

# The Best Hiking in British Columbia

British Columbia is a very large province, larger than California, Oregon, and Washington State all put together. Most of it is wild and remote. Hiking opportunities abound. From urban-backyard hikes in Vancouver to ferry-accessed trail heads on the far Northwest, there is a lot of territory to explore on the coast. Further inland, there are hundreds and hundreds of kilometers of high mountains calling trekkers and nature-lovers. Whether you want a leisurely stroll in a lush forest or a challenging full-day high-mountain hike, you'll find lots of options in "Beautiful BC." In this chapter, we highlight the best of all that BC has to offer—the best trails for kids, the best challenging hikes, best hikes for scenery, and even the best mountain lodges. So, read on and start planning!

---

## 1 THE BEST HIKES FOR FAMILIES

---

- **Kinney Lake** (Mt. Robson Provincial Park): This gentle mountain ramble is many families' introduction to the joys of hiking in the Rockies. Kinney Lake, in the shadow of the Canadian Rockies' highest peak, makes a great picnic spot. See p. 237.
- **Lost Lake Nature Trail** (Whistler): Even with Whistler's notoriously radical mountain bikers whizzing by, this is a calm, easy hike that leads out from the heart of Whistler Village. See p. 138.
- **Williams Lake River Valley Trail** (Williams Lake): Kids will love all the bridges here. There's also a beaver dam and lots of fish! Watching the Williams Lake River merge with the Fraser River is a lesson in the geography and history of British Columbia. See p. 158.
- **Lighthouse Park** (North Vancouver): Who doesn't find lighthouses magical? At Vancouver's doorstep, this large park has a lush forest and a truly picture-perfect well-preserved lighthouse. Great picnic spot! See p. 36.
- **Stawamus Chief** (Squamish): Most people hike the monolithic "Chief" via the South Peak. Our version also goes past Shannon Falls, but then it goes north to a quieter, higher, and more technical trail. This is an appropriate hike for experienced teens. See p. 132.

---

## 2 THE BEST EASY HIKES

---

- **Kettle Valley Railway** (Penticton to Naramata): A 10km (6¼-mile) leisurely hike that heads out of suburbia along a historic trestle bridge and ends at a gorgeous winery. Cheers! See p. 196.
- **Smuggler Cove Provincial Park** (Sunshine Coast): A classic West Coast half-hour ramble, this is the Sunshine Coast at its best. If you like birding, swimming, forests, pirates, and cool breezes, you'll like it here. See p. 64.

- **Pacific Spirit Park** (Vancouver): If you've got 2 hours to spare in downtown Vancouver, take a bus out to the coastal forests behind UBC and see how simply the city turns wild here. See p. 52.
- **High Note via Half Note Trail** (Whistler): Don't like hiking up but want to take in the mountain air? Take the Whistler Village Gondola and the Peak Chair to the top of the ski resort. See p. 143.
- **Emerald Lake** (Yoho National Park): This is not your average walk in a park. Flat, scenic, and circling around a jewel-like lake, there are interpretive signs in front, avalanches above, wildflowers below, and a great bistro at the end. See p. 228.
- **Big Cedar Trail, Meares Island** (Tofino): Paddle a kayak from Tofino to this amazing corner of Clayoquot Sound to see 2,000-year-old giant cedar trees. A true treasure for humankind. See p. 113.

---

### 3 THE BEST MODERATE HIKES

---

- **St. Mark's Summit** (Cypress Provincial Park): Just a bit longer than a half-day hike, this is a shorter version of the renowned Howe Crest Sound Trail, and it's in Vancouver's backyard. See p. 40.
- **Juan de Fuca Marine Trail** (Vancouver Island): A quick way to sample one of BC's most important backpacking trips, this hike has little elevation gain. Watch for orca whale out at sea, bald eagles in ancient trees, and starfish in the numerous tide pools. See p. 104.
- **Kokanee Lakes** (Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park): The best hike in the beautiful Kootenay Mountains of interior British Columbia takes you high into an alpine region dotted with turquoise lakes. See p. 239.
- **Mount Daniel** (Sechelt): There aren't many hikes in this book that take you to such great summit lookouts so quickly. Yes, it's steep. But the view takes in the gently-dotted harbors, islands, and rambling coastline of the Sunshine Coast. See p. 70.
- **Cal-Cheak to Brandywine Falls** (Whistler): This is a little-visited area south of Whistler. The legendary falls in question are hidden in the wilderness. The trail heads past a handful of little lakes, a suspension bridge, and a lush mountain meadow. See p. 129.

---

### 4 THE BEST DIFFICULT HIKES

---

- **Rainbow Range** (Cariboo Chilcotin Coast): Leading into the little-known but magic Rainbow Range, deep in the heart of the remote Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, this hike will challenge those looking for remoteness and route-finding challenges, and to see the rarely seen. See p. 170.
- **The Grouse Grind** (North Vancouver): One of the iconic hikes of BC, this is where Vancouver's athletic folk challenge themselves weekend after weekend. It's short but steep, a classic endurance test called God's Stairmaster—no active visit to Vancouver is complete without it. See p. 43.
- **Bedwell Trail** (Strathcona Provincial Park): There are some surprisingly high mountains on Vancouver Island. In the middle of the island, this takes you to alpine waterfalls, meadows, and mid-summer snowfields. See p. 116.

- **Iceline Trail** (Yoho National Park): This trip can be done many ways, but our 18km (11-mile) version has it all: glaciers, waterfalls, high alpine peaks, and raging milky rivers. It's a classic Rocky Mountain trail rich in history and that elusive "Rocky Mountain high." See p. 230.
- **Panorama Ridge** (Garibaldi Provincial Park): A whopping 1,500m (4,921 ft.) elevation gain pays off on the shores of Garibaldi Lake. You can knock the Helm Glacier, the Barrier cliff, Black Tusk, the Table, and Taylor Meadows off your must-see list. See p. 140.
- **Mount Bowman** (Cache Creek): A dry summit next to the Mad Dog Mountain in the center of British Columbia, this is a remote trail leading to the summit of the highest peak in the Marble Ridge. The trip involves some challenging route-finding. See p. 156.
- **Mount Seymour Trail** (North Vancouver): There are three high summits to the north of Vancouver, and many trails taking you to them within Mt Seymour Provincial Park. The best trail takes in Mystery Lake first, and then takes in all three peaks. See p. 49.

---

## 5 THE BEST HISTORIC HIKEs

---

- **Barkerville to Summit Rock** (Cariboo Chilcotin Coast): A moderate hike along the old wagon tracks of a historic highway that teemed with life during the gold rush that began in 1862. See p. 172.
- **Myra Canyon, Kettle Valley Railway** (Okanagan): You can take in a variety of sections of this historic railway, originally built between 1910 and 1915, and lovingly restored between 2006 and 2008. The trestle bridges in the parched land south of Kelowna make up the most thrilling parts of the trail. See p. 196.
- **Newcastle Island Provincial Park** (Vancouver Island): An easy 7.5km (4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-mile) trail follows the coast of this island that once was the home to Salish villagers, herring salteries, and a sandstone quarry. Access is by a short ferry from Nanaimo. See p. 107.
- **Stein Valley Nlaka'Pamux Heritage Park** (Hope): A gorgeous trail through a sacred site of the Lytton First Nation, in a stunningly wild valley. Visit an "asking rock," pictographs, and a culturally-modified tree. See p. 147.
- **Burnt Bridge Creek Loop** (Bella Coola): The final section of the historic 420km (261-mile) Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail takes you over the same final steps the legendary explorer and mapmaker might have taken when he first reached the Pacific Ocean in 1793. The trail also has an even older Native history. See p. 167.

---

## 6 THE BEST HIKEs FOR SEEING WILDLIFE

---

- **Wild Pacific Trail** (Vancouver Island): This is classic, dramatic West Coast terrain just outside the town of Ucluelet. Watch for gray whales in spring, and seals, sea lions, and surfers the rest of the year. On land, there are bears, cougars, and wolves. It's the kind of place where you want to sit still and soak it all in. See p. 110.
- **Mount Finlayson** (Vancouver Island): Where Victoria's weekend warriors challenge themselves, Goldstream is a

hive of activity when salmon spawn in autumn, drawing crowds of bald eagles. See p. 80.

- **American Camp** (San Juan Island): If you want to see orca whales, come here in summertime. Three pods regularly make their home in the waters off Lime Kiln Point and can often be seen from American Camp. See p. 97.
- **International Hike and Bike** (Oliver): A great spot for bird-watching, this leisurely trail in the South Okanagan may also offer up deer, painted turtles,

coyotes, and beavers. Birders from around the world come here to see more than 200 species, including herons, orioles, goldfinch, and Canada's smallest woodpeckers. See p. 210.

- **Kindersley Pass** (Kootenay National Park): If you don't spot deer, bear, or mountain goats while hiking this full-day trail, just head down the road from the trail head towards Radium Hot Spring, where bighorn sheep hang out. Remember, dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife. See p. 234.

---

## 7 THE BEST SCENIC HIKES

---

- **Bugaboo Spires** (Bugaboo Spires Provincial Park): For those craving stunning and unique mountain sceneries, this is alpine paradise. It's a tough 5km (3-mile) climb, but no horizon in BC matches the Bugaboos' granite spires as seen from the Conrad Kain Hut. See p. 225.
- **Lake O'Hara Circuit** (Yoho National Park): This is the kind of alpine landscape dreams are made of. Lake O'Hara is a beautiful, magical area just west of the Continental Divide. Access is complicated, so plan ahead. See p. 245.
- **Joffre Lakes** (Joffre Provincial Park): A moderate 5-hour hike in the Coast Mountains north of Whistler takes you to three gorgeous turquoise lakes set

amidst the cool and clear air coming off the Matier Glacier. See p. 135.

- **Junction Sheep Range** (Williams Lake): With rolling grasslands, deep eroded gullies, cliffs, and hoodoos, the landscapes here, where the Chilcotin and Fraser rivers meet, are unique and beautiful. A moderate 2-hour hike takes you to the Farwell and Fraser canyons. See p. 161.
- **Skookumchuck Narrows Provincial Park** (Sunshine Coast): It's worth the trip just to catch this natural phenomenon, one of the world's largest saltwater rapids. Be sure to time your hike with the twice-daily tide changes, otherwise there'll be nothing but still water! See p. 61.

---

## 8 THE BEST MOUNTAIN LODGES

---

- **West Coast Wilderness Lodge** (Egmont; ☎ 877/988-3838 or 604/883-3667; www.wcwl.com): Oceanfront property this divine on the Sunshine Coast is hard to come by. With a rustic vibe, friendly staff, a spa, and the cute village of Egmont nearby. See p. 75.
- **Nita Lake Lodge** (Whistler; ☎ 888/755-6482 or 604/966-5700; www.nitalakelodge.com): A luxury boutique lakeside lodge just steps from the Whistler Creekside is a great place to unwind and rest up for a day exploring the mountains. Rooms are mainly "deluxe studios" with modern amenities and a hip décor. See p. 150.

- **Cathedral Mountain Lodge** (Yoho National Park; ☎ 866/619-6442 or 250/343-6442; [www.cathedralmountain.com](http://www.cathedralmountain.com)): Located close to so many of the great hikes in the amazing Yoho National Park, this is a collection of cozy cabins tucked along the shores of the Kicking Horse River. See p. 251.
- **Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa** (Osoyoos; ☎ 877/313-9463 or 250/495-5445; [www.spiritridge.ca](http://www.spiritridge.ca)): Overlooking Okanagan Lake, with the valley in front of you and miles of vineyards all around, this new Santa Fe-inspired resort brings life to the desert. See p. 217.
- **Strathcona Park Lodge & Outdoor Education Centre** (Campbell River; ☎ 250/286-3122): With cabins, chalets, and lodge rooms, this is one of Canada's most ethical and eco-friendly resorts. Great for families. See p. 120.

---

## 9 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

---

- **Araxi Restaurant & Bar** (Whistler; ☎ 604/932-4540): Award-winning upscale dining in the chic heart of Whistler Village. Summer evening meals on the terrace are unforgettable. See p. 150.
- **Breakers Deli** (Tofino; ☎ 250/725-2559): A popular informal eatery, this is a great place to pick up a picnic. Falafel wraps or smoked salmon burritos make great trail lunches! It's open early. See p. 121.
- **Cilantros on the Lake, Emerald Lake Lodge** (Yoho National Park; ☎ 250/343-6321): Reward yourself post-hike with a grilled flatbread pizza, a pint of micro-brewed beer, and a truly stunning scene on the shores of the marvelous Emerald Lake. See p. 253.
- **Fresco** (Kelowna; ☎ 250/868-8805): The Okanagan's most exciting and inspired eatery focuses on local and regional products, and of course, Okanagan wines. See p. 218.
- **Homer's Most Excellent Take Out** (Sooke; ☎ 250/642-7456): A classic shake shack, fill up on fish and chips, wraps, burgers, *poutine*, or burritos. Fresh, cheap, and decadent, if not calorie-wise. See p. 122.
- **Salmon House on the Hill** (West Vancouver; ☎ 604/926-3212): A Vancouver-area classic, this may be the best place to sample alder-grilled salmon in the world. Great views add to the appeal. Great wine list. See p. 76.

---

## 10 THE BEST CAMPGROUNDS

---

- **Riverside RV Resort & Campground** (Whistler; ☎ 604/905-5533; [www.whistlercamping.com](http://www.whistlercamping.com)): A fancy campground for a stylish town. Heated showers, a café, a putting green, and free shuttles into the Village make this the most happening campground on the Sea to Sky Highway. See p. 150.
- **Illecillewaet Campground** (Glacier National Park; ☎ 250/837-7500; [www.pc.gc.ca/glacier](http://www.pc.gc.ca/glacier)): Few campgrounds have so much at their doorstep. Awesome hikes, a historic site, a gushing alpine river, and a glacier in the background. This is a great base camp. No reservations are taken. See p. 251.

- **Bear Creek Provincial Park** (Kelowna; ☎ 800/689-9025 or 604/689-9025): Shady sites on the shores of Okanagan Lake, there are 5km (3 miles) of hiking trails right next door. Reservations are highly recommended. See p. 216.
- **Redstreak Campground** (Kootenay National Park; ☎ 877/737-3783; [www.pccamping.ca](http://www.pccamping.ca)): With plenty of nearby trails, an outdoor theater, playground, and kitchen shelters, this large and full-service campground has more activities and amenities than most resorts. It's just 2.5km (1½ miles) from the village of Radium Hot Springs. Remember, you must reserve in advance! See p. 252.