

Active Recreation Experiences



There is no shortage of opportunity for outdoor recreation on Vancouver Island. While traveling on the island, visitors are encouraged to seek out activities that support healthy lifestyles and produce a low-carbon footprint. Human-powered activities such as hiking, cycling, and paddling can be found in abundance throughout the region's natural spaces. Please remember to tread lightly and leave no trace when interacting with the plants and wildlife that call these places home.

1 Hiking

Hiking is limitless on Vancouver Island. From Juan De Fuca Provincial Park on the southern west coast to Cape Scott Provincial Park at the northern tip, there are ample opportunities for day hikes and overnight excursions for hikers of all abilities. Strathcona Provincial Park, the oldest provincial park in British Columbia and the largest on Vancouver Island, offers a substantial network of alpine trails. In Nanaimo, visitors can take a small passenger ferry or kayak over to **Saysutshun** to hike the calming coastal trails and learn about the unique history and culture of the Snuneymuxw peoples. To reach a spectacular view of Sansum Narrows, hike the short loop trail at Stoney Hill Regional Park in North Cowichan. For those seeking a challenge, the Nootka Island Trail located near the village of Tahsis, provides a rugged coastal backpacking experience. Searching for a local guide to lead your hiking trip on Vancouver Island? Guided hiking tours are available through **Long Beach Nature Tours**, **Coastal Bliss Adventures**, **MB Guiding**, and **Hike Vancouver Island** to name a few.

2 Cycling

Slow down and cruise the roads and trails of Vancouver Island by bike. From May to October, visitors to Sointula can stop by the **Sointula Resource Centre** (across the street from the ferry terminal) to utilize their Green Bike Program. Grab a complimentary bike and helmet to spend an afternoon meandering the trails around Malcolm Island. Heading to the west coast, the new 25-kilometer multi-use pathway called **ʔapsčiiik tašii** (pronounced ups-cheek ta-shee) winds through the coastal rainforests of the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, located in the traditional territories of the Tla-o-qui-aht First

Nation and Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ. Visitors can rent an e-bike from family-owned business **T-Bird E-Bikes** to explore numerous points of interest and beaches along the paved pathway. The Cowichan Valley Trail is another spectacular destination for cyclists of all ages and abilities. The multi-use gravel trail is wide and mostly flat, allowing for easy cycling through Cowichan's scenic countryside and to attractions such as the historic Kinsol Trestle. Take a leisurely cycle tour with **Island Time Tours** to explore all the valley has to offer.

3 Paddling

Canoers searching for a multi-day paddling excursion are encouraged to plan a trip to the Sayward Forest Canoe Route, located an hour drive from Campbell River. An average of three to five days is required to complete the full circuit, which features approximately 50-kilometers of paddling and portaging as well as breathtaking scenery and well-maintained campsites. Lake Cowichan, one of the largest freshwater lakes on Vancouver Island, is another paddlers paradise offering picturesque mountain views and expansive waters to explore. **Kaatza Adventures**, owned and operated by Ts'uubaa-asatx First Nation, provides kayak, canoe, water bike, and stand-up paddle board rentals. In addition to freshwater paddling, Vancouver Island's rich marine ecosystem, secluded coves, and rugged coastline make it a renowned destination for sea kayaking. Guided kayak tours are available through **West Coast Expeditions**, **Kingfisher Wilderness Adventures**, **North Island Kayak**, **Comox Valley Kayaks & Canoes**, **Gulf Island Kayaking**, and **Cowichan Bay Kayaking** to name just a few.



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4 Snowshoeing and Cross-Country Skiing

During the winter months, enjoy a tranquil stroll through the snowy forests of Paradise Meadows. Take in the magical views of snow-capped mountains and frozen lakes by renting snowshoes or cross-country skis from the Raven Lodge at **Mount Washington Alpine Resort**. Upon return to the lodge, cozy up fireside with a hot chocolate to warm up. For a marvelous night under the stars, an evening guided snowshoe tour and gourmet three-course fondue is also available by reservation. **Mount Cain Alpine Park**, located an hour and 15-minute drive past Campbell River, is a community owned and operated ski hill well-known for its untouched powder and friendly culture. Explore Mount Cain's serene winter landscape and crisp fresh air by renting snowshoes at the ski shop.

5 Caving

Travel underground to explore the vast cave system on Vancouver Island, home to the largest concentration of caves in North America. Heading west, Upana Caves is located a 25-minute drive past the village of Gold River on a gravel road. Spelunkers of all skill levels can take a self-guided tour through the five caves and enjoy two viewpoints overlooking the canyon and waterfall. Heading further north, Little Huson Caves Regional Park is located along the gravel road heading towards Zeballos. This park also offers self-guided tours suitable for beginners and features striking views of natural cave formations. Be prepared to get wet and always remember to wear sturdy footwear, warm clothes, and bring at least two sources of light when entering caves. Those looking for a guided experience are encouraged to venture to **Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park** where knowledgeable guides will teach about the cave system's unique geology. Caving tours are available for explorers of all ages and comfort levels.



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6 Walking Tours

Embark on a walking tour to learn about the important histories and cultures of the places you are visiting. Ride the ferry to Alert Bay on Cormorant Island, traditional territory of the ‘Namgis First Nation, to take part in a self-guided walking tour of the village’s totem poles and historical sites. Known as the “City of Totems”, Duncan is also renowned for over 40 carved totems located throughout the downtown core. Pick up a totem tour map at the Cowichan Regional Visitor Centre to learn the special story behind each totem. Visitors can also take part in a self-guided heritage walking tour in the quaint town of Ladysmith. Stroll the vibrant streets while discovering the restored heritage buildings and artifacts from the town’s early days. The world-famous murals of Chemainus are also not to be missed! Explore on foot over 60 outdoor murals and various sculptures portraying the town’s unique history. For the foodies, travel south and experience a guided walking tour with **Off the Eaten Track** or **A Taste of Victoria Food Tours** to take in Victoria’s authentic local dishes and vibrant culinary culture.

7 Scuba Diving

The abundant biodiversity and clear waters of Vancouver Island make it an underwater paradise for dive enthusiasts. Miles of coastline and year-round diving provide visitors with numerous opportunities to explore colorful natural reefs, historic shipwrecks, and diverse marine ecosystems. For a multi-day experience, **God’s Pocket Resort** located off the northeast tip of the island offers world-class diving excursions around Browning Passage and an off-grid wilderness lodge to unwind after a day in the ocean. Similarly, **Rendezvous Diving Adventures** located between Port Alberni and Bamfield take visitors to explore the remarkable waters of Barkley Sound. For a shorter trip, take a day charter out of the Nanaimo harbour with **Sundown Diving** or **Nanaimo Dive Outfitters** to explore the various sea caves, rock pillars, and artificial reefs. The Discovery Passage near Campbell River also boasts renowned dive spots and unique marine life. For an unforgettable experience, take a guided diving charter with **Ocean Fix Dive Centre** or **Abyssal Diving Charters**.



For more information visit forvi.ca

4VI gratefully acknowledges that we live, work and play on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Kwakwaka’wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast Salish peoples.
