

VISITOR GUIDE

tourismnanaimo.com



WELCOME TO NANAIMO

Located on the east coast of Vancouver Island, Nanaimo is a vibrant harbour city framed by lush coastal forests, rugged shorelines and the open waters of the Salish Sea. Situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, this place carries a deep and living history shaped by thousands of years of stewardship, culture, and connection to the land and sea.

Just 110 km north of Victoria and 55 km across the Salish Sea from Vancouver, Nanaimo is both a destination and a gateway. Ferries, seaplanes, and a regional airport make access easy, while its central location opens the door to the Gulf Islands, the Sunshine Coast, and the vast wilderness of Vancouver Island.

But Nanaimo is more than a stop along the way. Between the ocean and mountains, the city thrives on an independent West Coast spirit where outdoor adventure meets creative energy. Trails weave through forested parks, waterfront pathways connect lively neighbourhoods, and local cafés, markets, and galleries reflect a community grounded in both tradition and innovation.

Whether you're hiking coastal ridgelines, paddling calm inlets, discovering Indigenous culture, or simply hunting down the perfect Nanaimo Bar, every experience here is shaped by the land and the people who call it home.

Step in with curiosity, move with respect, and embrace Nanaimo as it is—unfiltered, unapologetic, and full of surprises.

VISITING NANAIMO

How to be a Respectful Visitor

ALLYSHIP

At Tourism Nanaimo, we recognize the importance of fostering a community where all people feel valued, respected, and included. True allyship is an active, ongoing commitment to inclusion, equity, and reconciliation. It means listening, learning, and standing in solidarity with those whose voices have been historically marginalized, including First Nations, Indigenous communities and the 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

As a visitor to Nanaimo, you are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw, Snaw-naw-as, and Stz'uminus First Nations. Practicing allyship here means honoring Indigenous rights, cultures, and traditions with respect and humility. It also means engaging with the broader community in ways that uphold inclusivity and dignity for all.

Each June, Nanaimo celebrates **Pride Week**, led by the Nanaimo Pride Society. These events are a joyful and powerful expression of love, identity, and community, reflecting the city's commitment to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and belonging.

Snuneymuxw Days, held in late July, is a deeply meaningful gathering hosted by the Snuneymuxw First Nation. This multi-day event celebrates the Nation's cultural traditions and community spirit, featuring exhilarating war canoe races, family-friendly activities, and opportunities for shared learning. Visitors are welcome to witness and appreciate these traditions in a way that honors the Snuneymuxw people's enduring connection to this land.

Our commitment to allyship and inclusivity extends beyond these celebrations—it is a responsibility we hold year-round. Tourism Nanaimo is dedicated to continuous learning, deepening relationships, and supporting a future where all communities thrive.

To support our diverse community, we've developed an Inclusive Washroom Map to help everyone find safe, welcoming, and inclusive facilities throughout the city.



INCLUSIVE WASHROOM MAP

Scan here

**Join us in making Nanaimo a place
where every visitor feels seen,
respected, and celebrated.**

HONOURING HUL'Q'UMI'NUM'

Nanaimo is located on the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw, Snaw-Naw-As, and Stzuminus First Nations, where the Hul'q'umi'num' language has been spoken for generations. Indigenous languages carry deep connections to land, culture, and community, reflecting knowledge systems, histories, and values that have shaped this region since time immemorial.

Efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages help strengthen cultural identity, preserve traditional knowledge, and support healing and reconciliation. As recognized by UNESCO, Indigenous languages hold unique worldviews and wisdom that are vital to humanity's shared heritage.

Throughout this guide, you'll encounter **Hul'q'umi'num'** words and place names. We share them to encourage curiosity, foster respect, and invite visitors to deepen their connection to this place and to the First Peoples whose stewardship continues to shape it today.



Useful Phrases

Huy ch qu (h-aye ch kuh)

This means “thank you”. In the traditional way to say thank you, you would also raise your hands up (palms facing in) to the person you’re thanking

Namut kwu (nah-mutt kw-uh)

This means “You’re welcome.” Say it in response to someone saying, ‘huy ch qu!’

Si:em (sii-em)

This means “honoured person” and if you want to be really respectful, you will add it after saying Huy ch qu. So you would say “Huy ch qu si:em”. It means “thank you honoured person”, but is really like “thank you very much”. You can use it with other words too, adding it at the end to be more polite.

I ch uw uy al (ee ch ooh aye all)

This means “How are you?” It is the most common greeting in Hul’qumi’num. It translates literally to “are you good?”

I cun uw uy al (ee ts-un ooh aye all)

This means “I am good”. It is the most common response to “I ch uw uy al”. I cun (ee ts-un) is a shorter response and means “I am”.

Nuw’ilum (new-ee-lum)

This means “welcome”.

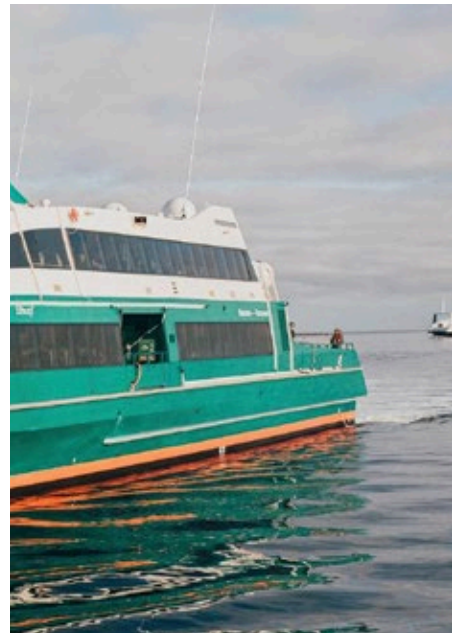
Huyewulth

(huh-yay-with, the “th” should be with the tip of your tongue pressed behind your front teeth)

This means “goodbye”.



PLAN YOUR JOURNEY





○ PORT HARDY

VANCOUVER ISLAND

BRITISH COLUMBIA
CANADA

Mount
Washington

○ CAMPBELL RIVER

Courtenay/
Comox

○ POWELL RIVER

THE SUNSHINE
COAST

TOFINO

Qualicum Beach
/Parksville

UCLUELET

NANAIMO

GULF
ISLANDS

○ VANCOUVER

DUNCAN

Trans-Canada Highway

SOUTHERN
GULF ISLANDS

○ VICTORIA

PORT ANGELES

WASHINGTON
USA

○ SEATTLE

GETTING HERE



Getting to Nanaimo is part of the adventure! Whether you're coming in via Nanaimo Airport (YCD), rolling onto the island with ferries, or cruising into the harbour by boat, Nanaimo is an easily accessible West Coast destination that welcomes you from near and far. With seamless connections by air, land, and sea, your journey is just the beginning of your visit to our city. Once you arrive, getting around is just as easy—whether you prefer to drive, cycle, or stroll along the scenic waterfront, Nanaimo invites you to get around the city at your own pace.

BY SEA

Hullo Foot-Passenger Only Ferry

For a faster, direct service, Hullo Ferry offers a 70-minute foot-passenger-only sailing between downtown Vancouver and downtown Nanaimo, with comfortable pre-bookable seating and onboard Wi-Fi. Downtown Vancouver departures and arrivals are at Canada Place. The Nanaimo terminal on Port Way has a dedicated pay parking lot, and a shuttle runs to and from downtown hotels and locations. Reservations are recommended.

BC Ferries

Whether you're driving or walking aboard, ferry travel offers a **scenic and seamless** way to arrive. BC Ferries operates **two main routes** connecting the mainland to Nanaimo:

- **Departure Bay Terminal**
A **1 hour 40 minute sailing** from **Horseshoe Bay (West Vancouver)**, conveniently landing just minutes from downtown Nanaimo.
- **Duke Point Terminal**
A **2-hour sailing** from **Tsawwassen Terminal (south of Vancouver)**, ideal for those continuing north along Vancouver Island's highways.

Advance reservations are recommended, especially during peak travel seasons. Check schedules, book tickets, and get real-time updates via the **BC Ferries app**.

Cruise into Nanaimo: Boating

Are you a boater planning a trip to a coastal area of BC, such as Nanaimo? Cruising into Nanaimo at your own pace lets you create your own experience and see the city from a different view! Nanaimo is a welcoming port city with full-service marinas offering moorage, refueling, and provisioning for private boats and yachts. Boaters can access:

- **Stone's Marina and Warfinger Marina** for downtown access.
- **Newcastle Marina** for easy trips to Saysutshun Island.
- **The Port of Nanaimo Marina** for transient moorage and marine services.

Check out AHOYBC, a valuable resource for trip planning.



BY CAR

Traveling to and from Nanaimo is convenient and flexible, with highway access, public transit, and scenic coastal routes making exploration easy.

- **Highway 19 (Inland Island Highway)**
A smooth four-lane highway with a 110 km/h speed limit, connecting Nanaimo to northern Vancouver Island. Driving from Nanaimo's ferry terminals to destinations like Courtenay or Campbell River is fast and efficient.
- **Highway 1 (Trans-Canada Highway)**
The scenic southern route linking Nanaimo to Victoria in approximately 90 minutes.
- **Highway 19A (Oceanside Route)**
For a leisurely coastal drive, detour at Parksville and take in the stunning waterfront views, charming small towns, and roadside attractions.
- **Car Rental Options:**
Budget operates four Nanaimo locations (Seaplane Terminal, Downtown, Hayes Rd, and Woodgrove), while Enterprise is located on Bowen Road. Book ahead in peak season for best availability.

BY AIR

Seaplane & Helicopter

Regularly scheduled flights to downtown Vancouver and Vancouver International Airport South Terminal are available through Harbour Air Seaplanes, Sunshine Coast Air, and Seair Seaplanes. Flight time is approximately 20 minutes to bring you into downtown Nanaimo.

- **Harbour Air & Seair Seaplanes** operate routes from downtown Vancouver and Vancouver International Airport into Nanaimo Harbour. With multiple daily flights, it takes just 20 minutes to hop across the Georgia Strait and start your visit.
- **Helijet** offers multiple daily helicopter flights - fast daily flights to and from Vancouver's helipad and Nanaimo's Cruise Ship Terminal location are easily booked online or over the phone.

Direct flights to Nanaimo Airport (YCD)

- **Nanaimo Airport (YCD)** offers daily flights via **Air Canada, WestJet, and Pacific Coastal**, connecting travellers to Vancouver, Kelowna, and Alberta, with seasonal direct flights from Toronto.

Located just 18 km south of downtown Nanaimo, the airport offers shuttles, taxis, rental car kiosks, and short- and long-term parking.

- **Transportation from YCD:** Taxi services, transit buses, the Nanaimo Airporter shuttle, and car rentals from Budget and National are available.

GETTING AROUND

Public Transit & Rideshare

Nanaimo is well-served by regional and intercity bus services, making travel easy for visitors without a car:

- **Island Link Bus & Vancouver Island Connector**
Daily scheduled services connecting Nanaimo to Victoria, Tofino, Courtenay, Campbell River, and other key destinations.
- **BC Transit**
Reliable local bus service running seven days a week, with key hubs in downtown Nanaimo, Vancouver Island University, and Woodgrove Mall. Payment is with cash or a pre-purchased pass. Visit BCtransit's website for more information on fares and routes www.bctransit.com/nanaimo

For those looking to explore independently, car rentals are available from Budget, National, and Enterprise, conveniently located near the airport and ferry terminals. Nanaimo also offers 24/7 taxi services via Yellow Cab and AC Taxi, Uber, as well as URide, a local rideshare option.

- **Uber:** App-based ride share service
- **URide:** App-based rideshare service.
- **Modo/Evo Car Share:** Flexible options for exploring at your own pace. Be sure to check out their websites to create your account prior to your trip to Nanaimo.

Evolve Ebikes

The Evolve eBike sharing program makes it simple for visitors to get around and experience everything Nanaimo has to offer. Conveniently located throughout the city, each eBike comes with a helmet for your safety. Just register online, find a nearby eBike, unlock it, and enjoy the ride.

Respecting the environment

LEAVE NO TRACE

Be mindful of your environmental impact during your visit. Beyond picking up litter, consider how your presence affects nature. Follow these seven Leave No Trace principles to help protect the outdoors:

1

Plan ahead and prepare. Before visiting an area, research the potential weather conditions and the regulations. The weather can change quickly, especially if you are hiking to higher elevations. For example, in BC parks, dogs must be on a leash.

2

Travel and camp on durable surfaces. To preserve delicate ecosystems, only set up camp in designated areas. If you are wilderness camping, look for already-established spots on hard, durable surfaces.

3

Dispose of waste properly. When out in nature, carry a trash bag with you and pack out what you pack in. Pick up trash you find to leave places better than when you got there.

4

Leave what you find. While taking a souvenir or memento from nature is tempting, leaving things where you found them is best. Instead, take photographs.

5

Minimize campfire impacts. Minimize campfire impacts by using only designated fire rings in established areas. Wildfires are a serious risk, so always check current wildfire conditions and fire ban status before lighting a fire. Keep fires small, never leave them unattended, and fully extinguish them with water before leaving. Stay informed and help protect our forests!

6

Respect wildlife. When outdoors, remember that you are entering the natural habitats of many animals. Do not approach animals or try to feed the animals you encounter. Instead, observe from afar. If you are bringing dogs or other pets out onto the trail with you, keep them leashed and under control.

7

Be considerate of others. Be considerate of others by being mindful of fellow campers, hikers, and trail users. Campgrounds, municipal parks, and provincial parks can be busy at times, so respect others' space, keep noise levels down, and follow shared-use guidelines. A little courtesy goes a long way in ensuring everyone enjoys the outdoors!

Learn more about Leave No Trace at www.LNT.org

EXPLORING NANAIMO'S DIVERSE NEIGHBOURHOODS

At over 90 square kilometres and a growing population of over 100,000 people, Nanaimo is a city of distinct neighbourhoods, each offering unique visitor experiences. To make navigating easier, we've grouped these vibrant areas into three main regions: North, Central, and South Nanaimo.

NORTH NANAIMO NEIGHBOURHOODS

Lantzville

Nanaimo's northernmost neighbourhood offers coastal charm and quiet living. Enjoy rocky beach walks, summer swims, and spring herring runs. Visit Upper Lantzville's Superior Farms for local goods and farm animals, and dine at Camas, Katerina's Taverna, or Lantzville Pub.

North Nanaimo

A lively hub combining retail and nature, North Nanaimo features Woodgrove Mall and sandy beaches like Invermere (dog off-leash). Explore Linley Valley's trails and recharge at Simon Holt, Horang, or Longwood Brew Pub.

Pleasant Valley

Centered around Brannen Lake, Pleasant Valley is great for water fun and mountain biking. Swim, launch a boat, or hit Doumont's trails, then relax on the patio at Black Bear Pub.

North Jinglepot

Set against Mount Benson, North Jinglepot blends rural and residential life. Hike to the summit for city views or enjoy the family-friendly trails and scenic falls at Ammonite Falls Park.

Uplands

A well-established area with lakeside recreation at Long Lake, Uplands offers paddling, swimming, and fishing. Nearby are Oliver Woods Rec Centre and shopping at Nanaimo North Town Centre and Country Club Mall.

Hammond Bay

With ocean views and natural beauty, Hammond Bay invites exploration at Neck Point Park and Piper's Lagoon. Discover coves, sea stars, orcas, and walk to Shack Island at low tide.





CENTRAL NANAIMO NEIGHBOURHOODS

Departure Bay – Stillup (stuh-lee-lup)

Known by its traditional Snuneymuxw name, meaning the “true home” of the Snuneymuxw people. Today, this lively seaside neighbourhood is a hub for coastal recreation, featuring a wide sandy beach ideal for water sports, an 800-metre elevated waterfront walkway with panoramic ocean views, and nearby Sugarloaf Mountain, where a short hike rewards visitors with sweeping vistas of the city and surrounding islands.

Diver Lake

An urban oasis with a peaceful floating fishing dock, Diver Lake is a serene spot for birdwatching and leisurely walks along tree-lined trails, providing a tranquil escape from the city’s hustle and bustle.

Brechin Hill

Ideal for water adventures, Brechin Hill is home to the Brechin Boat Launch, a gateway to kayaking around Sayoutshun (Newcastle Island) or further into the channel. After a day on the water, relax at a waterfront pub with stunning harbour views.

Central Nanaimo

A green, activity-filled area with Beban Park, a sprawling recreation complex featuring indoor pools, skating rinks, tennis courts, soccer fields, a pitch and putt golf course, and disc golf. Foodies can enjoy a delicious bowl of pho at Huong Lan Vietnamese or gluten-free fare at Off the Hook.

Stadium / University District

A hub of activity and sports, this area is anchored by the Nanaimo Aquatic Centre, with an Olympic-sized pool, water slides, and a lazy river. Across the street, the Nanaimo Ice Centre offers public skating, while the stadium district hosts Nanaimo NightOwls baseball and Harbourside FC soccer.

SOUTH NANAIMO NEIGHBOURHOODS

South Nanaimo

A historic, family-friendly area with parks and local eats. Explore Colliery Dam’s lakes and trails, splash at Harewood Park, or see ancient carvings at Petroglyph Park. Dine at Wolf Brewing, Baby Salsa, or SIP Pub.

Chase River/Extension

Ideal for nature lovers and thrill-seekers, this area offers river swimming, the Extension Ridge Trail to the Abyss, and adventure at WildPlay with zip lining and bungee jumping.

Cedar/Yellowpoint

Rustic and artistic, this countryside area features the Cedar Farmers Market, artisan studios along Yellowpoint Trail, forest walks at Hemer and Cable Bay, and dining at Mahle House or Crow and Gate Pub.

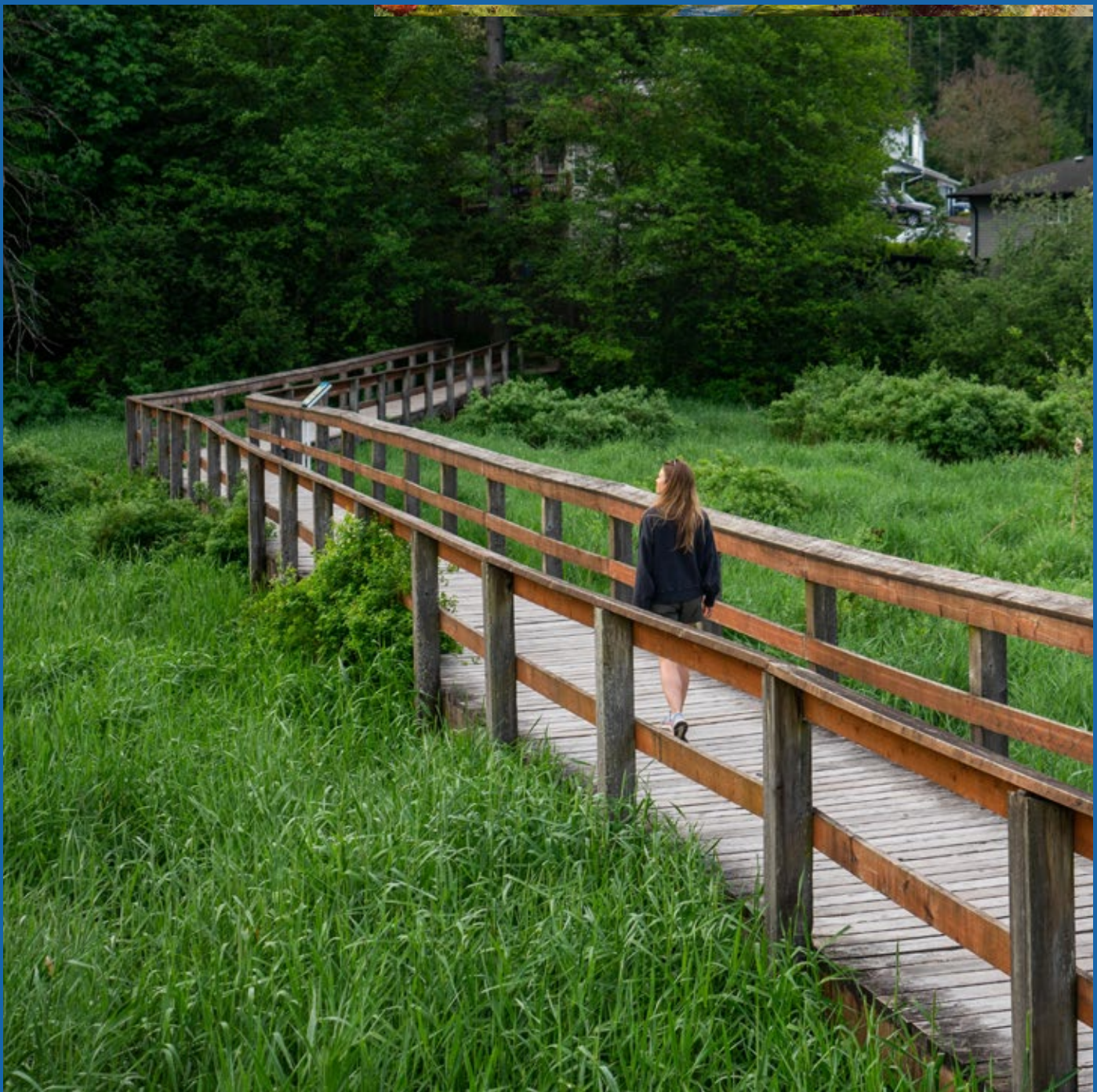
Nanaimo’s diverse neighbourhoods perfectly blend natural beauty, outdoor activities, local culture, and vibrant community experiences. Whether you’re looking to shop, hike, paddle, dine, or just relax by the waterfront, Nanaimo’s unique areas invite you to explore beyond the ordinary.

For more detailed information and to plan your visit, check out [Tourism Nanaimo’s Neighbourhood Guide](#).



EXPERIENCE NANAIMO







IF NANAIMO COULD TALK

Nanaimo is a year-round destination with something special in every season. Spring brings colorful blooms and ideal weather for parks and trails. Summer offers sunny days perfect for kayaking, paddleboarding, and beach time. Fall features golden foliage and scenic hikes, while winter's mild climate invites exploration of cozy cafés, boutiques, and cultural spots. No matter the season, Nanaimo's charm shines through.

NANAIMO VISITOR CENTRE

Located in the heart of downtown's Arts & Culture district, the Visitor Centre is easily accessible from ferries and float planes. Friendly staff are ready to help you explore the best of Nanaimo and Vancouver Island. Shared with the Vancouver Island Conference Centre and Nanaimo Museum, it's steps from shops, galleries, and the scenic Maffeo Sutton Park—an ideal starting point for any visit.

Visit us at: 101 Gordon St, Nanaimo

VISITOR SERVICES SUMMER KIOSK

Centrally located on the sea wall of one of the highest trafficked parks in Nanaimo, the Maffeo Sutton Kiosk allows the Visitor Services team to meet our visitors in the heart of the action. Whether you're attending one of the many community events happening in the park or are just out for a leisurely stroll by the ocean, the Visitor Services team will be positioned here from the start of June to the end of August, ready to help visitors with all their travel needs!

BIKING

Nanaimo is a haven for cycling enthusiasts, offering a diverse array of biking experiences amidst its picturesque landscapes.

Mountain bikers can explore the **Doumont Trails**, nestled in the foothills of Mount Benson, with over 60 trails ranging from easy to double black diamond—widely regarded as some of the best on Vancouver Island.

The **Westwood Lake** area features a scenic 6 km loop around the lake with nine connected trails, including Legalize It, Nanaimo's first authorized mountain bike trail, providing both challenging climbs and exhilarating descents. For an extended adventure, the Outer Bypass links Westwood and Doumont through single-track paths and gravel roads, perfect for a full day of riding.

BMX riders can hone their skills at the **Stevie Smith Bike Park** in Beban Park, home to a high-energy BMX pump track built in tribute to the late Canadian World Cup winner. This park welcomes both seasoned riders and beginners looking to develop their skills.

For cyclists who prefer paved routes, the **Parkway Trail** and **E&N Trail** offer multi-use paths that traverse the city, complemented by newly added dedicated cycle lanes in the downtown core that connect to these and other existing trails. Local retailers provide bike rentals, repairs, and equipment to ensure a seamless experience for all riders.

Another great way to tour around Nanaimo is Evo, the e-bike sharing platform. With a fleet of 100 electric bikes available citywide, visitors can easily access these e-bikes through the free Evo app for a convenient and eco-friendly way to get around. Users can pay by the minute or hour for a quick trip or a leisurely ride, or opt for a monthly subscription for reduced rates.



SHOPPING

Nanaimo offers a vibrant and diverse shopping scene, with malls, plazas, and unique districts featuring everything from national brands to local boutiques.

Shoppers can explore trendy fashion, home goods, artisan creations, and vintage treasures, all within charming settings. Whether you're hunting for the latest styles or relaxing in a cozy café, Nanaimo provides the perfect mix for an enjoyable day of shopping and discovery.



DOWNTOWN SHOPPING DISTRICTS

Old City Quarter: Stroll through this charming district filled with revitalized heritage buildings. Discover a mix of independent shops, unique gifts, clothing, furniture, and cozy eateries.

Commercial Street: Voted Canada's 'Greatest Street' in 2011, this lively area showcases Nanaimo's eclectic spirit. Shop for vintage and new clothing, artisan goods, books, and more—all while enjoying frequent community events and markets.

Pioneer Waterfront Plaza: This picturesque row of shops by the harbour is perfect for a scenic stroll. Grab a coffee or snack, browse local gifts, or catch a seaplane or whale-watching tour.

INDIGENOUS RETAILERS

Ay Lelum – The House of Good Design

This design house located on Snuneymuxw First Nation creates wearable art garments that share traditional Coast Salish art and culture and embrace diversity. The designs feature non-ceremonial family artwork that is culturally appropriate and can be enjoyed by everyone.

Strong Nations – Publishing House and Bookstore

This Nanaimo-based indigenous publishing house and bookstore also offers a curated selection of cultural products and giftware from local, BC and Canadian First Nations artists.

Snaw-Naw-As First Nations Market (at the Lantzville Shell gas station)

This indigenous-owned and led market offers a selection of First Nations giftware by Coast Salish artists. All proceeds support the Snaw-Naw-As community.

THRIFTING AND VINTAGE STORES

Nanaimo has a lively vintage and thrifting scene where treasure hunters can find unique clothing and distinctive home decor. Commercial Street hosts a charming cluster of vintage shops, perfect for discovering recycled fashion and furnishings. Across the city, several thrift stores support local charities, offering a wide range of items from apparel to furniture. Whether you're after a standout wardrobe piece or a quirky home accent, Nanaimo's thrifting scene has plenty of hidden gems.

LOCAL MARKETS

Discover the vibrant heart of Nanaimo and its surrounding communities at these bustling markets, where fresh produce, artisan crafts, and local flavors come together in a celebration of island life.

Commercial Street Night Market

Downtown Nanaimo

Thursdays June – August, From 5 PM to 9 PM

Nanaimo's busiest street market turns Commercial Street into a vibrant festival with nearly 200 vendors, food trucks, live music, a kids' zone, and a welcoming Inclusive Zone for all.

Island Roots Farmers Market

Beban Park, Nanaimo

Wednesday Afternoons, Year-Round

A true community staple, this food-focused farmers' market showcases locally grown produce, baked goods, and specialty items. From mid-October to mid-April, the market moves indoors to the Centennial Building, offering a cozy shopping experience through the cooler months.

Cedar Farmers Market

Woobank Road, Cedar

Sundays, Mother's Day to Halloween

Nestled in the heart of Cedar, this market is a gathering place for local farmers, artisans, and musicians. Enjoy fresh produce, handmade goods, vibrant flowers, and delicious food truck fare while soaking in the sounds of live music.

Gabriola Farmers Market

Agi Hall, South Road, Gabriola Island

Saturdays, 10 AM to 1 PM

A charming island experience, this market features home-baked treats, farm-fresh produce, and handcrafted wares from Gabriola's creative community—a must-visit for those seeking an authentic taste of island life.



BEACH AND PARKS

Nanaimo's vast coastline means beach life is never far away, wherever you are in the city. From tidal beaches that reveal expansive dunes in low tide to sandy lakeside beaches for summer fun and rocky beaches ideal for exploration, you'll find a beach to suit your mood here. While some Nanaimo beaches are popular swimming and watersports spots, others are hidden gems that only reveal themselves around the turn of a trail.





Pipers Lagoon

This coastal gem offers stunning ocean views, especially at sunrise and sunset. Explore rocky bays, tidal lagoons, and even cross to Shack Island at low tide. The park is partially wheelchair accessible, and dogs are not allowed from April to October to protect the environment.

Blueback Beach

Located in north Nanaimo, Blueback Beach is reached by descending 300 steps, with resting spots along the way. Low tide reveals sandy stretches ideal for beachcombing, while the scenic setting makes it a favorite for sunset watchers and photographers.

Neck Point Park

Neck Point Park features a 3 km trail with rocky shores, forest paths, and sandy beaches. A hidden fairy door village adds a touch of magic for families. The park is partly wheelchair accessible and allows leashed dogs, making it great for all visitors.

Westwood Lake Park

A summer favorite, Westwood Lake offers sandy beaches, a roped swimming area with lifeguards, and calm, motor-free waters ideal for paddleboarding. On-site amenities include washrooms and change rooms, making it easy to spend the day here.

Departure Bay – Stillup – Beach

This scenic half-moon bay blends sand and shingle shores, perfect for swimming and paddling. A summer swimming area, raised walkway, nearby food spots, and a playground make it a top family-friendly destination with washroom facilities available.

Petroglyph Park

In south Nanaimo, this park showcases ancient Indigenous rock carvings over 1,000 years old. A short trail leads visitors to sandstone images of animals and mythical figures—offering a peaceful, meaningful glimpse into local history.

Bowen Park

Minutes from downtown, Bowen Park offers accessible trails, forest paths, a duck pond, waterfall, picnic areas, and even disc golf. It's perfect for walks, wildlife watching, or just a quick escape into nature for all ages and abilities.

Maffeo Sutton Park & Swy-a-Lana Lagoon

Steps from downtown, this waterfront park blends urban charm with natural beauty. Enjoy harbour views, public art, a playground, food trucks, and a summer-friendly lagoon. Fully accessible paths make it a great spot for everyone to explore.

DOG FRIENDLY

On-Leash

In Nanaimo, our parks aren't just for people, they're for pups too! Most of our beautiful parks welcome leashed dogs, so you and your furry friend can explore the lush trails, scenic views, and peaceful green spaces together.

Places to note where dogs are prohibited:

- Playgrounds
- Sports Fields
- Cemeteries
- Pipers Lagoon (from April 1 to October 31)
- Departure Bay Beach (from May 1 to September 30)
- Buttertubs Marsh

Off Leash Parks

Nanaimo is a playground and a paradise for pups! With several off-leash dog parks scattered across the city, your four-legged friend has plenty of space to run, romp, and sniff out new adventures. From fully fenced play areas to scenic waterfront strolls, Nanaimo's off-leash spots are designed with happy tails in mind.

Beban Park Off-Leash Dog Park

- A fully fenced, off-leash park with separate areas for big and small dogs
- Features benches and water stations

Westwood Lake Park

- Dogs are welcome on-leash around the 6 km loop trail
- There's a designated off-leash swimming area at the west end of the lake

Colliery Dam Park

- Dogs can roam off-leash on the upper dam trails
- Several water access points for pups who love to swim

Cable Bay Trail

- A beautiful forested trail leading to a scenic ocean viewpoint
- Dogs are allowed off-leash but must be under control

May Richards Bennett Pioneer Park

- A spacious off-leash area with forested trails
- Perfect for fetch and socializing with other dogs

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVE SPACES IN NANAIMO

Exploring Nanaimo should be enjoyable for everyone. Whether you're seeking quiet spaces, sensory-friendly options, or accessible amenities, the city offers inclusive experiences to enhance your visit.

Quiet Spaces & Sensory-Friendly Options

During the busy Commercial Street Night Market, the Downtown Vancouver Island Regional Library offers a peaceful second-floor sensory-support space—ideal for a quiet break with calming tools.

The Nanaimo Art Gallery provides sensory kits with headphones, writing pads, and fidget toys for a more inclusive visit.

Many local restaurants also offer quieter seating—just ask your server.

Accessible Public Amenities

Nanaimo parks and public spaces include:

- Water bottle refill stations at Maffeo Sutton and Neck Point Parks
- Ample seating along trails and in shaded areas
- Phone charging stations at places like the Visitor Centre, library, and recreation facilities

Inclusive & Accessible Washrooms

Tourism Nanaimo's growing washroom map helps you find gender-inclusive facilities across the city. Have a location to add or update? Let us know and help expand this resource.





GOLFING

Calling all golfing enthusiasts, from seasoned pros to curious beginners! Nanaimo's picturesque golf courses offer an unforgettable experience for every player. With two 18-hole courses, two 9-hole courses, and an 11-hole pitch and putt to choose from, you'll find the perfect challenge to suit your style.

Cottonwood Golf Course

Nestled on the southern edge of Nanaimo, Cottonwood Golf Course is a public, par 72 that caters to golfers of all skill levels. With three sets of tees on each hole and a mix of par 3, 4, and 5 holes, the course offers a strategic layout with creative water hazards and strategic bunkers. Clubs, gas-powered carts, and pushcarts are available for rent, and the on-site restaurant is open seasonally, adding to the complete golfing experience.

Eaglequest Golf Centre

Eaglequest Nanaimo Fiddlers Green is a beautifully designed par 3 course, stretching over 1286 yards. With its magnificent trees and water features, this course offers a delightful challenge for advanced golfers while being welcoming and comfortable for beginners. It's the perfect place to practice your short game or introduce someone new to the sport.

Nanaimo Golf Club

Nanaimo Golf Club is a spectacular 18-hole par 72 semi-private course with full practice facilities, including a driving range and putting greens. Its well-maintained fairways and stunning ocean views provide an exceptional golfing experience. The Golf Club also boasts an excellent dining room that welcomes members, golf traffic, and the public, making it an ideal spot to unwind after a day on the course. Reservations are recommended for dining.

Prime Golf

Experience golf like never before at Prime Golf, Nanaimo's premier indoor golf simulation centre. Located inside the Nanaimo North Town Centre, this facility features three state-of-the-art golf simulator bays. Play on some of the world's most renowned courses or test your skills with interactive games designed to improve accuracy and power. Club rentals are available on-site.

Nanaimo Disc Golf Club

For those looking for a twist on the traditional golfing experience, the Nanaimo Disc Golf Club offers a fun and active way to enjoy the outdoors. With two courses in Nanaimo, at Bowen Park and an 18-hole layout at Pryde Vista Golf Course, disc golf is a fantastic way to experience Nanaimo's natural beauty while engaging in friendly competition.

NANAIMO'S HIKING TRAILS

Nestled between the Salish Sea and the rugged mountains of Vancouver Island, Nanaimo is a hiker's paradise. With its coastal cliffs, lush rainforests, and panoramic summits, the city offers trails for every visitor—whether you seek a heart-pounding ascent or a leisurely nature walk. Each trail tells a story of Nanaimo's rich landscape, inviting you to experience the region's tranquility, adventure, and breathtaking beauty.



TOP HIKING TRAILS IN NANAIMO

Mount Benson – te'tuxwtun

Trail Length: Varies | Difficulty: Moderate to difficult

Te'tuxwtun is the traditional name for Mount Benson and means “Grandmother of the Surrounding Mountains.”

Nanaimo's iconic mountain hike challenges adventurers with steep terrain and dense coastal forest, culminating in unparalleled summit views stretching across the city, the Salish Sea, and the snow-capped peaks of central Vancouver Island. The climb is demanding but the panoramic vistas at the top make the effort worthwhile.

-  Off-leash permitted in certain areas.
-  Not wheelchair accessible

Ammonite Falls (Benson Creek Regional Park)

Trail Length: Varies | Difficulty: Easy to moderate

A must-visit waterfall hike, this trail winds through lush forest before unveiling the stunning Ammonite Falls, named after the fossils embedded in its rock face. Recent stair and platform installations ensure safer access.

-  Off-leash permitted.
-  Not wheelchair accessible

The Abyss & Extension Ridge Trail

Trail Length: 9.2 km loop | Difficulty: Moderate


A geological wonder, this trail features a striking 50 cm-wide rock fissure known as The Abyss and expansive views from the ridge. The rocky terrain adds an element of challenge, so tread carefully.

-  On-leash recommended near the fissure.
-  Not wheelchair accessible

Westwood Lake

Trail Length: 5.6 km loop | Difficulty: Easy

A scenic lakeside trail, this route offers forested paths, gentle slopes, and inviting swimming spots. The power line area features a designated off-leash dog zone, making it a local favorite for pet owners.

-  On-leash around the lake, off-leash in designated areas (no dogs on beaches).

Colliery Dam Park

Trail Length: Varies | Difficulty: Easy

A family-friendly nature escape, Colliery Dam offers gentle trails around twin lakes, perfect for a relaxed stroll or a quick dip in the summer.

-  Off-leash near the upper dam, on-leash elsewhere.
-  Partially wheelchair accessible

Bowen Park

Trail Length: Varies | Difficulty: Easy

An urban oasis, Bowen Park winds through towering old-growth trees, along the Millstone River, and past a cascading waterfall and duck pond—a peaceful retreat just minutes from downtown.

-  On leash.
-  Wheelchair accessible

Cable Bay Trail

Trail Length: 2.5 km one way | Difficulty: Moderate

A hidden coastal gem, this trail meanders through lush forest before opening up to rugged shorelines and sweeping ocean views—a prime spot for seabird watching and marine life sightings.

-  Off-leash permitted.
-  Not wheelchair accessible

The Trans Canada Trail

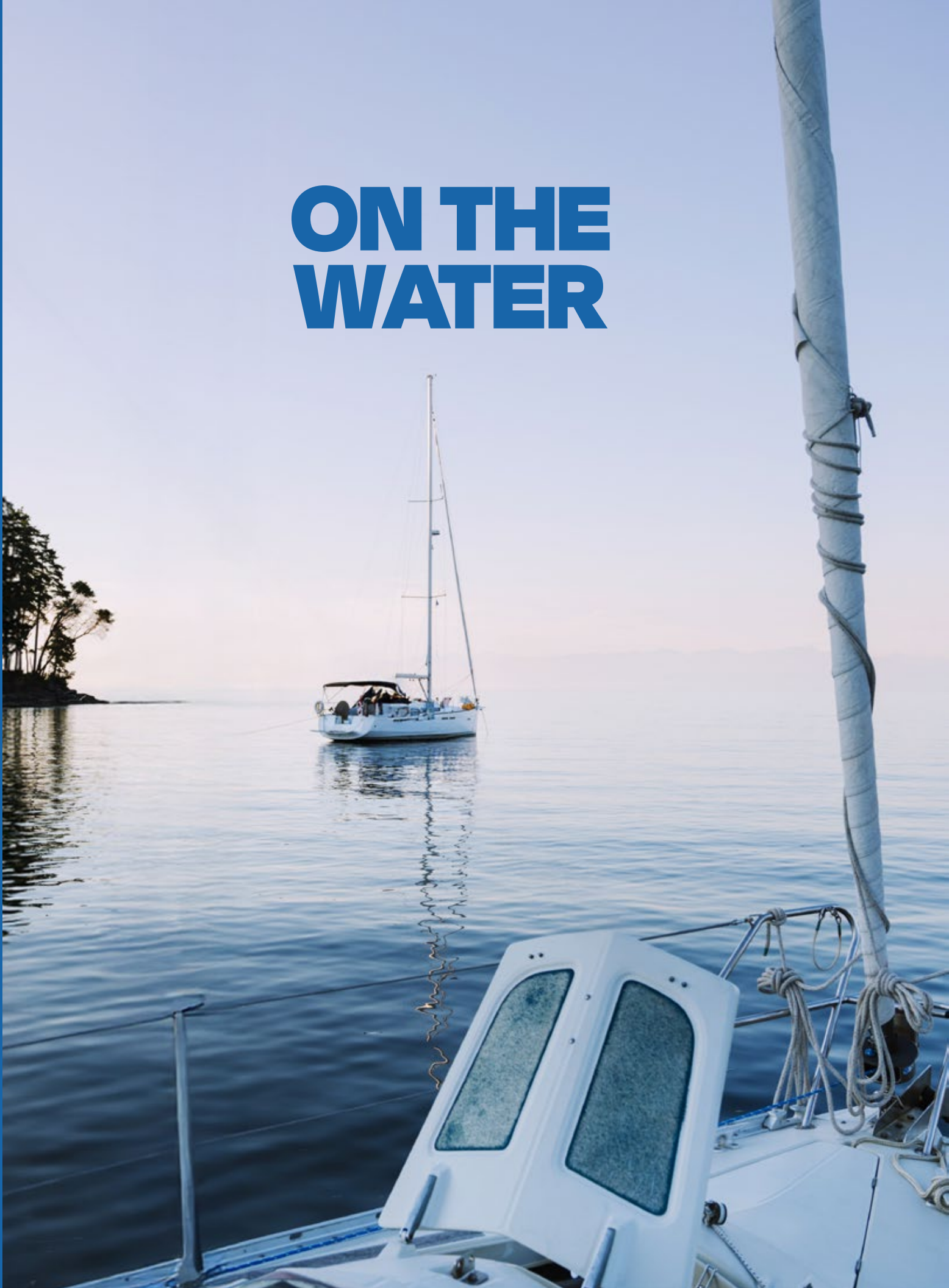
The Trans Canada Trail is the longest multi-use trail system in the world. The Nanaimo portion of the trail was part of TCT's Trail accessibility mapping program, delivered in partnership with AccessNow and includes various trails throughout the region.

HIKING TIPS FOR NANAIMO

- **Be Wildlife Aware** – Stay alert and respect local habitats. Never feed wild animals.
- **Leave No Trace** – Carry out everything you bring in to keep trails pristine.
- **Dog Etiquette** – Keep pets leashed where required and always clean up after them.
- **Hike Prepared** – Pack water, appropriate footwear, and a map.

Whether you're standing atop Mount Benson, wandering forested paths, or gazing at ocean horizons, Nanaimo's trails offer a diverse and unforgettable outdoor experience.

ON THE WATER



Nanaimo is a dream destination for boating and fishing enthusiasts and beginners with its long shoreline and kilometres of ocean access. Nestled between scenic protected bays and the open waters of the Georgia Strait, Nanaimo offers endless opportunities for touring, wildlife watching, and fishing adventures.

SALMON FISHING

Nanaimo is renowned for its year-round salmon fishing, with the first runs of Chinook Salmon starting as early as March and continuing through the fall. Coho Salmon can be found well into January, making Nanaimo a prime destination for avid anglers.

- **Saltwater Fishing:** Enjoy the thrill of deep-sea fishing just minutes from the harbour with local fishing charters ready to guide you to the best spots.
- **Freshwater Fishing:** Prefer to stay inland? Head to the Nanaimo River for salmon fishing in the fall, or try one of Nanaimo's scenic lakes, which are regularly stocked with trout.

Boat tours and fishing charters are available through several local businesses.



FIND YOUR PERFECT FISHING ADVENTURE

Scan here

MOORING

If you're arriving in Nanaimo on your own vessel, you'll find plenty of moorage options within a short distance of downtown. Conveniently located and equipped with excellent facilities, these marinas provide easy access to the city's vibrant waterfront:

- **Nanaimo Port Authority's Visiting Vessel Pier** – Located at the heart of downtown, it is perfect for exploring the city on foot.
- **Saysutshun** – Offering public floats, campsites, and showers, making it an ideal family adventure spot.
- **Newcastle Marina and Stones Marina** – Full-service marinas with modern amenities.

All of Nanaimo's moorage facilities are just a dinghy ride or short walk away from the bustling downtown, filled with parks, restaurants, shops, and cultural attractions.

BOAT HIRE

Want to explore the water but don't have your own boat? Nanaimo offers a wide variety of options:

- **Fishing Charters** – Guided fishing adventures for all levels.
- **Eco-Tours** – Wildlife and scenic tours showcasing Nanaimo's stunning coastline.
- **Watersports Rentals** – Paddleboards, kayaks, and more.
- **Sailing Lessons and Bare Boat Charters** – Learn to sail or charter a boat for your own adventure.

WATERSPORTS

Whether you're looking for a relaxing paddle or an adrenaline-pumping fishing trip, Nanaimo's watersports providers have you covered.

Nanaimo is the ideal base for exploring the Gulf Islands and the beautiful coastlines of Vancouver Island, extending to Nanoose Bay. Located within a 30 nautical mile radius of:

- **Salt Spring Island** – A haven for artisans and foodies.
- **Vancouver** – An easy day trip or overnight adventure.
- **Sunshine Coast** – Known for its laid-back vibe and scenic beauty.
- **Lasqueti Island** – A rugged and remote island perfect for off-the-grid exploring.

WHALE WATCHING

Step aboard and set out into the rich waters of the Salish Sea, where orcas, humpbacks, and porpoises glide through deep channels just beyond Nanaimo's harbour. From spring through fall, guided tours offer front-row seats to one of nature's most awe-inspiring performances. Rooted in the stories and stewardship of the Coast Salish peoples, whale watching here is more than a marine adventure—it's a connection to the cultural heartbeat of the coast. Bring your camera and your sense of wonder.

Nanaimo is more than a stop on your boating route—it's a vibrant destination rich in history, culture, and natural beauty. From peaceful Saysutshun to the lively Dinghy Dock Pub, it blends serenity with community spirit. Whether visiting briefly or passing through, Nanaimo captures the true essence of the West Coast.



© Donald Mulder

DIVING

Get ready to experience some of the world's best temperate diving waters! The cold, clear ocean surrounding Nanaimo creates an unparalleled destination for scuba diving and snorkeling, teeming with diverse marine life.

WRECK DIVING HOTSPOTS

Nanaimo is home to three spectacular wreck dives, offering unforgettable underwater experiences:

- **HMCS Saskatchewan**
A 366-foot Navy Destroyer sunk in 1997 to form an artificial reef, now flourishing with marine plants, fish, and octopuses.
- **HMCS Cape Breton**
Recognized as the largest upright artificial reef in the world, making it a truly unique dive site.
- **RivTow Lion**
Sunk in 2005 in Departure Bay, this 50-foot-deep wreck is ideal for beginner divers looking to gain experience.

Beyond these artificial reefs, divers can explore natural reefs, rocky islands, and underwater rock walls. Local dive outfitters offer training, gear rentals, and guided tours.



PADDLING

Get closer to the aquatic action by kayak, canoe, or paddleboard by paddling Nanaimo's stunning coastal waters and scenic inland lakes. Whether you prefer a self-guided adventure or a guided tour, there are endless paddling opportunities for every skill level.

COASTAL PADDLING DESTINATIONS

- **Saysutshun & Protection Island**
Paddle the serene waters surrounding these historic islands, surrounded by sandy beaches, sandstone formations, and hidden coves. Protection Island is just a short trip from downtown Nanaimo, with a stop at the floating Dinghy Dock Pub adding to the experience.
- **Winchelsea Islands**
For a more challenging paddle, venture out to these rugged islands, home to wildlife, rocky shorelines, and breathtaking ocean views.
- **Departure Bay & Jesse Island**
Paddle along the northern areas of Departure Bay for spectacular coastal scenery or explore Jesse Island and SALTERY BAY on Newcastle Island for a peaceful escape.
- **Hudson Rocks, Five Finger Island & Snake Island**
These offshore islands, accessible to experienced paddlers, offer rich marine life, bird colonies, and stunning rocky landscapes.
- **Pipers Lagoon & Neck Point**
The rocky nooks, sheltered waters, and the unique Shack Island make this destination a perfect short paddle or a launching point for longer adventures.

FRESHWATER PADDLING SPOTS

For a calmer paddling experience, head to one of Nanaimo's scenic lakes:

- **Westwood Lake** – A peaceful escape with a scenic loop paddle and forested surroundings.
- **Long Lake** – An excellent spot for beginners and families, with calm waters and easy access points.
- **Brannen Lake** – A less crowded option, ideal for relaxing paddles and nature spotting.
- **Quennell Lake** – A winding network of bays and inlets, this lake is framed by lush greenery and rich with aquatic life.



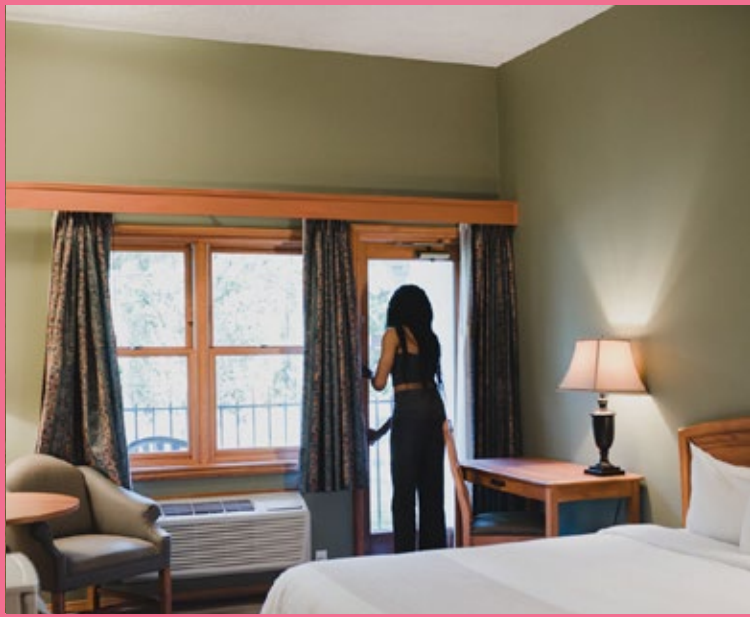
NANAIMO RIVER ESTUARY

This diverse paddling area features meandering channels, grassy islets, and unique driftwood formations. Expect to see eagles, herons, and other wildlife as you explore this ever-changing ecosystem.

Whether you're seeking a leisurely paddle along the shore, a wildlife-filled estuary adventure, or an open-water challenge, Nanaimo's paddling opportunities are as diverse as its landscape.



BOOK YOUR ADVENTURE
Scan here





STAY



Uniquely Nanaimo

WHERE EVERY STAY TELLS A STORY

No two stays in Nanaimo are alike—each offers a unique way to experience the city’s vibrant charm. From waterfront retreats to downtown hotels, cozy inns, and outdoor escapes, there’s something for every traveler. More than just a place to sleep, each stay comes with local hospitality and unforgettable surroundings.

Waterfront & Scenic Stays

Wake up to stunning views at Inn on Long Lake or Waterfront Suites & Marina, ideal for lakeside or harbourfront relaxation. For mountain vistas and elegant comfort, The Grand Hotel is a refined choice. Cozier options like Buccaneer Inn and The Spot – Boutique Hotel offer local charm and a personal touch.

Stay in the Heart of Downtown

Downtown Nanaimo puts you near arts, dining, and nightlife. Stay close to the action at Best Western Dorchester, Coast Bastion Hotel, Courtyard by Marriott, or Painted Turtle Guesthouse. With easy access to shops, cafés, and the waterfront, downtown stays are both convenient and vibrant.

Pet-Friendly Stays

Bring your furry friend along with ease—Nanaimo offers a range of pet-friendly accommodations. Comfortable options include Days Inn, Best Western Northgate, Ramada Inn, Value Lodge, and more, all welcoming pets so you can travel together without compromise.

Hidden Retreats & Nature Escapes

Escape the bustle with peaceful stays in Nanaimo’s South End. Kiwi Cove Lodge and Raven Point Inn offer serene surroundings, while Yellow Point Lodge provides rustic cabins and scenic trails—perfect for those craving nature, quiet, and coastal charm.

Bed & Breakfasts: A Home Away from Home

Experience warm hospitality at one of Nanaimo’s welcoming B&Bs. Choose a beachfront stay at MGM Seashore, Long Lake Waterfront, or Randle House, or opt for hillside charm at Gibraltar Rock or Ann Arthur Guesthouse. Each offers a cozy, personal stay.

EXTEND YOUR STAY

For those looking to extend their adventure, a short 20-minute ferry ride from downtown Nanaimo will take you to Gabriola Island, where a slower pace and stunning coastal beauty await. Stay at The Surf Lodge or Page’s Resort & Marina for a charming seaside experience, camp under the stars at Descanso Bay Regional Park, or cozy up at WurHere B&B or The Haven, a peaceful retreat perfect for relaxation and self-discovery.

Just 20 minutes by ferry from downtown Nanaimo, Gabriola Island offers a peaceful escape and scenic coastal beauty. Stay seaside at The Surf Lodge or Page’s Resort, camp at Descanso Bay, or enjoy cozy comfort at WurHere B&B or The Haven.



BOOK YOUR STAY

Scan here

CAMPING & RVING IN NANAIMO: YOUR GATEWAY TO THE OUTDOORS

For travellers seeking fresh air and outdoor adventure, Nanaimo offers year-round camping and RV options in a variety of scenic settings. Whether you're looking for a forest retreat, a lakeside escape, or an oceanfront stay, you'll find plenty of places to pitch a tent or park your RV.

In the South End, popular choices include Living Forest Oceanside Campground, Mountaineer Campground & RV Park, Rondalyn Resort, and Nanaimo Lakes campsites. Central and North Nanaimo feature excellent options such as Brannen Lake RV Park & Campsite, Jinglepot RV Park & Campgrounds, Westwood Lake Campground Resort, and Snaw-Naw-As Campground. Across the region, visitors can choose from walk-in tent sites, group campgrounds, cabin rentals, and full-service RV sites with hookups and amenities.

Camping experiences in Nanaimo range from simple wilderness-style sites to full-facility campgrounds offering showers, laundry, and sani-dump stations. Whether you prefer provincial parks, recreation sites, or privately operated campgrounds, you'll find peaceful locations near lakes, rivers, forests, and the Salish Sea.

For a truly unique stay, camping on Saysutshun Island offers an unforgettable coastal experience. The island features 18 walk-in campsites tucked into a quiet forest just a short walk from the docks, with several sites located right beside the ocean. Five group sites can accommodate gatherings of up to 50 guests. Facilities include potable water, flush and pit toilets, hot showers, and food lockers to protect supplies from curious raccoons. With no cars permitted on the island, the setting is calm and wonderfully peaceful, filled only with the sounds of the ocean, birds, and wind through the trees. Campsites are first-come, first-served, but reservations through the BC Parks online system are strongly recommended.

Summer is peak camping season in Nanaimo, and long weekends such as May Long, Canada Day, BC Day, and Labour Day fill quickly. Booking ahead will help ensure a smooth and stress-free stay.

Pack your gear, step outside, and discover why Nanaimo is the perfect basecamp for your next outdoor getaway.





FOOD





Savour Nanaimo

A CULINARY ADVENTURE AWAITS





Looking for a getaway where food takes center stage? Plan a gastronomic weekend in Nanaimo, where bold flavours, innovative chefs, and a deep connection to local ingredients create an unforgettable dining experience. From waterfront grills to bustling food trucks, romantic plate-sharing spots to lively bars, there's no shortage of delicious options to explore.

At the heart of Nanaimo's food scene is a dedication to fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Our chefs collaborate with regional farmers, fishers, and artisans to bring the best of Vancouver Island to your plate. Whether it's wild-caught seafood, farm-fresh produce, or handcrafted goods, every meal celebrates the region's natural bounty.

Nanaimo's diverse dining scene is a reflection of its cultural richness. From family-run restaurants serving authentic international cuisine to West Coast-inspired fine dining, there's a flavour for every craving. Enjoy a warm bowl of pho on a crisp winter evening, fresh tacos on a summer patio, or locally brewed craft beer paired with seasonal bites. With new flavours around every corner, every meal is an opportunity to explore.



Learn More
Scan here

MEALS ON WHEELS: NANAIMO'S FOOD TRUCK SCENE

For those on the move, Nanaimo's food truck scene offers a unique and exciting way to dine. Found at Maffeo Sutton Park, Departure Bay Beach, and local events like the Commercial Street Night Market, these mobile eateries serve up everything from birria tacos to gourmet grilled cheese, and sushi burritos to handcrafted donuts. Whether you're grabbing a quick bite or indulging in a street food feast, Nanaimo's food trucks add a fun, fresh twist to the city's dining experience.

SIGNATURE CULINARY EVENTS

Throughout the year, Nanaimo celebrates its love for food with exciting events such as Dine Around, local farmers' markets, and food truck festivals. Whether you're a fan of fine dining, comfort food, or innovative street eats, there's always a reason to gather, taste, and celebrate.

LOCAL CRAFT BEVERAGES TO TASTE OR TAKE HOME

Complement your dining experience with beverages from our local breweries, distilleries, and wineries. Whether you're a craft beer enthusiast, a wine connoisseur, or a spirits aficionado, Nanaimo's drink scene offers something to delight every palate.

Here, beneath the protection of Mt. Benson, locally grown grapes, hops, and botanicals thrive. Brewers, winemakers and distillers have taken advantage of our city's natural abundance to create delicious and award-winning beverages.

Longwood Brewpub

A Nanaimo staple, this brewpub is known for its craft beer and hearty fare. Sip the signature Berried Alive raspberry ale while enjoying views of Mt. Benson from the family-friendly restaurant or pub patio.

Longwood Brewery

Get a true craft beer experience with a flight at this production-focused brewery. Learn how they use mostly Island-grown ingredients for their signature blends of hops and barley.

White Sails Brewing

Located near the seawall, White Sails offers a chill taproom with live music, board games, a full coffee bar, and locally sourced eats—perfect after a stroll or shopping downtown.

Wolf Brewing Company

Set on the edge of downtown, Wolf Brewing serves fresh pours from 10 taps, including gluten-free and non-beer options. The cozy, dog-friendly patio, live music Fridays, and welcoming vibe make it a local favorite.

Arbutus Distillery

This award-winning distillery creates bold spirits using 100% Island-grown ingredients. Visit the Cocktail Lounge to sample gins, whiskies, and liqueurs, paired with small bites and views of the copper stills.

Millstone Estate Winery

Just five minutes from Departure Bay, this boutique winery produces cool-climate wines from estate and Okanagan grapes. Enjoy tastings, vineyard views, and live summer music on the family-friendly patio.

Big Bang Cidery

Located near downtown, this orchard-based cidery offers small-batch cider made from rare apple varieties. Visit April–October to sip on the patio, picnic under the trees, and enjoy a relaxed, family-friendly setting. During harvest season, guests can often watch cider pressing in action, adding a hands-on touch to the experience.





THE NANAIMO BAR EXPERIENCE

No trip to Nanaimo is complete without indulging in our city's namesake dessert—the iconic Nanaimo Bar! While the origins of this sweet treat's connection to Nanaimo remain somewhat of a mystery, we take immense pride in our legendary no-bake dessert.

You simply can't miss the delicious blend of chocolate, custard, and coconut that gives the Nanaimo Bar its distinctive flavour. For those eager to explore, the Nanaimo Bar Trail features over 30 locations offering delightful and creative interpretations of this beloved treat, including gluten-free, nut-free, and dairy-free options, ensuring everyone can join in on the indulgence!

But that's not all! The trail boasts an array of unique offerings, from Nanaimo Bar cupcakes and ice cream to cotton candy and cocktails, making it easy to enjoy multiple stops to savor all the variations fully.

Our love for this iconic dessert extends beyond just eating it. The trail also includes 10 non-edible Nanaimo Bar experiences, such as artisan soaps, clothing, and even a themed pedicure. So come explore and celebrate the sweet side of Nanaimo!

HOW DID THE NANAIMO BAR GET ITS NAME?

The mystery of how this desert bar got its name adds to its attraction. The earliest printed recipe on record was in the 1952 Women's Auxiliary to the Nanaimo Hospital cookbook. It is thought this led the dessert to take on the moniker of Nanaimo Bar.

In 1985, Nanaimo Mayor Graeme Roberts created a contest to find the ultimate Nanaimo bar recipe. The recipe submitted by resident Joyce Hardcastle was declared the winner, and it is her recipe that the classic Nanaimo bar remains based on today.

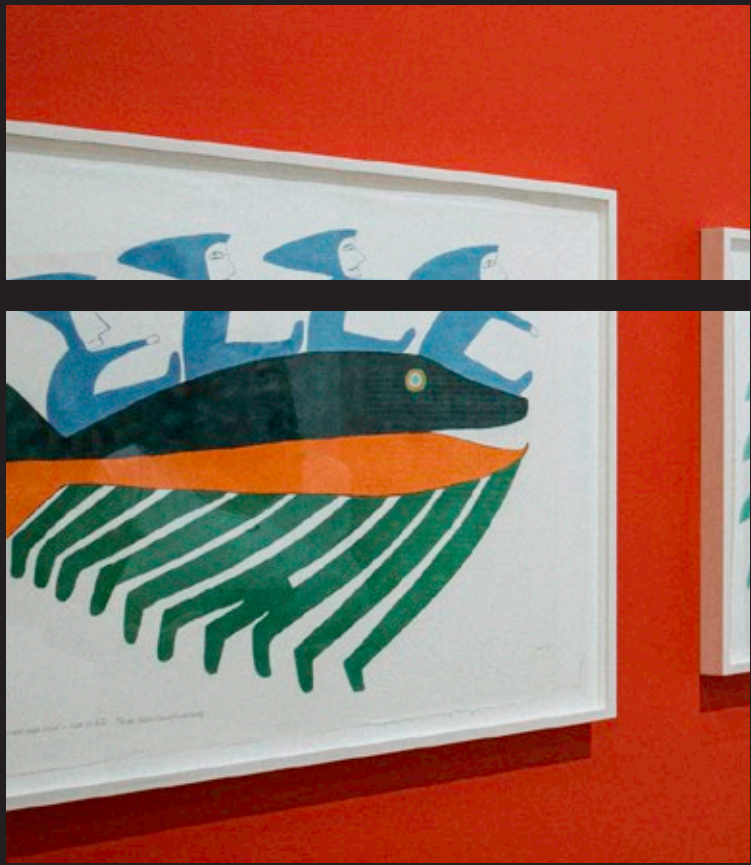
After being featured at Expo '86 in Vancouver, the Nanaimo Bar became recognized nationally as a Canadian classic, and the rest, as they say... is delicious history!



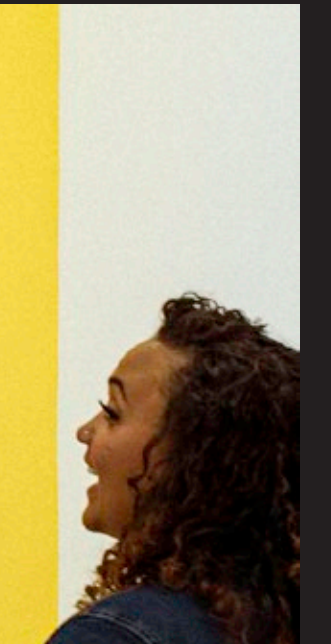
NANAIMO BAR TRAIL
Scan to explore



NANAIMO BAR RECIPE
Scan for Joyce's recipe



ARTS AND CULTURE





HONOURING HISTORY THROUGH ART

At the heart of Courtyard Nanaimo by Marriott, a powerful cultural story unfolds through the artwork of Ay Lelum – The Good House of Design, a renowned multi-generational Coast Salish design house from Snuneymuxw. This collaboration weaves together past and present, immersing visitors to Nanaimo in the rich history of the land they stand upon.

Historically, Coast Salish peoples raised the cherished Woolly Dogs, a now-extinct breed with thick, soft fur, which was spun into beautiful and powerful blankets.

The site of the Marriott Courtyard holds deep significance—it was once home to these revered animals. According to Dr. William Good, Snuneymuxw Elder and Ay Lelum artist, the land featured natural rock bluffs shaped like small puppies, a fitting marker for where these animals once lived. Despite the Woolly Dogs' extinction over a century ago, their presence is still felt; oral histories have preserved their story even when outside skepticism doubted their existence. Recent Western research has validated what Snuneymuxw knowledge keepers have always known: Woolly Dogs were real, and their legacy is rooted in the cultural fabric of the Coast Salish peoples.

Courtyard Nanaimo now serves as the only place in the world where the Woolly Dogs' story is publicly shared on a sacred site where they once lived. Ay Lelum's artwork throughout the hotel reflects this profound connection, turning its walls into visual storytelling spaces.

The collaboration between Snuneymuxw First Nation, Petroglyph Development Group, the hotel's majority owner, Courtyard by Marriott and Ay Lelum, breathes life into an important Snuneymuxw story. This project is more than hotel décor; it is a reminder of the timeless knowledge system that continues to inform this territory. The Woolly Dogs' legacy endures through art, allowing visitors to engage with this history in a deeply immersive way.



NANAIMO MUSEUM: A GATEWAY TO THE CITY'S PAST

Located in the heart of downtown Nanaimo, the Nanaimo Museum offers an immersive look into the city's history, culture, and heritage. Set on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, the museum is a must-visit for guests of all ages.

What You'll Experience:

- **Step into the past**—Take a lantern into the replica Coal Mine and uncover Nanaimo's mining heritage.
- **Snuneymuxw First Nation history**—Learn about the deep-rooted culture and traditions of the original stewards of this land.
- **Feature Exhibits**—Explore seasonal and rotating displays that showcase diverse aspects of Nanaimo's past and present.
- **Nanaimo Sports Hall of Fame**—Celebrate the achievements of local athletes and teams who have made their mark in sports history.
- **Gift Shop**—Browse a curated collection of souvenirs, seasonal gifts, and works by local artists.

VANCOUVER ISLAND MILITARY MUSEUM: A TRIBUTE TO SERVICE

A short walk from the Nanaimo Museum is the Vancouver Island Military Museum, housed in a historic downtown building and run by veteran volunteers. This intimate and informative museum offers a remarkable collection of military artifacts, including uniforms, medals, and memorabilia, with personal stories that bring history to life.

DOWNTOWN HERITAGE WALKING TOURS: STEP BACK IN TIME

For those who want to delve into Nanaimo's history beyond the museum walls, the Nanaimo Museum offers guided heritage walking tours throughout the year or a self-guided option below.

Self-Guided Option: Download the **On This Spot app** for six interactive historic walking tours. With 400 historic photos, you can slide an interactive button to see a then-and-now comparison from the exact spot you're standing—bringing Nanaimo's past to life in a unique, digital way.

Whether you prefer exploring exhibits indoors or strolling through the streets of history, Nanaimo's museums and heritage tours offer a fascinating journey through time.



NANAIMO ART GALLERY: A CONTEMPORARY HUB FOR CREATIVITY

The Nanaimo Art Gallery is a vibrant contemporary art space situated on Commercial Street that showcases a dynamic mix of local, national, and international artists. With a focus on thought-provoking exhibitions and community engagement, the gallery offers an immersive experience for visitors of all backgrounds—whether you're an art enthusiast or simply curious.

The gallery curates four major exhibitions per year, blending in-house curation with traveling exhibitions from across Canada. Beyond exhibitions, the gallery provides a welcoming space for creativity and education, offering:

- A Gallery Store featuring handmade works from over 100 local artists—perfect for finding a unique Nanaimo souvenir.
- Workshops & Events, including:
 - Art Lab Sundays is a weekly drop-in program open to all ages.
 - Artist Talks & Tours, where visitors can gain insight into the creative process.
 - Adult Workshops are designed for learning new skills and artistic techniques.

More than just a gallery, the Nanaimo Art Gallery is a cornerstone of the city's cultural scene. Whether you're connecting with the vibrant downtown or looking for a meaningful keepsake, the gallery invites visitors to engage with contemporary art in an open, inclusive environment. No prior art knowledge is needed—just a willingness to learn and appreciate.

Make sure to stop by, browse the Gallery Store, and experience the creativity that makes Nanaimo's art community thrive!



LGBTQ+ TRAVEL

Nanaimo warmly welcomes 2SLGBTQIA+ travellers to experience its vibrant and inclusive community. Our city is a haven where authenticity thrives and diversity is celebrated year-round.

NANAIMO PRIDE WEEK

Nanaimo bursts into a kaleidoscope of colour at the beginning of every June during Pride Week, hosted by the dedicated volunteers of the Nanaimo Pride Society. This week-long celebration embodies love, acceptance, and unity, featuring a dynamic array of events:

- **Flag-Raising Ceremony:** Kicking off the festivities, the Pride flag is hoisted high above Nanaimo City Hall, symbolizing our commitment to inclusivity.
- **Pride Parade:** A lively procession through downtown, showcasing the spirit, diversity, and dance moves of our community.
- **Pride Festival:** A vibrant gathering with live music, drag performances, kids zone, food trucks and local vendors, fostering community connections and joy.



Scan the QR Code to view the event schedules and participation opportunities on the Nanaimo Pride Society's event page.

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

To ensure a comfortable and enjoyable stay, consider the following resources:

- **Gender-Inclusive Facilities:** Our Gender-Inclusive Washroom Map assists in locating facilities where all individuals can feel at ease.
- **Accommodations:** Nanaimo offers a range of lodging options that are committed to inclusivity. Explore our accommodations page to find the perfect place to stay.

Nanaimo is more than a destination; it's a community that embraces you. Join us in celebrating diversity, fostering connections, and creating unforgettable memories. Your authentic self is always welcome here.

YEAR-ROUND 2SLGBTQIA+ SCENE

Beyond Pride Week, Nanaimo's 2SLGBTQIA+ community thrives with eclectic drag shows, art exhibitions, and social gatherings throughout the year. Inclusive venues and locally owned businesses offer welcoming spaces for all. Stay updated on upcoming events by exploring local event listings and community boards.



Scan the QR Code to sign up for our E-news

OUR NEIGHBOURS

Nanaimo is more than a city—it's a gateway to West Coast experiences. With scenic coastlines, nearby islands, and a laid-back vibe, it invites you to slow down and explore. Paddle to Saysutshun, visit artistic Gabriola, or relax on Protection Island—each spot tells its own story. Rooted in nature and Indigenous culture, the region blends adventure with a sense of home.

SAYSUTSHUN ISLAND

Saysutshun Island is a sacred village site and home of the Snuneymuxw people, holding deep spiritual meaning as a place of transformation, healing, and preparation. Managed in partnership with BC Parks, Saysutshun (Newcastle Island Marine Provincial Park) lies just minutes from downtown Nanaimo and offers a rich blend of culture, nature, and recreation. Visitors can explore traditional sites, historic sandstone quarries, and more than 22 km of trails through coastal forest and shoreline. Beaches, tidal pools, camping, boating, playgrounds, and seasonal kayak or bike rentals provide outdoor fun, while the concession serves Indigenous-inspired meals and grab-and-go options. Access the island by passenger ferry, boat, kayak, or paddleboard.



Saysutshun Island is home to the p'uq' xulxulus, or rare white racoon!

The hulquiminum word has lots of symbols, we can send a picture of the saysutshun family book to help identify which symbols.

PROTECTION ISLAND

A short ferry ride from Nanaimo, Protection Island offers a peaceful, car-free escape with coastal trails, quiet beaches, and a rich mining history. Explore a 4 km loop past parks and heritage sites, and keep an eye out for golf carts—local transport! Don't miss the Dinghy Dock Pub, Canada's only floating pub, with waterfront views and great food. Perfect for a nature walk, unique dining, or learning about Nanaimo's past.



GABRIOLA ISLAND

Just 20 minutes by ferry, Gabriola Island is known for its creative energy, natural beauty, and Indigenous heritage. Galleries, studios, festivals, and farmers' markets highlight the island's artistic spirit. Outdoor lovers can hike, kayak, or visit Malaspina Galleries' wave-shaped sandstone cliffs. With local eats, cozy stays, and a welcoming community, Gabriola is ideal for both relaxation and exploration.



Learn More
Scan here

TOP 10 NANAIMO

THE NANAIMO BAR TRAIL

So you've got a sweet tooth, do you? Follow this self-guided tasting trail to discover all the secret variations of the legendary Nanaimo Bar dessert. Your taste buds will love you!



VISIT SAYSUTSHUN

Just minutes from downtown Nanaimo's Maffeo Sutton Park, Saysutshun Island is an easy escape into nature, culture, and history. This sacred village site and home of the Snuneymuxw people holds deep spiritual meaning as a place of transformation, healing, and preparation. Managed in partnership with BC Parks, the island offers more than 22 km of forested and shoreline trails, sandy beaches, tidal pools, camping, boating, playgrounds, and seasonal kayak and bike rentals. Arrive by passenger ferry, kayak, or paddleboard for a memorable day or overnight stay.

2 WHALE WATCHING TOUR

Have you ever wondered what it's like to see whales blowing and skimming across the ocean? Head out with Vancouver Island Whale Watch on a tour and keep your eyes peeled for orcas, humpbacks, and other marine mammals!



CRAFT BEVERAGES AND CULINARY TOUR

Welcome, fellow wine snobs, beer fanatics and bonafide foodies from far and wide – we can't wait to share our tasty vittles with you! Book a culinary, craft beverage or estate winery tour with one of our fun and knowledgeable local guides to treat your palate to the Island's finest.

5 UNCOVER HISTORY

Discover the history of Nanaimo with a visit to one of our museums. Immerse yourself in Nanaimo's indigenous history and culture and explore the city's coal mining past with a walk through a replica coal mine shaft at Nanaimo Museum. Or uncover Nanaimo's proud military history at the Vancouver Island Military Museum.

DISCOVER DOWNTOWN

Find quaint shops, heritage buildings, and culinary experiences, and attend an event in Diana Krall Plaza or the Old City Quarter historical district.

6



ARTISAN TRAIL

For the ultimate artisan experience, we recommend driving along the Cedar Yellow Point Artisan Trail loop. There are plenty of beautiful stops along the way, providing a chance to visit farms, meet local growers, and chat with artists famous for crafting unique creations!



8

FISHING & CRABBING CHARTER

Whether you are an experienced fisherman or have yet to feel the thrill of catching a meal on a hook, Nanaimo & Region's fishing and crabbing charters will not disappoint! One of our local guides can get you out on the water, where you can catch fresh seafood and bring it ashore for a feast!

9 PADDLE'S UP

Nothing clears the mind and calms the spirit like a good paddle. The protected waters of the Nanaimo region's lakes and harbours are full of secret coves and inlets to explore by kayak, canoe or paddleboard. This is one of the best ways to spot rare wildlife or catch the perfect coastal sunset!



10 NANAIMO'S NATURAL WONDERS

With so many nature-rich parks to choose from in the Nanaimo region, peace and quiet are never hard to find. Common favourites include the tidal lagoon at Pipers Park, sandstone rock formations at Malaspina Galleries, the Abyss fault line or a peaceful walk to the beautiful Ammonite Falls.

SIGNATURE ANNUAL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Embrace the authentic energy of Nanaimo at our Bathtub Races - a thrilling tribute to our marine heritage, get lost in the magic of our Lantern Festival, or join the city in colour for our Pride Festival, Jazz Fest and more. Every season brings something new and exciting, ensuring that no two visits to Nanaimo are ever the same.

WINTER

- Downtown Nanaimo WinterFest
- Dine Around Mid Vancouver Island Food Festival
- Maple Sugar Festival du Sucre d'Érable
- The Nanaimo Whiskey Festival
- Naked Bungee Jump at Wildplay

SPRING

- Wee Tipple Whisk(e)y Festival
- Nanaimo Big Band Festival
- Nanaimo Pride Parade and Festival
- National Indigenous Day (June 21)
- Old City Quarter Sounds of Summer Concert Series
- Commercial Street Night Market

SUMMER

- Old City Quarter Sounds of Summer Concert Series
- Commercial Street Night Market
- Snuneymuxw Days Festival
- Nanaimo Dragon Boat Festival
- Nanaimo Marine Festival and Great International World
- Championship Bathtub Race
- Silly Boat Regatta
- BC Bike Race
- Nanaimo Blues Festival
- Nanaimo Fringe Festival
- Nanaimo International Jazz Festival
- Vancouver Island Exhibition (VIEX)

FALL

- Gabriola Thanksgiving Studio Tour
- Nanaimo River Hatchery Spawning Day

This is just a small sample of the events and festivals that take place throughout the year in Nanaimo. Check the events calendar at www.tourismnanaimo.com/events for the latest 'What's On' information.

This is just a glimpse of the vibrant events happening year-round in Nanaimo. For the latest updates and detailed event information, visit [Tourism Nanaimo's Events Calendar](#).



Scan the QR Code to see
the Tourism Nanaimo's
Events Calendar.