Discover Vancouver Island

Vancouver Island – no other island in the northeast Pacific is larger or more beautifully complex. Here, deep forests and rugged coastlines give way to long sandy beaches and coastal flats from deep mountain slopes to yawning estuaries. Add rivers, waterfalls, wetlands, and old-growth forests – and you have a region of unparalleled beauty.

Long before recorded history, the Island’s First Nations peoples had established a rich culture that included legends of mythical creatures, such as the sea-slug and forest-dwelling creatures. As an Oral culture, their stories and songs passed the Island’s wildlife through the mist and along the rugged coastline.

Today, explorers come seeking similarities.

Selected Publications
- Where to See Wildlife on Vancouver Island, by Kim Goldberg. Hartgrove Publishing.
- Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands Travel Guide. British Columbia Road and Recreational Atlas.

What to See
- Great Blue Heron
- Black Bear
- Roosevelt Elk
- Bald Eagle

More Information
- British Columbia Wildlife Viewing Program: www.wildlifewatching.bc.ca
- Vancouver Island: www.vancouverisland.com
- Federation of BC Naturalists: www.fedcan.org

Internet Sites
- BC Parks: www.parksbc.gov.bc.ca
- Vancouver Island: www.vancouverisland.com

Wildlife Viewing Sites
- San Juan Islands
- Hornby Island
- Saturna Island
- Nanaimo
- Powell River

Additional Resources
- Ministry of Environment
- BC Parks
- Federation of BC Naturalists

Facts
- Vancouver Island is the second-largest island in Canada, measuring over 2,000 kilometres in length.
- The island is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including sea lions, killer whales, and over 300 species of birds.
- The island’s forests are home to grizzly bears, elk, and caribou.
- Vancouver Island is home to the endangered Vancouver Island marmot.

Enjoy the natural beauty of Vancouver Island as a wildlife enthusiast.

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Viewing Highlights

- To truly experience B.C.'s west coast, stand amidst a towering old-growth coastal rainforest. Black-tailed Deer, Roosevelt Elk, Black Bears, Grey Wolves, and Marbled Murrelets move secretly through these forests.
- Bald Eagles are common on Vancouver Island. Estuaries and shoreline areas are the best places to see this majestic bird in its native habitat.
- To the First Nations peoples of Vancouver Island, salmon was the provider of life. Its awesome spawning ritual plays out every autumn in the island's rivers.
- In spring and summer, Grey Whales travel along the west coast of Vancouver Island. Pacific Rim National Park and Clayoquot Sound provide especially good sites for spotting these massive marine mammals.
- Kayak along the island's northwest coast and you may be lucky enough to watch Sea Otters frolicking in offshore kelp beds.
- Take time to explore tidepools along the coast. These mini habitats teem with colourful sea stars, spiny sea urchins, delicate anemones and other fascinating intertidal creatures.
- The Great Blue Heron is a year-round resident on Vancouver Island. Watch for it stealthily stalking its prey in fields, wetlands, and shoreline areas.
- During spring migration, thousands of Brant geese stop at Parksville and Qualicum Beach. Come in April and experience the fun of the annual Brant Festival.
- Visit the Comox Valley during winter and you will see thousands of North America’s most elegant waterfowl species—the Trumpeter Swan.
- Southeastern Vancouver Island is home to most of Canada's endangered Garry oak ecosystems. A stroll through a meadow in spring will take you past gnarled oak trees and spectacular displays of wildflowers.
- Dry and rocky sites support one of Vancouver Island’s most beautiful trees, the arbutus, whose reddish peeling bark contrasts strikingly with its leathery green leaves.

Wildlife Viewing Tips

- Make it your goal to safely observe wildlife behaving naturally in their native habitat.
- Move quietly and slowly.
- Use field guides to identify wildlife species and signs such as nests, tracks, and droppings.

- Use guides and local knowledge to enhance your viewing experience.
- Explore various habitats. Forests, lakes, estuaries, shorelines, alpine sites and marine areas provide very different wildlife viewing opportunities.
- Be patient. Wildlife follow their own activity patterns. Try viewing at different times of the day.
- If you do not see the species you are searching for, just remember to enjoy the natural beauty of Vancouver Island.

Responsible Viewing

Respect the Needs of Wildlife

- Do not harass wildlife. This can stress animals, disrupt their normal behaviour, and leave eggs and young vulnerable to predation.
- Avoid sensitive habitats such as seal and sea lion haul-out sites, and nest sites, including seabird breeding colonies.
- Wildlife are particularly vulnerable while feeding, nesting, and raising their young. Watch them from your car or a viewing blind, or hide behind natural landscape features. Use binoculars, spotting scopes, or telephoto lenses to maintain a safe distance between you and the animals you are viewing.
- Follow 'Be Whale Wise' guidelines for viewing marine wildlife (http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species/marinemammals/view_e.html). Keep at least 100 metres away from marine mammals and birds.
- Never feed wildlife. It is illegal and unsafe.
- Keep pets under control at all times, or leave them at home.

Protect the Environment

- Stay on designated roads and trails to avoid trampling plants and disturbing soils.

- Do not take flowers, plants, rocks, wood, shells, shellfish or other marine animals. They form an important part of the natural environment.
- Do not touch organisms in tidepools. Sunscreen and hand lotions leave a chemical film on the water that can kill sensitive intertidal creatures.
- Put garbage (including pet excrement) in on-site garbage bins. If none are provided, take your garbage with you.

Stay Safe

- Do not approach wild animals. They can be unpredictable and dangerous.
- Bears often frequent salmon spawning areas. Learn how to be 'bear-safe' by reading 'Safety Guide to Bears in the Wild'.
- Many roads on Vancouver Island are active logging roads. Always yield to heavy equipment.
- While driving, be aware that wildlife may unexpectedly cross roads.
- Find out about local hunting seasons by consulting the 'Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis'.

Respect Others

- Respect the rights of private property owners. Do not enter private property unless you have the owner’s permission. Leave gates as you find them.
- Be considerate of other recreationists.
- Respect the rights of First Nations people who still use many wilderness areas for food gathering and ceremonial purposes.

Report all Poachers and Polluters

- British Columbia has laws to protect our environment and wildlife. If you witness others harming wildlife or polluting the environment, report the incident to the nearest conservation officer or local Ministry of Environment office (1-877-952-7277).
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<tr>
<th>Map #</th>
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<th>Highlights</th>
<th>Territorial Mammals</th>
<th>Arctic Mammals</th>
<th>Intertidal Fauna</th>
<th>Seabirds</th>
<th>Shorebirds</th>
<th>Raptors</th>
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**KEY**
- **ACCESS** B = Boat, G = Gravel 2 wheel drive road, P = Highway/paved, W = Walk/hike
- **SEASONS** Sp = Spring (late March to late June), S = Summer (late June to late Sept), F = Fall (late Sept to late Dec), W = Winter (late Dec to late March), Y = Year round (Note: viewing seasons are affected by weather patterns which vary annually)
- **FACILITIES** C = Camping, D = Day use, T = Trails, V = Viewing blinds/platforms/interpretive displays