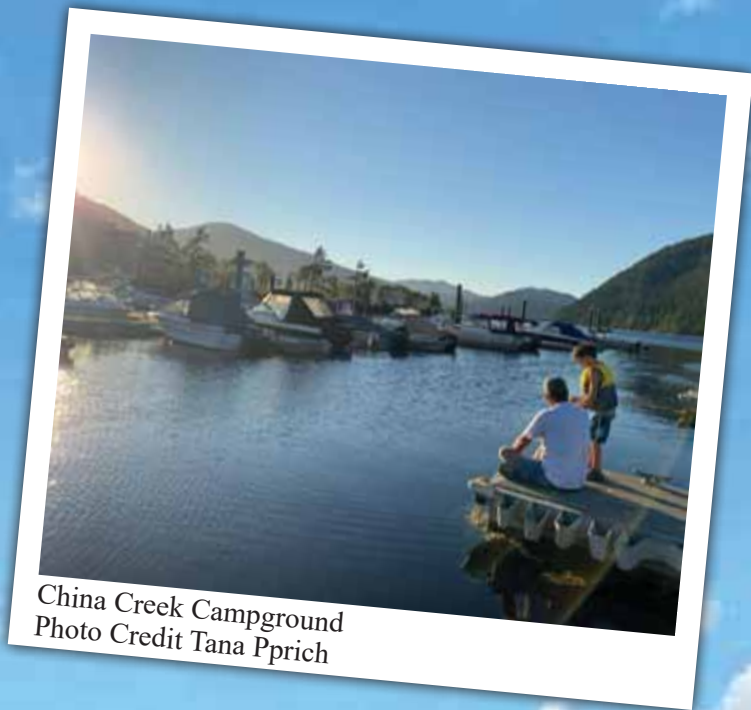
Photo Credit Sharlene Patterson

beaches, and a boat launch, the perfect summer stop. Taylor Arm Provincial Park is the last provincial park on Sproat Lake, on your way to the West Coast. Taylor Arm is a breathtaking location for camping and spending hours at the beach. Sproat Lake is the spot to be in the summer, spending time out on the water paddleboarding, kayaking, houseboating, swimming, or fishing on a beautiful sunny day does amazing things for your soul. □

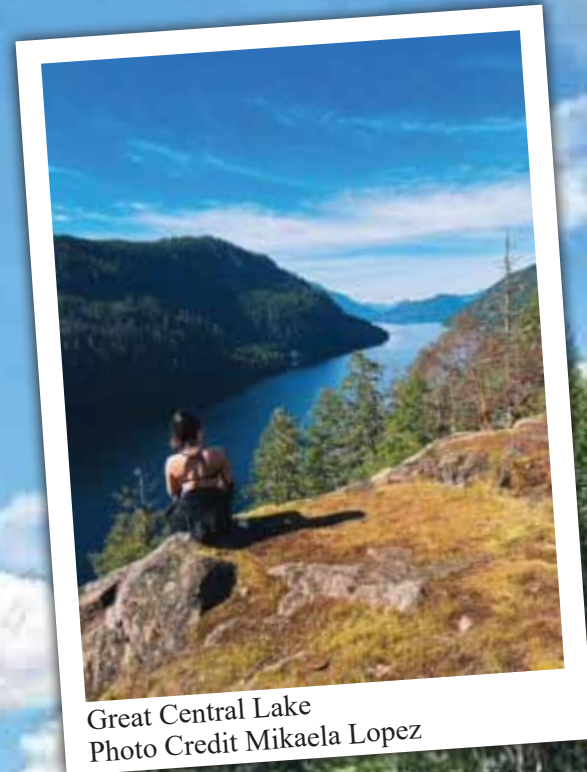
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China Creek Campground
Photo Credit Tana Pprich



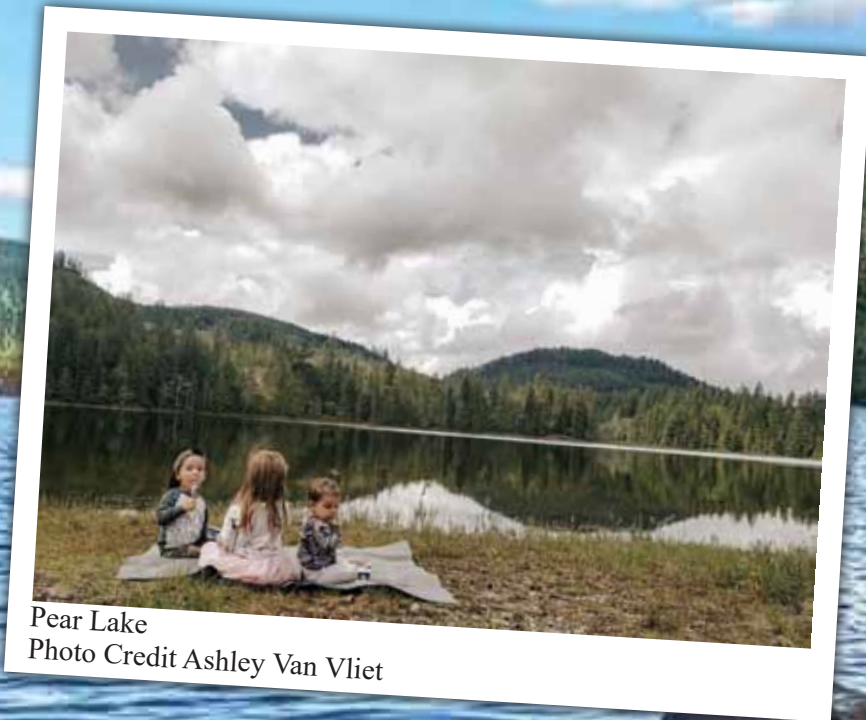
Great Central Lake
Photo Credit Mikaela Lopez



Saddle between Mt Arrowsmith & Cokely
Photo Credit Ashley Cyr @islandgirls.exploring



5040
Photo Credit Tamiko Corlazzoli



Pear Lake
Photo Credit Ashley Van Vliet



Taylor Arm, Sproat Lake Photo Credit Adam Copp

TRAVELLING DOWN OUR INLET

After a short 25 minute drive or quick boat ride down the Inlet, we arrive at China Creek. China Creek was first known for its gold-bearing gravel and Chinese gold miners mining the area between 1892 and 1900. The mining efforts at China Creek needed many workers, which resulted in a small mining village, complete with homes, stables, and a blacksmith shop. Extensive mining was done in the areas around China Creek, and while some gold was found in places, the area didn't boom like other parts of Canada. Evidence of mining activities can still be found in the area, especially along Phase Two of the Alberni Inlet Trail, which begins at China Creek.

China Creek is the perfect local escape, with a spectacular campsite and RV park right on the Inlet. Hike, mountain bike, paddle board, kayak, or dive down to the sunken ship and see the resident octopus, China Creek has it all, and it's so close to home.

Heading a little further down the Inlet we arrive in Bamfield, which was predominantly home to HUU-ay-aht of the Nuu-chah-nulth before Europeans founded a small fishing village in the late 1800's. 13km south of Bamfield is Pachena Bay, which originally served as a village for the HUU-ay-aht peoples before being destroyed by a tsunami in the 1700's. Bamfield was named after William Eddy Banfield, the first local government in the area. The name probably should have been Banfield, with an "n" instead of an "m", but it is said that the misspelling either happened because of how the HUU-ay-aht pronounced the name or due to a postal misspell; either way, it stuck. In 1902 the Bamfield Cable Station was constructed, with an underwater cable laid in October of the same year, spanning nearly 4,000 miles of the Pacific Ocean from Bamfield to Fanning Island, a tiny coral atoll in the mid-Pacific. From there the cable ran to Fiji, New Zealand and Australia, connecting the British Colonies. In 1926 a new concrete structure was built to replace the original wooden structure. As technology improved, the cable was eventually decommissioned in 1959 and the building is now a historical site used by the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre. The Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre was founded in 1968 after the National Research Council asked five western Canadian Universities (University of British Columbia, University of Victoria, University of Calgary, University of Alberta and Simon Fraser University) to determine the best location for a marine biology station on the Pacific Coast. While Bamfield wasn't the first choice, it was determined the best choice, and the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre opened in 1972.



Photo Credit Port Authority

China Creek is home to two of four Chinese Immigrant Vessels that were sunk in the Inlet as a way to preserve history and create underwater life. In 1999, four ships full of Chinese Immigrants crossed into Canadian seas, and were stopped by the Canadian Coast Guard. Each vessel housed over 100 Chinese immigrants looking to start a new life in Canada. They travelled in horrible conditions, kept in the holds of the ship with no access to the upper deck, they passed food through small holes in the deck. Many of the immigrants found aboard the vessels have

since been sent back to China. None of the vessels were claimed after being seized by the Canadian Government, and \$100,000 was spent cleaning the vessels of feces, vomit, and garbage. After everything was said and done, the Port Alberni Reef Society thought it important to create awareness around what had happened, and purchased the entire fleet of vessels. Only one of the vessels was in good enough condition to continue being used, the other three were too damaged so they became artificial reefs at China Creek and the Barclay Sound. Unfortunately, one ship was so rusted that it broke apart when being submerged, the other two ships are still present and are spectacular dive sites.

Bamfield is home to less than 200 people, according to 2016 census data. It is primarily a tourist destination for backpackers accessing the West Coast Trail, ocean kayakers, and fishers. Bamfield is the northern terminus of the West Coast Trail, a 75km trail that was built in the 1970's, that travels along the southwestern edge of the Island to Port Renfrew. Pachena Bay is a popular camping site now, featuring spectacular Pacific Ocean sunrises, day hikes, paddleboarding and fishing. Bamfield is packed full of things to do, from whale watching, to hiking, or just relaxing on the Inlet, it is worth a visit! ☐

China Creek, Bamfield, Poett Nook, Pachena Bay



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Located as far West as you can go in Canada, Vancouver Island is home to 846,278 people who decided that the Island life was for them. Separated from the mainland of BC by the Salish Sea, which includes the Johnstone Strait, Queen Charlotte Strait, and the Strait of Georgia, Vancouver Island has been home to numerous First Nations communities for time immemorial, but it wasn't until 1778 that European settlers first explored the Island. Vancouver Island is the largest Island on the Pacific Coast of North

America, with an area of 31,285 square km of breathtaking landscape. This landscape includes dense forests, intricate river systems, glacier mountains, deep lakes, and flat lands. Laying in a temperate rainforest biome, we have some of the mildest temperatures in Canada. Living in a rainforest means slightly wetter conditions, especially on the West Coast of the Island, but that also makes for absolutely lush forests full of Douglas fir, western red cedars, ancient ferns, and arbutus

trees to grow plentifully. Vancouver Island is home to awe inspiring old growth forests such as Cathedral Grove and Fairy Creek, where some trees are hundreds of years old.

Although Vancouver Island is located within a temperate rainforest biome, we have diverse mountain ranges as tall as 2,195m. Strathcona Provincial Park is home to a group of peaks that include the Comox Glacier. Strathcona Provincial Park is also home to

the second tallest waterfall on Vancouver Island (and 16th in all of Canada), and the tallest waterfall is Kiwi Falls located in Schoen Lake Provincial Park. Although Vancouver Island and the mainland share similar flora and fauna, there are some exceptions. Animals such as mountain goats, coyotes, skunks, and chipmunks, which are plentiful on the mainland, are absent on the Island. Black bears, deer, and cougars call much of Vancouver Island home, we're also home to most of Canada's Roosevelt Elk. □

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THE WESTCOAST

Tofino & Ucluelet

Photo Credit: Tofino, Chris Pouget

Port Alberni is the gateway to Vancouver Island's West Coast, just a two hour drive and you're in beautiful Tofino or Ucluelet. Tofino is located on the traditional territories of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations, who resided in the Clayoquot Sound. Tofino earned its title, the Tofiño Inlet, by Spanish navy officers in honour of Captain Tofiño in 1792. Up until 1959 when the first logging road was built connecting Port Alberni to the West Coast, it was only possible to access Tofino and Ucluelet by boat. Tofino's inaccessibility meant that the first non-native settlement didn't occur until 1855. By the late 1890's, Norwegian, Scottish, and English homesteads started appearing, the first doctor arrived in 1905, and the post office was built in 1909. The Church of England funded the installment of a church in 1913, instructing that the church be built on the most beautiful part of Vancouver Island. In 1932, Tofino was incorporated as a town after many years of being known as a "Post Office and Steamer Landing".

It wasn't until 1971 that the National Parks opened the Pacific Rim National Park that a road was paved to Tofino. Now, Tofino is well known for some of the best surfing beaches in North America, with four to choose from; Long Beach, Cox Bay Beach, Chesterman Beach, and Mackenzie Beach. National surfing competitions are often held in Tofino, bringing people from all over the country to our beautiful Island. If surfing sounds a little intense for your liking, paddleboarding, kayaking, hiking, and walking along the beach are also fantastic activities that Tofino has to offer. Just as our spectacular old growth forests have a way of making us feel small, the beaches of Tofino give that same feeling. Looking off into the nothingness of the ocean, with your toes dug into the sand, has a way of reminding us how magnificent our world truly is. While Tofino is a surfing hot spot in the summer, it also offers spectacular storm watching in the winter with hotels located almost directly on the beach for the best seat in the house. Downtown

Tofino is a hub of surfers, tourists, and locals going about their daily life. Surf shops and schools, boutique clothing stores, and delicious west coast fare can be found all along the main strip in Tofino, complete with a playground and skatepark.

From Tofino we head south to Ucluelet, which means "people with a safe place to land". Captain James Cook first set foot on the west coast of Vancouver Island, just 100km north of Ucluelet in 1778, and Captain James Barkley followed in 1787 arriving near Ucluelet in search of sea otter pelts. A trading post was established in 1870 in the Ucluelet Harbour, working primarily in the sealing industry, and became a bustling little town. Contact between settlers and First Nations didn't happen until 1890, as more settlers began arriving, pending the news of a road from Port Alberni. The Canadian Pacific Railway operated a small freight boat sailing between Victoria and

Ucluelet three times a month; by the start of the First World War, Ucluelet had established a whaling station, lighthouse, government telegraph office, and lifeboat station.

Ucluelet has remained a small community with a big sense of adventure. Storm watching, surfing, ocean adventures, whale watching, hiking, and of course relaxation, are all a part of the Ucluelet experience. Ucluelet has numerous beaches to choose from; Halfmoon Bay, Little Beach, Big Beach, and Terrace Beach to name a few. These beaches are a little more secluded than those in Tofino, which makes for a beautifully peaceful experience. Take a walk along the Wild Pacific Trail or around Lighthouse Loop and experience tree-topped hikes overlooking the rugged coastline and spectacular waves. The West Coast of Vancouver Island is truly a phenomenal experience for all ages. □



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BEACH LIFE



Photo Credit Sarah Kristen images



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Photo Credit Denay Piatka



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It's time to head east from Port Alberni, up and over the hump, through the Grove, and around the lake, to Errington and Coombs, nestled on the east side of Mount Arrowsmith. Prior to the railway, Coombs and Errington were primarily uninhabited forest land. After the E&N Railway was sold to the Canadian Pacific Railway around 1905, tracks were extended from Nanaimo to Parksville, and then on to the Alberni Valley in 1911. It was important to establish settlements along the railway; the CPR sold the land adjacent to the track along French Creek to the Salvation Army. At that time, around 50 Sikhs who had left the Beban/Cumberland mines were hired to fell and clear the land for colony houses. The Salvation Army put out advertisements in England, and in 1910 a handful of families settled in the Coombs Salvation Army Colony and they were taught farming skills. Around the same time, the CPR built the Cameron Lake Chalet and the Mt. Arrowsmith Trail (known as the CPR Trail), which offered a serene place to rest for visitors travelling from Victoria to the Alberni Valley.

Cathedral Grove, officially known as MacMillan Provincial Park, is known worldwide for some of the oldest and biggest trees on Vancouver Island, specifically giant Douglas Firs. The name Cathedral Grove came from Viscount Willingdon, Governor General of Canada in 1928, who compared the magnificent trees to the great cathedrals in Europe. Cathedral Grove has been a popular place to pull off the highway and wander through grand old growth trees since as early as the 1920's. It is home to an 800 year old giant Douglas Fir, coming in at 76m tall and 9m round that will make you feel teeny tiny.

Today, Coombs is best known for its Goats on the Roof market, where goats chomp happily on the grass covered roof. This popular spot is also home to Coombs Emporium, a spectacular display of giant stone sculptures. The market offers unique boutique shops, delicious ice cream, locally sourced groceries, Chinese antiques, a cozy bookstore, and so much more. This is the perfect stop to stretch your legs and explore the area.

Just 15 minutes down the road, we find ourselves in the beautiful oceanside town, Qualicum Beach, the traditional Territories of Qualicum First Nations and Sna'naw'as First Nation. Qualicum means "Where Dog Salmon Run" in the Pentlach language. With the help of local Indigenous guides, Adam Grant Horne with the HBC found a land route between

Parksville, Qualicum, Coombs, Errington

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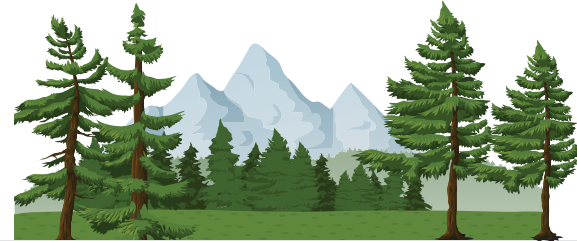
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the Qualicum River and Alberni Inlet in 1856, and it wasn't until the 1880's that settlers started arriving in the area. A road was built from Nanaimo to Parksville in 1886 and extended to Qualicum Beach in 1894. The E&N Railway built the Qualicum Beach train station in 1914 and The Merchants Trust and Trading Company was established, which organized the layout of the town.

Around 9,000 people call Qualicum Beach their home. This small community has a beautiful waterfront beach and seawall, boutique stores featuring handcrafted and locally made clothing, skincare, and jewellery, and delicious local fare. The Qualicum Farmers Market runs year round with baked goods, local produce, flowers, crafts, and local meat and eggs. Qualicum Beach has hosted an annual Triathlon

for ages 4+ featuring a swim, bike, and run for participants, for the past 24 years. Qualicum also hosts an annual Show and Shine on Father's Day. Both are fun events that bring the community together! Qualicum Beach is best known for its miles of sandy beaches, spanning some 20km between Qualicum Beach and Parksville. With low tides spanning for at least 1km and warm waters, it is ideal for paddleboarding, kayaking, and beachcombing.

45 minutes southeast from Port Alberni, we find ourselves in Parksville, originally home to the Coast Salish people. Parksville was originally named Englishman River, after an Englishman drowned trying to cross in 1850. First non-native settlement began in 1883 and three years later a 38km wagon road was built between Nanaimo and Englishman

River. The city changed its name in 1887 after the Englishman River Post Office was changed to the Parksville Post Office, named after Nelson Parks, the postmaster. Logging became a major industry after the establishment of the E&N Railway, and Parksville quickly became a tourist destination for Islanders in search of sandy beaches.

Parksville is home to about 13,000 people and is still a popular tourist destination for Islanders and visitors alike. Parksville is the heart of the Oceanside communities and has one of the most spectacular west coast beaches, Rath Trevor Provincial Park, featuring magnificent old trees, soft sandy beaches, a (somewhat out of control) bunny population, and breathtaking sunsets. Parksville is well known for their Sandcastle competitions in the summer, where

artists come together and create breathtakingly unique sculptures out of sand. Downtown Parksville is home to boutique clothing stores, cosy bookstores, and art galleries featuring local artists. Parksville and surrounding areas have plenty of trails to explore, including the Englishman River Falls Provincial Park trail, which showcases two stunning waterfalls carrying water from as far as Mt. Arrowsmith, into the Englishman River. Crystal clear waters are ideal for swimming when the water levels lower, a popular place for locals, and watching salmon spawning in the fall.

The Oceanside communities of Errington, Coombs, Qualicum Beach, and Parksville are beautifully scenic with coastal views and dense forests, and full of friendly people. □

"Are you new to Port Alberni?"



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Neighbourhood Welcome Area Coordinator
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Hupačasath Creating a Healthy and Self-Sufficient Community Over the Years

For thousands of years the Hupačasath peoples have utilized the rich resources the valley has to offer; from fishing and marine resources, to lush forests abundant with berries, mushrooms, and other flora. The Hupačasath First Nations are on a mission to enhance the quality of life for their people by creating a healthy and self-sufficient community. One of the ways they are doing that is through the development of opportunities built around traditional knowledge, community strengths, and are based on the realities of the market. The Hupačasath Community Garden began as a way to provide fresh produce with the community; for many years this program has provided locally grown fruit and vegetables to homes on the reserve. In 2019 the project expanded to 8 acres of land, allowing them the resources to offer weekly boxes to homes outside of the Hupačasath community.

The Hupačasath Community Garden is located next to the House of Gathering on Beaver Creek Road. The Hupačasath Youth Centre also resides on the same land, which offers an opportunity of involving local youth in the gardening process, teaching them skills and developing confidence. This is much more than just a garden, it is a place for the community to gather and learn new skills, in a safe and fun environment. The team is passionate about providing healthy foods and a hands-on experience to the community.

Providing healthy foods is just one way the Hupačasath peoples are enhancing their quality of life. Maintaining a healthy environment, which includes protecting fish and wildlife from industrial

development, urban growth, and tainted waters, is an important part of overall health. If our environment suffers, we suffer. Sustainable use of the land has been an important part of the Hupačasath past, present, and future. The Hupačasath have specific protected areas; they are working on reclaiming and enhancing forests, lakes, rivers, and creeks that have been damaged by development. Maintaining a healthy population of all the animals, birds, fish, plants and the eco-systems that these species depend on for their survival and health, is imperative for sustainability.

The Hupačasath First Nations are working hard to create a healthy community that utilizes the land and resources sustainably. Through education, traditional practices, and living history, the community is providing the next generation with the tools and experience to carry on living sustainably off the land.



FOOD BOX PROGRAM

Farm is located at 4890 Beaver Creek Road, right across from CO-OP.



OPEN NOW

For more information about the CSA program contact: 250-724-4041

The Hupacasath First Nations community garden provides the Alberni Valley with locally grown produce at a reasonable cost. Locally grown produce provides many benefits for the community as well as the individual, through cutting down on our foods carbon footprint, supporting local businesses and sustainable agriculture, all while enjoying fresher and tastier food!

The food box program starts towards the end of June and runs to Thanksgiving. Boxes are available for pick up or delivery every Wednesday. Each box is packed with produce picked that day to ensure the maximum freshness.



hupačasath First Nation

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North Island Paradise

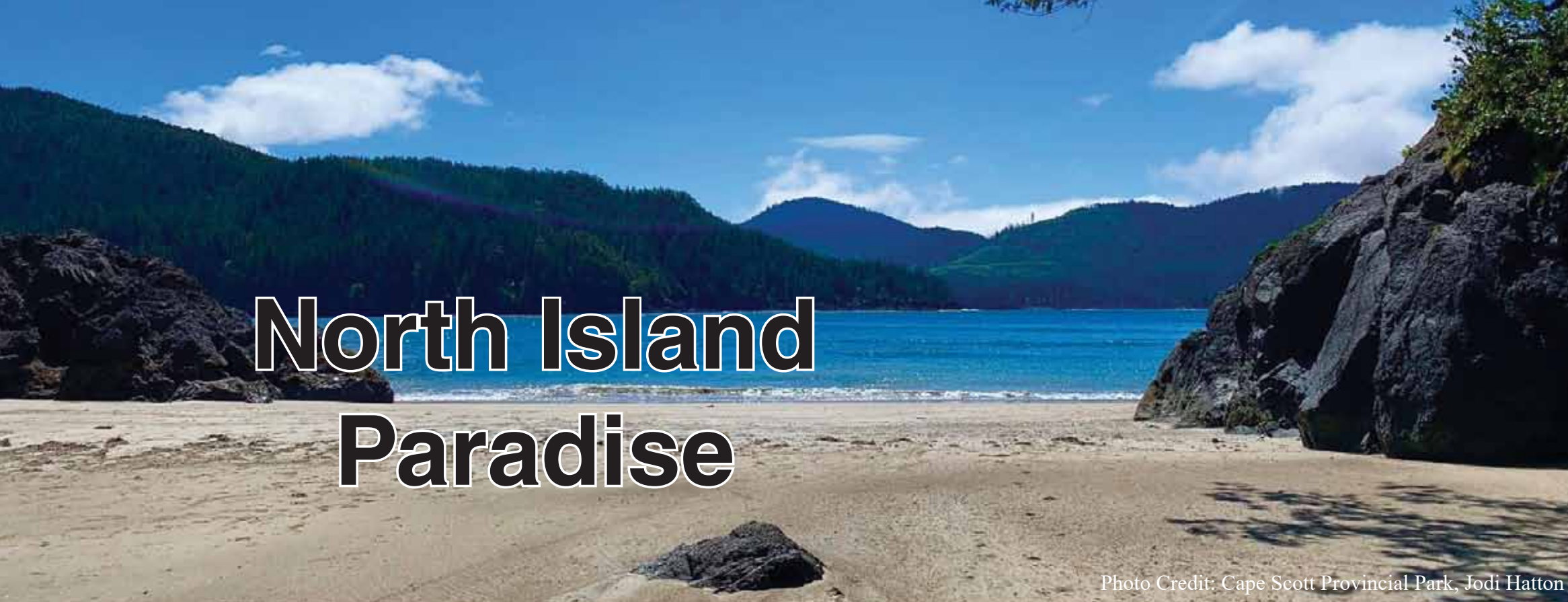


Photo Credit: Cape Scott Provincial Park, Jodi Hatton

Discovering the North Island Communities

Turning left onto the Trans Canada Hwy from Port Alberni, we head “up Island” and travel north. Our first stop is the Comox Valley, located on the traditional territories of the K’ómoks First Nation. The Comox Valley consists of Fanny Bay, Cumberland, Courtenay, Comox, and Mount Washington. Settlers began arriving in the 1860’s due to promising agricultural land and in 1863, with 50 people residing in the valley, cattle, oxen, and seeds were sent via ship. A wharf was built in 1874, which is now referred to as “The Landing”. This wharf was used as a Royal Navy Training base during the First World War. A road was built connecting the Comox Valley to central Island in 1910, with the expansion of the logging and coal industries. With more access to the valley, Comox quickly became a tourist town with hotels, a golf course, boating, fishing, and hunting.

Now, upwards of 75,000 people call the Comox Valley home. The Comox Valley offers plenty to do; hiking, biking, ziplining, and beachcombing are all popular activities in the area. The Courtenay Museum and Palaeontology Centre is home to the first Elasmosaurus that was discovered in the area in 1988. Explore the local estuary, bird watch, and take

in the magnificent mountain landscape and relaxing ocean breeze.

The protective mountain ranges that overlook Comox Bay are a part of Strathcona Provincial Park, with Mount Washington being most popular. Mt. Washington was named in 1860, when Captain Richards explored Canada’s Pacific Coast, after Rear Admiral John Washington, who was the Official Hydrographer to the Royal Navy. Mt. Washington first opened in 1979 as the first planned ski resort in BC, it was considered state of the art due to the indoor washrooms the resort provided. Now it is considered a year round mountain with backpacking, hiking, and nature walks in the summer, and skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, and tubing in the winter. Mt. Washington offers breathtaking views of the Comox Valley year round!

Further north we find ourselves in Campbell River, the area was named after the surgeon on board of the surveying ships, Dr. Samuel Campbell. Settlement of Campbell River finally began in the 1880’s, when the logging industry took off. Campbell River didn’t have a natural harbour, which made transportation via water challenging. It wasn’t until the road was extended from Courtenay in the 1920’s, did Campbell River come into its own regional area.

Now, Campbell River is home to around 37,500 people, and serves as the last major city of north Island. For years, Port Alberni and Campbell River had been feuding over who is the Salmon Capital of the Island, as both are popular for salmon fishing. In 1993, it became the Twin City of Ishikira, Japan, visitors can view the Torii Gate in Sequoia Park, and to mark the 10 year anniversary, a totem pole carved by Bill Hendersen was sent to Ishikira. Campbell River has nine beaches and parks to enjoy; Saratoga Beach which is ideal for families, Stories Beach is ideal for swimming and windsurfing, Willow Point Park has tennis courts and baseball diamonds, Rotary Beach Park overlooks the Discovery Passage, Centennial Park has an outdoor pool, Sequina Park is home to Torii Gate, Foreshore Park has a large grassy area along the coastline, Ken Forde Park is ideal for boat watching and launching, and Nunns Creek Park has a preserved wooded area with walkway. Hiking is popular in Campbell River and Elk Falls Provincial Park, with 6km of trails and a suspension bridge, is home to three waterfalls, the Moose, the Elk and Deer waterfalls with Elk Falls being the largest.

After Campbell River, the highway changes from four lanes down to two. Communities become more remote as we travel further up Island, with a notable must see, being Telegraph Cove located just before Port McNeil.

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Telegraph Cove began as a one room telegraph station in 1912 in the northern terminus of a telegraph line that stretched from tree to tree along Vancouver Islands east coast from Campbell River. Fred Wastell purchased most of the land around the cove and along with Japanese investors, established a salmon saltery and sawmill. Now, Telegraph Cove is primarily used as a tourist destination. The houses within Telegraph Cove are original structures and are used as a place for visitors to stay. Telegraph Cove is well known for whale watching, camping, kayaking, and RVing, with a pub, restaurant, and small market on site.

Port McNeil and Port Hardy are our last two major communities up Island. European connection happened in 1836 after the S.S. Beaver embarked on an exploratory trip for Hudson Bay Company, and Port Hardy was established in 1912. By 1914 twelve families had settled and built a school, saw mill, church and hotel. Up until 1979 when a logging road was built from Campbell River to Port Hardy, the town was only accessible via boat. Port Hardy is home to a unique historical site, the Dakota 576 crash site trail; in 1944, after Dak 576 missed it's landing site in Port Hardy due to weather, it ran out of fuel on its



second approach and crashed into the forest killing the pilot and navigator, while the crew and passengers survived in the back of the plane. This is now the site of a 4.2km dog friendly hike where you can discover the crash site and explore this historic location. Port Hardy has a sister city in Numata, Japan, established in 1993 after the mayor of Numata, Hisao Shinoda sent a letter to Port Hardy mayor Al Huddleston suggesting a twinning relationship between the two communities. The two cities officially became twins in 1994 after Mayor Russ Hellberg and six others travelled to Numata to sign the Twinning Agreement and celebrate Numata's 100th birthday.

Present day Port Hardy is home to about 5,000 people, and relies heavily on tourism. It is the gateway to Cape Scott Provincial Park, the North Coast Trail, and the BC Marine Trail, making it a popular spot for backpackers and hikers and is paradise on the north part of our island. Port Hardy has a beautiful waterfront,

delicious local restaurants, and rich culture. The climate in Port Hardy is somewhat different than the rest of the Island, as it is directly influenced by the Pacific Ocean, making the summers cool and winters mild and wet. □

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CENTRAL ISLAND

The Cultural Capital

Further south of our Oceanside communities, we head into the central part of Vancouver Island. First, Nanaimo is located on the traditional territories of the Snunéymuxw First Nations, which can be seen at Petroglyph Provincial Park in South Nanaimo. These ancient rock carvings date back thousands of years depicting wolves, humans, and fish. Petroglyph Provincial Park offers an interpretive walk through the petroglyphs where concrete casts have been made of the original petroglyphs. Nanaimo was originally named Coviletown, before changing to Nanaimo which was derived from Snunéymuxw. Nanaimo was first founded for coal in the early 1850's and the city evolved as an HBC trading post. Miners were brought from Fort Rupert on the northern tip of the Island, to the now Downtown Nanaimo, where they set up homesteads. Mining and shoreline activities dictated the growth of the city over the next decade, as shops and businesses were set up along dirt roads named Commercial, Warf, and Bastion street. In 1864, a British architect was hired to redesign the

haphazard town that Nanaimo had become over the past decade.

Today, over 100,000 people call Nanaimo home and it is known as the "Cultural Capital of Canada" due to its multiple museums, art galleries, and theatres. The Nanaimo Harbour has a beautiful waterfront walkway, outdoor theatre, epic playground, and dock where you can watch seaplanes land and boats sail. Nanaimo has multiple beaches to choose from; Departure Bay Beach, Pipers Lagoon, and Neck Point Park to name a few. Mount Benson, once a fire lookout station, now serves as a popular trail for hikers that features a lake and phenomenal views of Nanaimo and surrounding areas. Nanaimo offers "big box" shopping, local businesses, and a variety of different cuisines, making it a hub for central islanders.

Ladysmith is located on the 49th Parallel, a circle of latitude that is 49 degrees north of the equator. In 1884, the E&N Railway was established and

transportation between Nanaimo and Victoria became considerably easier. The Ladysmith Harbour became a busy place in the early 1900's, with a shingle mill, a smelter, a foundry and improved wharf for fishing boats. Similar to Nanaimo, Ladysmith first began as a mining town, until an explosion in a local mine killed 32 men in 1909, leading to strikes and the eventual decline of the mining industry with the final mine closing in 1931. The late 1940's saw an economic upturn with the logging industry. Artifacts and buildings from both the mining and logging

industries can be found along Ladysmith's First Ave. Many of the original buildings have also been maintained, giving Ladysmith the title of "Heritage by the Sea". First Ave is full of small businesses, boutique clothing stores, and restaurants. Ladysmith is home to around 9,000 people, and is the hometown of Pamela Anderson, who still owns property on the waterfront. Ladysmith is well known for their annual Christmas Lights display, which is a must see.

On our way to Duncan, we travel through Saltair and Chemainus. Both are seaside communities with unique houses, coastal trail systems, and beach access. The name Chemainus comes from the native shaman and prophet "Tsa-meeun-is" meaning broken chest. Legend says that the man survived a massive wound in his chest from an arrow in battle to become a powerful chief. Chemainus was founded as an unincorporated logging town in 1858, but most of its growth has come from the spectacular outdoor gallery that Chemainus is famously known for. The Mural Town showcases 60 murals and 9 sculptures, statues, and carvings decorating the town.

Further south we go into Duncan, which is known as the Totem Pole City, with the world's largest totem pole collection, with 44 hand-carved poles created by Indigenous master artisans. Take a self guided tour to see and learn about the masterfully designed totem poles throughout Duncan's downtown core.

The Cowichan Valley Regional Area is home to many other communities, including Cowichan Bay, Cobble Hill, Shawnigan Lake, and Mill Bay. Cobble Hill is known for its agricultural surroundings, and for Cobble Hill itself, which stands 1100ft high. Cobble Hill is a popular hiking and mountain biking spot, with a network of trails travelling up and around the mountain. On clear days, Mt. Baker and Mt. Rainer can be seen from the lookout on Cobble Hill. Now, the village of Shawnigan Lake contains a museum, two general stores, restaurants, small businesses,

gas station, pharmacy, and coffee shops. There are several beaches along the lake, hiking trails, and access to the abandoned railway. Kinsol Trestle can be found along the west end of the lake, it is one of the worlds largest standing wooden railway trestles and has been rehabilitated and open to the public since 2011.

The Malahat is located on the traditional territories of Malahat First Nations, who lived along the Saanich Inlet. Prior to the Malahat drive, travel between Victoria and the rest of the Island in the 1800's was a treacherous journey spanning over 3-5 days of bumpy dirt roads between Goldstream and the Cowichan Valley. Original surveyors in 1870 were firmly against the idea of building a road on the east side of the mountain, but eventually the plans were approved and work began in 1903. The Malahat Drive finished in 1911 and is now considered one of the most scenic stretches of the Trans Canada Hwy. The Malahat drive spans 25km from Mill

Bay to Goldstream Provincial Park, encompassing Bamberton Provincial Park, Spectacle Lake Provincial Park, and Goldstream Provincial Park. The drive climbs the Malahat summit at 1,168ft tall, with spectacular view points of the Saanich Inlet. The most recent addition to this historic mountain is the Malahat SkyWalk, which officially opened in the summer of 2021. This 10-storey spiral tower stands 250m above sea level and has spectacular 360° views of the Saanich Peninsula, Mt. Baker, and the Southern Gulf Islands. The SkyWalk starts off amongst the tops of Arbutus trees, before the gradual climb up the spiral structure. At the top you'll be amongst the clouds, taking in the phenomenal landscape. Throughout the experience there are informational signs explaining our local history, Indigenous cultures, plants, and animals. The Malahat SkyWalk is perfect for the entire family. Finish off the experience by delighting your inner child with the spiral slide back down, which besides the view, is one of the best parts of the SkyWalk. □



Nanaimo Harbour



Photo credit Malahat SkyWalk, Hamish Hamilton

VICTORIA

The Capital City

Victoria is rich in history, culture, and community. A beautiful place to call home as part of our island.

Victoria is British Columbia's capital, located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. After Europeans discovered Vancouver Island, the area was quickly established as a trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company. When Vancouver Island became a British crown colony in 1849, soon after a small village arose near the fort and the settlement was named Victoria in 1852, after Queen Victoria. The village grew and expanded and in 1865 the Royal Navy designated a naval base in Esquimalt on the west side of the harbour. Victoria was incorporated as a city in 1862 and by 1877 the population in Victoria was 3,630. Now, Victoria is the largest urban area on Vancouver Island, with 393,812 people calling it home.

Victoria is a vibrant and beautiful city that has retained much of its historic architecture, which can be seen all throughout the downtown core and residential areas. These historic buildings have maintained much of their "British Old World Charm". The Helmcken House (1852) and Craigdarroch Castle (1890) were transformed from family homes to museums; since the Empress Hotel made its debut in 1908, it has been hosting afternoon teas overlooking the harbour. Victoria is home to Canada's first Chinatown, which is famously known for its Fan Tan Alley, one of Canada's narrowest streets, and the Gate of Harmonious Interest which was built in 1981. Of course, Victoria is most well known as the home to BC's Parliament building, which was built overlooking the harbour in 1893. The Royal BC Museum is just across the street featuring an epic clock tower. Explore the grounds of the Parliament building full of statues and memorials while looking in awe at the intricate architecture.



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Just around the corner from the harbour is a spectacular display of float homes, known as Fisherman's Wharf. Built after the Second World War in 1948 to accommodate fishing vessels. The wharf is home to unique and colourful float homes, restaurants, and the opportunity to see some adorable sea lions up close.

Victoria has been described as a "garden city", due to its many parks and garden spaces. One of the most well known and historically significant parks is Beacon Hill, which was entrusted to the city of Victoria by the BC Government in 1882. Prior to that, Beacon Hill has been a place of cultural, historical, and sacred significance to the Lekwungen People. This land was used to cultivate camas (a blue and purple flower from the lily family), and other native plants. Present day Beacon Hill offers two playgrounds, two spray parks, tennis courts, rose garden, sports fields, and children's petting farm. A totem pole was erected in the park in 1956 called the Story Pole, it stands close to 39m tall overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The awe-inspiring 100+ year old Butchart Gardens resides within the Greater Victoria Region as a National Historic Park. Located on Tod Inlet, these magnificent gardens started off as a dream when Robert and Jennie Butchart moved to Vancouver Island from Ontario in 1904, with the intent to build a cement plant on the limestone deposits at Tod Inlet. Once the limestone deposits were depleted, Jennie envisioned a grand garden, and work began on today's Sunken Garden. The gardens expanded between 1906-1929 as the Butchart's designed the Japanese Garden, Italian Garden, and the overflowing Rose Garden. In 1939 the Butchart's gifted the gardens to their grandson for his 21st birthday, and he transformed the space into what we know today as the world renowned Butchart Gardens. Open year round, these magnificent gardens transport you out of this world and into another, overflowing with various flowers, trees, and other flora.

Vancouver Island is (as we can agree) the best place to live in Canada. From north to south, we're blessed with beautiful weather, magnificent forests, stunning waterfalls, mountains, and of course, the coast. Spring is here, which means it's time to get back outside and witness the landscape be reborn; listen for the birds returning, watch the flowers blossom, and the forests brighten with green. Vancouver Island is unique and special to all of us, and we hope this has encouraged you to explore this magnificent place we call home. ☐

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