

# Vancouver Island Experience

## Vancouver to Victoria

The Tsawwassen Ferry to Swartz Bay is the fastest way to get to Victoria. The ferry ride takes about two hours. Nothing beats standing out on deck when navigating the narrow passages between the Gulf Islands when the weather is good. Coming out on the south-west side of Salt Spring Island and winding your way toward Swartz Bay, you reach a very narrow channel with a close view of Galiano Island on the north and Mayne Island on the south. Pender Island is the island on the south side of the ferry as you enter the Bay. The islands have a more leisurely pace of life. Small farms, acreages, and summer cottages are available. In addition, the Gulf Islands are home to a number of well-known artists. When you arrive on Vancouver Island, make a point of stopping in Sidney, a lovely seaside town, before looking for a place to spend the night.

Begin your day by visiting Butchart Gardens, an amazing garden paradise that has welcomed visitors from all over the world for more than a century. Drive into Victoria and stroll through the historic downtown and along the waterfront. Visit the Parliament Buildings and the Empress Hotel for high tea. The Royal BC Museum and the IMAX Theatre are also nearby. If you love historic homes, Craigdarroch Castle is a convenient eight-minute drive from Victoria's inner harbour, up Fort Street, and right on Joan Crescent. You can also walk from the Inner Harbour up Fort Street and along Antique Row, stopping at various interesting shops and sights along the way. Victoria is a lovely place.

**Driving Distance – 69 KM**

## Victoria to Malahat

Spend another day discovering all that Victoria has to offer. Today, you may want to leave your RV at home and go exploring by bike. Trekking by bicycle A variety of single-day guided and unguided bike trips are available in Victoria. Take the 30-kilometer trip up the Island Highway to Malahat later today and stay with one of our campground partners in the area to relax, create a campfire, and focus on the day's events. . We recommend making reservations for campgrounds ahead of time, particularly during the months of July and August.

**Driving Distance – 27 KM**

## Malahat to Nanaimo

On your way to Nanaimo, expect the unexpected. Every bend in the road offers a different type of scenery, from dense forest to small towns to breathtaking views of the Gulf Islands that dot the Strait of Georgia. Bamberton Provincial Park is a worthwhile stop for a scenic break on your way up the Trans Canada Highway. Duncan, located in the Cowichan Valley, is also worth a visit. The Lumber Mill Museum is a must-see. Duncan is referred to as the "City of Totems." A historic totem pole walking tour can be found in the downtown area. Mountain biking and hiking trails, as well as scuba diving, canoeing, kayaking, and fishing, are all available in this island area. You'll come to a town called Chemainus about halfway up the west side of the island. This is a charming seaside town with murals on the sides of several of the downtown houses. The town's corporate heritage and collective spirit are depicted in these murals.

### Driving Distance – 91 KM

#### Nanaimo to Tofino/Ucluelet

You can get to Port Alberni and Tofino by branching off the Trans Canada Highway onto Highway 4 or 4A just north of Nanaimo. Stop at either Little Qualicum Falls, McMillan, or Sproat Lake Provincial Parks for a scenic break. These provincial parks are located further inland and have a distinct atmosphere than those located along the coast. Stop in Coombs to see the goats that graze on the roof of a local business, and near Port Alberni, stop at Cathedral Grove. Walk through a massive old-growth rain forest of trees that are up to three metres high.

The highway narrows between Port Alberni and Tofino. Expect a two-hour drive through this section as traffic slows down to accommodate the winding, mountainous terrain. As a result, it's a good idea to arrange some extra time into your schedule to make your drive less stressful. Tofino, located on the northern edge of the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, is a popular destination for those who have completed the well-known West Coast Trail, which ends in Pachena Bay. Since campsites in and around Tofino are limited, it is strongly recommended that you make a reservation ahead of time.

Tofino and Ucluelet are perfect playgrounds for all types of activities, including adventure and relaxation. In "Canada's Surf Capital," go whale watching, fishing, or take a surf lesson. Long Beach Golf Course is a short distance from Long Beach and is a perfect way to spend the day. There are a variety of ways to spend part of your days indoors, including incredible food, art, and yoga. You may want to stay another day or two in this beautiful part of Vancouver Island so you don't have to pick between activities.

### Driving Distance – 170 KM

#### Tofino to Courtenay

Return to Qualicum Beach leaving Tofino. From Parksville, take the Oceanside Road - 19A - to Courtenay. The Oceanside Route runs along the coast from Nanoose Bay to Campbell River, but you'll only be able to see a portion of it. Parksville and Qualicum Beach, as well as the Lighthouse Country towns of Qualicum Bay, Bowser, and Deep Bay, are all worth seeing. Until arriving in Courtenay for the night, take the Oceanside Route through the charming villages of Fanny Bay, Buckley Bay, and Union Bay.

### Driving Distance – 360 KM

#### Courtenay/Comox to Vancouver via Horseshoe Bay

Take a mid-morning sailing from Comox to Powell River on the Sunshine Coast with BC Ferries. Arrive in Saltery Bay by mid-afternoon for the mid-afternoon sailing. In several ways, the road follows the coast, and there are plenty of opportunities to stop for photos and to enjoy the scenery. We suggest staying at one of the several campgrounds along Highway 101 between Earls Cove and Gibsons if you've chosen to make this a two-day trip. You may even plan to continue your journey another day because you enjoy this area so much. The road comes to an end at Langdale, where you must board another BC ferry to reach Horseshoe Bay. It's just a short drive from Horseshoe Bay to Vancouver.



Your Vancouver Island adventure comes to an end today. Today is the last day to drop off your RV or carry on to the next leg of your journey. If you're going to the Rockies, we recommend taking a detour through Whistler. This tour will take you to Sun Peaks and Jasper before heading south to Lake Louise and Banff via the Icefields Parkway. You'll return to Vancouver via the beautiful Okanagan Valley area from Banff.

**Driving Distance - 224 KM**