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British Columbia: Vancouver Island

Travel Style - Guided Walking Tour

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep into the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.



In the coastal wilderness of Vancouver Island, “a walk in the woods” is something truly inspirational. Along dramatic Western shores, vast swaths of sylvan forests rise from wide beaches and alongside rocky headlands lashed by ocean surf. Soaring cedars, among the tallest trees on earth, tower over Douglas firs, oaks, and dogwoods from a primitive forest floor carpeted with ferns and velvety moss. It's a remarkably fertile landscape fed by misty Pacific breezes and a stunning network of waterfalls, streams, and fjords. Begin your journey in Vancouver and conclude in the culture-rich British Columbia capital of Victoria. Between, witness the legacies of First Nations people and trace pastoral footpaths through the old-growth forests of Pacific Rim National Park, with a delightful excursion by ferry to the quaint island of Newcastle. Explore remote coastal inlets by Zodiac boat in search of black bears. Savor delectable farm-to-table picnics in spectacular settings and dine on the bounty of the sea, ending each unforgettable day at oceanfront five-star resort accommodations.



Tour Only Itinerary - 2019

Day 1

Join your Country Walkers *British Columbia: Vancouver Island* tour and ferry to Vancouver Island



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Rath Trevor Beach Provincial Park 1-2 miles, easy. Qualicum Falls; 2.5 miles, easy

Breakfast is included at your hotel.

Your guide(s) will meet you at 7:15 a.m. in the lobby of the St. Regis Hotel. Your guides will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking.

After breakfast, depart the bustle of Vancouver City for the tranquil, unspoiled wilderness of Vancouver Island. Your five-hour travel day will be broken up with a few short walks and visits. Upon arrival at the ferry terminal, embark for a 1.5-hour long sail across the scenic Strait of Georgia, leaving the gleaming cityscape and cedar-lined shores behind. Arrive in Nanaimo, the island's "Harbor City," and disembark to continue your drive to Rath Trevor Beach Provincial Park. Here, savor a freshly prepared picnic of local ingredients after exploring the shoreline of the park's wide, sandy beach.

Departing after lunch, you set off for a short drive to Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Park on the shores of Cameron Lake. One of the island's most picturesque parks, this pastoral haven is home to old-growth Douglas-fir forest and colorful wildflowers in the spring. A loop trail past tranquil streams and fields and under the soaring canopy delivers you to impressive waterfalls cascading down a rocky gorge bordered by steep mountain peaks.

Arrive late this afternoon at your home for the next three nights. After time to refresh, join your companions in the dining room for a scrumptious dinner with sweeping views of the Ucluelet Coast, whose name in the indigenous First Nations language translates into "people of the safe harbor." Feast on fresh, seasonal cuisine harvested nearby; all seafood served here is sustainably certified as "ocean wise." After a rewarding day in this Pacific paradise, fall asleep in your luxurious rainforest view suite.

Accommodation: Black Rock Resort, Ucluelet

Inspired by the surrounding land and sea, the 5-star Black Rock Resort on Vancouver Island's rugged west coast combines elegance and contemporary comfort. Its innovative architecture – of rock, water, glass, steel, and wood – features expansive spaces, natural light and breathtaking seaward vistas from its decks and dining room. From your luxurious Studio Trail Suite, you have access to Big Beach and the Wild Pacific Trail as it winds through the resort. Your room offers a sofa, a spa-inspired bathroom with heated floors, a soaker tub and rain shower.

Day 2

Pacific Rim National Park

Schooner Cove Trail; 2 miles, easy. Wild Pacific Trail: Ancient Cedar's and Artists Loops; 2 miles, easy

Today you set off for a day of walking in the Pacific Rim National Park and along the Wild Pacific Trail. Home to mossy rainforest, wind-sculpted trees, rocky cliffs lashed by roiling waves, and



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stunning beaches, this area offers some of the most dramatic walking on the west coast.

Following a relaxing lunch on Long Beach, you transfer to the nearby Ancient Cedars Loop Trail, where some of the largest trees on Vancouver Island greet you—giant red cedars rising above old-growth Sitka spruce and western hemlock. Two of these mammoth cedars are 800 years old; one measures almost 40 feet around its base! First Nations tribes revered these trees and once harvested them to carve canoes, build shelter, and extract medicines. Their bark was used to weave clothing, hats, and baskets.

Your footpath, hand-carved out of thick brush, skirts rugged cliffs overlooking Barclay Sound and the Broken Group Islands to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the south and west. As you walk, you pass through old-growth forests of towering trees, gigantic moss-draped nurse logs, raised twisted roots, fungi, lichen, and ferns. The primitive terrain is a photographer's dream. Seaward, marvel at outer barrier reefs churning up the surf. Between February and May, whales breach the surface. Keep your eyes open, too, for the protected "sea lion pool." Sheltered behind a barrier reef, it's a prime spot for sea lions and seals. To take in the drama around you, pause at viewing nooks and decks for a bird's-eye view of surge channels, tumbling cliffs, and wide sandy beaches. You might spot some of the 300 bird species that migrate through the Ucluelet Peninsula such as the most regal of the winged predators at the "eagle sentry point." At Big Beach, there'll be time to explore tidal pools and enjoy a delicious picnic lunch of fresh local specialties.

Following this dramatic walk straight to your hotel, rejuvenate in the resort's ocean-side Jacuzzi or outdoor pool. For dinner this evening, savor the freshest salmon BBQ you're likely to ever eat, skillfully prepared by your guides overlooking the beach.

**Please note: As many trails in this area are tide dependent, walks may vary*

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Day 3

Private Zodiac-style bear watch excursion

Wild Pacific Trail: Lighthouse Loop; 2 miles, easy

The highlight for today is a thrilling bear-watching expedition in search of black bears seeking food along the coast during low tide. Embark in an open-air, 24-foot rigid-hulled Zodiac-style boat and head into the calm fjord inlets of Clayoquot Sound. You stop in sheltered bays to marvel at these



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majestic creatures as they forage in tidal pools for crabs, clams, and barnacles. The shallow draft of your boat lets your experienced pilot bring you close so you can safely and unobtrusively observe. During your outing, you may also spot bald eagles, seals, and other sea life. Warm gloves, hats, and drinks are provided.

Later, explore another section of the Wild Pacific Trail as you walk the Lighthouse Loop from Terrace Beach, site of an ancient First Nations canoe beach and an ancient midden, or dumping site that dates back at least 5,000 years. Interpretive signs share the rich history of this area, once home to over 10,000 Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations peoples. Learn about this fascinating area as you wind your way through a mossy rainforest to a rugged and wind-swept coastline, skirting rocky headlands that offer dramatic views of Barkley Sound and the Amphitrite Lighthouse.

This evening is free to choose from a few dining options, walk into town for a casual dinner at one of the local restaurants or perhaps take the time to indulge in a spa treatment at the hotel (not included in the tour cost). Your guides will be available to assist with recommendations and transfers to or from town.

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Day 4

Newcastle Island

Marine Provincial Park; 3 miles, easy

You begin with an early breakfast so you can make the most of your transfer day to the southern tip of Vancouver Island. Your drive takes about 5 hours, but you pause for two scenic walks along the way—a chance to stretch your legs and get a glimpse of some of the tallest trees on Vancouver Island, many more than 800 years old.

After an easy stroll through Cathedral Grove, you continue another hour to the pedestrian ferry for your short shuttle to Newcastle Island, part of the Snuneymuxw First Nations Traditional Territory. The Snuneymuxw are a coastal Salish people who have long called Vancouver Island home. In their Hul-qumi'num dialect, they call Newcastle Island "Saysutshun." The island's shores were an annual homestead for this semi-nomadic tribe that followed the cycles of the sea for food. Spawning herring brought them here between January and April and they built a series of longhouses for shelter. Aside from being a fishing ground, Saysutshun served other important purposes for the Snuneymuxw: it was a training ground for competitive canoe pullers, a source of botanical medicines, and a place of



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healing where families would soothe their hearts, minds, and bodies after the death of loved ones. Enjoy your box lunch before your scenic 10-minute ferry ride. Meet a Snuneymuxw guide and learn about some of the edible plants and traditional medicines used to this day. Then follow a well-maintained trail through the Marine Provincial Park, enjoying coastal views before venturing into the island's interior, a pristine paradise of Douglas firs, oaks, and dogwoods.

Later, continue the drive to Brentwood Bay, on the outskirts of Victoria and your next hotel, the lovely Brentwood Bay Resort where your oceanfront room welcomes you with beautiful views from its balcony. This evening savor another dinner of seasonally-inspired ingredients harvested from the sea and grown fresh on Vancouver Island.

Accommodation: Brentwood Bay Resort & Spa, Brentwood Bay

Located in the heart of Victoria's wine country, the 5-star Brentwood Bay Resort & Spa enjoys an oceanfront setting, 20 minutes from downtown Victoria and just across the bay from Butchart Gardens. The glass walls of the dining room provide breathtaking views of the bay and local artwork brings the character of Victoria to your every moment. You may indulge in a spa treatment or a swim in the pool before retiring to your ocean suite, outfitted with luxury furnishings and bedding, a fireplace, and a balcony or terrace with ocean views.

Day 5

John Dean Provincial Park

2.5 miles, easy with moderate sections. Butchart Gardens; 1-1.5 miles, easy

Linger over breakfast on the bay, enjoying the warm ambiance of the fireplace indoors or dining al fresco on the terrace with spectacular views of the Saanich Inlet. This is another chance to savor the freshness of Vancouver Island cuisine, perhaps sampling a house-smoked salmon Benedict with fried capers and crispy garlic herb potatoes. After another satisfying meal, you transfer to John Dean Provincial Park, a preserved wilderness sitting atop Mount Newton and overlooking Saanich Bay, the Gulf Islands, and the Cascade Mountains.

John Dean donated his private property in 1921 to found the park, the remnants of his cabin still visible in the woods. Wildlife abounds and you may spot red-tailed hawks, bald eagles, and turkey vultures soaring overhead. You may also hear pileated woodpeckers doing their work on some of the area's largest Douglas Firs. Lunch today is in a delightful setting, Butchart Gardens, the pride of Victoria and one of the world's premier floral show gardens. This remarkable botanical showcase was initially founded by the enterprising Butchart Family in 1904 as a quarry for limestone. Once the rock supply was near depleted, Jennie Butchart had the crevices loaded with top soil from nearby farms, planting Japanese, Italian, Rose, and Mediterranean gardens. Throughout the 20th century, the Butchart's descendants transformed it into a pleasure park of world-class proportions. Today, it is a National Historic Site of Canada.

You return to your hotel early this afternoon, where you may indulge in the spa amenities if you wish or



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stroll along the marina.

Gather for a final celebratory dinner.

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Day 6

Your *British Columbia: Vancouver Island* tour concludes

Victoria city and harbor walking tour; 2-3 miles, easy

Spend your final morning exploring Victoria on foot. Established in 1843 as a fort for the Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria has been called "more British than Britain," an adage that lives and breathes in its abundance of Victorian-era architecture, beautiful formal gardens, elegant tea rooms, and double decker buses. Now the capital of British Columbia, the small city enjoys a breathtaking setting on the Strait of Juan de Fuca as Washington State's Olympic Mountains rise in the distance.

Learn about Victoria's frontier and colonial past as you stroll past the Parliament and other historic buildings, pass by inviting parks and gardens, and trace the scenic centerpiece of the city, the Inner Harbor.

Late morning you bid farewell to your travel companions. You may extend your time in Victoria on your own or depart for Seattle, Washington by ferry.