



7 amazing things to do in Vancouver

There are lots of reasons to visit Vancouver, but here's the main one: Qantas is about to start flying there direct from Sydney.

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The first lungful of wintry air when you arrive in Vancouver is invigorating. It's actually not as cold as you might think, even coming straight from an Australian summer, because this coastal city is home to some of Canada's most mild weather. You might not even see snow, at least not in the city. The mercury usually hovers just above the zero mark which means once you've passed customs, hydrated post-flight, and donned your boots/gloves/hat/jacket, you're good to go.

No matter what season you arrive, there's a lot to see and do. Vancouver is home to about 2.6 million people, which makes it a bustling hub of culture, art, food, shopping, and incredible scenery. And since Qantas has just announced it's going to fly direct from Sydney to Vancouver all year round, instead of just seasonally schlepping snow-crazed Aussies to the slopes, it paves the way for competitive fares between it and Air Canada when the border finally opens.

Here are seven things everyone should do in Vancouver.



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Cycle around Stanley Park

Stanley Park is a 405ha park right in the middle of town, which offers great views of the city. One of the highlights is the 8.8km sea wall section, which gives you a front-row view to the city's bustling port while the water laps at the trail. However, the totem poles along the way present an opportunity to start learning about the city's Indigenous culture and the foliage of the forest trails provides an insight into the city's dramatic seasonality. Rent a bicycle or an e-bike from one of the nearby shops, like [Yes Cycle Bike Rental](#) (which has a 4.8-star rating on Google), to quickly shake off the jet lag.



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Walk the Capilano Suspension Bridge

There's a good reason this simple bridge became Insta-famous: it lets you take a walk on the wild side without actually leaving the city, with a spectacular view 70m above the rushing Capilano river. [Capilano Suspension Bridge Park](#) has a lot to offer.

There's a Treetops Adventure walk, high up in the towering trees; a Cliffwalk, which follows a granite precipice along the river; a Story Centre, where you can learn about the city's development; and the Kia'Palano cultural centre, which explores the history of the region's first human inhabitants. The park is easily accessible on public transport or by car.



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Stop by A-maze-ing Laughter

This is one of the most engaging public art installations I've ever seen. Chinese artist Yue Minjun created 14 bronze sculptures of himself, which are impossible to view without laughing. They're cheeky, jolly, and very wholesome. You can find the cheerful statues at Morton Park, in the city's West End. And let's face it, no visit to Vancouver is complete without a selfie mimicking the playful posts (guilty).



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Explore the hidden gems of Gastown

[Gastown](#) is one of Vancouver's coolest neighbourhoods, home to 12 blocks of stylish restaurants, bars, shops, galleries, and more. It was home to the city's first saloon, back in 1867, and it's well worth a visit. One of the coolest things you'll see is the famous Gastown Steam Clock, which is an antique-style clock built in 1977 that is steam powered and uses whistles to tell the time. However, once you've ticked that off the list, you can dive into the heritage architecture, one-of-a-kind retailers, and food. Always food.



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Dive into the vibrant local galleries

Local art galleries provide fascinating insights for travellers, with an unmatched opportunity to take the pulse of the people and places we visit. [Vancouver Art Gallery](#) (pictured) and [The Polygon](#) are both essentials, as is the [Bill Reid Gallery](#), which is the only public gallery dedicated to contemporary Indigenous art in the country's northwest. Some of the smaller offerings also offer great rewards, such as the [Ian Tan Gallery](#), which exhibits fascinating contemporary works from emerging and established Canadian artists.



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Check the jam-packed events calendar

Vancouver is a city of creatives, home to a jam-packed calendar of festivals, events, music, comedy, and more. There are actually more than 50 professional theatre companies in town, as well as more than 25 professional dance companies, which means a huge selection of entertainment. The best way to get an overview of what's on during your visit is by checking Destination Vancouver's [events calendar](#). If you're in town between January and July, you should also try to get tickets to a National Hockey League (NHL) game to watch the locals do what they do best... but only if you cheer for the [Vancouver Canucks](#).



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Plan your days around culinary delights

My final piece of advice is to make bookings at a few of the city's best restaurants. Vancouver has a diverse and adventurous palate with an emphasis on fresh ethical produce, so you could find yourself sampling everything from perfectly cooked steaks to divine fresh seafood, cutting edge vegetarian dishes and avant garde desserts. I can personally recommend [The Eatery](#), which is a kitsch sushi bar on West Broadway. However, current top-rated eats include [Lunch Lady](#), a favourite of the late Anthony Bourdain; [L'Abattoir](#), in Gastown, for sophisticated French-influenced plates; and [Joe Fortes Seafood and Chop House](#), which is a large downtown institution famous for serving classic American-style dishes.

- *Kirrily Schwarz*

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