



VANCOUVER ISLAND  
**NORTH**

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2026 EXPLORER GUIDE

# EXPERIENCE

## Our World



Alert Bay, BC, Canada  
'Namgis Territory



## ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE

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

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

## ATTRACTIONS

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



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

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



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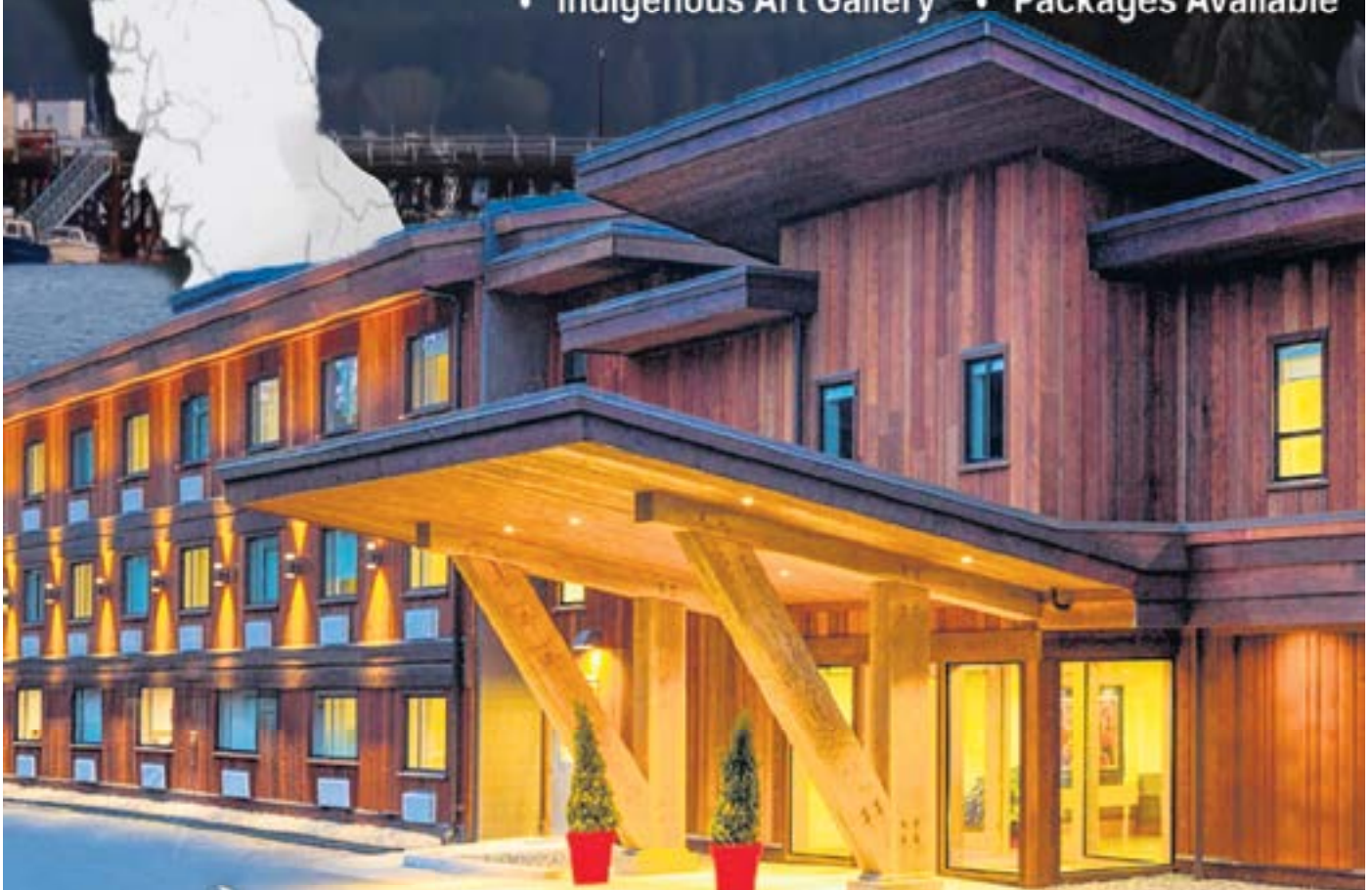
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Canyoning © Geoff Heath



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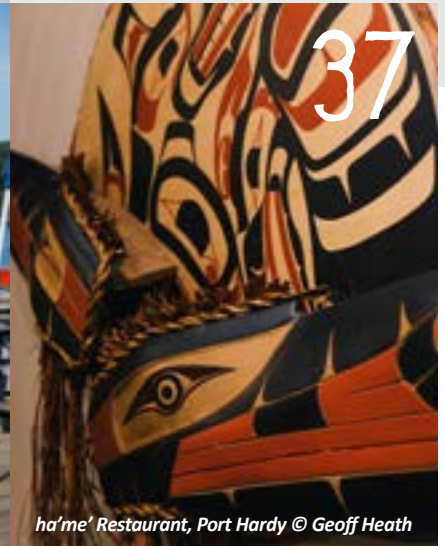
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Alert Bay Market © Geoff Heath



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ha'me' Restaurant, Port Hardy © Geoff Heath



# Wild, Open Spaces.

**Experience a different side of Vancouver Island—one defined by ancient traditions and vast landscapes.**

Vancouver Island North is a place of profound connection, where Indigenous stories bring the mountains and seas to life. From the thrill of world-class wildlife viewing to the stillness of the remote wilderness, we invite you to explore with purpose.



**VANCOUVER ISLAND  
NORTH**

**JOIN US IN OUR  
COMMITMENT TO PRESERVATION:**

**TAKE THE WILD PLEDGE** to travel mindfully and protect the beauty of the North Island for generations to come.



**PLAN YOUR ADVENTURE  
AND TAKE THE PLEDGE AT:**

**[vancouverislandnorth.ca/takethepledge](https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/takethepledge)**



Beach fire © Steven Fines

# WELCOME TO VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH

Find yourself in wild open spaces.

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

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

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

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

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

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





Black Bear © Finn Steiner

# LAND OF THE WILD

## BEAR WATCHING

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

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

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### TO STAY SAFE, PLEASE BE AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING WHEN ENCOUNTERING WILDLIFE:

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

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

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

Be wildlife smart. Know before you go and visit [www.wildsafebc.com](http://www.wildsafebc.com) for important safety information.



*Humpback Whale © Steven Fines*

## WHALE WATCHING

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

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

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

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

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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:  
[www.mersociety.org/seeablowgoslow](http://www.mersociety.org/seeablowgoslow)



© Tom Powell

## EXPLORE THE REGION ON TWO WHEELS

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

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

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



Raft Cove © Rob Wilson

## CATCH A SURF BREAK

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

Between rugged coastlines and vast, sandy beaches is a haven for experienced surfers seeking the ultimate challenge. With powerful swells and quiet beaches, the North Island offers a thrilling playground for riders ready to push their limits.

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

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Port Alice

## BC BIRD TRAIL



Port Hardy

### CRANE A NECK SKYWARD YEAR-ROUND ON VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH

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

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

Check out the Vancouver Island North Bird Trail on the BC Bird Trail website!

[bcbirdtrail.ca/trails/vancouver-island-north](http://bcbirdtrail.ca/trails/vancouver-island-north)

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Little Huson Caves © Tyler Cave

# HIKING

**VANCOUVERISLANDNORTH.CA/  
ACTIVITY-TYPE/THINGS-TO-  
DO/HIKING-TRAILS**

Vancouver Island North offers abundant hiking options, from short, scenic loops to multi-day backpacking treks. Many seaside communities feature accessible seawalls and boardwalks perfect for family strolls.


In Port Hardy, the Quatse Loop and Estuary Trail are easily accessed from the waterfront, with the Quatse Loop passing the Salmon Stewardship Centre. Nearby, Storey's Beach invites beachcombers and is the starting point for the rugged 11 km Tex Lyon Trail. The lovely Fort Rupert Trail follows an ancient First Nations pathway through the forest.

Port McNeill features the wide, smooth Rotary Trail and the short Cluxewe Salt Marsh Trail. On the road to Port Alice, the Marble River Trail leads to Emerald Pools or Bear Falls, exciting during salmon spawning.

Alert Bay on Cormorant Island offers an uphill climb to the Ecological Park with its marsh boardwalk and trails, or relaxed strolling along the seawall. Malcolm Island has the historic Mateoja Heritage Trail and the Beautiful Bay Trail, great for orca watching.

For a unique experience, follow the logging road past Holberg to Raft Cove Provincial Park, featuring a moderately challenging 2.5 km trail to the open Pacific Ocean.

PH: (250) 230-4575  
gonorthisland.ca



## NATURE, NATURALLY

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

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

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

**VANCOUVERISLANDNORTH.CA/  
RECREATION-MAP**



# CAPE SCOTT PROVINCIAL PARK

CAPE SCOTT PARK.COM

Cape Scott Provincial Park's sweeping tidal flats, forested trails, and rugged headlands are becoming a premier destination for the international backpacking community. Whether you are a family seeking a scenic stroll or a seasoned adventurer looking for a grueling trek, this northern Vancouver Island gem offers a range of world-class wilderness experiences.

## FOR DAY HIKERS AND FAMILIES

The San Josef Bay trail provides a perfect introduction to the park. A well-groomed, 45-minute gravel path leads from the parking lot to a stunning beach characterized by sea stacks and expansive white sands. This trail is accessible for high-clearance, all-terrain strollers, making it ideal for families. Guided hikes and transportation to San Josef Bay are available from nearby Port Hardy.

## THE ORIGINAL CAPE SCOTT TRAIL

Backpackers seeking a moderate challenge can follow the original 16 km Cape Scott Trail to Nels Bight. This route traverses varied terrain, leading to incredible beach camping. Explorers can find remnants of the area's history, including traces of a 19th-century Danish settlement and a WWII radar base. At Nels Bight, a Ranger Cabin—built in 2014—is staffed during summer and serves as an emergency shelter in winter. Those reaching the Cape Scott lighthouse are invited to sign the guest book.

## THE NORTH COAST TRAIL

The ultimate backcountry experience is found on the North Coast Trail, a 43 km extension that brings the total point-to-point journey to 58 km. This "gloriously challenging grind" features rope-assisted inclines, cable cars, and deep mud. Hikers typically require at least five days to complete the trek, which begins at Shushartie Bay



Otters © Finn Steiner

(accessible via water taxi from Port Hardy) and ends at the main Cape Scott trailhead.

## PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Access: The trailhead is located 64 km from Port Hardy via gravel logging roads past Holberg.

Services: Water taxis, land shuttles, and guided tours can be arranged through local providers in Port Hardy.

Preparation: The weather is notoriously unpredictable. Essential gear includes layered clothing and sturdy rain gear.

## TAKE THE WILD PLEDGE

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# DIVING

Vancouver Island North offers world-renowned cold-water scuba diving (around 10°C) in clear, current-fed waters, home to an extraordinary, colorful, and dense diversity of marine life. It's a truly different world where virtually every surface is inhabited. Divers frequently encounter Giant Pacific octopuses, wolf eels, schooling rockfish, and many species of nudibranch. The rock walls are vibrant with red soft coral, sponges, anemones, and sea stars—a photographer's dream. Endless coastline provides numerous dive opportunities, including sites in the Broughton and Blackfish Archipelagos, Zeballos, Browning Pass (near God's Pocket Marine Provincial Park), and Quatsino Narrows. Certified divers must wear dry suits and can rent gear, join guided trips with local operators, or stay at a dive resort to explore this cold-water paradise.



Vancouver Island North © Isabella Zandona

# CAVING

Vancouver Island North has Canada's highest concentration of caves, formed in soft karst (limestone).

Little Huson Caves Regional Park, 45 minutes south of Port McNeill, offers a beginner-friendly, self-guided tour with a natural rock bridge and a cathedral-style cave. Excellent karst formations can be seen from platforms along the Alice Lake Loop, including the Eternal Fountain and the Devil's Bath (a cenote).

Experienced cavers can explore some of Canada's longest and deepest karst caves, concentrated in the Quatsino and Parsons Bay formations. Safety is vital: use two lights, wear a helmet, share your itinerary, and note your expected return. Guides are strongly recommended for difficult treks, and unmapped caves should be avoided. Caving information is available at Canadian Caver: [www.cancaver.ca](http://www.cancaver.ca).

# CANYONING

Experience the wild side of Vancouver Island North through the heart-pumping sport of canyoning. Led by certified guides from Western Canyoning Adventure, you will immerse yourself in a landscape carved by water over centuries—rappelling down cascading waterfalls, sliding through natural rock chutes, and swimming in crystal-clear pools. Whether you are a first-timer looking for a “taster” tour or a seasoned adrenaline seeker ready for a full-day descent with nine rappels and natural slides, these tours offer a safe and supportive way to push your limits. This unique adventure provides an “inside-out” perspective of the region's rugged beauty that simply can't be reached by hiking or rafting alone.

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Hassle free hiking tours to remote locations on Vancouver Island North with our knowledgeable guides & small groups will make your adventure fun and easy.

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- Cape Scott Provincial Park
- Remote locations around Port Hardy
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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE & BLOG FOR MORE INFO ON OUR HIKING TOURS AND THE INSIDE SCOOP ON VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH.

250.230.4575 - Port Hardy  
[coveadventuretours.com](http://coveadventuretours.com)  
[@coveadventuretours](https://www.instagram.com/coveadventuretours)

**BOOK ONLINE**

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

**WHAT TO BRING:** A bathing suit, towel, and running or hiking shoes that can get wet (no water shoes).

**WHAT'S INCLUDED:** Professional guides, wetsuits, harnesses, helmets, and all necessary safety gear.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Participants should have a moderate level of physical fitness and be comfortable swimming.

# 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](http://dfo-mpo.gc.ca), for tips about regulations, licenses, local openings and conservation areas.

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



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



SCAN ME

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[recfish-pechesportive.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/nrls-sndpp/index-eng.cfm](http://recfish-pechesportive.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/nrls-sndpp/index-eng.cfm)

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# KAYAKING

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

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

Guides and fellow kayakers become fast friends on day trips or longer excursions that might include sleepovers in rustic campgrounds, comfortable base camps or luxurious resorts hidden away on remote islands. Weather and sea conditions can change quickly, so be prepared and travel in a group. A number of local kayaking companies offer half, full and multi-day tours [vancouverislandnorth.ca/activity-type/things-to-do/sports-activities/kayaking/](http://vancouverislandnorth.ca/activity-type/things-to-do/sports-activities/kayaking/)




*Kayaking, God's Pocket Marine Provincial Park © Finn Steiner*

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](http://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.



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BC Ferries © Kimberly Kufas

Transit, two taxi companies, and two car rentals. Public transit serves Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Fort Rupert/Storey's Beach, and Coal Harbour year-round with wheelchair-accessible buses. Contact Mount Waddington Transit for schedules and fares: 250-956-3151 or [bctransit.com/mount-waddington](http://bctransit.com/mount-waddington).

## BY SEA

Ferries and water taxis are vital. Sointula (25 min) and Alert Bay (45 min) are short ferry rides from Port McNeill. Port Hardy's Bear Cove terminal offers sailings to Prince Rupert and the Central Coast. Contact [BCFerries.com](http://BCFerries.com) or call 1-888-223-3779 for schedules/reservations (Inside Passage/Central Coast). Check Visitor Centres for water taxi charters.

Channel 16 is strictly for emergencies. Get weather info by calling 250-949-7148 or tuning to Channels 21B or Wx1, 2, or 3 (VHF radio). Harbour Authorities, marinas, and fuel docks monitor Channel 66. See [AHOYBC.com](http://AHOYBC.com) for west coast/Vancouver Island ocean boating info, including interactive trip planning maps.

## BY AIR

Port Hardy airport has scheduled daily service to Vancouver and beyond - [pacificcoastal.com](http://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.

# TRAVELLING

## BY LAND

[DRIVEBC.CA](http://DRIVEBC.CA)

BC Road Report: 1-800-550-4997

On the North Island, all main roads connect to Hwy 19. Major communities like Sayward, Telegraph Cove, Port Alice, and Coal Harbour have modern, paved access. However, some wilderness areas and campsites are only reachable via dusty gravel logging roads, requiring extreme caution; logging trucks always have the right of way (see the Resource Road User Safety Guide: [bcforestsafesafe.org/files/tk\\_pdfs/gde\\_resrd.pdf](http://bcforestsafesafe.org/files/tk_pdfs/gde_resrd.pdf)).

Vehicle alternatives include the Port Hardy Express Bus (Island Link service: [islandlinkbus.com](http://islandlinkbus.com)), Mount Waddington Regional



**WILDERNESS SEAPLANES**

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**Scan to BOOK your stay!**



Alert Bay totem pole © Geoff Heath

## INDIGENOUS CULTURE

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

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

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

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

# A CALL TO CULTURAL EXPLORERS

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

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

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

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

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



U'Mista Cultural Centre © Tom Powell

## 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.

Vancouver Island North towns offer numerous recreational, entertaining, and educational alternatives for self-guided activities.

Stay up to date on festivals, concerts, and events by checking Visitor Centres, coffee shop bulletin boards, the "Hot Spots" section of the North Island Gazette, or [vancouverislandnorth.ca/events](http://vancouverislandnorth.ca/events).

Shop for art, crafts, fashion, and local edible goodies like smoked and candied salmon. Galleries, retail outlets, and museum gift

shops feature the nature-inspired work of local artisans and First Nations artists, including jewelers, carvers, painters, and textile workers.

Seek serenity on the water by renting a kayak from Seaview Kayak in Port Hardy to glide across crystal clear lakes or calm ocean waters.

For indoor activities, enjoy a drop-in workout or yoga class at recreation centres, or pamper yourself with a spa treatment or massage. Make a splash at the indoor pool, hot tub, and sauna in Port Hardy, or enjoy Port McNeill's outdoor pool from May through August. For the adventurous, take a refreshing dip in the ocean or one of our many cold lakes and rivers.

Plan a tour of museums in Alert Bay, Coal Harbour, Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice,

Quatsino, Telegraph Cove, Sointula, Echo Bay, and Winter Harbour, each sharing unique local stories (See page 24 for more details).

Experience First Nations culture with traditional dances – (July and August only) at the 'Namgis Big House in Alert Bay. Nearby, the U'mista Cultural Centre showcases its world-renowned collection of potlatch regalia.

Check out Port Hardy's Quatse River Hatchery and the Salmon Stewardship Centre to learn about the lifecycle and economic importance of salmon.

Enjoy a friendly game of golf at Seven Hills Golf & Country Club in Port Hardy, a serene 9-hole course with a comfortable clubhouse. Further out, the Port Alice Golf & Country Club offers a 9-hole course with sweeping views of Neroutsos Inlet.

**Seven Hills Golf & Country Club**

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- ✓  Food
- ✓  Map
- ✓  Rope
- ✓  Cell phone
- ✓  Knife
- ✓  Matches
- ✓  Water

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DISTANCE CHART – FROM PORT HARDY

TO	KM	TIME	TO	KM	TIME
ALERT BAY	43 km	1 1/2 hours via ferry	WOSS	104 km	1 1/2 hours
CAPE SCOTT TRHEAD	68 km	1 1/2 hours via ferry	SAWARD JUNCTN	168 km	2 hours
COAL HARBOUR	18 km	20 mins	CAMPBELL RIVER	232 km	3 hours
HOLBERG	48 km	1 hour	COURTENAY	292 km	3 1/2 hours
PORT ALICE	55 km	45 mins	NANAIMO	387 km	4 1/2 hours
PORT MCNEILL	43 km	30 mins	CHEMAINUS	419 km	4 1/2 hours
SOINTULA	43 km	1 1/2 hours via ferry	DUNCAN	437 km	5 hours
TELEGRAPH COVE	63 km	1 hour	VICTORIA	497 km	6 hours
WINTER HARBOUR	73 km	2 hours	TOFINO	502 km	6 1/2 hours





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Camping © Steven Fines

## CAMPING & RECREATION SITES

Nothing says summer like tent camping. Vancouver Island North caters to those who enjoy sleeping under the stars with options ranging from full-service family friendly spots to basic wilderness sites. Campgrounds in the region are provided by a mix of operators: forest companies, the Regional District of Mount Waddington, BC Provincial Parks, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and private owners.

### SAFETY FIRST

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

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

### PLANNING YOUR TRIP

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

Check out our camping page to learn more  
[vancouverislandnorth.ca/activity-type/where-to-stay/campgrounds-rv-parks](https://vancouverislandnorth.ca/activity-type/where-to-stay/campgrounds-rv-parks)



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# TELEGRAPH COVE



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Support local lives  
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SCAN ME

FOR THE GOOD OF OUR WILD



#ForTheGoodOfOurWild

© Kimberly Kufaas Photography

Telegraph Cove © Jordyn Giesbrecht

In December 2024, a devastating fire hit Telegraph Cove's dock area, destroying the pub, restaurant, Whale Interpretive Centre, and tour offices. The rebuild is already underway, with completion expected by May 1st for the 2026 summer season.

Telegraph Cove is a popular sport fishing destination for salmon, cod, and halibut, known for its calm summer waters.

The historic village, with its restored wooden buildings and boardwalk, was named in 1912 as the northern terminus for the telegraph

line. It later hosted a lumber mill and saltery, and its genesis into a whale-watching mecca began in 1980.

This picturesque waterfront village is perched at the entrance to Johnstone Strait and is among the last surviving boardwalk communities on the west coast, attracting kayakers, wildlife viewers, boaters, scuba divers, and sports-fishing enthusiasts.

Daily seasonal tours offer grizzly bear viewing in the Knight Inlet area and whale watching from May to October. Viewing

the rich marine environment can also be experienced on guided kayak trips. The area is known for the density of marine mammals, including orcas, humpback whales, Minke whales, and various dolphins and seals.

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

# TELEGRAPH COVE

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Telegraph Cove © Geoff Heith

# Telegraph Cove art

## GALLERY & GIFTS



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250 514 5030 - donbastian.com

These waters are one of the most predictable places to see both mammal-eating ("Bigg's killer whales") and fish-eating ("Northern Residents") orcas. The "Northern Residents" are unique globally for their body rubbing behaviour on specific beaches, which are protected as the Dr. Michael Bigg Ecological Reserve at Robson Bight. The Reserve is not open to the public.

Back on land, trailheads to Bauza Cove and the Blinkhorn Peninsula offer incredible views of Johnstone Strait. Guided rainforest tours are also available.

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# SOINTULA

SOINTULAINFO.CA

VISITOR CENTRE  
250.973.2001

## FAST FACT:

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



Sointula and Malcolm Island - Mitchell Bay © BC Bird Trail

## A PLACE OF HARMONY

A fascinating history and plenty of rural charm make Sointula on Malcolm Island a memorable getaway. The town's name means "place of harmony" in Finnish and it was established in 1901 by a colony of Finnish settlers with utopian dreams.

Most visitors arrive via a 25-minute BC Ferries sailing from Port McNeill. Many travel as pedestrians or cyclists, and bikes can be borrowed for the day from the Sointula Resource Centre (May to September). A car is helpful for reaching destinations like Bere Point, Mitchell Bay or the Pulteney Point Lighthouse. Boaters use the Malcolm Island Lions Harbour, which offers amenities and a second free bike location.

Hikers enjoy the Mateoja Heritage trail and the three-kilometre Kaleva Road Walkway, a seaside interpretive trail overlooking Broughton Strait. Bere Point Regional Park is the starting point for the Beautiful Bay trail, where fortunate visitors might witness orcas rubbing on the pebble beach below the viewing platform.

Visit the local museum and BC's longest running cooperative store (established 1909, open Tues to Sat). Food options include a bakery, a cozy café, a burger joint, and a seasonal restaurant. Shops and home studios offer island-made art and crafts. The Coop also runs a gas station and convenience store. The Sointula Resource Centre Society provides information on accommodation options.



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**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

Port Hardy – Quatse River Park © BC Bird Trail

The small hamlet of Quatsino, located just 15 minutes from Coal Harbour by water taxi or six minutes by air, offers a peaceful retreat where time seems to stand still. With only eight kilometers of gravel road, residents and visitors embrace a simpler way of life connected to the land, forest, and sea.

In 1894, Norwegian settlers arrived, seeking a prosperous life. The historic St. Olaf's Anglican Church, built in 1897, remains one of the oldest buildings still in use on northern Vancouver Island. Quatsino Elementary School, constructed in 1933, is one of the last remaining one-room schools in B.C.

The Quatsino Museum & Archives, located across from the government dock, offers a free glimpse into the community's rich history. It is open weekends from 1 to 2 PM from September to June and daily from 1 to 2 PM during July and August.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Quatsino offers guided sport fishing adventures. The area is a prime fishing destination with easy access to species including salmon, cod, and halibut.

Quatsino is also home to three full-service waterfront lodges, where visitors can kayak the calm waters of Quatsino Sound or hike the scenic Colony Lake Trail. Accessible only by boat or floatplane, Quatsino offers a tranquil escape.

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# PORT MCNEILL

PORTMCNEILL.CA  
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Port McNeill Marina © Jordyn Giesbrecht

## GATEWAY TO THE BROUGHTON ARCHIPELAGO

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

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

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

If you've ever wondered what British Columbia looked and felt like before cities, this is the place where you will find the answer. Orcas and Humpback Whales move through our protected waters exactly as they have for thousands of years. There is no city backdrop, no smog and no urban noise or distractions.

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**North Island Music Fest is coming soon, stay tuned for more information by visiting [www.northislandmusicfestival.ca](http://www.northislandmusicfestival.ca).**

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

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**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.**

---

to experience one of our best kept and most spectacular secrets...A sunset of unimaginable depth and colour, set to the background music of the tidal rhythms of our harbour. It is a memory that will stay with you forever.

Consider Port McNeill your explore and adventure base, the place where you plan your next day's unique venture. There are still wide-open west coast beaches

like San Josef Bay to visit or Cape Scott Provincial Park or the North Coast Hiking Trail to explore. So stay another day and discover what you have been missing.

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

### **FAST FACT:**

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

# Cluxewe Resort

A Natural Wonder on Beautiful North Vancouver Island

Cluxewe Resort is a First Nations-owned and operated campground, RV park and resort on northern Vancouver Island. Rent beachfront cottages or camp with your RV or tent. Go bird watching on the Cluxewe Estuary or watch whales from your cozy campsite. Located near Port McNeill, with easy access to Port Hardy, Telegraph Cove, Alert Bay and Sointula. Use Cluxewe Resort as your launchpad for all of your North Island adventures.

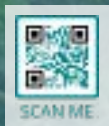


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#ForTheGoodOfOurWild

### FAST FACT:

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

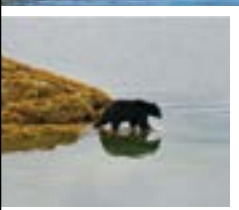
# BROUGHTON ARCHIPELAGO

The Broughton Archipelago is an irresistible marine destination known for its natural beauty and solitude, offering visitors the chance to immerse themselves at water level by kayak, boat, or guided expedition. Legendary sailing and paddling excursions delve into the mazy waterways and numerous islands northeast of Port McNeill, promising crisp ocean air, shoreline exploration, and potential sightings of seals, orcas, or humpback whales.

These islands have been utilized by Indigenous peoples for generations and were once more densely populated. Evidence of this history includes white midden beaches, culturally modified trees, pictographs, and ancient clam gardens—a sophisticated form of shellfish aquaculture.

Echo Bay on Gilford Island serves as a main port of call, featuring a full-service marina and a museum created by Billy Proctor. Marinas, lodgings, and campgrounds are found throughout this postcard region. Those seeking a solitary experience can find secluded coves, as the Broughton Archipelago welcomes visitors to connect with its peaceful nature.

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## FAST FACT:

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

Alert Bay © Gina Woods

## HOME OF THE KILLER WHALE

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

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

Library-Museum on 116 Fir Street, offers additional First Nation artifacts.

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

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

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

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

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

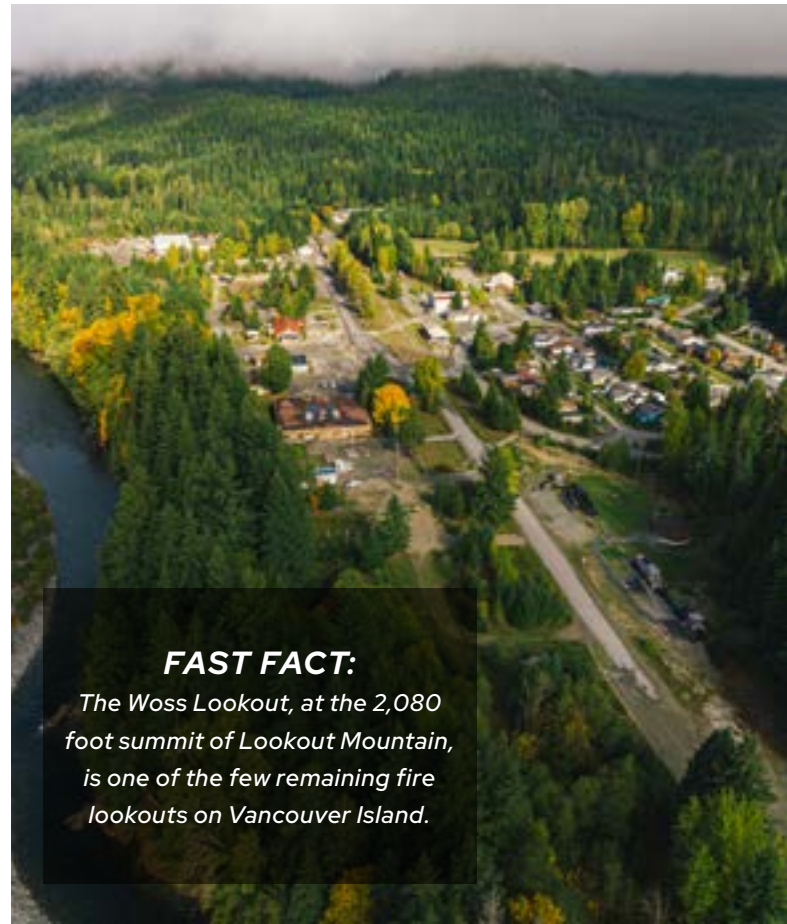
# WOSS & NIMPKISH VALLEY

Woss, 130 kilometres north of Campbell River, offers a mix of secret ski hills, hiking, watersports, and intriguing history.

Logging has long been the main industry in the Nimpkish Valley. Woss was home to Canada's last active railroad logging until 2017. Steam Locomotive 113, built in 1920 for rail logging, is now a registered Heritage Site at Woss Heritage Park, along with the Woss Fire Lookout.

Beyond the logging zones are emerald-green parks and backcountry wilderness. The Nimpkish Valley Ecological Reserve protects the region's oldest trees. Schoen Lake Provincial Park offers beautiful scenery and is open March to October. Adventurous climbers can tackle Pinder Peak and Rugged Mountain. For a view, hike the short, steep Woss Lookout Trail to the recently restored fire lookout tower.

North of Woss, Nimpkish Lake is popular for windsurfing and kiteboarding. Explore the "walk-in" limestone caves at Little Huson Regional Park. Mount Cain is a funky, community-run, family-oriented ski hill known for powder and minimal line-ups. It operates on weekends and select Mondays during ski season, offering 18 runs, a t-bar lift, slope-side accommodations, and affordable prices. In the off-season, its high alpine meadows attract hikers and wildlife watchers.



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

Woss © Geoff Heith



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

Port Alice, perched on a hillside facing the Neroutsos Inlet, is a thriving community and the most southerly access point to Quatsino Sound, ideal for do-it-yourself adventurers. It serves as a base camp for kayaking, scuba diving, and fishing expeditions to remote spots like Side Bay and Brooks Peninsula. The town offers public launch facilities for ocean access.

Nearby, Alice and Victoria Lakes feature Link River and Spruce Bay campgrounds, popular for freshwater fishing. The Alice Lake Loop Recreational Corridor allows easy viewing of geological wonders like Devil's Bath and the Eternal Fountain, part of the region's prime caving country. Wilderness hiking is excellent on the Marble River Trail, leading to Bear Falls and Emerald Pools.

In town, visitors can stroll the wheelchair-accessible Sea Walk, spot hundreds of bird species and marine life—including orca and humpback whales—and hike to Walk-out Island at low tide. Cyclists can tackle the trails of Rumble Mountain, while golfers enjoy the challenging nine-hole course at the Port Alice Golf and Country Club.

The town's history dates back to a WWI-era pulp mill; it was relocated in 1965 to its present location along Neroutsos Inlet. Port Alice is a choice community for artists seeking a quiet, naturally breathtaking setting. Visitors will find B&B's, vacation rentals, a full-service campground, and services including a gas station, pizza restaurant, grocery and liquor stores, a bank, community centre, and a marina.

*Frigon Islands, Port Alice © Tyler Cave*

## COAL HARBOUR

Coal Harbour, a marine hub on the North Island accessible via a leisurely road trip, offers spontaneous exploration and access to Quatsino Sound's rich fishing grounds. Historically a mining town, military base (Royal Canadian Air Force during WWII), and Canada's last whaling station (operating until the mid-'60s), today it serves as a launch point for fishing charters, boaters, kayakers, and campers exploring the scenic coastal waters and old-growth forests. The town has a growing community of artists and craftspeople, adding to its colourful local history.

The Aircab float plane hangar houses a private collection of local artifacts, including items from its logging, whaling, and WWII periods. Noteworthy is a six-metre-long blue whale jawbone, a remnant of its whaling past.

The unique Hornsby Steam Crawler, a custom-built steam crawler tractor patented in 1904 for "endless track" technology, is on public display near the Fire Hall. Inspired by the Yukon Gold Rush and used by the Port Alice Pulp Mill from 1928 to haul wood, it's a significant piece of BC Coast forest industry machinery.

The Quatsino First Nation operates the Coal Harbour marina, providing moorage, public washrooms, showers, and a laundromat.

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



# PORT HARDY

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## **FAST FACT:**

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

*Port Hardy Marina © Jordyn Giesbrecht*

## **LIVE THE ADVENTURE**

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

Home to the Kwagu'ł, Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'xw, and Quatsino First Nations, Port Hardy is steeped in cultural legacy dating back more than 8,000 years. Totem poles and big houses throughout the community and nearby Fort Rupert offer a glimpse into this deep-rooted history.

From hiking the famed North Coast Trail to paddling serene inlets or reeling in world-class fish, Port Hardy is a basecamp for adventure. Hiking and walking are favourite pastimes here, with trails for every level. The Hardy Bay Seawall walk delivers stunning coastal views and cultural interpretive signage, while the Fort Rupert Trail offers a quiet journey through ancestral Kwagu'ł lands. Wildlife lovers should

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

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

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

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

# HOLBERG & WINTER HARBOUR

ECHOES OF THE PAST. GATEWAYS TO ADVENTURE

### FAST FACT:

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

Winter Harbour © Geoff Heith

Holberg, an hour northwest of Port Hardy, was once the site of the world's largest floating logging camp and is the final outpost before Cape Scott Provincial Park. The drive is a rugged logging road featuring the iconic, shoe-covered "Shoe Tree."

The region is extremely remote: expect unpaved roads, no cell service, gas, or tire repair. Prepare thoroughly for backroad travel.

Holberg is worth a stop. The Scarlet Ibis Pub offers a meal and the Scarlet Ibis Cabins provide lodging. Nearby, Ronning's Garden, founded in 1910 and recently restored, is a unique collection of exotic plants in a rainforest setting.

Holberg is the gateway to the wild northwest coast, including dramatic Cape Scott Provincial Park and Raft Cove Provincial Park, known for surfing and wilderness camping. Other pristine areas include San Josef Bay and Cape Palmerston. It's the final resupply point for the iconic Cape Scott Trail and North Coast Trail backpackers.

The gravel road continues to Winter Harbour, a small, historic fishing village on Quatsino Sound. Visitors can stroll the waterfront boardwalk or hike the Botel Park Trail to Grant Bay for beachcombing. A small museum details local heritage.

During fishing season, Winter Harbour is a bustling hub for anglers, with lodges and marinas available. Kayakers will also enjoy the extensive paddling and frequent wildlife sightings, including sea otters.

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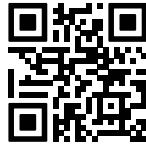


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