

Outdoors in Vancouver



Towering trees in Stanley Park

Canada's urban jewel of green space, the mighty and highly beloved Stanley Park, is the only highlight when it comes to outdoor fun in Vancouver. Use this list to find things to do outside in the city.

👁️ SIGHTS

A-maze-ing Laughter (Morton Park)

Vancouver's most-photographed public artwork (by contemporary Chinese artist Yue Minjun) is just a few steps from English Bay Beach. Expect to see groups of smiling visitors snapping the 14 oversized bronzes, all of which look as if they're about to explode with uncontrollable laughter.

English Bay Beach (cnr Denman St & Beach Ave)

Wandering south on Denman Street, you'll spot a clutch of palm trees ahead announcing one of Canada's best urban beaches. In winter, this is a crisp, bracing walking route. Be sure to snap a few photos of the beach's towering inukshuk (Inuit sculpture), south of the main area.

Coal Harbour Seawall (Canada Place to Stanley Park)

A scenic waterfront stroll from Canada Place to Stanley Park, this is a perfect way to spend a frosty afternoon. Along a mile or more you'll take in art and history along the seawalk, Harbour Green Park and the *Light Shed* artwork – a replica of one of the marine sheds that once lined this area.

Dr Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden & Park (vancouverchinesegarden.com; 578 Carrall Street)

A tranquil break from bustling Chinatown, this intimate 'garden of ease' reflects Taoist principles of balance and harmony. Entry includes a 45-minute guided tour, during which you'll learn about the symbolism behind the placement of the gnarled pine

trees, winding covered pathways and ancient limestone formations. Look out for the lazy turtles bobbing in the jade-coloured water.

Grandview Park (Commercial Drive, between Charles & William Streets)

This alfresco neighbourhood hangout along the Drive is named after the views peeking between its trees: to the north are the North Shore mountains; to the west is a cityscape vista of twinkling towers.

Granville Island Public Market (granvilleisland.com/public-market; Johnston Street)

Granville Island's highlight is the covered Public Market, a multisensory smorgasbord of fish, cheese, fruit and baked treats. Pick up fixings for a picnic at nearby Vanier Park or hit the international food court. Dine off-peak and you're more likely to snag a table.

Stanley Park (Vancouver, BC V6G 1Z4)

This magnificent 404-hectare park combines excellent attractions with a mystical natural aura. Don't miss a stroll or cycle (rentals near the W Georgia St entrance) around the 5.5-mile seawall. A kind of visual spa treatment fringed by a 150,000-tree temperate rainforest, it'll take you past the park's popular totem poles.

🔥 ACTIVITIES

Britannia Community Centre (britanniacentre.org; 1661 Napier Street)

Open to ice skaters all year round, this popular community centre rink also offers skating lessons and regular events, including women-only drop-in hockey, late-night mixed hockey and evening adults' skating.

Cypress Mountain (cypressmountain.com; Cypress Bowl Road, West Vancouver)

Around five miles north of West Vancouver via Highway 99, Cypress Provincial Park becomes Cypress Mountain resort in winter, attracting well-insulated

locals with its 53 runs, seven miles of snowshoe trails, cross-country ski access and a family-friendly six-chute snow-tubing course. Lift tickets include a 20 per cent discount on all subsequent visits. There's a large floodlit area here, and it's popular with night skiers. When you're done, head to the mountain's Crazy Raven Bar & Grill for a fireplace-warmed pint of beer. If you don't want to drive, consider the seasonal Cypress Coach Lines shuttle.

Harbour Air (harbourair.com)

A thrilling way to explore Vancouver's natural setting, these panoramic floatplane flights will have you soaring over mountains, forests and coastlines – ending with a dramatic water landing.

★ ENTERTAINMENT

Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (vancouversymphony.ca)

The city's orchestra plays classical and popular music concerts around the city and beyond. Venues range from the palatial Orpheum Theatre to outdoor spaces in Stanley Park.

Good to know

Vancouver's favourite winter hangout, family-friendly **Grouse Mountain** offers 26 ski and snowboard runs (including 14 night runs). There are classes and lessons available, and the area's forested snowshoe trails are magical. There are also a few dining options if you just want to relax and enjoy the wintry scenery, hot chocolate in hand (grousemountain.com).



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TOP PICKS

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TOP PICKS

🛏 Sleeping

YWCA Hotel

Best for backpackers (ywcahotel.com; 733 Beatty)
A good-value, well-located option offering nicely maintained (if spartan) rooms of the student-accommodation variety. There's a wide range of configurations, from singles to five-bed rooms, plus shared, semi-private or private bathrooms. Each room has a mini-refrigerator, and guests can use the three large communal kitchens. Rates include access to the YWCA Health Centre.

£ St Regis Hotel

Best for a boutique stay (stregishotel.com; 602 Dunsmuir Street)
Transformed in recent years, this is now an art-lined sleepover in a 1913 shell. Befitting its age, almost all the rooms are of different sizes, and exhibit a loungey élan with leather-look wallpaper, earth-toned bedspreads, flatscreen TVs and multimedia hubs. Rates include a cooked breakfast, a nearby gym and free international phone calls.

££ Fairmont Pacific Rim

Best for memorable views (fairmont.com/pacificrim; 1038 Canada Place)
This chic 377-room property near the convention centre is excellent. While many rooms have city views, the waterfront vistas from some will blow you away. They're particularly enjoyable when you're sitting in a jetted tub or cuboid Japanese bath with a glass of bubbly. Extras include gratis bikes and a rooftop swimming pool.

£££



FURTHER READING

Pick up our *Vancouver* guide (£13.99) or our *Pocket Vancouver* guide (£8.50). Both are also available as eBooks (£9.79 and £5.95 respectively).