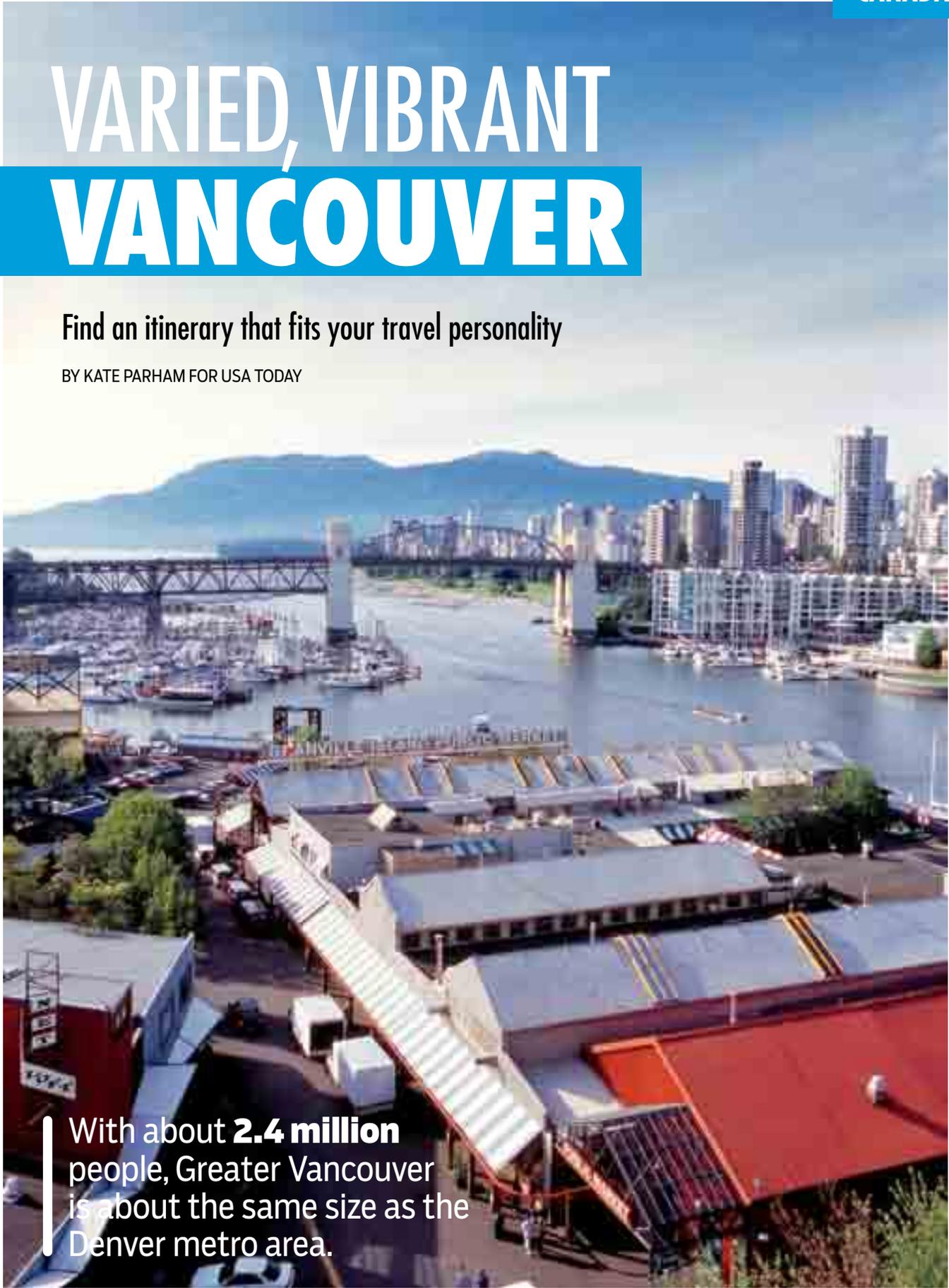


VARIED, VIBRANT VANCOUVER

Find an itinerary that fits your travel personality

BY KATE PARHAM FOR USA TODAY

An aerial photograph of Vancouver, Canada, showing a mix of urban and industrial landscapes. In the foreground, there are several large industrial buildings with corrugated metal roofs, some with solar panels. A prominent red-roofed building is visible on the right. In the middle ground, a large body of water (likely False Creek) is filled with numerous sailboats and yachts. A large steel truss bridge spans the water. In the background, a dense city skyline with various high-rise buildings is visible, set against a backdrop of blue mountains under a clear sky.

With about **2.4 million** people, Greater Vancouver is about the same size as the Denver metro area.

S MACK DAB BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE ASIA PACIFIC SITS THE CANADIAN CITY OF VANCOUVER.

The westernmost city of the country's 10 provinces and three territories, Vancouver is known for its cleanliness, size, and geographic diversity. The city covers 1,130 square miles and has a breathtaking skyline with skyscrapers and modern architecture on one side and mountains, water, and lush greenery on the other.

A mere 24 miles north of the Washington border, Vancouver has plenty of attractions to fit a range of tastes. Whether you want to check out the great outdoors or check into a luxurious spa, there's something here for you.

ADVENTURE TRAVELER

Travelers who like to explore the great outdoors will find that this city has it all: beaches, islands, whale watching, gardens, parks, and mountains nearby.

► EXPLORE

Commonly referred to as Mother Nature's Stairmaster, **Grouse Mountain** (grousemountain.com) takes hikers up a 2-mile trail with more than 2,500 steps (hence the nickname), leading to one of the most incredible views of the city at the snow-capped top.

Rent a bike, strap on a pair of inline skates, or walk the Stanley Park seawall, a 13.7-mile path lining Vancouver's waterfront from Coal Harbour around Stanley Park and False Creek, past Granville Island and ending at **Kitsilano Beach Park** (vancouverparks.ca).

Take a kayak out to False Creek, a narrow inlet just between downtown Vancouver, Yaletown, and Granville Island. The trip offers adventurers up-close views of passing yachts, sailboats, and bustling city life.

► EAT

In the heart of downtown on the 42nd floor of the Empire Landmark Hotel—one of the tallest buildings in the city—is **Cloud 9** (1400 Robson St., 604-687-0511, cloud9restaurant.ca), a revolving restaurant with 20-foot windows. Diners get an unobstructed, 360-degree view of the city.

After, take your taste buds for a wild ride with a scoop of one (or several) of **La Casa Gelato's** (1033 Venables St., 604-251-3211, lacasagelato.com) 500-plus

Take a kayak out to False Creek.



BRITISH COLUMBIA



crazy flavors, like curry, blue cheese, and wasabi/green apple.

► STAY

The **Fairmont Pacific Rim** (1038 Canada Place, 604-695-5300, fairmont.com/pacificrim), which opened in February 2010, features over 375 luxurious guest rooms. Outdoorsy types will revel in the postcard-worthy views of the North Shore Mountains, Stanley Park, and Coal Harbour, all of which can best be seen from the charming outdoor terrace at the hotel's Willow Stream Spa.

FOODIE TRAVELER

Fine wines, celebrated coffees, Asian cuisine, and fresh Pacific Coast seafood—what more could a foodie traveler want? Vancouver's a true melting pot for people and tastes, and the restaurant scene covers all the bases. >>

Trip PLANNER



GET THERE

Fly into Vancouver International Airport. Vancouver has little traffic and an abundance of public transportation. Most residents get around by transit, taxis, or on foot in the downtown area. To travel outside of downtown, rent a car.



PLAN

Vancouver is a year-round destination, though different types of people seek out the city at different times of year. If you're looking to score a sweet hotel deal, head to Vancouver during the winter. Outdoor activities are plentiful in the spring. If it's a festival you want, visit during the summer. Hockey fans abound in the fall, as do the foodies.



DON'T MISS

- **January:** Canada's largest restaurant festival, Dine Out Vancouver, includes over 215 restaurants with three-course dinner menus at \$18, \$28, or \$38, complete with pairings of either wine or beer. tourismvancouver.com/dov

- **May:** Meet local chefs and fishermen at the Spot Prawn Festival, featuring cooking demos from the city's top chefs, wine tasting, and live music. chefstablesociety.com

- **June:** Acclaimed for its innovative and adventurous programming and community spirit, the Vancouver International Jazz Festival offers hundreds of shows, ranging from emerging artists to established legendary musicians. coastaljazz.ca

- **June-September:** Set on the magnificent waterfront in Vancouver's Vanier Park, Bard of the Beach brings Shakespeare to life with plays, related dramas, and special events. bardonthebeach.org

► EXPLORE

Born out of a passion for great food, the **Dirty Apron Cooking School** (540 Beatty St., 604-879-8588, dirtyapron.com) provides an environment for toast-burners and aspiring chefs alike to learn the tricks of the trade. The Dirty Apron offers a range of hands-on classes, varying from working with local ingredients to creating regional classics and executing essential knife skills.

Book a tour with **Edible Canada** (212 Johnston St., 604-558-0040, ediblecanada.com), headquartered at the Granville Island Public Market. These chef-guided tours will take you through the city's markets, which house a fascinating assortment of homemade products and gastronomic delights.

► EAT

Head down to South Granville for Indian cuisine at **Vij's** (1480 W. 11th Ave., 604-736-6664, vijs.ca). Here the all-female, Punjabi kitchen staff dishes out authentic eats like fresh naan and chickpeas flavored with star anise.

To sample some of the city's best Asian cuisine, head to the Kitsilano gem **Maenam** (1938 W. 4th Ave., 604-730-5579, maenam.ca). Or try award-winning **Kirin** (1172 Alberni St., 604-682-8833, kirinrestaurants.com), known for northern Chinese cuisine, fresh seafood, and dim sum.

Get your sushi fix at **Miku** (1055 W. Hastings St., 604-568-3900, mikures-taurant.com), where fresh ingredients, global inspiration, and artful presentation headline the Aburi-style sushi. Or stop in at **Tojo's** (1133 W. Broadway, 604-872-8050, tojoes.com), where the British Columbia roll reigns supreme. Grab lunch at **Cafe Medina** (556 Beatty St., 604-879-3114, medinacafe.com), the cool cafe with a deliciously eclectic menu.

► STAY

Opened in 2009, the **Shangri-La Hotel** (1128 W. Georgia St., 604-689-1120, shangri-la.com), is in the heart of downtown. Guests can experience fine dining at Market by Jean-Georges, run by three-star Michelin chef. Before dinner, enjoy a hot cup of tea during afternoon tea service in the Xi Shi Lounge.

Check into **Wedgewood** (845 Hornby St., 604-689-7777, wedgewoodhotel.com), the cosmopolitan hotel sitting amidst the gardens and waterfalls of Robson Square. The Bacchus Restaurant & Piano Lounge inside received the AAA Four Diamond Award, as did the hotel.



■ Fairmont Pacific Rim



■ L'Abattoir

LUXURY TRAVELER

Vancouver has world-class spas, shops, and fine restaurants—not to mention grade-A entertainment. Travelers in the mood to be spoiled won't have to work hard to find the lap of luxury here.

► EXPLORE

There's plenty of great shopping in Vancouver. While the city's most fashionable shops may be found on Robson Street, you can spend the entire day shopping in the boutiques and galleries of Vancouver's upscale **South Granville** neighborhood (southgranville.org). Don't miss Holt Renfrew, an all-Canadian department store housing only the most luxurious designer brands.

British Columbia is home to over 130 wineries, most of which are located in the Okanagan Valley, a dry, near-desert region about 4 miles inland from Vancouver.

Swirl, sniff, and sip some of the region's best wines from producers like Quails' Gate, Mission Hill, and Sumac Ridge. Be sure to try ice wine, a sweet wine produced from grapes frozen on the vine.

► EAT

Named as one of the best new restaurants in Vancouver, **L'Abattoir** (217 Carrall St., 604-568-1701, labattoir.ca) serves French-influenced West Coast fare alongside inventive cocktails and a boutique-focused wine list.

If you want great seafood, be sure to check out **Blue Water Cafe** (1095 Hamilton St., 604-688-8078, bluewatercafe.net), where chef Frank Pabst cooks with wild and sustainable seafood. Try the Dungeness crab with white asparagus panna cotta. And don't leave without trying a few fresh oysters.

► STAY

For the utmost luxury, check into the newly renovated **Rosewood Hotel Georgia** (801 W. Georgia St., 604-682-5566, rosewoodhotelgeorgia.com), where the likes of Elvis Presley, Katharine Hepburn, and various members of British royalty have stayed. Be sure to book a massage at Sense, the world-class sanctuary complete with a state-of-the-art fitness center and 52-foot indoor saltwater lap pool.

If you're coming from L.A. or NYC, you'll love the Total Opulence Package at **OPUS Vancouver** (322 Davie St., opushotel.com). You'll fly in on a Dassault Falcon 50EX jet. Cozy into lounge-style seating as you enjoy the custom menus designed by the hotel's catering team, with chauffeured BMW 7 car service to and from the airport. Check into the glamorous penthouse suite and let the hotel's concierge take care of the rest. ■