



VANCOUVER
ECONOMIC COMMISSION

LIVING IN VANCOUVER



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About Vancouver

In global surveys Vancouver consistently ranks as one of the world's most livable cities. Vancouver's physical setting shows both sides of the city's personality. In its borders are kilometers of scenic hiking trails, walking paths, bike routes, horseback riding trails and beaches that border the Strait of Georgia — the tree-and-sand-lined waterway that connects Vancouver with the Pacific Ocean. Yet the city is also a bustling and sophisticated urban centre with thriving immigrant enclaves, a dazzling, world-renowned restaurant scene, a lively arts and cultural life, charming neighbourhoods, distinctive shops and (almost) non-stop nightlife.

With an easy access to superior healthcare and community-based family services, and an open environment of political freedom, equality and inclusiveness, it's easy to see why this city ranks so highly among the world most livable places.

Vancouver's Natural Advantages

Few places in the world can match Vancouver for its spectacular natural setting: it rises dramatically at the edge of North America's west coast, surrounded by towering mountains, thick forests and the protective straits and bays of the Pacific Ocean. Our weather too is famously temperate, buffered by a sea-level location and nearly constant jet stream of warm, South Pacific air.

The city, one of Canada's largest, is also a recreational paradise, just minutes away from ski resorts, mountain-biking and hiking trails, pristine beaches and old-growth rainforests.

Vancouver's Balanced Climate

Average January temperature: 3°C (40°F)
Average July temperature: 22°C (65°F)
Average annual rain + snowfall: 122 cm (48 in)
Annual sunshine: 1,928 hours

Vancouver Parks

If you live or work in Vancouver, then you live or work near a park. The city boasts 200 of them, including our ‘crown jewel,’ 1,000-acre Stanley Park — the third-largest urban park in North America, and home to an estimated half-million trees and 200 km (125 miles) of trails and roads.

Natural Environment

- Cycle, run, walk or blade the 10-km (6-mi) Stanley Park seawall.
- Get a front-row view of the awesome North Shore Mountains and English Bay from Jericho or Locarno beaches or Spanish Banks.
- Take time to stop and smell the roses: amble through colourful Queen Elizabeth Park and Van Dusen Gardens.
- Ski, board or snowshoe at Cypress Mountain, Grouse Mountain and Mount Seymour — all just 20-30 minutes from downtown and fully lit for night skiing.
- Walk, hike, cycle or ride horseback-ride through Pacific Spirit Regional Park.
- Sail, windsurf, kayak or jet-ski across English Bay.

Recreation, Attractions and Maps

For more information on Vancouver’s attractions, including maps or for information on what’s going on in the city, go to www.tourismvancouver.com.

Another good source for news, arts, entertainment, culture and lifestyle in Vancouver, can be found at www.straight.com

Source: Environment Canada

Housing in Vancouver



Vancouver has a variety of housing, including single-family homes, apartments, condominiums, and townhouses. The downtown West End is mainly high-rise apartment buildings and condominiums, while much of the rest of the city is single-family homes mixed with low-rise, apartments, medium density condos and townhouse developments along major streets.

Where to Stay Until You Find a Home

If you are not purchasing a home and are considering rental accommodation, there are a number of ways to find a rental home. Check classified ads in city and community newspapers, bulletin boards in shops, neighbourhood's agencies or local community centers. Check the Yellow Pages under "Rental Agencies".

Rental Housing

For a comprehensive view into the housing rental prices, please click on the following housing maps document powered by Craigslist and Google.

- <http://vancouver.en.craigslist.ca/hhh/>
- www.rentbc.com
- <http://www.kijiji.ca/b-apartments-condos/vancouver/c3711700287>
- <http://www.walkscore.com/CA-BC/Vancouver>

Average Rental Prices for Vancouver

1 Bedroom \$900-\$1200
2 Bedrooms \$1100-\$1700
3 Bedrooms \$1800-\$2600

If you are looking at renting in Kitsilano or South Granville area keep in mind that most buildings choose to not advertise on local websites and instead display vacancy's signs in front of the buildings. Walking through the neighborhood is your best bet

Finding a Home to Buy

Deciding what neighbourhood to settle in can be a daunting task. However to inform your decision, there are neighbourhood area profiles for 20 of Vancouver's neighbourhoods are available at <http://www.bizmapbc.com/>

Some of Vancouver's most family friendly (and beautiful) neighbourhoods include: South Granville; Kerrisdale; Kitsilano; Point Grey and the area known as Shaughnessy that surrounds the University of British Columbia campus. Other options include West Vancouver that lies across the Lions Gate Bridge, 20 minutes outside the downtown area.

There are special newspapers that only have listings of homes for sale. You can also walk or drive around neighbourhoods you like, looking for "For Sale" signs. Almost all houses are sold through real estate agents. A real estate agent can help you look for a home. The Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver can provide more information on home buying. View their website at: www.realtylink.org.

Housing Price Index for Greater Vancouver

May 2014

Benchmark ▲▼	Price Index ▲▼	1 Month +/- ▲▼	6 Month +/- ▲▼	1 Year +/- ▲▼	3 Year +/- ▲▼	5 Year +/- ▲▼
Residential (Greater Vancouver Average)						
\$624,000	163.6	0.8	3.5	4.3	3.1	23.8
Detached						
\$966,500	178.6	1.0	4.5	5.4	5.0	37.2
Townhouse						
\$469,100	152.2	1.0	2.4	3.1	0.7	16.3
Apartment						
\$377,500	152.6	0.5	2.6	3.2	1.1	13.5

Property Taxes

Residential Areas

The Vancouver Economic Commission has embedded information on specific residential areas into a Google map: [Residential Map](#)

People who own land, houses and other buildings in the city pay property taxes to the City of Vancouver. The money received from property taxes is used to provide City services, some of which are described in this guide. Property tax is based on how much a property is worth according to the government. The BC Assessment Authority, a provincial body, conducts property assessments to determine how much each property is worth in the city. The City of Vancouver sets the tax rates. Every year, property owners get a tax assessment in the mail that indicates how much tax must be paid to the City. Vancouver residents pay property taxes twice a year: once in February and once in July. There are various methods of payment, including at a bank, via the Internet, by mail or in-person at the Tax Office in City Hall. Late payments are subject to a 5 percent fine. To inquire, call: 604-873-7633.

The Province also provides a tax subsidy to some homeowners through the Homeowners Grant Program. Eligible homeowners must apply for and complete a Homeowner's Grant application each year in July when they pay their property taxes.

Getting Around

Walking

The City of Vancouver encourages people to get around by walking as much as possible. Unlike many cities in North America, Vancouver has no highways cutting through the city. It is possible to walk almost anywhere in Vancouver and the many parks and tree-lined streets make walking a pleasure.

Cycling

The City of Vancouver has developed an extensive system of bikeways for cyclists in the city. The Cycling in Vancouver map has information on bicycling and the best ways to cycle to any part of the city. Visit <http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/transport/cycling/> to download a map or call 604-871-6070.

Public Transit

TransLink, a local transportation authority, provides an integrated public transportation system of buses, SkyTrain, SeaBus and the West Coast Express, a commuter rail service. Riders can use the same tickets for different modes of travel in the system and buy books of tickets and passes. Riders need to have exact change to pay for bus fare. Schedules are available in Vancouver Public Library branches, at City Hall, as well as information booths at some shopping malls. For schedule information, call 604-521-0400. Also check TransLink website: www.translink.bc.ca.

Driving a Vehicle

You must have a valid BC driver's license to drive a car or other motor vehicle in Vancouver.

Foreign Driver's licenses are valid for 90 days

The Province of BC is responsible for licenses, insurance, speed limits and road safety. For more information, contact the Driver Service Centers in the Lower Mainland. Their telephone numbers are listed in the White Pages of the telephone book under "ICBC". For accident claims, call the Accident Claim Centers in Vancouver, also listed in the telephone book. You can also check the ICBC's website at: www.icbc.com.

Speed Limits

The speed limit on all Vancouver roads is 50 kilo-meters per hour (km/h), unless you see a sign for another speed. The speed limit on lanes behind houses and buildings is 20 km/h. Any park or school area has a speed limit of 30 km/h to keep children safe. Vancouver Police give out tickets with heavy fines for people who go over the speed limits in the city.

Residents Parking Only and Residents Permit Parking

Around some homes there are signs which say *Resident Parking Only*. This means that the street parking is intended for people who live on that block or in that area. If you are not a resident and park your car in that area, you may get a ticket. If you see the sign *Residents Permit Parking*, you will need to display a special permit from the City to park your car in that area. Cars with no permit can be ticketed. For more information, call Residential Parking Permits (Tel: 604-873-7338).

Transportation for People with Disabilities

Vancouver has special buses and sidewalk ramps to make it easy for people with disabilities to get around. TransLink's handyDART service has small buses that are easy for people in wheelchairs to use.

HandyDART buses pick people up at their homes and take them where they want to go. Call the handyDART (Tel: 604-430-2692) for more information.

About 60% of Vancouver's curbed streets and lane corners have curb ramps to make it easy for people in wheelchairs to cross the street and get back on the sidewalk on the other side. To inquire about curb ramps, call the City's Engineering Department (Tel: 604-871-6131).

For more information about accessibility for people with disabilities, call the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (Tel: 604-875-0188).

Schools and Education



The Vancouver School Board (VSB), a municipally elected body funded by the Province, is responsible for schools and education in Vancouver. The VSB, with 56,000 students, is one of the largest school districts in BC. The VSB has 91 elementary schools and 18 secondary schools. There are schools close to, or in, each neighbourhoods of the city. The VSB has a yearly operating budget of more than \$350 million and employs more than 3,200 teachers and staff.

The Federation of Independent Schools Association (Tel: 604-684-6023, www.fisabc.ca) is an umbrella organization which offers information regarding private schools, including Catholic schools, in the Province. The Conseil Scolaire Francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (Francophone Education Authority of BC, Tel: 1-888-715-2200) is an independent school board that provides French programming to students who have French as a first language.

Registering for Schools

For information about schools for your children or courses for adult education, call the Vancouver School Board at 604-713-5000. The VSB web site is www.vsb.bc.ca. The District Reception and Placement Centre at 2530 East 43rd Ave (Tel: 604-713-5999) evaluates new students for placement in classes.

Multicultural Liaison Workers at schools provide parents and children with additional help in communicating with school staff. In Vancouver, staff speak the following languages:

- Cantonese
- Mandarin
- Hindi
- Punjabi
- Tagalog
- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Khmer
- Korean

The Vancouver School Board also has Aboriginal Liaison Workers to assist with aboriginal students.

VSB Community Education Services (CES)

Community Education Services (CES) has more than 2,000 programs for adult education and special courses. There are special courses for all ages, for people trying to get into college or university, and also classes in English as a Second Language (ESL) for beginner

to advanced levels. Call CES at 604-713-4500 or visit their web site at:
www.continuinged.ca

CES offers courses in many languages, including Cantonese, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Sign Language and Spanish.

Rankings of schools in Vancouver

<http://britishcolumbia.compareschoolrankings.org/ChooseReport.aspx>

Health Services

The Province of British Columbia is responsible for all health services. Any citizen or permanent resident who has landed and is living in BC needs to apply for health services offered under the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP). To find out more about MSP, call 604-683-7151 or visit <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/>. Application for MSP is recommended immediately upon arrival as the waiting list is often around three months for confirmation. All residents and citizens are eligible for the same basic medical services.

Health Care and Benefits

Health Insurance B.C. – MSP – since January, 2014

- \$69.25 per month for one person
- \$125.50 for family of two
- \$138.50 for three or more in a family

Some employers pay 100%, while others offer 90%, or less. Extended health care providers include: Blue Cross, Greenshield, and Sunlife. Such companies cover dental, non-surgical procedures, optometry visits.

Finding a Family Physician:

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia can help you to locate a family physician who is currently accepting new patients. To find out more, call 604-736-1877 or visit <http://www.bcfamilyphysicians.com/find-a-family-doctor/>

The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCHA)

The Provincial Government set up the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority in 2001. It is the governing body responsible for planning, funding and coordinating health services in Vancouver, Richmond, and the Sunshine Coast (up to Powell River). For general inquiries, call 604-736-2033.

For further information, check their website at: www.vch.ca. Also, check the Blue Pages in the telephone book listed under “Health Authorities”.

Hospitals & Emergencies

Vancouver’s hospitals are also part of the VCHA. If you need help in a medical emergency, you can call 9-1-1 for Ambulance or go to the Emergency Department at a hospital. The Emergency Department at hospitals in Vancouver are open during the day, but only some

are open at night. To make sure, call the hospital to find out if their emergency department is open

Childcare



Children from birth to 12 years old may need to be cared for by someone other than their parents or immediate family. The parents may have to work or attend school, or may want their child to play and learn with other children. Childcare (also called “daycare”) can provide this service for children and families. Childcare can be provided in a caregiver’s home, a group centre, or pre-school. These places may or may not be licensed. When childcare is licensed, it meets certain health and safety standards.

If you need childcare, it is up to you to find the right services for your children, and keep in mind that childcare services are not all run the same way. You can get help by calling Westcoast Information Daycare (3rd Floor, 210 West Broadway, Tel: 604-709-5699) for information about:

- childcare options available
- childcare locations, with lists and maps
- how much child care costs
- hours childcare programs are open
- what to look for when choosing childcare
-

Westcoast Information Daycare staff can speak different languages, and translated information is available.

Please note, due to a growing population there may be waitlists for childcare and we strongly suggest you **apply as soon as possible** as it may take up to a year to receive placement

Getting Help to Pay for Childcare

If you need help paying for childcare, go to the office of the Ministry of Human Resources closest to you (see Blue Pages in the telephone book) or call the Westcoast Information Daycare number. Tell them you want to apply for a childcare subsidy.

Family Places

The drop-in centers identified below are for parents and pre-school age children, including support to parents in a group setting and creative play for preschool children.

- **Eastside Family Place**
1661 Napier St., Tel: 604-255-9841
- **Hastings Community Family Enrichment**
Centre, 3096 East Hastings St., Tel: 604-718-6222
- **Marpole Oakridge Family Place**
1305 W. 70th Ave., Tel: 604-263-1405
- **Mount Pleasant Family Centre**
2910 St Georgia St., Tel: 604-872-6757
- **Thunderbird Family Place**
2311 Cassiar St., Tel: 604-713-1818
- **South Vancouver Family Place**
2295 East 61st Ave., Tel: 604-325-5213
- **Westside Family Place**
2819 West 11th Ave., Tel: 604-738-2819
- **Roundhouse Family Place**
188 Drake St., Tel: 604-718-6559

Arts & Culture

Thanks to Vancouver's inspiring surroundings, a 'work hard, play hard' mentality and a rich history of immigration and multiculturalism, the city offers a stunning diversity of arts and cultural events, attractions and venues.

Residents and tourists alike experience live theatre, dance, concerts, films, art gallery and museum exhibitions, literary readings, lectures, fairs and festivals in any one of our many, varied neighbourhoods. The City boasts more artists per capita than other Canadian cities.

Vancouver has emerged as one of North America's major 'foodie' centres, with a "red hot dining scene" (*Chicago Sun-Times*) boasting a constellation of star chefs focused on seasonal and local ingredients, and an "Asian food scene so good and so vast as to have few rivals in North America" (*New York Times*).

Sports fans also have much to cheer about – Vancouver is home to professional and semi-pro hockey, plus football, soccer and baseball teams, each with its legion of loyal fans.

Arts & Cultural Venues

Arts Club Theatre Company www.artsclub.com
Commodore Ballroom <http://www.livenation.com/venues/15034/commodore-ballroom>
Firehall Arts Centre www.firehallartscentre.ca
Fringe Festival www.vancouverfringe.com
Heritage Hall www.heritagehall.bc.ca
Maritime Museum www.vancouvermaritimemuseum.com
Orpheum Theatre www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/theatres
Queen Elizabeth Theatre www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/theatres
[The Centre in Vancouver for Performing Arts http://www.ticketmaster.ca/The-Centre-in-Vancouver-tickets-Vancouver/venue/139276](http://www.ticketmaster.ca/The-Centre-in-Vancouver-tickets-Vancouver/venue/139276)
Vancouver Art Gallery www.vanartgallery.bc.ca
Vancouver East Cultural Centre www.vecc.bc.ca
Vancouver International Film Centre www.vifc.org
Vancouver Museum <http://www.museumofvancouver.ca/>
Vancouver Playhouse www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/theatres

Prize Assets: Sports, Amusements & Attractions

BC Lions (football) www.bclions.com
BC Place Stadium www.bcplacestadium.com
Board of Parks and Recreation www.vancouverparks.ca

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Rogers Arena <http://rogersarena.com/>

Hastings Racecourse www.hastingspark.com

HR MacMillan Space Centre www.hrmacmillanspacecentre.com

Pacific Coliseum www.pne.ca/venue/rental/pacific_coliseum.htm

Playland www.pne.ca/playland

Science World at Telus World of Science www.scienceworld.bc.ca

Vancouver Canucks (NHL hockey) <http://canucks.nhl.com/>

Vancouver Giants (Western Hockey League) www.vancouvergiants.com

Vancouver Whitecaps (soccer) www.whitecapsfc.com

Vancouver Canadians (baseball) www.canadiansbaseball.com

Shopping

British Shops

For a taste of home:

- The Candy Aisle – For British sweets
- The British Store & Sherlock’s Café – Variety of British foods
- The Celtic Treasure Chest – Variety of British foods

Top 10 Vancouver Shopping Destinations

1. [Robson Street and Downtown Vancouver](#) – Vancouver’s best-known shopping district is lined with international designers and famous brands, making it a great destination for clothes, accessories, shoes and bags. A huge variety of shopping can also be found in the surrounding streets, including book stores, electronics, Pacific Centre Mall, high-end Holt Renfrew and the ultimate Canadian department store The Bay. One block north of Robson Street, you’ll find Tiffany, Brooks Brothers and other luxe shops on Alberni Street, Vancouver’s version of Rodeo Drive.
2. [Metropolis at Metrotown](#) – With nearly 400 stores, this is B.C.’s largest shopping centre. It’s just 15 minutes from downtown Vancouver by SkyTrain.
3. [South Granville](#) – South Granville is a frequently overlooked Vancouver shopping district just over the Granville Street Bridge from downtown. It offers independent clothing boutiques, one-off home ware stores (as well as big chains, like B.C.’s only Williams-Sonoma) and dozens of commercial art galleries, earning it the nickname Gallery Row.
4. [Gastown](#) – Historic Gastown is the centre for interior design in Vancouver—check out the internationally-acclaimed Inform— and also one of the best places to find independent Vancouver fashion, First Nations art (Coastal Peoples Fine Art Gallery), antiques and fabulous home decor gifts (Parliament).
5. [Main Street](#) – The hip, local counterpart to downtown’s glitzy Robson Street, Main Street has a variety of original Vancouver and Canadian fashion boutiques— Twigg&Hottie is a must-visit—plus high-quality second-hand wares, collectibles (at Front & Company), a famous skate shop and antiques.
6. [Punjabi Market/Little India](#) – South Vancouver is home to one of the city’s largest Indo-Canadian communities and a shopping hub of Indian fashions, beaded bags, loads of jewelry—both real and costume— fabulous fabrics and great authentic Indian food.

7. [Chinatown](#) - Options here run the gamut from cheap Chinese imports to China-chic housewares (check out Peking Lounge), jewelry, clothes, toys, art, all kinds of authentic herbal medicines, tea accessories and more.
8. [Granville Island](#) - The heart of Vancouver's craft and foodie community, Granville Island has a variety of shops selling handmade arts and crafts, First Nations art and collectibles and clothing and jewelry, plus great toys at the Granville Island Kids Market.
9. [West 4th Avenue](#) - The original home of Lululemon, West 4th in the Kitsilano neighbourhood is the perfect shopping destination for yoga wear, ski and snowboard equipment, maternity fashion, baby stores, clothes and housewares.
10. [Yaletown](#) - The brick warehouses of Yaletown were once part of Vancouver's industrial heart; these days, they house trendy clothing boutiques and carefully curated interior decorating depots like The Cross.

Furniture for the home

- EQ3 - <http://www.eq3.com/ca/en/>
- Urban Barn - <http://www.urbanbarn.com/>
- Crate&Barrel - <http://www.crateandbarrel.com/>
- CB2 - <http://www.cb2.com/>
- Restoration Hardware - <http://www.restorationhardware.com/>
- West Elm - <http://www.westelm.com/>
- Pottery Barn - <https://www.potterybarn.ca/>
- Country Furniture - <http://countryfurniture.net/>
- Home Effects - <http://www.homeeffects.ca/>
- Fullhouse Modern - <http://fullhouseconsign.com/>
- Moe's Home - <http://www.moeshome.ca/index.cfm>
- Briers Home - <http://briers.ca/>
- The Brick - <http://www1.thebrick.com/brickb2c/jsp/index.jsp>
- Home Sense - <http://www.homesense.ca/en/index.asp>
- Bombay Company - <http://www.bombay.ca/home.php>
- Inspiration Furniture - <http://www.inspirationfurniture.ca/>
- Mobler Furniture - <http://www.moblerfurniture.com/>
- Urban Décor - <http://www.urbandecor.ca/>
- Design House - <http://designhouse.ca/>
- Novo Furniture - <http://www.novofurniture.com/>
- Spencer Interiors - <http://www.spencerinteriors.ca/>
- Parliament Interiors - <http://www.parliamentinteriors.com/>
- BoConcept - <http://www.boconcept.com/en-ca/>
- MINT - <http://shop.mintinteriors.ca/>
- Chintz & Company - <https://chintz.com/t-vancouver.aspx>

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- Industrial Revolution - <http://industrialrevolution.net/>
- Style Garage - <http://www.stylegarage.com/store-info/store-info.shtml>
- Brougham Interiors - <http://broughaminteriors.com/>
- Zientte - <http://zientte.ca/>
- Inform Interiors - <http://www.informinteriors.com/>

Further Reading

- Scout Magazine - <http://scoutmagazine.ca/>
- Monocle - <http://monocle.com/>
- Montecristo Magazine - <http://montecristomagazine.com/>
- Vancouver Magazine - <http://www.vanmag.com/>
- View Magazine - <http://viewmagazine.ca/>
- Yelp - <http://www.yelp.com/vancouver>