

## Canada: Vancouver Island & the Gulf Islands

### Bike Vacation + Air Package

What better way to experience Canada's Vancouver Islands and Gulf Islands than by bike... with a little bit of kayaking thrown in too? Pedal alongside the Salish Sea, stopping to explore quaint seaside villages—perhaps spotting sea lions and seals basking on the beach. A local ferry takes you across Swartz Bay to your charming Pender Island resort—where you'll find yourself relaxing on the waterfront, or perhaps indulging in your resort's invigorating eucalyptus steam cave. Spin on gentle roads through old-growth forests—and join your local trip leaders on a guided sea kayaking adventure to discover the island's rich marine life. On Vancouver Island, you'll sample cider at a local cider mill, explore the colorful floral display at Victoria's Butchart Gardens, and luxuriate in the mineral pools at your opulent seaside resort.

### Cultural Highlights

- Island hop along Canada's west coast, admiring land and sea views by bicycle and ferry.
- Go sea kayaking from Pender Island on an included excursion.
- Cycle popular bike trails on Vancouver Island.
- Visit Victoria's spectacular Butchart Gardens.
- Enjoy lunch and a tasting at the family-owned Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse.

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills on Pender Island and is ideal for beginners and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those in need of assistance with hills.

**Tour Duration:** 7 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 7-40 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 2-5 hours

**Group size:** 14-20 max

### ARRIVAL DAY: Fly to and arrive in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Your vacation is about to begin! Enjoy your flight and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

Start off your first day in Victoria right by having a VBT representative greet you at the airport. A

complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel in downtown Victoria. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming seaside town at your leisure.

## **DAY 1: Victoria / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Victoria City Ride**

After an included breakfast, meet your VBT trip leaders at the hotel in Victoria at 1:30 p.m. They will be wearing VBT staff garments.

You'll join your trip leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride through Victoria's neighborhoods, passing by some of the city's most historic and iconic sites. Established in 1843 as a fort for the Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria has been called "more British than Britain." You'll see for yourself as you tour the city, admiring its abundance of Victorian-era architecture, beautiful formal gardens, elegant tea rooms, and double-decker buses. The present-day capital of British Columbia, this small city enjoys a breathtaking setting on the Strait of Juan de Fuca as Washington State's Olympic Mountains rise in the distance. Later, enjoy time to relax and settle in before a welcome reception and dinner at your hotel.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Afternoon: Victoria Warm-up loop — 12 km (7 miles)

### **What to Expect:**

Enjoy an easy ride through Victoria.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 km (7 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 2: Cycle along the North Saanich Peninsula / Ferry to Pender Island / Cycle to Hope Bay and South Pender Island**

Start your morning with a group shuttle from Victoria to Sidney. From here, ride along the Salish Sea to the North Saanich Peninsula and its rural community. Pause at Moses Point where, at low tide, the rocky shores are a beachcomber's delight. Tide pools reveal tiny crabs, starfish, and other sea creatures. Sea

lions, seals, dolphins, and the occasional pod of killer whales parade by. Eagles sometimes join in a feeding frenzy off the point.

Later this morning, you'll board a ferry to Pender Island, renowned for its beautiful parks and scenic vistas. Actually, two islands connected by a one-lane bridge, Pender Island is a cyclist's delight with pasturelands, forest-clad hills, and several beaches. Here, you'll spin along winding roads and gently rolling hills to Hope Bay. Later, you'll enjoy lunch featuring tasty local specialties. Continue cycling to your resort in South Pender island and unwind in your cozy oasis overlooking Bedwell Harbour. Gather for dinner at the hotel tonight.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Patricia Bay to Swartz Bay — 14 km (9 miles) with a one hour 45-minute crossing | Otter Bay to Driftwood Center — 10 km (6 miles)

Afternoon: Driftwood Center to Brooks Point Regional Park — 15 km (9 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Follow the easy bike route and bike path from Sidney to Swartz Bay ferry terminal. Pender Island is a great bicycling destination, but use caution on the island's main paved routes, which are narrow with hills, some short but steep, and blind corners. The maximum speed limit is 30 mph (50 km/hr). The ride from Port Browning to Poets Cove Resort is along a paved, winding road with gently rolling hills. There is one steep and winding uphill for 0.6 km (0.3 miles) passing the road to the marina in Port Browning. VBT highly recommends that you dismount your bicycle and walk up this hill.

Cumulative Distance Range: 10 — 39 km (6 — 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 3: Cycle to Brooks Point Regional Park / Sea kayaking

After a leisurely breakfast at the resort, cycle to the southeastern tip of South Pender Island to Brooks Point Regional Park. Enjoy exploring the exceptional natural surroundings. Follow the trail along the rocky beach to the grasslands with commanding views of Boundary Pass, the Strait of Georgia, the San Juan Islands, and Mount Baker.

Embark on your sea kayaking adventure. Led by a skilled guide, you'll paddle through a protected harbor, keeping your eyes peeled for the rich marine life that thrives here. Enjoy a picnic lunch prepared by your leaders featuring locally sourced ingredients.

Afterward, you will have time for leisure. Visit your hotel's spa or stroll to a nearby art gallery. Dinner is on your own tonight at one of the hotel's bistro and lounges or pick up nibbles at the market and enjoy them by the harbor.

Please note: depending on the group size, you may be split into two kayaking groups, one paddling in the morning and the second in the afternoon. The ride to Brooks Point will be offered when not kayaking.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Poets Cove to Brooks Point Regional Park and return — 6 km (4 miles) | Sea kayaking (includes safety talk) — 2.5 hours

#### What to Expect:

The ride from Poets Cove to Brooks Point is on quiet paved roads with some hills. Here, enjoy an independent stroll along the coastline and admire the incredible views. Riding is brief today, its a great time to relax and rest your legs.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 km (4 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 4: Ferry to Vancouver Island / Cycle to Oak Bay Beach

This morning, you'll say goodbye to your hosts at Poets Cove Resort and board the ferry to Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island, renowned for its blend of cosmopolitan cities and breathtaking wilderness, a mild climate, and long history. Disembark your ferry at the Swartz Bay terminal and enjoy a tranquil spin along this rail trail to Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse. This family-owned, farm-based cidery produces award-winning, traditionally fermented ciders from organically grown heritage apples. Enjoy a tasting and copious lunch in this peaceful setting.

Afterward, follow Lochside Trail towards Oak Bay. As you spin along this trail, admire fields of golden corn and cathedral canopies of green leaves, including Garry Oaks trees—British Columbia’s only native oak. You might pause along the way for a Nainamo Bar, a three-layered, no-bake treat named for a city on Vancouver Island. Many varieties exist for you to savor.

On arrival at your boutique hotel, settle into your room and perhaps relax in its heated seaside mineral pools. Tonight’s dinner is on your own at one of the hotel’s dining venues, at the nearby marina or in downtown Oak Bay.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Swartz Bay to Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse — 14 km (9 miles)

Afternoon: Sea Cider farm & Ciderhouse to Oak Bay Beach — 29 km (18 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Enjoy easy rides today on quiet bike paths or secondary roads. The bike path/trail varies between paved and packed gravel surfaces. The morning ride gently ascends from the ferry terminal to Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse. The afternoon ride has some gentle hills and mostly descends to Oak Bay.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 — 42 km (9 — 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 5: Victoria / Butchart Gardens / Celebration dinner

After breakfast, cycle to the city of Victoria, the capital of British Columbia, blending a First Nations heritage with influences of British colonialism. Continue riding around the harbor to Butchart Gardens, a magnificent oasis north of the city and your destination for the day. Built atop a former limestone quarry over a century ago, this landscaping gem was the vision of Jennie Butchart, who dreamed of transforming the site into a grand sunken garden. Over time, the park was expanded with Japanese, Italian, and rose gardens and a children’s pavilion, and it is now also a venue for outdoor concerts and other events. Most recently, the cultural heritage of the Indigenous People was recognized with the addition of two totem poles. Today, Butchart Gardens is a city treasure and a National Historic Site of Canada. Enjoy time to explore this tranquil haven and finish your day with a rewarding ride back to the

hotel.

You'll have time to relax at the hotel this afternoon before gathering with your fellow travelers for a celebration dinner at the hotel featuring local favorites such as fresh seafood chowder, Wild Pacific halibut, and Saanich organic salad greens.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Oak Bay Beach via Victoria to Butchart Gardens — 37 km (23 miles)

Afternoon: Butchart Gardens to Oak Bay Beach — 32 km (20 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Ride from your hotel on paved roads to Victoria Harbour. There, you'll briefly join the Galloping Goose Trail and cycle north toward Brentwood Bay and Butchart Gardens.

The afternoon's return ride gently weaves through the side streets of Greater Victoria, passing by Elk lake along your way back to the hotel. The ride is mostly flat after three short steep climbs (0.5 km each) at the very outset.

Cumulative Distance Range: 32 — 69 km (20 — 43 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DEPARTURE DAY: Travel to Victoria / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After breakfast, travel to Victoria International Airport based on your flight departure time.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

## Hotel Grand Pacific (Days 1-1)

Elegant and refined, the Hotel Grand Pacific—named a Top Ten City Hotel in Canada by Travel + Leisure—is one of the few hotels located on Victoria’s picturesque Inner Harbor. Fisherman’s Wharf, the city’s downtown restaurant and shopping district, Chinatown, and the British Columbia Legislature and Parliament buildings are all nearby. Large rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows and soaker tubs offer views of the city while you enjoy complimentary bottled water and fresh fruit. Enjoy the many offerings of this air-conditioned lifestyle hotel, including a large swimming pool, athletic club, and walks to the sea wall. Linger over the creative fare at The Pacific Restaurant or take afternoon tea on the terrace.

## Poets Cove Resort & Spa (Days 2-3)

An idyllic escape on the shores of Bedwell Harbour, this Pender Island resort is the perfect place to relax and rejuvenate after an exciting day of cycling. While here, you may take advantage of the marina, the outdoor pool, and three onsite dining options that showcase the best of Gulf Islands cuisine, served up with spectacular views. The onsite Susurrus Spa offers a range of treatments in a tranquil setting (advance reservations recommended). The hotel is not air conditioned, but free WiFi is available throughout.

## Oak Bay Beach Hotel (Days 4-5)

The 5-star, oceanfront Oak Bay Beach Hotel is a landmark property that consistently ranks among the best luxury hotels in Canada. Built in the style of an English manor house, it blends Old World charm with modern amenities, including three dining options, heated seaside mineral pools, and Victoria’s only oceanfront spa. The hotel overlooks the Juan de Fuca Strait and the snow-capped Mount Baker, and is ideally located for taking the best advantage of Victoria, from Oak Bay Village to the Inner Harbour, as well as easy access to activities such as whale watching, kayaking, beachcombing—and, of course, cycling. Your spacious and elegantly decorated room has floor-to-ceiling windows and modern in-suite amenities. Enjoy air conditioning and free WiFi throughout.