



VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH

2025 EXPLORER GUIDE



EXPERIENCE

Our World



Alert Bay, BC, Canada
'Namgis Territory



ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE

While visiting Alert Bay, immerse yourself in the rich history of the Kwakwaka'wakw people by visiting the U'mista Cultural Centre. The centre offers a profound and enriching experience, allowing you to gain a deeper understanding of the Kwakwaka'wakw arts, culture and heritage. The Alert Bay Library and Museum serves as a captivating repository of the town's history, embracing the rich narratives of both the municipality and the First Nations community.

The traditional 'Namgis Big House is an inspiring epicentre of culture, where traditions come to life through ceremonial events, as well as summer cultural sharing from the T'sasata Cultural Group. The World's Tallest Totem Pole which stands outside the Big House, is an enduring symbol of heritage and artistry, has been drawing visitors from around the globe since 1973.

ATTRACTIONS

Explore the heart of Alert Bay! Find maps, information, and local insights at the Visitor Centre. Dive into thrilling whale watching or bear tours, fishing, and scenic nature trails by walking or biking. In addition to the island trails, visit our tennis court and skate parks. Stop by Culture Shock for great coffee and one-of-a-kind treasures. Don't miss the exhilarating 360° kayaking race with competitors from around the world. Immerse yourself in the perfect blend of play and culture - your adventure starts here.



You can find more information on what Alert Bay has to offer, by contacting the Alert Bay Information Centre (250) 974-5024 | INFO@ALERTBAY.CA

U'mista Cultural Centre:
For events and cultural activities check out our website or social media: www.umista.ca
call us at (250) 974-5403 or 1-800-690-8222



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U'Mista Cultural Centre - Geoff Heath



Alert Bay - Kimberley Kufas

Be good, take the Wild Pledge.



THE WILD PLEDGE IS A PROMISE TO PRACTISE RESPONSIBLE TOURISM and journey with care when visiting Vancouver Island communities, businesses, Indigenous communities, forests and oceans.

PLEDGE TO:

- Leave no trace when exploring our beaches, forests & land
- Encourage the celebration of local cultures, traditions & heritages
- Observe and not disturb our wildlife and natural habitats
- Support local lives by eating, staying & shopping locally
- Prepare for any experience in our trails, mountains & waters
- Share the trails, roads, routes & parking areas



Learn more and sign the pledge at
vancouverislandnorth.ca/takethepledge



Kayaking, Frigon Islands, Port Alice -Tyler Cave

WELCOME TO VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH

Find yourself in wild open spaces.

"Gilakas'la, Aayahu?at-, Welcome" The region of Vancouver Island North is located on the territory of the Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth peoples. Vancouver Island North is the ultimate destination in western Canada for relaxed and spontaneous eco-adventure. The upper third of the Canadian Pacific's largest island is pristine and secluded, yet just a day's travel from Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle. The region stretches past the shores of Vancouver Island to include Knight Inlet and a swath of the Great Bear Rainforest on the mainland

of British Columbia. Explore it on your own with go-anywhere impulsiveness while being mindful of Indigenous territories, or hand the reins to expert guides and charter operators. Troll for salmon in Queen Charlotte Strait or steelhead and trout in inland lakes. Watch as orcas power their way to the ocean surface. Ski world-class powder at crowd-free Mount Cain. Photograph black bears on the Island and their grizzly counterparts in the Great Bear Rainforest on the adjacent mainland coast. Run the world's fastest navigable tidal rapids. Try scuba diving at God's Pocket Marine Park, surfing at Raft Cove or kayaking on the sheltered east or wild, west coasts. Perhaps best of all, strap on a backpack for a trek to windswept, impossibly scenic Cape Scott Provincial Park at the Island's northern tip.

Our friendly communities are charmingly relaxed and within easy reach of our special wild places. Once unpacked, you're free to experience the North Island at your own pace. Spend your days out at sea, exploring magical coastlines, or immersed

in our inland wilderness. Meet and mingle with the friendly locals at cultural, seasonal and community festivals. Shop for crafts created on the North Island. Experience the traditions of the Kwakwaka'wakw People through art and living culture. Dine on the day's catch around a campfire or treat yourself to a meal at one of our restaurants.

As the sun sinks in the west, relax with your traveling companions wherever you've settled – wilderness campground, B&B, cabin, cottage, hotel or resort. Trade stories and flip through snapshots. After all the fresh air and active playtime, sleep well only to awake refreshed and ready to get lost in nature all over again

**VANCOUVERISLANDNORTH.CA/
RECREATION-MAP**



OBSERVE

WILDLIFE RESPECTFULLY

IN WILD OPEN SPACES



Photography: Kimberley Kufas

LAND OF THE WILD

Wild things roam through Vancouver Island North. Expect your first sightings to be majestic bald eagles riding the updrafts overhead, or perhaps a black bear grazing on the edge of the road. The Roosevelt Elk and Vancouver Island Marmot are unique to the region. More elusive, wolves wander the rainforest and beaches. Great blue herons fish at the edge of estuaries that echo with the sweet call of songbirds. Plentiful salmon populate the waters in every direction.

The further you travel from the densely populated parts of the world, the more nature comes out to play. The Vancouver Island North region allows visitors to view animals great and small in a way they often never expect. From the area's beaches to its forest trails and riversides, the lush Vancouver Island ecosystem promotes a biodiversity rarely seen near most cities and towns. Come mix in with the original locals, whether they wear feathers, fur or shimmering scales.

Be wildlife smart. Know before you go and visit wildsafebc.com for important safety information.



Black Bear - Finn Steiner

BEAR WATCHING

Perhaps the most common but beautiful of all Vancouver Island North wildlife, peaceful black bears roam widely with unexpected grace and gentleness. Looking for the bigger, more imposing grizzly bear? On the mainland a short flight or boat ride away, is a section of the coast renowned as one of the world's finest destinations for sightseeing these majestic mammals.

Day tours depart from Telegraph Cove to Knight Inlet, and from Port McNeill to Thompson Sound by boat. Multi-day tours, that include accommodation at remote wilderness lodges, head to the Great Bear Rainforest from Port Hardy by floatplane or from Alder Bay by boat. Diverse grizzly viewing experiences are offered, by guides sharing an Indigenous cultural perspective, or by naturalists focused on animal behavior and their interaction with the ecosystem. Trip suggestions can be found at vancouverislandnorth.ca/plan-your-trip/itineraries/. No organized black bear viewing tours exist, but they can be easily spotted by those who keep their eyes open. While gentle, common sense and respect should be employed when viewing these large mammals.

To stay safe, please be aware of the following when encountering wildlife:

- Always travel in a group and keep a close eye on small children and pets for safety when hiking in the woods
- Talk, sing, whistle or wear a bell when hiking in order to avoid startling a wild animal
- If you encounter a wild animal, stay back a respectful distance so that they do not feel threatened
- Do not feed wild animals
- If confronted by a wild animal, pick up small children, make yourself look as large as possible, back away slowly and leave the area
- Never run from a wild animal
- Carry bear spray
- Keep pets on a leash

Visit wildsafebc.com for more information on wildlife safety.



Prince of Whales Whale Watching

WHALE WATCHING

Vancouver Island North's most celebrated residents are its marine mammals and they come in many forms. Members of a population of some 300 fish-eating orcas known as the "Northern Residents" are often in the area in pursuit of salmon. More stealthy mammal-eating orca known as "Transients" or "Bigg's killer whales" are also often hunting here. Humpback whales, whose populations have recovered from near extinction, are now frequently seen in the area. Sightseeing trips may also encounter Pacific harbour seals, Dall's and harbour porpoise, Minke whales and a prodigious array of seabirds. Acrobatic Pacific white-sided dolphins and the world's largest sea lion species, Steller sea lions, are in the area year-round, though spring and fall are the most predictable times to see large numbers of both. The sight of dozens of sea lions lazing on the rocks and growling loudly is unforgettable.

Vancouver Island North tour operators view all of these magnificent creatures with respect. The small community here is dedicated to

ensuring safe, sustainable encounters that serve marine mammals and sightseers in equal measure. Captains closely adhere to "Be Whale Wise" guidelines that dictate that boats stay at least 200 meters away from any whales. That's not to say these remarkable mammals won't make a memorable encounter on their own terms.

Local experts offer tours from Telegraph Cove, Port McNeill, Alert Bay, Port Hardy, and as part of multi-day stays at remote lodges in the region that specialize in wildlife viewing. Visit our website for listings of local operators. Most operators adhere to the standards of the North Island Marine Mammal Stewardship Association, an organization that conducts conservation and business activities aimed at benefiting marine mammals, the economy and the marine environment off northern Vancouver Island.

With the increased number of humpback whales to the area, for the sake of both human and whale safety, extra measures are required to avoid collision:

Know that humpbacks are large, can surface unpredictably after long dives and be very unaware of boats

- Be on the lookout for blows at all times
 - Go slow if you see a blow
- If you see the Whale Watch Flag raised on boats, slow down as this means whales are near
- See the Marine Education and Research Society's page for areas of known whale density and further information on safe boater behaviour around whales:
mersociety.org/seeablowgoslow

THE WHALE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

The Whale Interpretive Centre (WIC), a cornerstone of marine education and conservation in British Columbia since 2002, was deeply affected by the 2024 fire. For 22 years, the WIC was home to the largest public collection of marine mammal skeletons in Western Canada, offering immersive interpretive tours that educated and inspired thousands of visitors from around the world. Through hands-on exhibits and engaging storytelling, the WIC fostered a deep connection between people and the ocean, leaving lasting memories for guests of all ages.

Although the fire resulted in the total loss of the WIC's contents, we are incredibly grateful that three of our skeletons—a Dall's porpoise, a Risso's dolphin, and the only recorded pygmy sperm whale specimen in BC—were off-site and safe. In May 2025, we were so fortunate to have been gifted a rare Bryde's whale by the

'Namgis First Nation. These skeletons will serve as the foundation for a revitalized Whale Interpretive Centre.

We are excited that the rebuild is swiftly moving forward and we anticipate welcoming visitors back to the Whale Interpretive Centre in late spring 2026. In the meantime, we are planning to maintain a physical presence in Telegraph Cove during summer 2025, to continue sharing our passion for marine life with the public.

While this chapter has brought profound challenges, the support we have received is nothing short of extraordinary. We are committed to rebuilding and starting this new chapter - one rooted in community support and a continued dedication to marine education and conservation.

BE WHALE WISE.

The following guidelines apply to all tour operators, commercial and pleasure craft, as well as kayaks and other self-propelled vessels:

- Be cautious and courteous, approaching known areas of marine wildlife activity with extreme caution
- Reduce speed to less than 7 knots when within 400 meters of the nearest whale
- Keep clear of the whales' path of travel
- Do not approach whales from the front or behind, always approach and depart from the side
- Do not approach or position your vessel closer than 100 meters to orca whales and 100 meters to any other whale
- Stay on the offshore side of the whales when they are travelling close to shore
- Do not swim with, touch or feed marine wildlife

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**Please contact our friendly staff at our Port Hardy base
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A person with a red backpack is hiking away from the camera on a dirt path through a lush, green forest. The path is flanked by dense ferns and other vegetation. Tall, moss-covered trees line the path, and the forest floor is covered in a thick layer of green plants. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

CONNECT

WITH NATURE

IN WILD OPEN SPACES

NATURE, NATURALLY

The pristine lakes and rivers, lush forests, jagged mountain ranges, and sandy shores encompassed by tidal waters that provide nourishment and protection, give Vancouver Island North an incredible ecosystem. Discover a hugely diverse selection of flora and fauna, lands and waters. Enjoy your passion for the natural world, your way.

Explore the land by way of an underground network of caves, kilometres of trails, rocky shores and sandy beaches. Enjoy the waters while fishing the secret coves and hidden streams, or diving beneath the waves to enjoy the spectacular undersea gardens, in waters described as some of the world's best temperate diving.

Travel mindfully and remember to Leave No Trace on your journey.

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RECREATION-MAP



HIKING

VANCOUVERISLANDNORTH.CA/
RECREATION-MAP

Every day on Vancouver Island North dawns with fresh possibilities for those eager to explore the region on foot. Take it easy with short, scenic loop routes. Spend the day hiking there and back to a postcard picnic spot by a lake, a river or the ocean. Or go long on overnight and multi-day backpacking treks into the heart of nature. Dedicated trails and logging roads penetrate deep into the landscape. Many seaside communities are lined with wheelchair-accessible seawalls and boardwalks perfect for family outings and sunset strolls.

Port Hardy's Quatse Loop and Estuary Trail lead from the fisherman's wharf and oceanfront hotels. The Quatse Estuary is home to eagles, herons and other kinds of birdlife. The forested 2.5 km Quatse Loop Trail veers off and follows the river past the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre with its interpretive displays and hatchery.

Beachcombers flock to Storey's Beach, an inviting stretch of sand near Fort Rupert just south of Port Hardy. Wade in the gentle tides or tackle the rugged 11 km out-and-back Tex Lyon Trail.

The beach is one terminus of the lovely Fort Rupert Trail, a route that follows an ancient First Nations pathway through the forest and past a lake to Bear Cove Road.

The Port McNeill Rotary Trail is a wide, smooth, crushed gravel pathway that runs along Highway 19 and into the Town of Port McNeill. A short distance north of Port McNeill the Cluxewe Salt Marsh Trail offers a sweet 45-minute return trip to the beach.

Find a forest walk along the road to Port Alice where the Marble River Trail offers hikers two destinations, Emerald Pools or Bear Falls – especially exciting during the spawning season when the salmon leap through the air in order to pass the falls on their upstream journey.

All the must-sees of the 'Namgis First Nation of Alert Bay on Cormorant Island are within an easy hike of the ferry terminal. There's an uphill climb (or relaxed drive) to the Ecological Park with its marsh boardwalk, excellent birdwatching and network of forested trails. Otherwise more relaxed strolling can be had at sea level along the restored boardwalk and oceanfront seawall.

Follow in the footsteps of Sointula's pioneers along Malcolm Island's historic Mateoja Heritage Trail, a six-kilometre return trip. Or watch for orcas when hiking the aptly named Beautiful Bay Trail.

For a truly unique west coast experience, head past the community of Holberg accessed via gravel logging road from Port Hardy. Look for the signs to Raft Cove, a provincial park with a moderately challenging, 2.5 km trail leading through the coastal rainforest out to the open Pacific Ocean

vancouverislandnorth.ca/activity-type/things-to-do/hiking-trails/



San Josef Bay trail - Rob Wilson



Cape Scott Provincial Park - Finn Steiner

CAPE SCOTT PROVINCIAL PARK

CAPESCOTTPARK.COM

The sweeping tidal flats, forested trails and ocean-slammed headlands of Cape Scott Provincial Park and the North Coast Trail are increasingly showing up on the radar of the international backpacking community. Day hikers and family groups can get a satisfying taste of the larger possibilities by taking the 45-minute trail to San Josef Bay's sandy beach on a well-groomed gravel path from the trailhead parking lot. Backpackers seeking a tougher challenge take the original Cape Scott Trail along 16 km of varied terrain to incredible beach camping at Nels Bight. The hardest adventurers, meanwhile, find the ultimate backcountry experience on the North Coast Trail, following the rugged, northernmost coast of Vancouver Island.

Sea stacks, and a wide stretch of white sand await day hikers at San Josef Bay. The trail winds through the forest, past huge trees and historic settlement sites to the beach. For families with little ones, this trail is accessible for high clearance, all-terrain style strollers. Transportation and guided hikes to San Josef Bay and other remote west coast beaches are available from

Port Hardy.

Multi-day hikers pack up and embark from the Cape Scott trailhead to Nissen Bight, Nels Bight and Guise Bay, all within a day's hike out. Coastal exploration abounds with a system of rugged trails connecting pocket beaches between Nels Bight and Experiment Bight at low tide, and remnants of the area's past life including trace evidence of a late 19th century Danish settlement, and a mid-1940s WWII early warning radar base. Those who head to Cape Scott itself are invited to sign the guest book at the lighthouse. In 2014 a new Ranger Cabin was constructed at Nels Bight. The cabin is staffed during the summer and functions as an emergency shelter for the public during the off season. Please respect this space if visiting during the winter.

The North Coast Trail is a 43 km extension to the original Cape Scott Trail. Experienced hikers that take on this gloriously challenging grind can look forward to rugged terrain with rope-assisted inclines, muddy sections, boardwalks and cable cars. The full length of

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forest, & land by reducing
your plastic waste output.



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GOOD OF
OUR WILD



#ForTheGoodOfOurWild

this point to point hike is 58 km. Shushartie Bay, accessed by water taxi from Port Hardy, is the eastern entrance to the trail, and access to the western entrance is at the Cape Scott trailhead. It is recommended that hikers give themselves a minimum of five days to complete this trek.

Travel to the Cape Scott trail head by driving 64 km from Port Hardy, past Holberg, on the gravel logging road. Water access to Shushartie Bay is available from Port Hardy by water taxi: capescottwatertaxi.com. Land shuttle service and guided day hikes can also be arranged with departures from Port Hardy.

Always come prepared. The weather changes quickly, and layered clothing topped by sturdy rain gear is essential. Plan your trip, overnight campsites are dotted along these routes. Please follow proper backcountry etiquette and Leave No Trace camping practices while visiting parks: : <https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/plan-your-trip/>



Vancouver Island North - Isabella Zandonà

DIVING

Zip up a dry suit, strap on a scuba cylinder and sink below the surface into an incredible marine wonderland. Vancouver Island North is world-renowned for its scuba diving. These cold (around 10°C), clear, current-fed waters are home to an extraordinary diversity of life in jaw-dropping density and colour. In these rich waters, species often exceed the limits given in field guides and unlike many tropical areas, virtually no surface is left uninhabited. You are truly visiting another world of amazingly mysterious and diverse

organisms. It is common to encounter more than ten species of nudibranch on a single dive. Giant Pacific octopuses and wolf eels might be spotted around their dens. And rockfish may school around you. The rock walls are brightly painted with red soft coral, multi-hued sponges and vibrant anemones and sea stars. It's an underwater photographer's dreamscape.

Seemingly endless stretches of coastline provide equally endless dive opportunities. Favourite spots in the

area include the concentration of dive sites in the Broughton and Blackfish Archipelagos, the gardens of Zeballos, the expansive walls of Browning Pass near God's Pocket Marine Provincial Park, and the vibrant life of Quatsino Narrows. Choose to rent gear (dry suits are a must) and join a local operator on guided trips out to prime locations, or settle into the comfort of a dive resort. Whichever way you get your feet wet as a certified diver, you're sure to want to explore all that this cold-water diver's paradise has to offer.

CAVING

Vancouver Island North boasts the highest concentration of caves in Canada. Water has worked its alchemical magic on the rugged landscape for hundreds of thousands of years. Result: The relatively soft karst (limestone) topography is riddled with networks of subterranean getaways – some suitable for beginners, others only for the most expert cavers.

An accessible caving introduction to explorers of all ages can be had at Little Huson Caves Regional Park, a 45-minute drive south of Port McNeill, off the Zeballos road. A self-guided tour here includes

stops at a natural rock bridge and walk-in, cathedral-style cave. Everyone can get an easy access look at some of Canada's finest karst formations from viewing platforms set up along the Alice Lake Loop. It includes stops at the Eternal Fountain with its soothing waterfall, and the Devil's Bath, a very good example of a cenote, much the same as those found in the Yucatan.

For their part, experienced cavers can explore some of the longest, deepest karst caves in Canada. On the North Island, several of these caves are concentrated in two areas rich in limestone, the Quatsino formation

and the Parsons Bay formations – the latter is not exclusive to the North Island region as it stretches farther south on Vancouver Island. When exploring underground, always have at least two sources of light and a helmet, and let someone know where you are going and when to expect your return. Guides are strongly recommended for the more difficult treks, and regional authorities ask that cavers steer clear of any unmapped caves. Information about the sport on Vancouver Island can be found through the Canadian Caver website at <https://www.cancaver.ca/>

SPORT FISHING

One of the North Island's most enjoyable and longest-running pastimes has to be fishing. Cast a line as you motor past postcard maritime scenery. Wait patiently for the big ones to bite while enjoying the camaraderie of fellow passengers and the good humour of the laidback guides who lead charter expeditions. Then get set to reel in the catch of the day, soon to be cleaned and readied for either the evening campfire or professionally prepared, frozen or vacuum packed, for the trip home.

All five varieties of Pacific salmon run fast on migration routes that travel down the west and east side of the Island, occasionally detouring on tides and currents out into the Queen Charlotte Strait. That gives North Island fishing enthusiasts first dibs on these members of the genus known as *Oncorhynchus* (aka the big pink ones) as they head south to their spawning grounds.

Launch your own boat at one of the many convenient ramps in our waterfront communities. Or hire a qualified charter operator. Local guides supply all the gear and advice necessary to reel in prize catches. Comfortable fishing boats are available by the half-day or full-day, but be sure to book well in advance as charters tend to book up during the peak season. Alternatively, you may choose not to venture from shore since the fish are typically biting within the length of a fishing line cast from any available dock.

All five varieties of Pacific salmon run on migration routes through the North Island.

Full service fishing lodges can not only be found in most of the coastal towns around Vancouver Island North, but also in some of the region's smallest communities and most remote corners. These lodges are prepared to provide multi-day fishing excursions that can include accommodation, meals, guided charters and other services that they package to suit the needs of guests.

Visitor Information Centers have leads on guides and useful tips on what's biting when and where. Also available are maps of the logging roads that head to steelhead and trout-filled wilderness lakes and streams. These routes are bumpy, and a solid four wheel drive vehicle is recommended (but not essential if you drive slow and easy).

Be sure to time your visit for when the fish are running. Salmon tend to migrate from May through September, and their numbers peak in the summer and fall. Halibut are abundant from March to September. Red snapper and ling cod are also caught locally, as are crab, prawns, oysters and mussels. Ask around at dockside or visit the Fisheries and Oceans Canada website, dfo-mpo.gc.ca, for tips about regulations, licenses, local openings and conservation areas.

All tidal sport fishing license are now delivered electronically

through the National Recreational Licensing System (NRLS). Get your license online in advance of your trip. <https://recfish-pechesportive.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/>

TOP 10 FISHING HOLES

Saltwater:

- Blackfish Sound
- Dillon, Daphne & Duval Points
- Gordon Group
- Masterman Island
- Telegraph Cove
- Cormorant Island
- Cluxewe River Mouth
- Wells Passage
- Haddington Island
- Quatsino Sound

Freshwater:

- Nimpkish Lake
- Schoen Lake
- Roberts Lake
- Victoria Lake
- Woss Lake
- O'Connor Lake
- Quatse River
- Nahwitti River
- Keogh River
- Cluxewe River



Vancouver Island North - Finn Steiner

All tidal sport fishing license are now delivered electronically through the National Recreational Licensing System (NRLS).

Get your license online in advance of your trip.



SCAN ME

[VANCOUVERISLANDNORTH.CA/
RECREATION-MAP](http://VANCOUVERISLANDNORTH.CA/RECREATION-MAP)





Kayaking Cape Sutil - Finn Steiner

KAYAKING

Paddle into shallow coves, up narrow creeks and across lakes while appreciating a silence broken only by the soft sound of paddle against water. Hug the coastline or strike out for a nearby island to picnic on a deserted sandy beach.

Strap your own transportation to a roof rack, or sign up for a guided tour in this world-class paddling destination. View intertidal life in the clear, cold waters. Seals, sea lions, orcas and maybe even humpback whales welcome respectful, low-impact visitors to their aquatic playground. The Lonely Planet travel guide ranked killer whale watching from a kayak in Johnstone Strait #2 in their Top 10 list of Canadian Adventures, but other species like humpbacks can also be seen from a kayak. One of the primary reasons visitors choose kayaks to view whales is the unique perspective they gain. Being quiet, low in the water, and respectful of the whales allows kayakers to gain a more rewarding experience with the grand cetaceans.

Guides and fellow kayakers become fast friends on day trips or longer excursions that might include sleepovers in rustic campgrounds, comfortable base camps or luxurious resorts

hidden away on remote islands. Weather and sea conditions can change quickly, so be prepared and travel in a group. A number of local kayaking companies offer half, full and multi-day tours – vancouverislandnorth.ca/activity-type/things-to-do/sports-activities/kayaking/

Experienced, long-distance kayakers tackle the Vancouver Island North Circle Route. Departing from Port Hardy, paddlers head north through God's Pocket Marine Park, along the north coast of the Island and around Cape Scott. The route then turns south and continues to trace the coastline to the mouth of Quatsino Sound. Once in the Sound, sites on the north and south shores serve paddlers as they make their way to Coal Harbour (bcmarinetrails.org). After exploring the local waters, kayakers heading north to the spectacular Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii sail via BC Ferries from Port Hardy's Bear Cove terminal.



SCAN ME



BC Ferries - Kimberly Kufas

TRAVELLING

BY LAND

DRIVEBC.CA

BC Road Report: 1-800-550-4997

All roads on the North Island lead to Hwy 19. Routes into communities like Sayward, Telegraph Cove, Port Alice and Coal Harbour are modern, paved thoroughfares. Other wilderness retreats and camping areas may only be accessible via gravel logging roads. Visibility along these often very dusty roads can be restricted, so extreme caution is recommended. Remember: Logging trucks always have the right of way. See the Resource Road User Safety Guide at: bcforestsafes.org/files/tk_pdfs/gde_resrd.pdf

Vancouver Island Connector provides daily scheduled bus service that connects the North Island with mid and south Island destinations and connections to Vancouver. It is recommended that you book your ticket in advance by calling 1-866-986-3466 or online at viconnector.com. Pick-up and drop-off available in Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice turn-off, Woss and Sayward junction.

If you don't plan to bring your own vehicle, transportation options include the Port Hardy Express Bus from Campbell River - Port McNeill - Port Hardy through Island Link bus service, Mount Waddington Regional Transit, two taxi companies, and two car rental companies. Public transit links the communities of Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Fort Rupert/Storey's Beach and Coal Harbour year round. Transit buses are wheelchair accessible. From December to March, on Saturdays only, the Mount Cain ski connector transports skiers and riders from Port Hardy and Port McNeill to Woss, where transit meets the Mount Cain ski bus. For scheduling and fare information on all routes, contact Mount Waddington Transit: 250-956-3151 or <https://bctransit.com/mount-waddington>. For Island Link bus service from Campbell River, visit <https://www.islandlinkbus.com/>

BY SEA

Ferries and water taxis are vital transportation links. Sointula (25 minute sailing) and Alert Bay (45 minute sailing) are a short ferry ride from Port McNeill. Port Hardy's Bear Cove terminal is the gateway for sailings to Prince Rupert and to the Central Coast. Contact BCFerries.com, or phone 1-888-223-3779 for schedule information or to reserve the Inside Passage or Central Coast routes. If you are looking to charter a boat to a coastal destination check at the Visitor Centres for assistance in selecting a water taxi service provider.

When travelling by water, Channel 16 is strictly reserved for emergency communications. Weather information is available by calling 250-949-7148, or by tuning into Channels 21B or Wx 1, 2, or 3 on your VHF radio. Harbour Authorities, marina resorts, and fuel docks monitor Channel 66. See AHOYBC.com for west coast and Vancouver Island ocean boating information, including interactive maps displaying marina, harbour, and facility markers for trip planning and travel.

BY AIR

Port Hardy airport has scheduled daily service to Vancouver and beyond - pacificcoastal.com. Charter companies in Port McNeill, Alert Bay, Coal Harbour and Port Hardy offer scenic flights and transport service to remote communities. Seaplanes and helicopters can be booked for flightseeing trips and for passenger transportation to wilderness lodges.

A CALL TO CULTURAL EXPLORERS

GILAKAS'LA. Vancouver Island North communities are located on the traditional territory of the Kwakwaka'wakw people, who have been stewards of this land since time immemorial.

Vancouver Island North exerts a magnetic pull on easygoing adventurers seeking authentic cultural experiences. The variety of activity here is remarkably diverse, especially when exploring the outdoors by land, sea and air. Shop local for smoked salmon, funky folk art, and exquisite First Nations masterpieces. Get to know some of the colorful individuals who call the area home at lively seasonal festivals, coffee shops, waterfront eateries and on the main streets.

Our communities are bastions of civilization in the midst of a wild landscape populated by bears, wolves, cougars and bald eagles. To the west is the open Pacific, to the east a mazy region of islands and waterways. The people here are down-to-earth and rooted in a sense of place, and you will find a full range of creature comforts with a personal touch.

Experience timeless Indigenous culture and traditions flourishing in Alert Bay, Port Hardy, Fort Rupert and at remote villages as you meet artists, witness carvers in action, tour communities and local waters, and participate in guided marine expeditions. The story of the region's industrial roots in logging, fishing and mining is well represented at local museums where the history is celebrated as much as the stunning local scenery.

Welcome to Vancouver Island North. Your first trip here won't be the last.



U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay - Kimberly Kufaaas

INDIGENOUS CULTURE

For more than 14,000 plus years, Canada's First Nations people have shared this wild coastal region with eagles, black bears, orca and salmon. After a long period of cultural repression, ancient traditions are again thriving as the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples preserve and celebrate their culture through art, dance, music, language and a sustainable day-to-day relationship with the natural world.

Alert Bay on Cormorant Island is internationally renowned for its storytelling, summertime dance performances and the potlatch treasures housed inside the must see U'mista Cultural Centre. The world's tallest totem pole stands vigil outside the 'Namgis Big House. Enjoy the colourful displays of traditional and contemporary artwork in many locations throughout the village – keep your eye out for a favourite piece to add to your personal collection. Fort Rupert on the southern outskirts of Port Hardy is home to the Kwakiutl First Nation. Take a walking tour of this friendly enclave by the sea and watch for internationally renowned carvers creating magnificent art from chunks of timber.

Climb aboard in Port Hardy for a culturally inspired marine tour or an adventure to the world's fastest navigable tidal rapids where your Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation guide will help you visualize this area as it was years ago through stories of their traditional territory. Learn to weave cedar, make a drum, or get lost in the stories told by Elders or through traditional song and dance.

Launch your marine-based cultural adventure from Port McNeill or Alder Bay to connect with the past, present, and future of the Kwakwaka'wakw people on a guided trip to the U'mista Cultural Centre followed by a marine wildlife zodiac tour that melds culture and nature. Grizzly bear viewing tours, hosted by Indigenous guides, travel through their traditional territories to share an Indigenous perspective of these sacred animals and their habitat.

MUSEUMS & CULTURAL CENTRES



Cultural explorers can dig deep into the ancient, recent and living histories of Vancouver Island North.

Go back to the source at the Port Hardy Museum and Archives, which houses artifacts from a local archeological dig at Bear Cove – the oldest known site of human habitation on Vancouver Island (circa 5850 BCE). Exhibits change regularly while shining thematic lights on First Nations history, the Hudson's Bay Company and European settlement.

The U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay is respected far and wide as one of Canada's finest First Nations museums with its unparalleled collection of potlatch regalia. Modeled after a big house, it is dedicated to preserving the heritage of the Kwakwaka'wakw. The gift shop features superb jewelry, carvings, and textiles.

Forestry has been a leading commercial activity on the North Island since European settlers arrived in the 1860s. Based in a sturdy log house, the Port McNeill Heritage Museum tracks local history with

archival photos, exhibits and vintage logging equipment.

An easy walk from the ferry landing, the Sointula Museum is home to artifacts, archival records and displays related to the colourful history of Malcolm Island. A primary focus is on the Finnish immigrants who arrived here at the beginning of the 1900s to launch a short-lived utopian commune.

Boaters heading northwest across Johnstone Strait and Blackfish Sound are advised to linger in the Echo Bay area and visit Billy Procter's Museum and Gift Shop. The author and lifelong area resident has collected fascinating memorabilia from the logging, fishing and trapping eras.

Learn about the perilous journey of salmon and their incredible survival stories at the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre in Port Hardy. Located beside a working hatchery, the centre features interactive exhibits, games and a family theatre. The staff at the interpretive centre can also provide tours of the hatchery.

Visit in the fall spawning season to witness hatchery activity during their busiest season.

The Port Alice Heritage Centre, above the fire hall, offers a look at the town's intriguing history. From its origin in 1917 with the building of the pulp mill, to its move to the current Village location in 1965, to Port Alice becoming British Columbia's first "instant municipality".

Experience the rich history of Coal Harbour as a whaling station and military base thanks to resident Joel Eilertsen, who welcomes visitors to his collection in the town's old Air Force hangar. A rebuilt boat from 1915 and an impressive six metre-long (20 feet) jawbone of a blue whale are also on display.

Artifacts and archival material are stored and displayed in the Quatsino Museum across from the government dock. It's open daily in July and August from 1 - 2 p.m., and every weekend from September to June also from 1 - 2 p.m. Email to arrange a private showing: Quatsino.museum@gmail.com

Take a look back at the unique story of a remote coastal community. The Winter Harbour historical photo collection is open to the public in the museum room near the Government Wharf Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Some centres and North Island experiences may not be open year-round. Be sure to check opening hours before heading out.

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Sea Wolf Adventures - Kimberly Kufas

FUN AND RELAXATION

With a wealth of recreational, entertaining, and educational alternatives, the towns of Vancouver Island North offer numerous options for go-your-own-way activities.

Check Visitor Centres, coffee shop bulletin boards, the "HotSpots" section of the North Island Gazette, or vancouverislandnorth.ca/events for the latest on festivals, concerts, special events, exhibits and other fun activities.

Shop for art, crafts, fashion and edible goodies (like locally made smoked and candied salmon). Galleries, retail outlets and museum gift shops sell the splendid, nature-inspired work of local artisans and First Nations artists – jewelers, carvers, painters, sculptors, photographers and textile workers included.

Rent a kayak from Seaview Kayak in Port Hardy and soak in the serenity that is experienced while gliding across the surface of a crystal clear lake or calm ocean waters.

Enjoy a drop-in workout, yoga class and much more at recreation centres in the region. Pamper yourself with a spa treatment or a massage from skilled body workers.

Make a splash at the indoor pool in Port Hardy then relax in the hot tub and sauna. Swim in Port McNeill's outdoor pool from May through August. Or take a refreshing dip in the ocean or one of our many cold, crystal clear lakes and rivers.

Plan a tour of museums found in Alert Bay, Coal Harbour, Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice, Quatsino, Telegraph Cove, Sointula and even tiny Echo Bay and Winter Harbour, each with their own unique focus and stories to share. See page 24 for more details.

Experience First Nations culture and traditional dances (July and August only) at the 'Namgis Big House in Alert Bay. Just down the hill sits the U'mista Cultural Centre and its world-renowned collection of potlatch regalia.

Learn about marine mammal conservation and the diverse ecology of Johnstone Strait at Telegraph Cove's Whale Interpretive

Centre. Children's games and interactive displays make this a popular spot for youngsters.

Check out Port Hardy's Quatse River Hatchery and the Salmon Stewardship Centre to view and learn more about the lifecycle of these long-distance swimmers and their importance to the local economy.

Enjoy a fun and friendly game of golf at Seven Hills Golf & Country Club in Port Hardy. This is a serene 9-hole champion-based golf course, with a comfortable clubhouse for post-game relaxation. A little further out sits the Port Alice Golf & Country Club, with a 9-hole course and sweeping views of Neroutsos Inlet.





CAMPING & RECREATION SITES

Nothing says summer like tent camping. Vancouver Island North caters to those who enjoy sleeping under the stars with options ranging from full-service family friendly spots to basic wilderness sites. Campgrounds in the region are provided by a mix of operators:

forest companies, the Regional District of Mount Waddington, BC Provincial Parks, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and private owners

SAFETY FIRST

When camping in Vancouver Island North, prioritizing safety is crucial. Given the area's abundant wildlife, including bears, proper food storage is essential. Food caches should be used to store all food items, garbage, and scented products away from your campsite to avoid attracting animals. Keep a clean campsite and never feed wildlife.

It is also crucial to respect wildlife by maintaining a safe distance. Know what to do in case of encountering bears or other animals. Carry bear spray and be familiar with how to use it. Make noise while hiking to alert animals of your presence. For your safety and the preservation of the natural environment, only camp in designated campsites. This helps minimize environmental impact and ensures assistance is available if needed.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Before setting out, check with local Visitor Centres for detailed information on specific sites, conditions, and any advisories. Regulations and available amenities can vary between sites, so it's important to be informed. Proper planning will help ensure a safe and enjoyable camping experience.

Check out our camping page to learn more

<https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/activity-type/where-to-stay/campgrounds-rv-parks/>

EXPLORE THE REGION ON TWO WHEELS

Experience the hidden treasures of Port McNeill and its surrounding islands on an unforgettable bike adventure. This region of the North Island offers endless opportunities for cycling enthusiasts of all levels.



Bikepacking - Tom Powell

Port McNeill serves as the perfect starting point for a variety of biking excursions, whether you're embarking on a scenic coastal day ride or a multi-day journey through quaint island communities. Don't miss the chance to explore Cormorant Island and Malcolm Island, just a short ferry ride away, each offering its own unique charm and cultural experiences.

With a mix of gravel and paved roads, cyclists can enjoy diverse terrain suitable for different biking preferences. From leisurely rides to more challenging routes, there's something for everyone here. Make sure your bike is equipped with tires at least 45mm wide to tackle rougher sections and ensure maximum comfort.

CRANE A NECK SKYWARD YEAR-ROUND ON VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH

The Northern tip of Vancouver Island is home to some of the most exceptional bird watching opportunities on the Pacific Coast. This ecologically diverse region, with ancient coastal rainforests, rocky islets, and expansive estuaries, supports a wide range of bird species. While the sheltered waters of the Broughton Archipelago serve as an excellent winter habitat for various wildlife, it is during the summer months that the area reveals its hidden gems.

Bird enthusiasts are encouraged to consider professional guided tours led by local experts. These tours offer a chance to explore the abundant waters with knowledgeable local interpreters and hopefully catch a glimpse of the charismatic species that return year after year to raise their young.

Check out the Vancouver Island North Bird Trail on the BC Bird Trail website! bcbirdtrail.ca/trails/vancouver-island-north/

CATCH A SURF BREAK

Dive into the untamed waves of the North Island for an adrenaline-fueled surfing experience. The sport first took off here in the 1960s at Grant Bay, Raft Cove and San Josef Bay in Cape Scott Provincial Park. Now, a new generation has returned to ride the long rollers and big breakers that lap steadily on the shores of these secluded sandy bays.

Between rugged coastlines and vast, sandy beaches is a haven for experienced surfers seeking the ultimate challenge. With powerful



Raft Cove Provincial Park - Rob Wilson

swells and quiet beaches, the North Island offers a thrilling playground for riders ready to push their limits.

Be prepared and know before you go, as most surf spots are far from town and without cell service. Leave a trip plan, know your limits and bring extra clothes!

#LIVETHEWILDPLEDGE

Visitors come from around the world to explore the rugged remote beaches of Northern Vancouver Island, and we encourage you to #LiveTheWildPledge by helping us take care of our home and environment. Beach clean ups are a part of everyday life up here, and we hope you can help us keep things clean!



#livethewildpledge - Tyler Cave

To find out how you can #livethewildpledge, visit vancouverislandnorth.ca/livethepledge.



SCAN ME

#TAKETHEWILDPLEDGE FOR THE GOOD OF OUR WILD

With our ancient coastal rainforests, towering mountains, and thriving ecosystems, Vancouver Island North offers a rare opportunity to trek in magnificent, unspoiled nature, see and experience wildlife, discover new cultures, and so much more. Vancouver Island North is a natural wonder to everyone that lives and travels here, and it is our responsibility to preserve and protect it – now and for the future.

The Wild Pledge is a promise to practice responsible tourism and journey with care when visiting Vancouver Island communities, businesses, Indigenous communities, forests and oceans.

Visit vancouverislandnorth.ca/takethepledge/ to learn more about travelling mindfully, and sign the pledge.

DISTANCE CHART - FROM PORT HARDY					
TO	KM	TIME	TO	KM	TIME
ALERT BAY	43km • 14km ferry	1 1/2 hours incl 45 min sailing	WOSS	104km	1 1/2 hours
CAPE SCOTT TRHEAD	68km • enroute road	1 1/2 hours	SAYWARD JUNCT	166km	2 hours
COAL HARBOUR	18km	20 mins	CAMPBELL RIVER	232km	3 hours
HOLBERG	48km • enroute road	1 hour	COURTENAY	292km	3 1/2 hours
PORT ALICE	55km	45 mins	NANAIMO	387km	4 1/2 hours
PORT MCNEILL	43km	30 mins	CHEMAINUS	495km	4 1/2 hours
SOINTULA	43km • 10km ferry	1 1/2 hours incl 25 min sailing	DUNCAN	437km	5 hours
TELEGRAPH COVE	63km	1 hour	VICTORIA	497km	6 hours
WINTER HARBOUR	73km • enroute road	2 hours	TOFINO	502km	6 1/2 hours





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PLACES TO EAT



Devil's Bath Brewing, Port McNeill
Photography © Tom Powell



Nax'id' Pub, Port Hardy
Photography © Lexa Bergen

PLACES TO STAY



Bear Cove Cottages
Photography © Daniel & Meriana Plaja



Cluxewe Resort
Photography © Geoff Heith

**TAKE THE
WILD PLEDGE**

Support local lives
by eating, staying & shopping locally.

FOR THE
GOOD OF
OUR WILD

#ForTheGoodOfOurWild



FAST FACT:

Telegraph Cove was the first community in BC to offer tours with wild whales in their natural habitat as the primary focus.

TAKE THE WILD PLEDGE

Support local lives

by eating, staying & shopping locally.



#ForTheGoodOfOurWild

© Kimberly Kufas Photography

TELEGRAPH COVE

Telegraph Cove - Jordyn Giesbrecht

In December 2024, the Cove suffered a devastating fire in the dock area, destroying the pub, restaurant, Whale Interpretive Centre, whale watching and bear tour offices. Already the rebuild is underway as well as plans for wildlife tours. For the 2025 summer season, a food service has been provided. It is expected that the rebuild will be completed by May 1st for the summer season of 2026.

Telegraph Cove's spirit remains strong! The community is committed to rebuilding and restoring this special place. In 2025, your support is crucial to their efforts. Here's how you can help:

Plan a visit: Show your love for Telegraph Cove by exploring its natural beauty, supporting local businesses that remain, and participating in the rebuilding process.

Donate: Contribute to the rebuilding

fund and the Whale Interpretive Centre fundraiser to help restore the lost structures and attractions.

Spread the word: Share Telegraph Cove's story and encourage others to visit and support this resilient community.

Let's help Telegraph Cove rise from the ashes and support their businesses amidst a tragedy. Follow Telegraph Cove on Instagram or Facebook to stay up to date..

Telegraph Cove is a popular sport fishing destination, renowned for its typically calm summer waters. Anglers can charter local boats to fish for salmon, cod, and halibut while enjoying the beautiful scenery and abundant wildlife. Additionally, crabbing and prawning offer opportunities to catch delicious seafood.

Telegraph Cove's history is embodied in its restored wooden buildings and boardwalk. In 1912, it was chosen as the northern terminus for the telegraph line from Campbell River and earned the name in the process. A lumber mill and salmon saltery followed. During the Second World War the Royal Canadian Air Force operated a sawmill here with a large crew. The lumber cut was used for building the airports at Port Hardy, Coal Harbour, Bella Bella, and Prince Rupert. Its genesis into a whale-watching mecca began in 1980 with the launch of BC's first whale watching focused business.

Step back in time and set sail into a marine wonderland at Telegraph Cove. This historic and picturesque waterfront village is perched at the entrance to Johnstone Strait, the Broughton Archipelago Marine Park and the Blackfish Archipelago. Telegraph Cove is among the last surviving boardwalk



Telegraph Cove - Geoff Heith

communities on the west coast. Kayakers, wildlife viewers, pleasure boaters, scuba divers and sports-fishing enthusiasts magnetically return to this secluded magical dot on the Vancouver Island North map.

Daily seasonal tours depart to view grizzly bears in the wild in the Knight Inlet area of the mainland coast, where the bears congregate on river estuaries to feed on grasses, roots, and on salmon as they return to spawn. Whale watching vessels offer day trip adventures with an onboard naturalist during the May to October season. Viewing the rich marine environment from a kayak can be experienced on half, full, or multi day guided trips. The density and abundance of marine mammals sets Telegraph Cove apart. It is common to spot orcas, humpback whales, Minke whales, Steller sea lions, Dall's and harbour porpoise, harbour seals and Pacific white-sided dolphins in the vicinity. River otters and black bears are also often sighted.

These waters are in fact one of most predictable places to see orcas in the wild. The area is frequented by both the mammal-eating orca population known as "Bigg's killer whales" or "Transients," and the fish-eating orca population known as the "Northern Residents." Families, or "matrillines", belonging to the latter population, come to the area to feed on salmon and to rub their bodies on rubbing beaches. They are the only population of killer whales in the world known to have this rubbing behaviour. The beaches they most often use have been recognized as critical habitat and are protected as a sanctuary known as the Dr. Michael Bigg Ecological Reserve at Robson Bight. Both the land and water areas of the Reserve are not open to the public.

Back on land, trailheads to Bauza Cove and the Blinkhorn Peninsula are close by. The Blinkhorn Trail has some moderate elevation gain that is rewarded with incredible views of Johnstone Strait and the islands. Guided rainforest tours are available.

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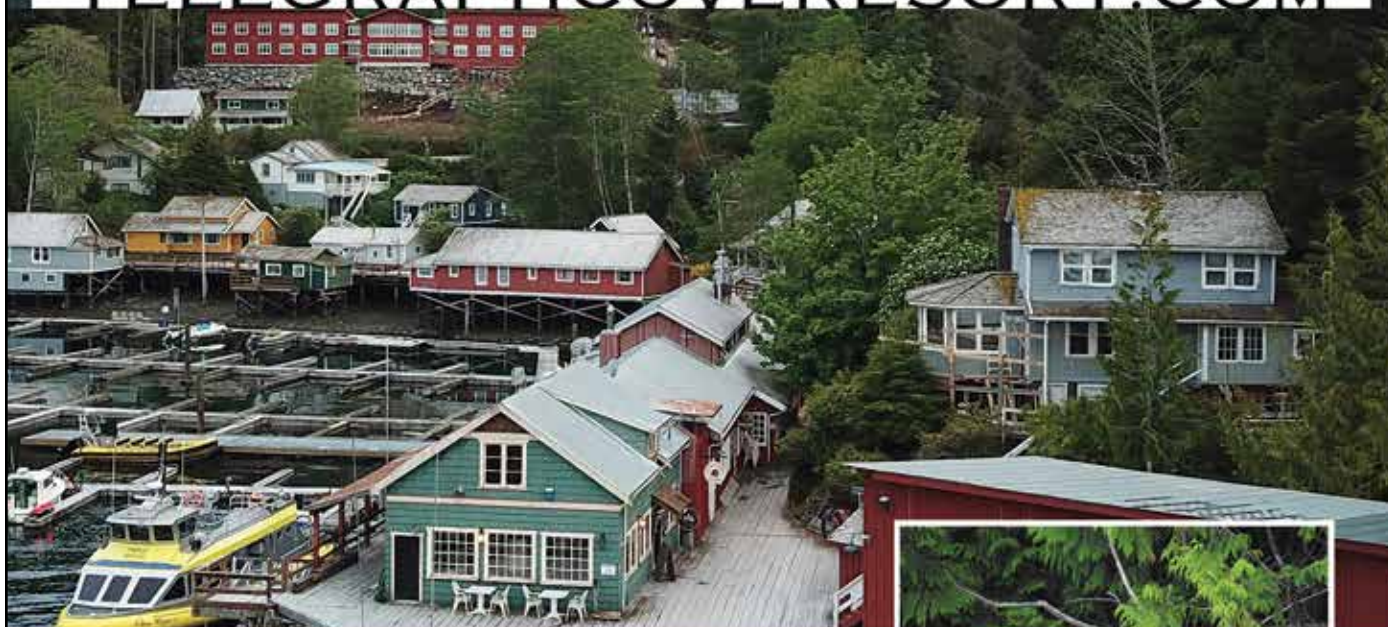
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SOINTULA

SOINTULAINFO.CA

VISITOR CENTRE

250.973.2001

FAST FACT:

The village of Sointula was settled in 1901 by a group of Finnish pioneers who rowed north from Nanaimo with intentions of setting up a utopian society



Sointula and Malcolm Island - Mitchell Bay © BC Bird Trail

A PLACE OF HARMONY

A fascinating history and plenty of rural charm make Sointula on sprawling Malcolm Island a memorable getaway. The town's name means "place of harmony" in Finnish. It was established in 1901 when a colony of Finnish settlers arrived with utopian dreams. While their ambitious plans were derailed within a decade, visitors will quickly learn that these visionaries chose the right place for a fresh air and saltwater paradise on earth.

Most visitors today arrive via a 25-minute BC Ferries sailing from Port McNeill. Many park their cars and travel either as pedestrians or cyclists. From May to September, those without bikes can borrow one for the day by checking in at the Sointula Resource Centre right off the ferry dock. The island invites exploration, and a car is helpful when heading to popular destinations like Bere Point, Mitchell Bay or the Pulteney Point Lighthouse. Boaters utilize the good moorage in the Malcolm Island Lions Harbour. A second free bike location at the harbour provides a convenient mode of transportation for visitors arriving by boat to access Island services. The Harbour also offers showers, laundry and Sani-dump facilities for boaters and campers.

Hikers rack up the mileage on the Mateoja Heritage trail, the path of early pioneer homesteaders. Ocean breezes and easy strolling

are in store on the Kaleva Road Walkway, a three-kilometre seaside interpretive trail overlooking Broughton Strait. Bere Point Regional Park and campground is the starting point for the Beautiful Bay trail, which winds along a rocky ridge that offers breathtaking ocean glimpses. Some hikers may be lucky enough to witness orcas rubbing on the pebble beach below the viewing platform at the start of the trail. Fortunate visitors that find themselves on the trail when the whales are rubbing should view from the platform. When whales are present please be cautious and quiet to minimize disruption of the whale's behavior.

Visit the local museum to learn about the island's unique history. Drop into BC's longest running cooperative store, formed as the Sointula Co-operative Store Association in 1909 (open Tues to Sat). A bakery, a cozy café, a burger joint and a seasonal restaurant provide a good range of food options, and it's possible to shop for island made art and crafts at a few shops and home studios. The Coop also runs a gas station and convenience store in the community. The Sointula Resource Centre Society's visitor information staff can point the way to the island's campgrounds, cottages, B&B establishments and other accommodation options.



QUATSINO

QUATSINO.ORG

FAST FACT:

Home to three seasons of the History Channel's *ALONE* series, participants assembled here before being taken by sea or air to various locations throughout Quatsino Sound and the North Island.

Port Hardy – Quatse River Park © BC Bird Trail

The small hamlet of Quatsino, located just 15 minutes from Coal Harbour by water taxi (Quatsino Sound Marine Transport 250-949-6358) or six minutes by air (Air Cab 250-949-6371), offers a peaceful retreat where time seems to stand still. With only eight kilometers of gravel road linking homes, fishing lodges, and summer cabins along the shoreline, both residents and visitors embrace a simpler way of life connected to the land, forest, and sea.

In 1894, Norwegian settlers arrived in Quatsino Sound aboard the steamship *Mischief*, seeking a prosperous life in the North Island wilderness. They chose a picturesque stretch of sunny coastline to build their community. The land, forest, and sea provided for their needs, and the settlement soon became a vital hub for the area, offering goods and services to support the growing number of settlers and workers. The historic St. Olaf's Anglican Church, built in 1897 as a small one-room school, is nestled near the government wharf and remains one of the oldest buildings still in use on northern Vancouver Island. Quatsino

**QUATSINO IS A
BEAUTIFUL AND
QUIET OASIS
FOR RELAXATION,
HIKING AND SPORT
FISHING. IT IS ONLY
ACCESSIBLE BY BOAT
OR FLOAT PLANE.**

Elementary School, constructed in 1933 and overlooking the wharf, is one of the last remaining one-room schools in B.C., offering a unique educational experience with a minimum enrollment of just six students. Today, the community's Bergh Cove Organic Schoolyard Garden occupies the site, providing fresh produce during harvest season.

The Quatsino Museum & Archives, located across from the government dock, offers a free glimpse into the community's rich history spanning 124 years. Visitors can also enjoy high-speed internet access

and light snacks. The museum is open weekends from 1 to 2 PM from September to June and daily from 1 to 2 PM during July and August. Special openings are available by request via quatsino.museum@recn.ca.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Quatsino offers guided sport fishing adventures on both the ocean and river, led by certified professionals. With easy access to a variety of inshore and offshore species, including salmon, cod, and halibut, the area is a prime fishing destination. Lodge stays offer waterfront accommodations, guided fishing trips, and meals.

Quatsino is also home to three full-service waterfront lodges, where visitors can immerse themselves in nature while kayaking the calm waters of Quatsino Sound or hiking the scenic Colony Lake Trail. Whether you're seeking solitude or adventure, Quatsino offers a tranquil escape, accessible only by boat or floatplane.



PORT MCNEILL

PORTMCNEILL.CA

VISITOR CENTRE

250.956.3881

FAST FACT:

Port McNeill is also known for its rich history tied to the logging industry. It was originally established as a small logging community, and remnants of this history can still be seen in the area's waterfront and surrounding landscapes, offering a glimpse into the region's industrial past.

Port McNeill Marina @ Jordyn Giesbrecht

GATEWAY TO THE BROUGHTON ARCHIPELAGO

Imagine finding a place where life's adventures are still genuinely authentic...A yet to be discovered place of spectacular beauty, where hiking trails wind through the peaceful stillness of Pacific rainforests or along a coast where whales can still be seen from the shore.

Port McNeill, tucked away on the mist-shrouded coast of Northern Vancouver Island and mostly unnoticed by the world, is one of those rare places. A place where you can still unplug from the world and take that needed long and deep breath while regaining life's lost sense of balance and purpose.

It is a place where hiking shoes and long walks in the forest replace stressful commutes and traffic jams. It is about bare feet on newly discovered beaches, tucked away in secluded coves. It is about Pacific Ocean air so fresh and so invigorating, it makes your skin tingle. It is where the shrill demands of an alarm clock are replaced by the noiseless passage of ocean kayaks. Here it is about the rhythm of natural places.

If you've ever wondered what British Columbia looked and felt like before cities, this is the place where you will find the answer. Orcas and Humpback Whales move through our protected waters exactly as they have for thousands of years. There is no city backdrop, no smog and no urban noise or distractions. Instead, your whale watching adventure is set amongst the mostly uninhabited and untouched islands of the Broughton Archipelago.

It is a slower pace of life here in Port McNeill, so leave your car at the hotel, pack a picnic lunch and walk or take your bike down to the

BC Ferry terminal for a short 40 minute ride to Alert Bay. Here you can experience, learn and absorb the traditions and culture of BC's coastal First Nations. There are stores and galleries to visit too or you can just sit on one of the benches overlooking the waterfront and do nothing but enjoy each and every peaceful moment.

Stay in Port McNeill for another day and grab a morning ferry to Sointula, on Malcolm Island. This village began as a 19th century Finnish settlement that was originally established as a utopian escape from Europe's dehumanizing industrialization. By foot, bicycle or car, this Island village will captivate you and make you wonder if utopia might actually exist. But try and get back before dark to experience one of our best kept and most spectacular secrets...A sunset of unimaginable depth and colour, set to the background music of the tidal rhythms of our harbour. It is a memory that will stay with you forever.

Consider Port McNeill your explore and adventure base, the place where you plan your next day's unique venture. There are still wide-open west coast beaches like San Josef Bay to visit or Cape Scott Provincial Park or the North Coast Hiking Trail to explore. So stay another day and discover what you have been missing.

Port McNeill and Vancouver Island North are destinations that will allow you to be you. It will give you time to reacquaint yourself with a friend, rekindle that relationship with a partner, get to know your family again or maybe just spend some uninterrupted and rejuvenating solo time.



All your needed supplies and groceries to restock your boat or RV are just a few steps away. Marine, diesel and regular gas is available and if your vehicle or boat needs some special attention, Port McNeill has world-class marine and automotive technicians there to help. High-speed (fibre-optic) Internet and cell service are available throughout Port McNeill and WiFi is accessible in all hotels and restaurants.

Port McNeill - Geoff Heith

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FAST FACT:

Broughton Archipelago Provincial Park is BC's largest marine park.

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BROUGHTON ARCHIPELAGO

Broughtons Archipelago © Michael Altenhenne

The natural beauty and solitude of the Broughton Archipelago are just a couple of features that make this region such an irresistible marine destination. Visitors with go-anywhere freedom can immerse themselves in the midst of it all at water level – either by kayak, pleasure boat or on guided expeditions.

The region's legendary sailing and paddling excursions head deep into the maze of waterways and numerous islands clustered northeast of Port McNeill. Every traveler's experience here will be unique yet it's sure to include deep inhales of crisp ocean air, long stretches of shoreline exploration and a few tricky tidal crossings. Paddle or sail where you choose into scenic inlets or onto whiteshell beaches. Camp under a sky alight with a million stars or fall asleep while rocking gently in a secluded moorage. Wilderness enthusiasts looking for eco-friendly adventures will find luxuriously remote floating lodge accommodation

amid spectacular wilderness scenery. Most memorable of all, there's sure to be sightings of seals, orcas or even humpback whales. Waterproof digital cameras will get a serious workout, guaranteed.

These islands have been utilized by Indigenous peoples for generations. Prior to European contact, the Broughtons were more densely populated than they are today and there is ample evidence of extensive use by the area's Indigenous peoples. It is not uncommon for kayakers and boaters to encounter white midden beaches, culturally modified trees, and even a pictograph while exploring the area. Visible at low tide, clam gardens are another historically significant marker, some sites have been dated to at least 2,000 years old. These are sites where an ancient yet sophisticated form of shellfish aquaculture was practiced by Indigenous who built rock walls to enhance the clam yield.

Echo Bay on Gilford Island is one of the region's main ports of call, either by water or floatplane. It's home to a full-service marina, and just a short walk away is a remarkable museum and replica hand-loggers shack created by author, naturalist and retired fisherman Billy Proctor. Shop for art, take a wilderness painting class, or dine at a pig roast. Marinas, affordable lodgings and oceanside campgrounds can be found throughout this postcard region.

Those seeking a more solitary communion with nature can easily find it in one of the many secluded coves noted in boaters' guides to the Broughton Archipelago. In every way, the Broughton Archipelago welcomes your visit and can enrich your life by connecting you with its peaceful nature.



ALERT BAY

ALERTBAY.CA

VISITOR CENTRE

250.974.5024

FAST FACT:

U'mista means 'the return of something important'. The U'mista Cultural Centre opened November 1980 as a groundbreaking project to house potlatch artifacts which had been seized by government during an earlier period of cultural repression.

Alert Bay © Gina Woods

HOME OF THE KILLER WHALE

Modern explorers seek to get lost in authentic cultures. On the west coast of Canada, Alert Bay is one of very few authentic fishing villages. Rare, precious and unique, this First Nation cultural tourism destination is easily within reach via a short, scenic 45-minute ferry ride from Port McNeill. Colourful heritage buildings from the late-1800's sit on the sheltered western coastline of Cormorant Island. Surrounded by the northern Pacific wilderness environment, Alert Bay's museums, art galleries, and bustling marina are populated by friendly locals. The 'Namgis First Nation, part of the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwak'wala speaking people), reside in their village, they call 'Yalis, at Alert Bay.

In 1922, culturally significant ceremonial regalia were confiscated from the Kwakwaka'wakw when the Canadian government banned potlatches. The fascinating U'mista Cultural Centre, at 1 Front Street, showcases this famed "Potlatch Collection" which has been reclaimed from institutions and private collections from around the world. In addition to this collection, the Alert Bay Library-Museum on 116 Fir Street, offers

additional First Nation artifacts.

Perhaps one of the most famous draws is the world's tallest totem pole, carved in two sections (50 metres and 3 metres) by six Kwakwaka'wakw artists. The impressive pole originally stood 53 metres (173 feet) high but the top ten feet of the pole fell to the ground during a 2007 storm. Watch a traditional dance performance by the T'sasala Cultural Group in the Big House, these performances are the only time that this traditional Big House is open for viewing. Regular performances take place Thursday to Saturday from July until the third weekend in August. Visit the original 'Namgis Burial Grounds (please view respectfully from the road only) as well as other totem poles and archways on the island. Cedar bark weaving, Nusa storytelling, salmon barbecues and island tours can be provided by local guides. Whale watching is also an option.

For those seeking outdoor adventure, Cormorant Island has more than 16 kilometres (10 miles) of hiking and cycling trails. The Ecological Park above town features a marshland boardwalk that is

a favourite for viewing bald eagles. The easy forest trail networks are marked with interpretive signage. Steep climbs may make parts of the island a challenge, so it is recommended that visitors bring their vehicles.

Whale watching vessels offer day trip adventures with an onboard naturalist during the May to October season. It's common to spot orcas, humpback whales, minke whales, Steller sea lions, Dall's and harbour porpoises, harbour seals, and Pacific white-sided dolphins in the local waters.

Summer events invite visitors to immerse themselves in the community culture. Visit letscamp.ca to book a site at the Village of Alert Bay Campground. Paddlers of all types converge to circumnavigate Cormorant Island during the Alert Bay 360 Eco Paddle, August long weekend. After the event, Eco Paddlers and spectators are invited to the Big House celebration with a local seafood buffet dinner and the T'sasala Cultural Group dance performance, tickets \$35.

WOSS & NIMPKISH VALLEY

One of B.C.'s best-kept secret ski hills, plentiful hiking, watersport-friendly lakes, and intriguing history are all part of the adventures that await those who visit Woss, 130 kilometres north of Campbell River.

Logging has been a mainstay occupation in the Nimpkish Valley since European settlers first arrived. Woss was the site of the last active railroad logging enterprise in Canada until the fall of 2017 when it was announced that rail operations would be discontinued. Steam Locomotive 113, built in 1920 for rail logging, is a historic local treasure that honours the community's heritage and is now a registered Heritage Site along with the Woss Fire Lookout located just north of the community. Head down to the railroad tracks to view the 113 Locomotive at the Woss Heritage Park.

Beyond the logging zones are emerald-green parks and backcountry wilderness. The Nimpkish Valley Ecological Reserve protects the oldest trees in the region. Schoen means "beautiful" in German, and it's exactly the right word for Schoen Lake Provincial Park, open March to October. Pinder Peak and Rugged Mountain have wilderness trail networks for adventuresome climbers. For a birds-eye view of the valley, hike the fairly short (1.8 km), fairly steep (rope-assisted sections) Woss Lookout Trail and take in the rugged vista from the recently restored fire lookout tower.

North of Woss is Nimpkish Lake, a breezy favourite with windsurfers and kiteboarders. Get a taste of the caving experience at Little Huson Regional Park's "walk-in" limestone caves and unique land formations. Open on weekends and select Mondays during ski season, Mount Cain is a funky, community-run, family-oriented ski hill virtually free of line-ups. With room aplenty to ski the powder that's piled up during the week, it's known as the Island's best! Snow sports enthusiasts ride the t-bar lifts and test themselves on 18 runs and 457 metres of vertical drop. Café-style meals, slope-side accommodations and affordable lift prices contribute to the relaxed vibes. Off-season, Mount Cain's high alpine meadows attract hikers and wildlife watchers.



FAST FACT:

The Woss Lookout, at the 2,080 foot summit of Lookout Mountain, is one of the few remaining fire lookouts on Vancouver Island.




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FAST FACT:

The Port Alice Road was unofficially renamed during a local contest and is now known by residents as the Frigon Road. The Frigon Islands are located just off the shores of Rumble Beach and are named after early settler Ned Frigon.

PORT ALICE

PORTALICE.CA

VILLAGE OFFICE
250.284.3391

GATEWAY TO THE WILD AND WONDERFUL WEST COAST

Port Alice Dyke Walk © BC Bird trail

For those seeking a peaceful retreat in nature, Port Alice offers breathtaking west-coast scenery and easy access to the great outdoors, all without the crowds. Nestled on a hillside overlooking Neroutsos Inlet, this vibrant community serves as the southern gateway to the pristine wilderness of Quatsino Sound.

Port Alice is a hub for DIY adventurers, offering opportunities for kayaking, scuba diving, and both charter and recreational fishing. Whether by boat or logging road, visitors can explore remote destinations like Side Bay, Gooding Cove, Harvey Cove, Brooks Peninsula, and Klaskino Inlet. Stop by the Port Alice Visitor Centre, located at the Community Centre, for helpful directions before venturing onto the backroads. Public launch





Port Alice © BC Bird Trail

facilities in town make it easy for travelers with their own boats or kayaks to get out on the water. Be sure to check out the newly expanded Lion's Park next to the marina.

Nearby, Link River and Spruce Bay campgrounds at Alice and Victoria Lakes are perfect for freshwater fishing and outdoor recreation. The Alice Lake Loop Recreational Corridor provides convenient access to geological wonders such as Devil's Bath and the Eternal Fountain, both part of Vancouver Island North's famous limestone formations. Adventurers can also explore the Marble River Trail, which leads to Bear Falls and Emerald Pools. The trailhead is located at Marble River Park along scenic Highway 30.

Back in town, enjoy a stroll along the Sea Walk, a wheelchair-accessible path that hugs the coastline. When the tide is low, take a short hike to Walk-out Island or stop for a picnic. Bring your binoculars – Neroutsos Inlet is a birdwatcher's paradise, home to hundreds of species throughout the year. Follow the interpretive signs for local and wildlife information along the way. The waters here are also frequented by orca, humpback, and grey whales, as well as seals, sea otters, sea lions, and migrating salmon.

Cyclists of all abilities can tackle the trails of Rumble Mountain, while golfers will appreciate the challenge of the Port Alice Golf and Country Club, a scenic nine-hole course set against stunning mountain and ocean vistas. The Visitor Centre provides valuable information about local attractions and offers an in-depth look into Port Alice's rich history. Founded around a World War I-era pulp mill, the town became British Columbia's first "instant municipality" in 1965, when it was relocated from its original mill site to its current location along Neroutsos Inlet.

Port Alice is also an inspiring destination for artists. Surrounded by natural beauty, it's the perfect setting for photographers, painters, sculptors, woodworkers, and anyone looking for a peaceful, creative retreat. Many artists have made Port Alice their home, and their works can be found at various locations around town. Be sure to stop by the Visitor Centre for information on where to view local art.

Visitors will find a range of accommodations, including charming B&Bs, vacation rental homes, and a full-service campground. Town amenities include a gas station, pizza restaurant, Coffee Shop, Food Truck, Pharmacy, gift shop, grocery and liquor stores, community centre, and a marina with moorage.

Port Alice

Gateway to the Wild West Coast

Come explore the beautiful Village of Port Alice. Here you'll find everything needed before heading out on the water or the backroads. Fuel up at the gas station, grab groceries, enjoy a coffee, grab a bite from one of our food vendors, play a few holes on our historic golf course, book a fishing charter or eco tour, or hike one of our trails. Enjoy crowd free sandy beaches like Side Bay & Gooding Cove, or stroll through old growth forests in Lawn Point & Brooks Peninsula Provincial Parks. Be sure to check out our visitor centre for information on all this and so much more!



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PORT HARDY

VISITPORTHARDY.COM

VISITOR CENTRE

1.866.427.3901

FAST FACT:

Port Hardy is the northern terminus of the Island Highway (Highway 19) – the only road connecting the entire length of Vancouver Island. Once a remote outpost only accessible by boat or plane, it's now a launch point for adventures into one of Canada's last true wilderness frontiers.

Port Hardy Marina © Jordyn Giesbrecht

LIVE THE ADVENTURE

Port Hardy, the largest community on Northern Vancouver Island, sits at the edge of the wild Pacific coast where untamed nature and rich Indigenous culture meet. True to its motto, "Live the Adventure," this coastal town invites visitors to dive deep into rugged landscapes, vibrant heritage, and unforgettable outdoor experiences.

Home to the Kwagu't, Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'xw, and Quatsino First Nations, Port Hardy is steeped in cultural legacy dating back more than 8,000 years. Totem poles and big houses throughout the community and nearby Fort Rupert offer a glimpse into this deep-rooted history.

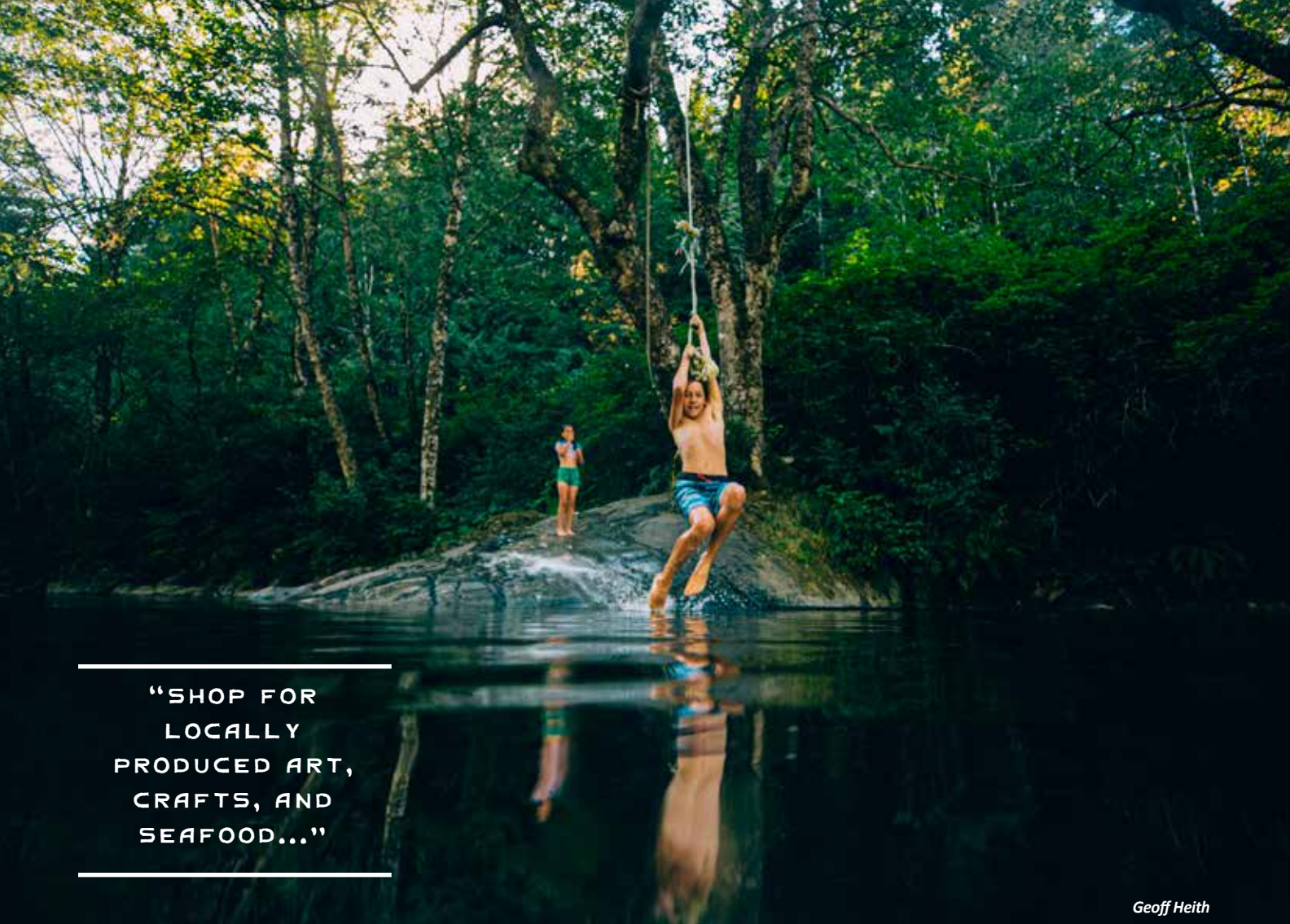
From hiking the famed North Coast Trail to paddling serene inlets or reeling in world-class fish, Port Hardy is a basecamp for adventure. Hiking and walking are favourite pastimes here, with trails for every level. The Hardy Bay Seawall walk delivers stunning coastal views and cultural interpretive signage, while the Fort Rupert Trail offers a quiet journey through ancestral Kwagu't lands. Wildlife lovers

should explore the Quatse Nature Trail, or challenge themselves with the scenic and demanding Tex Lyon Trail, which rewards hikers with sweeping ocean vistas.

No trip is complete without a visit to Port Hardy's beaches. Build a beach fire at Airport Beach, or enjoy a stroll and picnic at Storey's Beach, where coastal beauty meets tranquility.

By land, sea, or air, Port Hardy is unforgettable. Book a flightseeing tour by floatplane, helicopter, or the historic Grumman Goose for a bird's-eye view of endless Pacific horizons and lush temperate rainforest. Beneath the waves, the region is internationally recognized for cold-water scuba diving, earning a spot on National Geographic's Ultimate Adventure Bucket List for its vivid marine biodiversity.

Recognized by Expedia as the Best Place to Fish in Canada, Port Hardy delivers legendary catches – from summer salmon and halibut to winter Steelhead in local rivers. Paddle pristine



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Geoff Heith

waters, explore intertidal life, and discover secluded coves on a kayak or canoe journey that begins right in town.

Port Hardy also serves as the gateway to Cape Scott Provincial Park and the North Coast Trail, a true backcountry adventure across Vancouver Island's wild northern tip. Water taxis and shuttles depart regularly from town to San Josef Bay and remote trailheads.

Don't miss the iconic Inside Passage ferry voyage, departing from nearby Bear Cove. Voted one of the most beautiful ferry routes in the world by Travel + Leisure, this 15-hour journey winds past remote lighthouses, towering fjords, and the dramatic Grenville Channel. Summer sailings to Bella Coola reveal the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest – a spectacular showcase of BC's untouched coastal wilderness.

Back in town, relax and explore Port Hardy's

charm: browse artisan shops, admire intricate chainsaw carvings, or visit the Port Hardy Museum and Archives. Enjoy a drink or meal in one of the town's welcoming cafés or pubs. Come summer, don't miss FILOMI Days, a festival celebrating the town's heritage in fishing, logging, and mining with parades, fireworks, and fun for the whole family.

Rest easy after your adventures in accommodations ranging from cozy cabins and waterfront hotels to backwoods campsites. Whether you're listening to the ocean's lullaby or watching sunrise over Hardy Bay, you'll find your perfect place to recharge.

For more information and planning support, drop by the Port Hardy Visitor Centre at 7250 Market Street, open year-round. The friendly staff are ready to help – and there's a great souvenir shop too.

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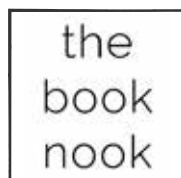
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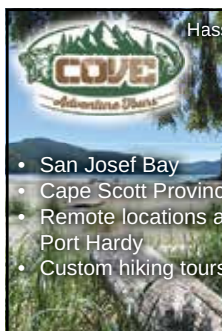
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FAST FACT:

Once the site of BC's largest whaling station which was in operation from 1948 -1967

COAL HARBOUR

The time-honoured road trip is a cherished way to travel with flexibility. On the North Island, leisurely road trips allow spontaneous explorations of the area's unique viewpoints on your own program. One of these detours off the beaten path leads to Coal Harbour, a marine hub

providing access to the fertile fishing grounds of Quatsino Sound. Over the past century Coal Harbour has played the roles of mining town, military base and whaling station. Today the town serves as a launch point for fishing charters, boaters, kayakers and campers heading into the scenic coastal waters and old-growth forests of northern Vancouver Island. The town itself is brimming with history and colourful locals, including a growing community of artists and craftspeople.

The Aircab float plane hangar near the marina features a space filled with a private collection of local artifacts from the town's logging and whaling periods. Of special interest to history buffs will be artifacts from the World War II era when Coal Harbour served as a Royal Canadian Air Force base. An impressive six metre-long (20 feet) jawbone of a blue whale is

also on display—evidence of Canada's last whaling station that operated here until the mid-'60s.

The Hornsby Steam Crawler, a one-of-a-kind, custom built steam crawler tractor, has returned to the community and is housed for public display just below the Coal Harbour Fire Hall on Albert Hole Road. This unique piece of machinery was inspired by the Yukon Gold Rush and was customized for use in the forest industry on the British Columbia Coast. Patented in 1904 as a new form of "endless track" technology, the Hornsby Steam Crawler was acquired by the Port Alice Pulp Mill in 1928 to haul wood along Holberg Inlet.

The Quatsino First Nation operate a marina in Coal Harbour that has serviced moorage, public washrooms, showers and a laundromat.

FAST FACT:

The road to Holberg follows part of the old San Josef Wagon Road, originally built in the late 1800s by Danish settlers trying to reach Cape Scott — though their farming colony ultimately failed, their legacy lives on in place names and homesteads like Ronning's Garden.

HOLBERG & WINTER HARBOUR

ECHOES OF THE PAST. GATEWAYS TO ADVENTURE

Traces of a once-booming past linger along the road to Holberg, once the site of the world's largest floating logging camp. Just an hour northwest of Port Hardy, Holberg is the final outpost before reaching Cape Scott Provincial Park. The journey itself

is part of the experience — the rugged gravel logging road winds through forested backcountry, with the quirky Shoe Tree along the way. What started as a local joke has become a roadside icon, draped with hundreds of shoes and boots that draw smiles from curious travelers.

Before setting out, it's important to understand the remote nature of this region. The road into Cape Scott is unpaved, and there is no cell service, gas stations, or tire repair along the way. Please ensure you're well-prepared for backroad travel. For essential trip planning details, visit <https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/plan-your-trip/know-before-you-go/>

While often treated as a waypoint, Holberg is well worth lingering in. The cozy Scarlet Ibis Pub offers a hearty meal and a warm welcome and for those needing a place to rest before or after a long hike, the Scarlet Ibis Cabins provide a perfect retreat. Just outside town, Ronning's Garden, founded in 1910 on the old San Josef Wagon Road, surprises visitors with its array of exotic plants nestled within classic B.C. rainforest. Though nearly lost to time, the garden has been lovingly restored and remains a unique testament to one settler's vision.

Holberg is also the launch point for outdoor enthusiasts heading into the wild northwest coast. Cape Scott Provincial Park is a remote haven of dramatic headlands,

sweeping beaches, and rugged hiking trails. Surfers and campers are drawn to Raft Cove Provincial Park, a secluded beach known for its big waves and wilderness vibe. Nearby gems like San Josef Bay and Cape Palmerston offer more pristine shoreline to explore.

For backpackers, Holberg is the last place to gear up before taking on the Cape Scott Trail or the North Coast Trail, two of Vancouver Island's most iconic backcountry hikes.

Continuing from Holberg, the gravel road leads to Winter Harbour, a small, historic fishing village perched on the edge of Quatsino Sound. The boardwalk invites strolls along the waterfront, and trails like Botel Park Trail lead out to prime beachcombing at Grant Bay. A tiny but fascinating museum in the community building showcases the area's heritage through vintage photos and local artifacts.

During the sport fishing season, Winter Harbour becomes a bustling hub for anglers in search of the ultimate catch. Lodges, marinas, and campgrounds welcome guests eager to cast into the rich Pacific waters. Kayakers will also find adventure here, with endless paddling opportunities and frequent wildlife encounters—including playful sea otters often seen floating in the harbour.

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A person wearing a dark jacket, a grey beanie, and a backpack stands on a large, weathered log. The log is positioned in a river or stream, with white water rapids visible in the background. The surrounding area is a dense forest of tall, thin evergreen trees. The foreground is covered in dry, yellowish-brown grass.

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