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2023 EXPLORER GUIDE



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For general inquiries and cultural planning:

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U'mista Cultural Centre with Sea Wolf Adventures
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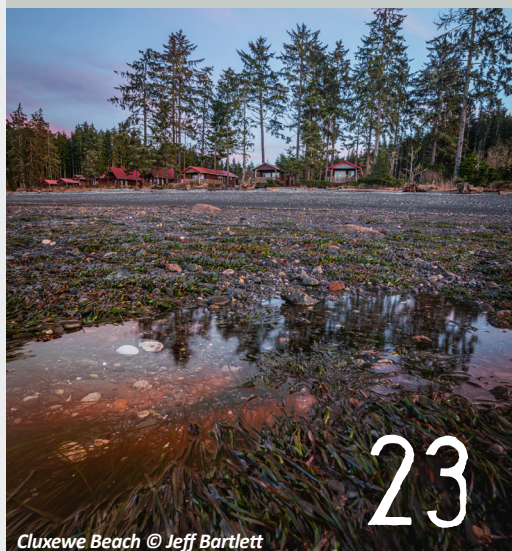
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Cluxewe Beach © Jeff Bartlett



Kayak Glamping © Karin Keller

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: bcforestsafesafe.org/files/tk_pdfs/gde_resrd.pdf

Vancouver Island North is accessible via bus on a limited schedule. Tickets must be booked in advance by calling Waivin' Flags Bus Service at (250)-956-2355 or online at <https://waivinflagstaxi.com/bus-service/>

If you don't plan to bring your own vehicle, transportation options include 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. For scheduling and fare information on all routes, contact Mount Waddington Transit: 250-956-3151 or bctransit.com/mount-waddington

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



SanJosef Road © Taylor Burk

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.



Swing at Cape Scott © Josh McGarel

WELCOME TO VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH

Find yourself in wild open spaces.

"Gilakas'la, Aayahu?aḷ-, Welcome"

The region of Vancouver Island North is located on the territory of the Kwakwaka'wakw and nuučaanuḷ peoples. Vancouver Island North is the first word and last stop in western Canada

for relaxed and spontaneous eco-adventure. The upper third of the Canadian Pacific's largest island is unspoiled and largely undiscovered 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. Or hand the reigns 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.

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A photograph of two black bear cubs standing on a large, dark, textured rock. The cub on the left is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. The cub on the right is slightly behind and to the right, also looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred natural setting.

OBSERVE

WILDLIFE RESPECTFULLY

IN WILD OPEN SPACES

Bear Cubs © Anthony Bucc

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.



Black Bear © Anthony Bucci

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/things-to-do/vacation-planner. No organized black bear viewing tours exist, but they can be easily spotted by those who keep their eyes open. Try the lush green grass off the shoulders of Highway 19. 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
- The safest encounter (for both you and the animal) is an encounter that is avoided

“...VIEW ANIMALS
GREAT AND SMALL
IN A WAY YOU OFTEN
NEVER EXPECT.”



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. Back from the brink of extinction, humpback whales are also spotted regularly. 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. See vancouverislandnorth.ca/things-to-do/wildlife-viewing/whalewatching/ for listings. A number of 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. Visit NIMMSA website for more information nimmsa.org.

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



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 200 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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A rectangular frame with a white border containing a photograph of a person standing in a forest path, looking towards the trees. The person is wearing a dark jacket and a hat. The forest is dense with tall trees and green foliage.

CONNECT
WITH NATURE

IN WILD OPEN SPACES

NATURE, NATURALLY

The pristine lakes and rivers, lush forests, rocky 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.

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HIKING

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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 abandoned 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.

The **North Island Trail Guide app** is available through your web browser or as a free mobile app for Apple or Android platforms. View on your desktop for trail locations and attributes. Download the free, GPS enabled mobile app while in service range and access to full functionality will be available should your hiking trip take you out of cell service range. Visit vinmap.ca for the app, or inquire at Local Visitor Centres for details on hiking options such as the following:

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 First Nations must-sees 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.

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

TAKE THE WILD PLEDGE

Leave no trace when exploring our beaches, forest, & land by reducing your plastic waste output.



#ForTheGoodOfOurWild

rope-assisted inclines, muddy sections, boardwalks and cable cars. The full length of 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 trailhead 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.

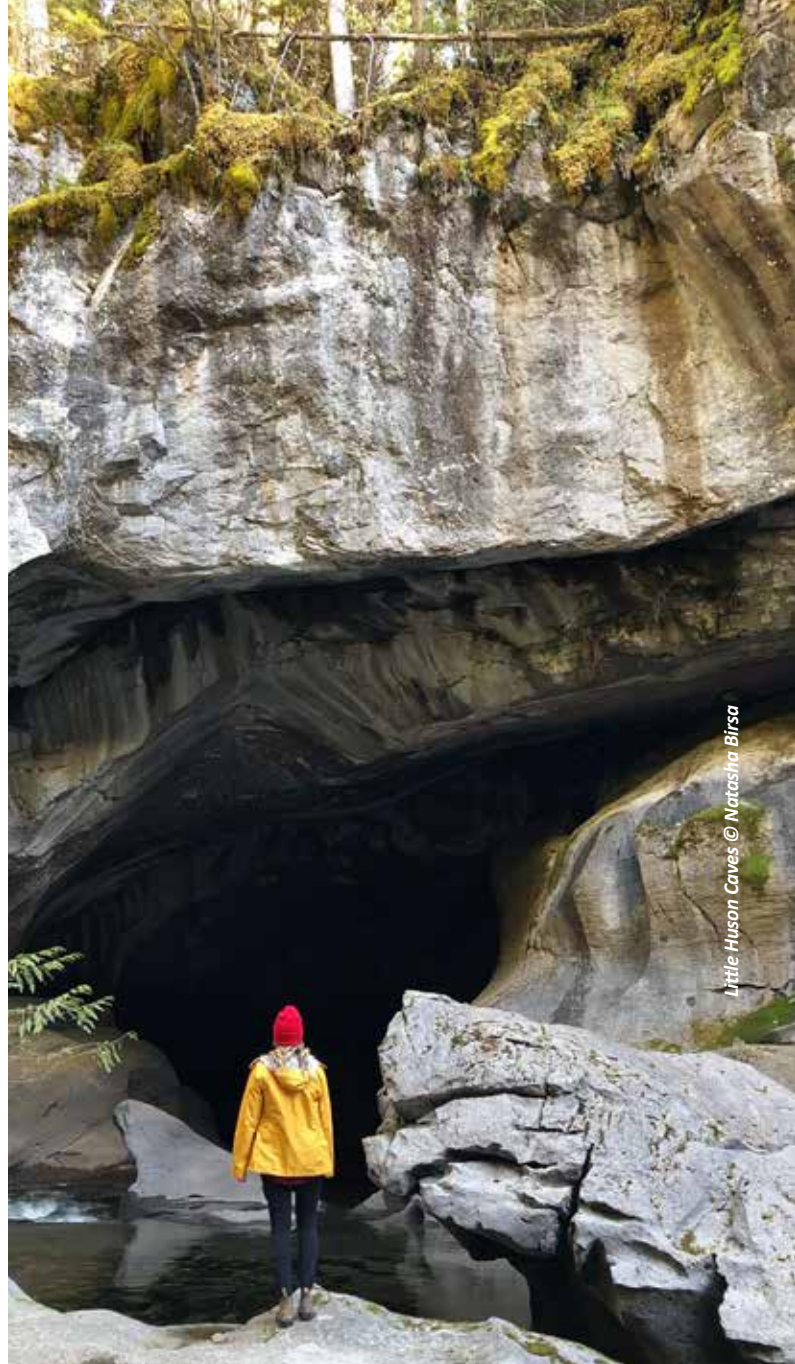
Always come prepared. The weather changes quickly, and layered clothing topped by sturdy rain gear is essential. Plan your trip, overnight campsites are dotted along these routes. Please **follow proper backcountry etiquette and Leave No Trace** camping practices while visiting parks: vancouverislandnorth.ca/plan/

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 cancaver.ca/



Little Huson Caves © Natasha Birsa

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.

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.

Ask one of the visitor centres for the best fishing holes; saltwater or freshwater.

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



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White Cliff Islets © Dan Hillert

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. Since technique and balance are more important than sheer strength, this is one sport that's increasingly popular with men, women and kids alike.

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.



SCAN ME

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.

Rent kayaks, paddle boards and more from various locations on the North Island and set off on your own adventure.



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Salmon • Halibut • Tuna

The image shows the interior of a large wooden building, likely a museum or interpretive center. A massive whale skeleton is suspended from the ceiling, its ribs and vertebrae clearly visible. The floor is made of wide wooden planks. In the background, a large open doorway leads outside, where a person is standing. Above the doorway is a red sign that says "EMERGENCY EXIT". The lighting is warm and comes from track lights on the ceiling.

CELEBRATE LOCAL CULTURE IN WILD OPEN SPACES

A CALL TO CULTURAL EXPLORERS

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 First Nations traditions flourishing in Alert Bay, Port Hardy, Fort Rupert and at remote villages as you meet artists, witness carvers in action, tour communities, participate in guided canoe and marine expeditions, and step into a Big House to witness traditional dance performances. The story of the region's European settlement, and industrial roots in logging, fishing and mining is well represented at local museums where the culture is celebrated as much as the stunning local scenery.

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



Totem in Estuary © Jordyn Giesbrecht

FIRST NATIONS

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 First Nation preserves and celebrates 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. Take a canoe trip or enjoy a salmon barbeque with First Nations guides. And visit an oceanfront graveyard filled with majestic memorial poles (please view respectfully from the road). 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 First Nations 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.



Telegraph Cove's family friendly **Whale Interpretive Centre** is dedicated to raising public awareness about the fragile ecosystem and migratory inhabitants of Johnstone Strait. Highlights include interactive displays, a kid's corner, educational films and the skeletal remains of whales, dolphins and other wildlife. The Centre has been recently renovated to expand the exhibit and display space, allowing for the installation of two new skeletons.

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. Email to arrange a private showing: quatsino.museum@recn.ca.

Experience Vancouver Island North at your own pace and through the eyes of local artists. This self-guided art tour includes over 15 unique stops at art studios and galleries, each featuring a variety of work from sculptures to paintings and carvings to stained glass. Take advantage of the quieter months of the late fall, winter, and early spring to enjoy a more private experience at the more popular galleries and studios. Download the art tour map here.





Visitors




Welcome

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❁ BOOKS

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Storey's Beach © Ben Giesbrecht

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 **"Hot Spots"** 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 stand-up paddleboard or kayak package, complete with board, paddle, leash and PFD and soak in the serenity

that is experienced while gliding across the many lakes or inlets of Vancouver Island North, or grab your surf gear and head to the west coast to catch some waves. Rental packages for paddle boards and kayaks are available in Port Alice & Port Hardy.

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 (set to reopen late summer 2023) 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 20 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.

Take the **self-guided Art Tour** and explore the many galleries, studios, and museums the North Island has to offer, each with their own unique focus and stories to share. See page 20 for more details.

PLACES TO EAT



Tia's Cafe, Port McNeill

Ignite your senses as you discover the local culinary delights of this area of island coastline. Smell the ocean as you taste your food, enjoy locally roasted beans and hand-crafted brews- savor the tastes of the coast as you discover good food created by good people. Devils Bath Brewing Co, a family-owned brewery featured on the BC Ale Trail, is a must-stop in Port McNeill.

From locally-caught seafood, Indigenous eats, and heritage eateries that honor the past- relax in comfort with a good meal after a day exploring the area.



SCAN ME



Nax'id' Pub, Port Hardy



Devil's Bath, Port McNeill

PLACES TO STAY



Cluxewe Resort

There is nothing quite like nestling into a cabin amidst the rain for the evening, or retreating to your idyllic place of rest with views of the sunset from your balcony. Whether you're looking for a place to rest your head for the night, or an all inclusive stay, Vancouver Island North has accommodation options ranging from hotels & motels to recreational site campgrounds and privately owned RV parks, to cozy cabins and all-inclusive resorts.



SCAN ME



Port Hardy RV & Resort



Kwa'ilas Hotel, Port Hardy

© Geoff Heith





Kwa'lilas Hotel

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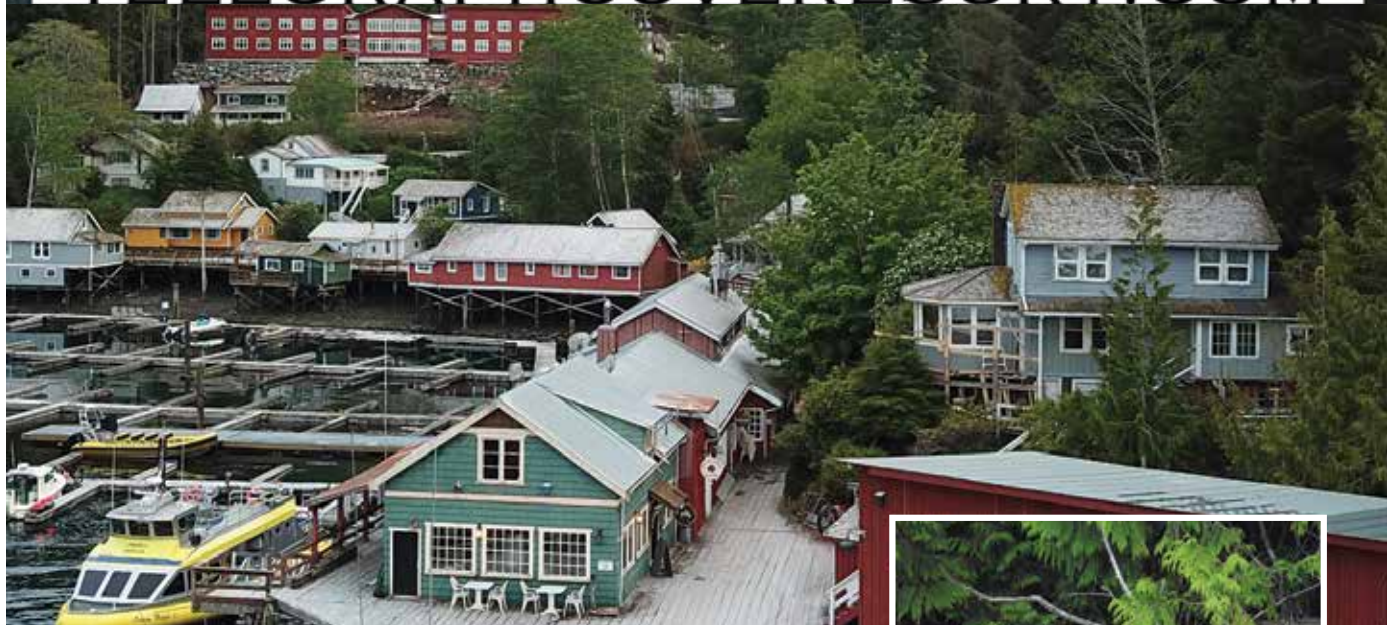
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POPULATION:

20 year-round residents

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.



SCAN ME



#ForTheGoodOfOurWild

© Kimberly Kufas Photography

TELEGRAPH COVE

Telegraph Cove © Ryan Dickie

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 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,"



Telegraph Cove © Natasha Birsa

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.

The Whale Interpretive Centre (WIC) in Telegraph Cove provides an additional opportunity to learn about local marine life. This facility offers a highly educational and engaging experience that focuses on the biology of local marine mammals, the threats they face, and how we can work toward conservation. The WIC is home to a fascinating collection of marine mammal skeletons and interactive displays. The feature skeleton is that of a 18-metre long (60 feet) Fin whale. The WIC now has hanging for the 2019 season a 8 meter (26 feet) Biggs/transient killer whale and a 9 meter (28 feet) humpback whale.

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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.

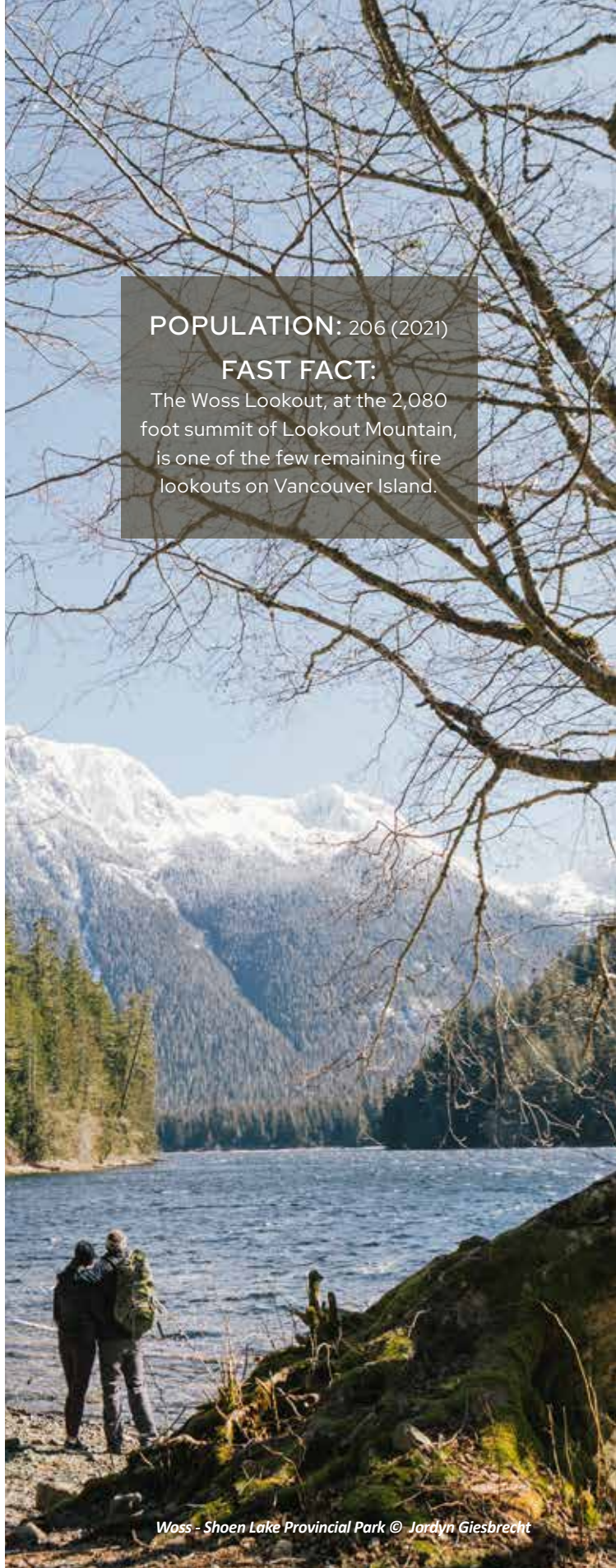
Beyond the logging zones are emerald-green parks and backcountry wilderness. The Nimpkish Valley Ecological Reserve protects the oldest trees in the region. Schoen means "beautiful" in German, and it's exactly the right word for Schoen Lake Provincial Park, open March to October. Pinder Peak and Rugged 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.

POPULATION: 206 (2021)

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.



Woss - Schoen Lake Provincial Park © Jordyn Giesbrecht



POPULATION:

Sointula 513 (2021)
Malcolm Island 750 (RDMW)

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

SOINTULAINFO.CA

VISITOR CENTRE
250.973.2001

Pulteney Point Lighthouse © Dan Hillert

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.



POPULATION:

91 year-round residents and 160 seasonal residents

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.

QUATSINO

QUATSINO.ORG

Hammock © Cassandra Casley

The tiny hamlet of Quatsino, which is 15 minutes from Coal Harbour by water taxi (Quatsino Sound Marine Transport 250-949-6358) and six minutes by air (Air Cab 250-949-6371), is a quiet place where change comes slowly. With just eight kilometers of gravel road connecting homes, fishing lodges and summer cabins that stretch single file along the shoreline, residents and visitors alike take pleasure in a breath of fresh air as they step back to a simpler way of life still linked to the land, forest and sea.

In 1894 Norwegian colonists arrived in Quatsino Sound aboard the steamship Mischief, with shared dreams of a prosperous life in this remote North Island wilderness. They chose an idyllic stretch of sunny shoreline and began work to build their new community. The land, forest and sea provided an income for these hardy souls and the community soon became a central hub for the Quatsino Sound area, providing goods and services to support the influx of settlers and job seekers. Nestled near the government wharf is historic St. Olaf's Anglican Church.

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

Dating back to 1897 and originally built as a small one-room school, it is one of the oldest buildings still in use on northern Vancouver Island. Quatsino Elementary School was built in 1933 overlooking the government wharf, and is one of the last one-room schools in B.C. With a minimum enrollment of just six students, it offers a unique and fantastic educational opportunity. The community's Bergh Cove Organic Schoolyard Garden now shares this site and provides fresh produce during the harvest season.

The Quatsino Museum & Archives, just across from the government dock,

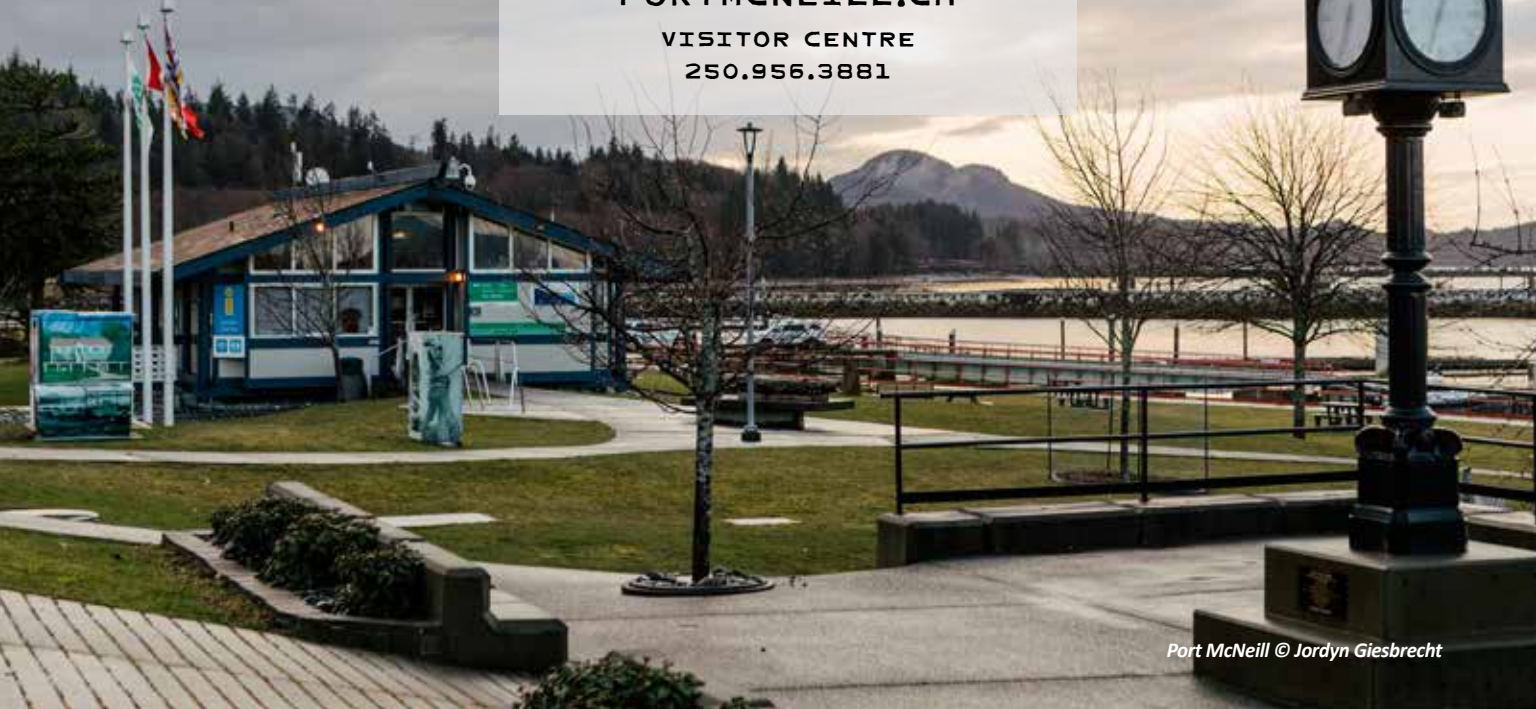
provides free high-speed internet access and light snacks in addition to offering a glimpse at Quatsino's rich and diverse 124-year history. Open every weekend from September to June and open daily during July & August. Special openings can be arranged by contacting quatsino.museum@recn.ca. Ocean and river sport fishing adventures based out of Quatsino are guided by experienced and certified professionals. This location, on the shores of Quatsino Sound, allows for easy access to a variety of in-shore and off-shore species - salmon, cod and halibut. Lodge stays include waterfront accommodation, guided fishing and meals.

Immerse yourself in solitude at one of Quatsino's three full service waterfront lodges where experienced and certified professional guides can take you on amazing sport-fishing adventures. Or choose to relax and kayak along the quiet inland waters of the Sound or perhaps surround yourself in natural beauty while hiking the Colony Lake Trail.

PORT MCNEILL

PORTMCNEILL.CA

VISITOR CENTRE
250.956.3881



Port McNeill © 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.

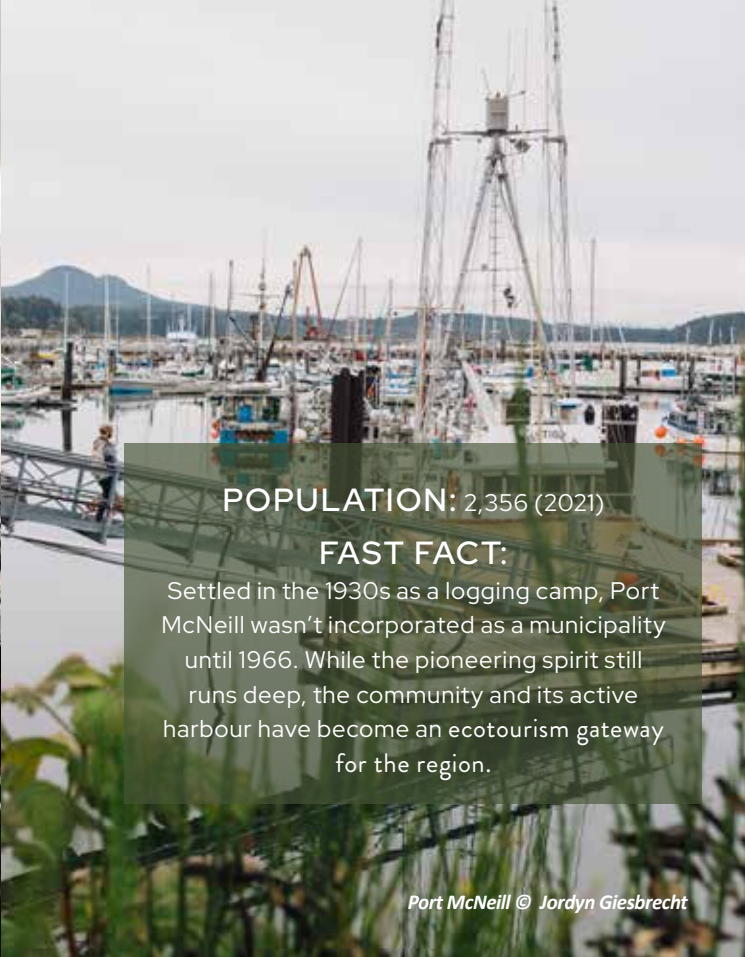
It is a place where hiking shoes and long walks in the forest replace stressful commutes and traffic jams. It is about bare feet on newly discovered beaches, tucked away in secluded coves. It is about Pacific Ocean air so fresh and so invigorating, it makes your skin tingle. It is where the shrill demands 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.



POPULATION: 2,356 (2021)

FAST FACT:

Settled in the 1930s as a logging camp, Port McNeill wasn't incorporated as a municipality until 1966. While the pioneering spirit still runs deep, the community and its active harbour have become an ecotourism gateway for the region.

Port McNeill © Jordyn Giesbrecht

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POPULATION:

10-12 year round in the Echo Bay area, 20-25 year round in Gwayasdums

FAST FACT:

Broughton Archipelago Provincial Park is BC's largest marine park

TAKE THE WILD PLEDGE

Prepare for any experience in our waters, trails and mountains.



FOR THE **GOOD OF OUR WILD**

#ForTheGoodOfOurWild

BROUGHTON ARCHIPELAGO

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 mazy region 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

POPULATION:

Alert Bay 449, Cormorant Island 1300

FAST FACT:

U'mista means 'the return of something important'. The U'mista Cultural Centre opened November 1980 as a ground breaking 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 35-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.

Summer events invite visitors to immerse themselves in the community culture. Artfest & Salmon run all share a weekend full of festivities, July 27 - 28, while paddlers of all types converge to circumnavigate Cormorant Island during the Alert Bay 360 Eco Paddle, August 4. 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.



POPULATION:

739 (2021)

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

Port Alice © Jordyn Giesbrecht

GATEWAY TO THE WILD AND WONDERFUL WEST COAST

Do-it-yourself adventurers find peace, lovely west-coast scenery and crowd-free access to the great outdoors in Port Alice. Perched on a pretty hillside facing the Neroutsos Inlet, this thriving community is the most southerly access point to Quatsino Sound.

The town is a base camp for kayaking, scuba diving, charter and recreational fishing expeditions via boat or logging road to such remote getaways as Side Bay, Gooding Cove, Harvey Cove, Brooks Peninsula and Klaskino Inlet. Ask for directions

at the Port Alice Visitor Centre, located in the Community Centre, before heading out on the back roads. Public launch facilities in town offer ocean access for travelers towing their own boat or kayak. Rent a kayak, paddle board or canoe or take a guided tour and spend some time exploring the Frigon Islands. Launch from the new accessible kayak dock at Lions Park.

Link River and Spruce Bay campgrounds at nearby Alice and Victoria Lakes are both favorite spots for freshwater fishing



Port Alice sunset © Darrell McIntosh

and outdoor recreation. The Alice Lake Loop Recreational Corridor provides easy access to view geological wonders like Devil's Bath and the Eternal Fountain, part of the vast stretches of limestone that make Vancouver Island North prime caving country. Wilderness hiking is at its best along the Marble River Trail leading to Bear Falls and Emerald Pools. Access the trail at Marble River Park and campsite along scenic Hwy 30 to Port Alice.

In town, stroll the Sea Walk, a wheelchair-accessible pathway that follows the community's coastline. Have a picnic, hike the short distance to Walk-out Island when the tide is low, and don't forget your binoculars. Hundreds of species of birds visit Neroutsos Inlet throughout the year. These same waters are home to orca, humpback, and grey whales, seals, sea otters, California and Steller sea lions, and migrating salmon.

Cyclists of all skill levels tackle the trails of the Rumble Mountain. Golfers head for the Port Alice Golf and Country Club, a challenging nine-hole course set against glorious mountain and ocean vistas. The Visitor Center offers

information for travelers and a well-documented look into Port Alice's past. The town's history dates back to the opening of a World War I-era pulp mill. It became the province's first instant municipality in 1965 when the town was relocated from the mill site to its present location a short distance north of the mill along Neroutsos Inlet.

Port Alice is a choice community for the artistic type looking for a quiet, naturally breathtaking setting. There is no shortage of inspiration for photographers, painters, sculptors, wood workers, or anyone looking for a place to focus on their craft. A number of artists have done just that and have made Port Alice their home. We also have photographers whose work can be seen at various locations around town. Stop in to the Visitor Centre to find out where all the local works can be viewed.

Visitors to Port Alice will find beautiful B&B's, vacation rental homes, and a full-service campground. Services in town include a gas station, pizza restaurant, grocery and liquor stores, a bank, 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, rent a kayak, 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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POPULATION:

3,902 (2021)

FAST FACT:

Port Hardy and the surrounding area is rich in tradition and deep-rooted in culture. Totems and big houses stand tall and weathered throughout Port Hardy and the neighbouring community of Fort Rupert, telling of the Indigenous history that began over 8,000 years ago.

PORT HARDY

VISITPORTHARDY.COM

VISITOR CENTRE

1.866.427.3901

Port Hardy © Ben Giesbrecht

TRUE NORTH ISLAND

Rich, rugged and resilient, Port Hardy is in the True North Island, at the Northern tip of Vancouver Island, and is the gateway to an authentic, unspoiled, nature-driven adventure. Located within the traditional territory of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation and home to two neighbouring First Nations bands, the Quatsino and Gwa'sala- 'Nakwaxda'xw, Port Hardy and the surrounding area is rich in tradition and deep-rooted in culture. Totems and big houses stand tall and weathered throughout Port Hardy and the neighbouring community of Fort Rupert, telling of the Indigenous history that began over 8,000 years ago. Port Hardy sits at the very edge of the coastal wilderness where you can hike our rugged trails, walk along our sandy beaches, paddle along the rocky shores of neighbouring islands or get to know the locals, no matter what you choose you will find that exploring Port Hardy connects you with nature in ways you didn't anticipate.

Hiking and walking are Port Hardy's most popular pastimes, and the trail network caters to all fitness levels. Take in the stunning sights of BC's coastal mountain range, First Nations totems & read interpretive wildlife signage along

the Hardy Bay Seawall. This beautiful walk is a favourite of many. The nearby Commuter Trail follows a known historical route traditionally used by ancestral Kwagw'at First Nations. Follow the boardwalk to an enchanting pond, the perfect spot for a picnic! The Quatse Nature Trail offers wonderful sights of wildlife from salmon and eagles to impressive old growth Cedar & Douglas fir trees. If you are up for the adventure, the Tex Lyon Trail is a challenging 8-hour round trip bringing hikers through old growth forest stands down onto the rocky shoreline of Beaver Harbour. The trail is difficult, but you will be rewarded with stunning panoramic views.

Your stay in Port Hardy will not be complete with a visit to one of our beautiful beaches. Airport Beach is one of the best spots in town for an afternoon beach fire. Stay warm, roast a marshmallow and wait for the sun to set. The colours of the evening sky on the distant landscape are perfect for making memories.

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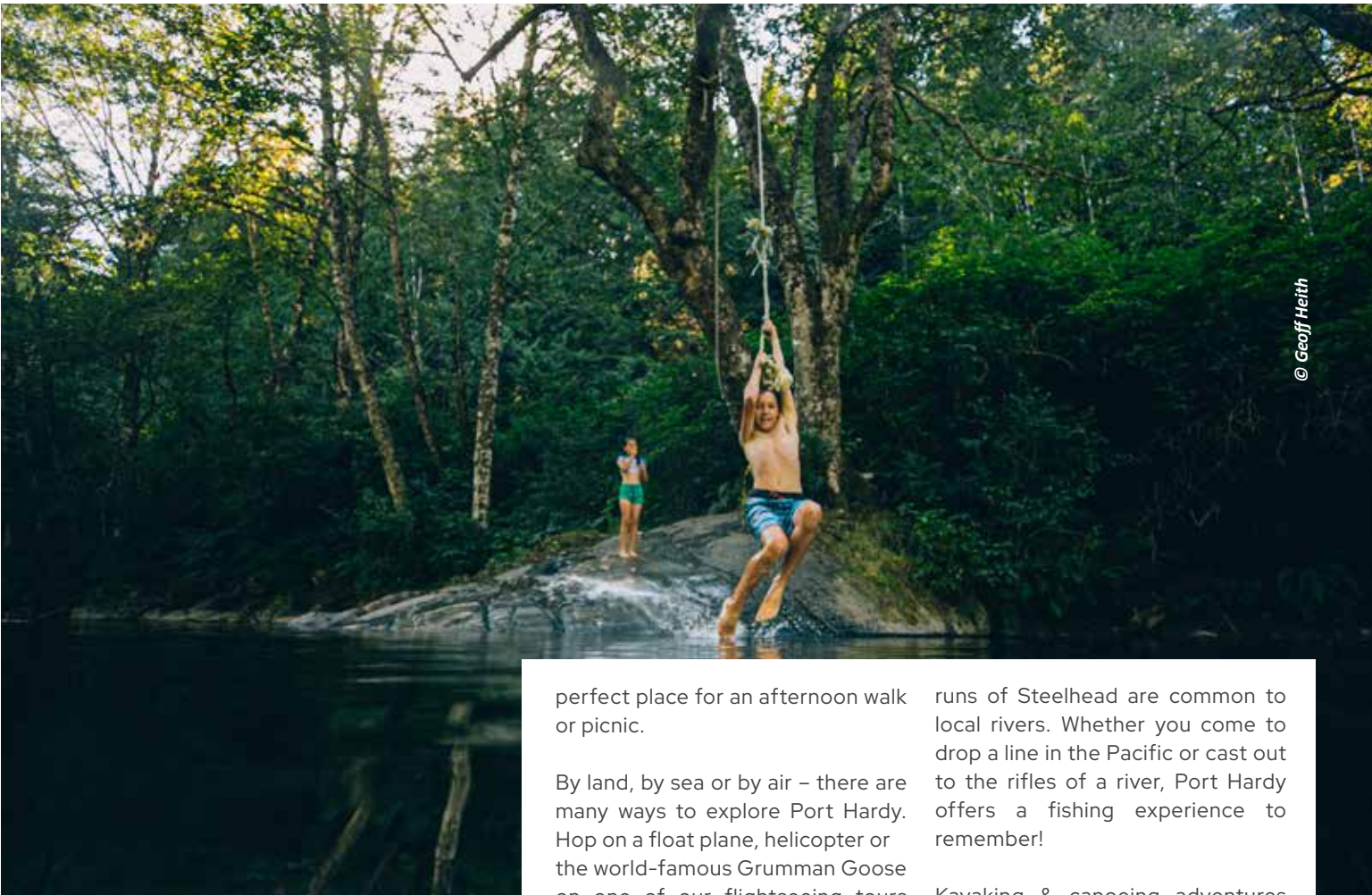


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perfect place for an afternoon walk or picnic.

By land, by sea or by air – there are many ways to explore Port Hardy. Hop on a float plane, helicopter or the world-famous Grumman Goose on one of our flightseeing tours that are a perfect way to see the spectacular landscape and diverse wilderness that surrounds Port Hardy. View sweeping beaches, expansive temperate coastal forest, and take in endless horizons across the Pacific Ocean.

If underwater exploration is your thing, the ocean around Northeast Vancouver Island is world-renowned for scuba diving with cold, current-fed waters being home to an extraordinary diversity of life in jaw-dropping density and colour. The area has been named in National Geographic's Ultimate Adventure Bucket List! Named 'Best Place to Fish in Canada' by Expedia, the waters surrounding Port Hardy are famous for year-round world-class sportfishing. While the ocean offers catches of salmon, halibut, and bottom fish in the summer, winter

runs of Steelhead are common to local rivers. Whether you come to drop a line in the Pacific or cast out to the rifles of a river, Port Hardy offers a fishing experience to remember!

Kayaking & canoeing adventures abound in Port Hardy. As the sun rises, the only sound is the soft scrape of your hull as you paddle away from the beach to an adventure you will never forget. Travel miles of shoreline, explore tide pools, and take in breathtaking scenery. Connect to nature in the striking beauty of Hardy Bay and Beaver Harbour, explore neighboring isles and inlets, and view the endless wildlife.

Port Hardy is also the gateway for the hardest of adventurers who come to experience the ultimate backcountry experience on the North Coast Trail and the Cape Scott Trail which carves a path across the entire northern tip of Vancouver Island. Port Hardy is the main departure point for water taxis and land shuttles destined for the North Coast Trail and San Josef Bay in Cape Scott Provincial Park.

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POPULATION: 175 (2020)

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.

POPULATION:

Holberg 35 (2016),
Winter Harbour 5

FAST FACT:

Some of the largest and oldest Monkey Puzzle trees in BC are found at Ronning's Garden, an early 1900's homestead near Holberg

HOLBERG & WINTER HARBOUR

Echoes and evidence of boom times can be found on journeys to what was once the site of the world's largest floating logging camp. Holberg is a one-hour drive northwest of Port Hardy and the last stop before Cape Scott Provincial Park. The gravel logging road

that takes you there is part of the fun, especially the infamous Shoe Tree – started as a joke by a local resident and now a Vancouver Island legend thanks to the hundreds of boots, sandals and shoes on its trunk and slung across its branches.

The village of Holberg is worth a long linger, and not strictly to enjoy the pub food and welcoming ambience at the renowned Scarlet Ibis. Ronning's Garden is a homestead founded in 1910 on the old San Josef Wagon Road. Its vast collection of exotic plants sits in stark contrast to the classic B.C. rainforest that surrounds it. Hiking, surfing or kayaking adventures are top priority for most visitors headed to the northwest coast of Vancouver Island. Cape Scott Provincial Park is an unspoiled wonderland with its deserted beaches, sculpted coastline and marathon hiking trails. Raft Cove Provincial Park attracts day trippers and campers who set up their tents on the sandy beach. Surfers who prize seclusion and best-kept-secret beach fronts have rediscovered Raft Cove's big waves. Other beaches to be explored are San Josef Bay and Cape Palmerston Beach. Holberg is the last

stop for backpackers set to tackle the Cape Scott Trail and the North Coast Trail.

From Holberg, the gravel road ends at Winter Harbour. This tiny, historic fishing village offers safe year-round anchorage, a seaside boardwalk and access to oceanfront hikes along Botel Park Trail and out to the prime beachcombing at Grant Bay. The local museum room at the community building is an entertaining way to view the history of this remote outpost through photographs. Expect to head home with harbour photos of the playful sea otters that pop their curious heads above water and float on their backs. Kayakers will also put their waterproof digital cameras to good use when exploring the many paddling adventures available in Quatsino Sound via a Winter Harbour launch.

The village of Winter Harbour shines during the sport fishing season. Fishing lodges, campgrounds and marinas fill with folks looking for the ultimate fishing destination. The close proximity to the abundant Pacific West Coast makes it an ideal spot for catching the big one.



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