

>5 things to do in: vancouver

# TAKE 5 IN VANCOUVER

By Jan Schroder

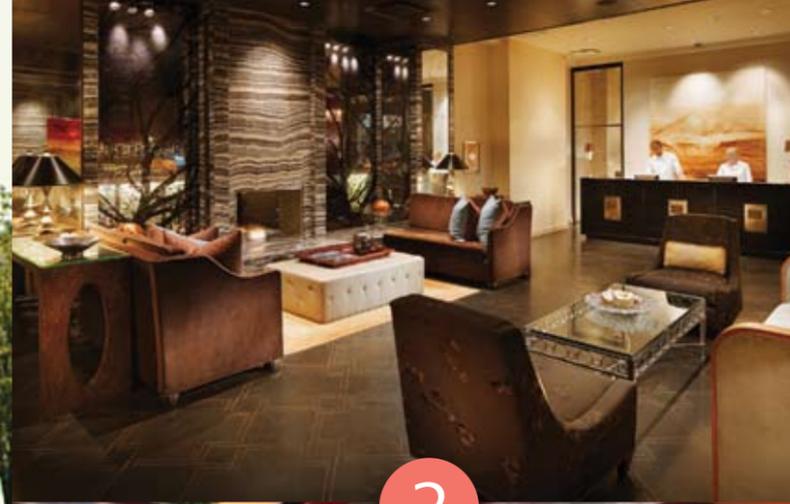
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Vancouver had been on my bucket list for years. Seeing those majestic snow-capped mountains rising out of the sea during the 2010 Winter Olympics further fueled my desire to visit British Columbia's largest city. When a cruise to Alaska (see story pg. 20) ended in Vancouver, my husband and I extended our stay as long as we could, but only had 36 summertime hours to take in the city. We did our best to make each one count. Vancouver was bursting with flowers and the bustle of people enjoying the weather in this city that's been ranked as one of the world's "most livable" and Canada's "most walkable." It's a place that values its natural beauty, as evidenced by its Greenest City 2020 initiative — a plan to become the greenest city in the world. My bucket list didn't grow any shorter on this trip — in fact it grew longer, as I added several more goals for a return visit one day.

**1. EXPLORE BY LAND, SEA AND TRAIN** So what if you look like a tourist hopping on a tour bus! When time is limited I appreciate the opportunity to get an overview of a city via bus tour, hopping off when I want to explore further. We rode through the many and varied neighborhoods of Vancouver on both the Big Bus and the Vancouver Trolley Company and got off to stroll along the shops at Granville Island before checking out the fabulous Farmers Market, which runs through October. We spotted a cute Aquabus behind the market, so hopped on for a mini cruise down False Creek, where we could see kayakers, paddle boarders and boaters on the water, as well as walkers, joggers, skaters and cyclists along the 13.7-mile Seawall, and sunbathers on the beaches. We hopped off again and took a tour of 135-year-old Stanley Park. At 1,000 acres, it's larger than Central Park and has gorgeous gardens, restaurants, beaches, rainforests, wildlife trails, a totem pole park and spectacular views. When it's time to leave, don't bother with an expensive cab to the airport. Hop on the SkyTrain, the city's metro system that easily whisked us to the airport, affording us a few last views.

**2. STAY (AND EAT!) DOWNTOWN** If we hadn't been loaded down with our luggage from a week in Alaska, we could have strolled rather than cabbed it up the hill right from our cruise ship to check into the gorgeous Loden Hotel, located in downtown Vancouver. Guests with more time can jump on the complimentary bicycles that greeted us in the lobby and take off on Vancouver's many bike paths — one of the best ways to explore the city. As it was, the Loden is in a perfect location to explore by foot or bus. We enjoyed the free wi-fi, while yoga enthusiasts will love the complimentary yoga gear for in-room use along with a dedicated yoga channel. The bathrooms are gorgeous and I longed for more hours to spend in the huge bathtub and lingering on the serene garden patio guarded by a smiling Buddha statue. Have dinner at The Loden's restaurant, Tableau, where we feasted on rich mushrooms on toast, roasted pork chops, roasted sea bream and lavender crème brulee, a delicious meal in a quaint, Old World bistro-like setting. Order the specials and you can't go wrong. The bar scene is lively too, worthy of a drop in for a local beer or a seasonal cocktail. [www.theloden.com](http://www.theloden.com)

PHOTOS: 1. COURTESY TOURISM VANCOUVER 2. COURTESY OF THE LODEN 3. COURTESY FLY OVER CANADA 4. CHRIS SCHRODER 5. JAN SCHRODER



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**3. FLY OVER CANADA — WITHOUT LEAVING VANCOUVER** Your feet will barely leave the ground, but you'll feel the thrill of being up in the air as you soar over the spectacular Canadian landscape from coast to coast inside Vancouver's newest attraction, Fly Over Canada. After a short introductory film, guests strap themselves into the seven-seat chairlift and prepare for "takeoff" as they are gently lifted to experience the sensation of flying over the country, viewing scenes such as the icebergs of Twillingate, an aerial view of Niagara Falls, the gorgeous fall colors of River Rouge, and vineyards where the latest in technology makes you feel like you can reach down and pluck a grape. Accompanying scents and a gentle mist washes over you during the 15-minute experience. [www.flyovercanada.com](http://www.flyovercanada.com)

**4. INDULGE IN THE LIVELY STREET FOOD SCENE** During the 2010 Winter Olympics, visitors lined up for hours for a taste of a Japadog, the wildly inventive hot dogs created by a food cart vendor when carts in Vancouver were limited to popcorn, chestnuts and hot dogs. Noriki Tamura combined hot dogs with ingredients such as teriyaki sauce, seaweed, plum sauce and Kimchi. The city got smart, lifted the ban and now food trucks line Howe Street during the week and are found by the dozens on Robson Street and the surrounding area on the weekends. To get the inside scoop, sign up for the World's Best Street Eats Tour where you'll enjoy four tastings and meet the "cartrepreneurs" during a two-hour guided tour. When our guide, Manuela, asked us to name our favorite it was a tough call. The

hoisin chicken roll from Eat Chicken Wraps, the Terimayo from Japadog, the butter chicken from Soho Road Naan Kebab or the pulled pork taco from Feastro? We loved them all and enjoyed the inside stories we heard from our tour guide, including a walk through the lovely secret garden above Robson Square, perfect for photo ops. [foodietours.ca/tour/worlds-best-street-eats-tour](http://foodietours.ca/tour/worlds-best-street-eats-tour)

**5. TRAVEL TO THE PEAK OF VANCOUVER** While we couldn't fit in a visit to the top-rated Victoria Island (still on the bucket list!) we did manage to make it to Grouse Mountain, an ideal place for kids and adults. After hopping the free shuttle that leaves from the central tourist area, Canada Place, we rode up the mountain and hopped on the Skyride, the largest aerial tram system in North America. It took us slowly up to the attractions at the top while we enjoyed the views of the Pacific Ocean and Gulf Islands. Open year-round, Grouse Mountain has trails and lessons for skiing and snowboarding during the winter months, and ziplining, paragliding, heli-tours and a lumberjack show in the summer, when you can also take the Peak Chairlift farther up the mountain. We loved watching the grizzly bears at the Refuge for Endangered Wildlife, where the ranger told us the story of Grinder and Coola, two motherless bears that were rescued. For a one-of-a-kind experience, visit the Eye of the Wind. It is the only wind turbine to have a glass viewing pod for 360-degree views. There are a few options for dining, including the Altitudes Bistro with fantastic views. [www.grousemountain.com](http://www.grousemountain.com)  
[Learn more at: www.tourismvancouver.com](http://www.tourismvancouver.com)