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**Vancouver – The Best City In The World?**

**By Dave Lympany**

The beautiful city of Vancouver is located in the Southwestern corner of British Columbia, Canada; on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. Being overlooked by the Coast Range Mountains and surrounded by water on three sides, the city has a landscape that truly takes your breath away.

The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) has everything from Beaches, mountains and 192 beautiful parks to a cosmopolitan downtown area, fabulous shopping and entertainment. Due to it's location it has a mild climate, which means not too much snow in the winter and pleasant temperatures in the summer, but it does tend to have a lot of rain. The average annual rain and snow fall is 1219mm.

As Canada's third largest city, the downtown area has a population of 514,000 (1996 census) and the GVRD has a population of almost two million.

Vancouver is a city of newcomers, according to the 1996 census 45 percent of residents were immigrants. According to international surveys, Vancouver is one of the best cities in the world for quality of life. It is also ranked, along with four other Canadian cities, as one of the safest cities in North America.

The Greater Vancouver Regional District comprises 21 separate municipalities - each is home to several hundred thousand people and many were once cities in their own right before being swallowed up by the urban sprawl. The actual city of Vancouver itself is made up of 23 different Neighborhoods – each having its own distinct character.

There are many wonderful places to visit, shop and eat in. This includes a vast number of galleries, sophisticated shopping and antique shops to choose from. Chinatown is one of the largest in North America and is a thriving commercial and residential district.

Gastown is the historical part of the city with cobblestone streets, heritage buildings, shops, restaurants and galleries. It's located just south of the harbor and is a vibrant place. Located just under the Granville Street Bridge is Granville Island Market which offers a mix of food, arts and crafts, shopping

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and theatres. Water taxis ferry shoppers to and from the market or you can stroll there.

Stanley Park, located close to downtown, has over 1000 acres of forest and is a firm favorite with both locals and tourists. The park has many kilometers of pathway, an aquarium, a pitch and putt golf course, a miniature railway, tennis, restaurants, beaches and on summer evenings live theatre. Robson Street is in the heart of downtown and offers boutiques, sidewalk cafes, shops and restaurants. The city has many tree lined streets and no highway cutting through the city so walking is encouraged. It is illegal to cross the street anywhere but at a marked intersection crossing in the city.

There is an excellent public transport system which consists of buses, Seabus, Skytrain and a commuter rail service called the West Coast Express. This is an integrated system and you can use the same tickets for different modes of transport. There is also an extensive system of bikeways, so cycling is another good way to get around.

The Port of Vancouver rates number one in North America in total foreign exports and is the gateway for Asia–Pacific trade. It has a natural deep water harbor and covers 233 kilometers of coastline. In 2003 its total cargo traffic was 66.7 million tones. The Port is also home to the Vancouver – Alaska cruise, one of the worlds most popular cruises. There are many attractions in and around the city offering a wide variety of activities. Grouse Mountain – located just 15 minutes from downtown, also known as the Peak of Vancouver. Riding the Gondola to the mountain top is an absolute must, in the winter you can experience the skiing, snowboarding, snow–shoeing, ice skating and sleigh rides and in the summer mountain bike tours, helicopter tours, tandem paragliding or maybe just enjoy the magnificent views at one of the restaurants.

Science World – located on Quebec Street offers hundreds of interactive exhibits, wrap around movies in a giant theatre and year round special events. There are always new exhibits arriving so it never gets boring.

Capilano Suspension bridge and Park – located 10 minutes from downtown is the city's most popular visitor attraction. The swaying footbridge bridge is 230 feet above the Capilano River and spans 450 feet. There is also a colorful Totem park, trails through the West Coast rain forest and much more.

Vancouver Zoo is located in Aldergrove just off the Trans Canada Highway. They are open all year round and offer either daily admission rates or season passes. There is a miniature safari train and a safari bus tour, you can also hire quadra cycles or bring your own bikes, in–line skates or any motor–less transportation to get you around.

The city Aquarium is situated 5 minutes from downtown in Stanley Park. They are a self supporting and not for profit group and are Canada's leading aquatic conservation organization. Open year round they have many different types of marine life to learn about and a daily schedule of shows. The Vancouver Canucks are one of the strongest teams in the NHL (Ice Hockey) and with the BC lions always very competitive, there is a good supply of sports choices. Vancouver is without doubt the most impressive city I have ever stayed in and is a must to visit if you are in Canada. Undoubtedly one of the most expensive places to buy property in Canada but with the amount the city has to offer I can understand why. For more detailed information including full descriptions of each municipality, visit

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<http://www.onestopimmigration–canada.com/vancouver.html>

The author immigrated to Canada in 2003 and has constructed a free information website

<http://www.onestopimmigration–canada.com>

about Canadian Immigration and life in Canada based on

his family's experiences.

### **Beautiful Vancouver, City of the Sea & Mountains**

**By Clint Leung**

Beautiful Vancouver, City of the Sea & Mountains

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As one flies over Vancouver during the decent into the Canadian city's airport, the surrounding beautiful natural scenery is already noticed with mountains on one side and the sea on the other. Once inside the baggage claim area of the international airport, visitors are greeted with large Pacific Northwest Coast Indian art carvings. This adds to the overall flavor of nature and the environment that makes Vancouver so different from other major cities. When driving along Granville Street towards the city center, one can't help but notice that the trees and hedges in the residential areas are so much larger and taller than the ones we normally see elsewhere. One of the locals claims that the superior growth of the area's plant life is due to the huge amount of rainfall. Vancouver is close to both the ocean and the mountain range so lots of rain is expected. In fact, the rain here can actually be a problem as grey skies, especially during the winter months, are one of the few negatives of living in Vancouver. Fortunately, there is very little snowfall within the city so for Vancouverites, it is a trade off of some sort to have to deal with rain rather than shoveling snow during their winters. As for tourists, the best time to visit Vancouver is the least wet season which is during the summer months. I've been told by another local that September is one of the best months to visit. When the sun is shining in Vancouver with both the ocean and mountains as the background, it really doesn't get any better.

Stanley Park on the west side of downtown Vancouver is the most visited attraction. A drive around the island will reveal great photo spots of both the city and the ocean. Vancouver's Aquarium is also on site in Stanley Park as well as a magnificent collection of Pacific Northwest Coastal Indian art totem poles. Of course, one can always marvel at the tall trees which seem to touch the skies here. The Lion's Gate Suspension Bridge connects Stanley Park with North Vancouver on the other side of the harbor. On the north side is Grouse Mountain, the area's closest ski resort to the city that has turned into an all year round attraction. During the non–winter months, one can take the gondola up Grouse mountain for some wonderful hiking and views of the Vancouver skyline. The Capilano Suspension Bridge which visitors walk across to a nice nature area is another must see nearby. One of the cuisine highlights in the British Columbia province is the salmon and one of the best restaurants to sample it is the Salmon House in adjacent West Vancouver. Dinner there with the Pacific Northwest Coast Indian

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art d'cor and spectacular nighttime views of the city is one of the best ways to finish off a day of sightseeing.

Back in downtown Vancouver, the Gastown district is one of the top tourist areas for boutique shopping and souvenirs. Don't miss the steam clock that rings on the hour. Vancouver has one of the largest Asian communities in North America so the Chinatown nearby as expected has some of the best dim sum luncheons outside of Hong Kong. Further boutique shopping can be found in the Yaletown and Granville Island districts.

If time permits, one of the recommended day trips to do out of Vancouver is to drive up the Sea & Sky highway to Whistler, one of North America's largest ski resorts. During the off ski season, Whistler is all season resort with many activities such as hiking, biking, festivities and shopping in the village. A ride up the gondola here will enable visitors to get a bird's eye view of the majestic Canadian Rockies

mountain range. The drive itself to Whistler, about two and a half hours along the coastline, offers many wonderful scenic points as well.

Vancouver is a great city to visit as one can really see how a major city can still be in very scenic surroundings. For those coming to Vancouver as the departure port of a cruise to either Hawaii or Alaska, it is highly recommended to allocate at least a full day before or after the cruise to see what the city has to offer. As I mentioned before, on a sunny day with the sea on one side and the mountains on the other, Vancouver is really hard to beat.

Clint Leung is owner of Free Spirit Gallery

<http://www.FreeSpiritGallery.ca>

, an online gallery

specializing in Inuit Eskimo and Northwest Native American art including carvings, sculpture and prints. Free Spirit Gallery has numerous information resource articles with photos of authentic Inuit and Native Indian art as well as free eCards.



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