

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.
- Embark on a sea kayaking excursion from Pender Island.
- Cycle scenic bike trails on Vancouver Island.
- Explore Victoria's spectacular Butchart Gardens.
- Savor 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. Day 3 includes minimal riding, allowing for time to kayak and relax.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 5-44 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-5 hours

Group size: 14-20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 64°/46°, June 70°/50°, July 75°/54°, August 74°/54°, September 69°/52°, October 58°/46°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 1, June 0.8, July 0.5, August 0.9, September 1.1, October 2.0

ARRIVAL DAY: Fly to Victoria / Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Victoria

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: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Victoria City Warm-Up Ride

After breakfast, enjoy a leisurely morning or more independent exploration, using our provided city information to uncover more of the area's hidden gems and highlights.

After lunch on your own, meet your VBT trip leaders at the hotel at 1:30 p.m. They will be wearing VBT staff garments for easy identification.

Join your leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride through Victoria's neighborhoods, passing some of the city's most historic and iconic landmarks. Established in 1843 as a Hudson's Bay Company fort, Victoria has often been described as "more British than Britain." You'll see why as you cycle past its Victorian-era architecture, formal gardens, elegant tea rooms, and double-decker buses. Now the capital of British Columbia, this charming city enjoys a stunning coastal setting on the Strait of Juan de Fuca, with the Olympic Mountains of Washington State rising dramatically in the distance.

Later, enjoy time to relax and settle in before gathering for a welcome reception and dinner at your hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Victoria Warm-Up Loop — 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

Warm up with an easy ride through Victoria, designed to help you get familiar with your bike. Pedal along paved city streets as you take in the charm of this coastal capital, passing gardens, historic buildings, and

waterfront views.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 km (7 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

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

Start your morning with a group shuttle from Victoria to Sidney. From here, cycle along the Salish Sea to the rural community of North Saanich. Pause at Moses Point, where low tide reveals a beachcomber's paradise—tide pools teeming with tiny crabs, starfish, and other sea life. You may spot sea lions, seals, dolphins, and even the occasional pod of killer whales. Eagles often circle overhead, joining the coastal activity.

Later this morning, board a ferry to Pender Island—technically two islands joined by a one-lane bridge—renowned for its beautiful parks, scenic vistas, and cyclist-friendly terrain. Pedal past forested hills, pasturelands, and quiet beaches en route to Hope Bay. After a lunch of fresh, locally inspired specialties, continue your ride through gently rolling countryside.

En route, you may wish to pause for a short hike up Mount Norman to enjoy one of the island's most breathtaking viewpoints, or stop at Mortimer Spit, a prime location for spotting marine wildlife.

Eventually, arrive at Poet's Cove Resort & Spa, your accommodations for tonight and tomorrow night. This peaceful retreat overlooks Bedwell Harbour and is the perfect spot to unwind. This evening, gather for dinner at the resort.

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 Poets Cove — 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

Follow the easy bike route and paved path from Sidney to the Swartz Bay ferry terminal. Pender Island is a wonderful cycling destination, but please use caution on the island's main paved roads, which can be narrow and hilly, with some short but steep climbs and blind corners. The maximum speed limit is 30 mph (50 km/h). The ride from Port Browning to Poets Cove Resort follows a paved, winding road with gently rolling terrain. One notable section includes a steep, winding uphill stretch of 0.6 km (0.3 miles) near the road to the marina in Port Browning. VBT highly recommends that you dismount and walk your bike up this hill.

Cumulative Distance Range: 10 – 36 km (6 – 22 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 and explore the exceptional natural beauty of Brooks Point Regional Park. Follow a scenic trail along the rocky beach to open grasslands, where you'll be treated to sweeping views of Boundary Pass, the Strait of Georgia, the San Juan Islands, and Mount Baker.

Today's sea kayaking adventure begins in a protected harbor, led by a skilled local guide. As you paddle, keep an eye out for the rich marine life that thrives in these pristine waters. Midday, enjoy a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders, featuring locally sourced ingredients.

Later, take time to relax. You might visit your hotel's spa or stroll to a nearby art gallery. Dinner is on your own this evening—choose from one of the hotel's bistros or lounges, or pick up light fare at the market to enjoy by the harbor.

Please note: Depending on group size, participants may be divided into two kayaking groups, with one paddling in the morning and the other in the afternoon. The ride to Brooks Point will be offered during the non-kayaking portion of the day.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Poets Cove to Brooks Point Regional Park and Return — 8 km (5 miles) | Sea Kayaking (Includes Safety Talk) — 2.5 hours

What to Expect:

The ride from Poets Cove to Brooks Point follows quiet paved roads with some hills. At the park, enjoy an independent stroll along the scenic coastline and take in the stunning views. With shorter riding today, it's a great opportunity to relax and rest your legs. An optional independent ride may be available for experienced cyclists—ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 8 km (5 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

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

This morning, bid farewell to your hosts at Poets Cove Resort and board the ferry to Swartz Bay on Vancouver Island—renowned for its cosmopolitan cities, breathtaking wilderness, mild climate, and rich history. Upon arrival at the Swartz Bay terminal, enjoy a tranquil spin along a scenic rail trail to Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse. This family-owned, farm-based cidery produces award-winning, traditionally fermented ciders from organically grown heritage apples. Savor a tasting and generous lunch in this peaceful setting.

After lunch, follow the Lochside Trail toward Oak Bay. As you ride, admire golden cornfields and green cathedral canopies, including rare Garry oak trees—British Columbia's only native oak. You might pause along the way to try a Nanaimo bar, a three-layer, no-bake treat named after the city on Vancouver Island. Many delicious variations await.

On arrival at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, your boutique accommodation for the night, settle into your elegant room and take in the hotel's stunning oceanfront setting. Perched above the Salish Sea, this luxurious retreat offers sweeping coastal views and is just steps from a charming marina and local shops. You may wish to unwind in the hotel's renowned heated seaside mineral pools. If you'd like to book a spa treatment, advance reservations are strongly recommended.

Dinner is on your own this evening—choose from the hotel's refined dining room, its cozy pub, or outdoor terrace, all offering views of the sea. Alternatively, stroll to the nearby marina or into downtown Oak Bay for additional options.

Today's Ride Choices

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

Afternoon: Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse to Mount Doug to Oak Bay Beach — 30 km (19 miles)

What to Expect:

Enjoy easy rides today along quiet bike paths and secondary roads. The trail surface varies between pavement and packed gravel. This morning's ride features a gentle ascent from the ferry terminal to Sea Cider Farm & Ciderhouse. In the afternoon, the route includes some gentle hills and a mostly downhill ride into Oak Bay.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 — 44 km (9 — 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Victoria / Butchart Gardens / Celebration Dinner

After breakfast, cycle to Victoria, the capital of British Columbia—a city that blends rich First Nations heritage with British colonial influences. Continue riding around the harbor to Butchart Gardens, a magnificent oasis located north of the city and your destination for the day.

Built atop a former limestone quarry over a century ago, this horticultural gem was the vision of Jennie Butchart, who dreamed of transforming the site into a grand sunken garden. Over time, the park has grown to include Japanese, Italian, and rose gardens, a children's pavilion, and even a venue for outdoor concerts and events. Most recently, the cultural heritage of the Indigenous People was honored with the addition of two totem poles. Today, Butchart Gardens is a beloved local treasure and a designated National Historic Site of Canada. Enjoy time to explore this tranquil haven before a rewarding ride back to the hotel.

Later this afternoon, unwind at the hotel before gathering with your fellow travelers for a celebratory dinner featuring local favorites such as fresh seafood chowder, Wild Pacific halibut, and Saanich organic greens.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Oak Bay Beach via Victoria to Butchart Gardens — 35 km (22 miles)

Afternoon: Butchart Gardens to Oak Bay Beach — 36 km (22 miles)

What to Expect:

Ride from your hotel on paved roads to Victoria Harbour, where you'll briefly join the Galloping Goose Trail and cycle north toward Brentwood Bay and Butchart Gardens. The afternoon's return route gently weaves through the side streets of Greater Victoria, passing Elk Lake along the way. The ride is mostly flat, with just three short but steep climbs (each about 0.5 km) at the outset.

Cumulative Distance Range: 35 — 71 km (22 — 44 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DEPARTURE DAY: Travel to Victoria / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After an included breakfast, travel to Victoria International Airport (YYJ) 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.