

Drenched by more than a metre of rain each year, Vancouver is laced with exquisite forests, parks and gardens. There is a powerful sense of a city set in wilderness, with black bears wandering into outer suburbs.

Many visitors are drawn to this verdant city by its dramatic natural setting. Vancouver aims to become the greenest city in the world by 2020 and sustainability initiatives are embedded in its urban heart. It has North America's greenest building – the regenerative Centre for Integrated Research on Sustainability at the University of British Columbia – and, by 2020, all new buildings in the city will have to be carbon neutral.

Canada geese take off from the grassed roof of the Vancouver Convention Centre while sea planes, from the carbon neutral Harbour Air fleet, lift off across the bay.

This dog-friendly city has a fine public transport system. All taxis are hybrid

cars, running on biodiesel, and electric vehicle recharging stations are springing up across the city.

Visitors can cycle around 300 km of bike lanes; explore artists' studios at Granville Island or visit book stores and yoga studios in the former hippy haven Kitsilano.

Food is innovative, with many restaurants serving seafoods recommended by Vancouver Aquarium's Ocean Wise sustainability program. The locavore movement enjoys a strong following.

Karri Schuermans, former City of Sydney marketing manager, who runs the award-winning, carbon neutral, Chambar restaurant with her husband, chef Nico Schuermans, says a lot of work is going on behind the scenes to make Vancouver the world's greenest city. "I think you have to dream big, go for it and make it happen."

DO

## Grouse Mountain

Člimb the 2,830 steps of 'Mother Nature's Stairmaster' or take the Skyride to the summit of the 1,127 m mountain. On top catch a chairlift to the base of the wind turbine for the Eye of the Wind tour. In winter, snowboard or ski on one of 26 ski runs. Summer activities include ziplining or watching raptors in the Birds in Motion show.

www.grousemountain.com

## Stanley Park

Cycle, roller blade or take a tram ride around this 400 hectare park. Options range from visiting the Vancouver Aquarium to spotting wildlife on Beaver Lake or one of the forest trails. In summer, bask on one of the beaches or guzzle maple and walnut icecream at the scenic lookout on Prospect Point.

www.vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley

## Wreck Beach

Steep steps lead down from the main campus of the University of British Columbia through shimmering woodland to this 7.8 km 'clothes optional' beach'. Up to 14,000 visitors can pack the pebbly shores of Canada's first nudist beach on a hot weekend, with musicians playing anything from reggae to jazz and vendors offering veggie burger's and fruit drinks. www.wreckbeach.org >>>





Grouse Mountain

GREEN LIFESTYLE DCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2013 GREEN LIFESTYLE DCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2012







### Chambar

'Moose horns' sculpted from recycled skateboards decorate this trendy restaurant. Belgium three-star Michelin-trained chef Nico Schuermans produces memorable food, including grilled organic asparagus with saffron Dungeness crab butter and peppercorn-crusted bison flatiron with seductive, smoked tomato, beamaise sauce. The restaurant became carbon neutral largely by dramatically cutting waste. Chambar offset emissions through CowpowerBC, which supports farmers converting manure into renewable energy, www.chambar.com

## Raincity Grill

This restaurant has won numerous food awards and is famous for its 100-mile tasting menu, which includes North Arm Farm beetroot salad with goats cheese mousse and Salspring Island honey mussels. All the fish served is Ocean Wise and live caught. Most other food is 'either certified organic or produced in organic, ethical style'. www.raincityarill.com

## Edibte Lanada Bistra

Situated on Granville Island, customers of Edible Canada can leave their cars to recharge at the free electric plug-in parking stalls outside while dining at recycled fir tables inside. The chefs source food from small culinary artisans and pluck herbs from planter boxes surrounding the restaurant. The bistro serves sustainable seafood in memorable dishes like Kasu and birch syrup sablefish, and also supports the Growing Chefs! urban agriculture program for kids. www.ediblecanada.com

# FACT FILE

### GETTING THERE

Several airlines ffy to Canada via the United States, but only Air Canada offers direct Sydney to Vancouver flights, cutting time and emissions. Places featured are within 45 minutes of Vancouver city centre.

#### WHEN TO GO

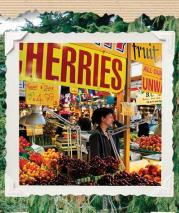
The best time of year is the summer months of May to August. Skiers favour winter or spring, while autumn is good for fall leaf displays and wildlife spotting.

### ■ LOGISTICS

Australian passport holders do not need a visa to visit Canada.

### CARBON OFFSET

A return flight from Sydney to Vancouver creates 4.2 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, which costs around \$97 to offset. www.carbonplanet.com





GREEN LIFESTYLE OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2012 73

4