

## Canada: Vancouver Island & the Gulf Islands

### Bike Vacation Only

A breathtaking voyage across land and sea, this scenic journey across Canada's west coast islands is a cyclist's haven. Embrace tranquility in the floral wonderland of Butchart Gardens. Cruise into beaches, keeping your eyes peeled for kelp crabs, sea stars, and sand dollars. Explore unhurried Pender Island, a magnet for artists and craftspeople. Stroll Brooks Point, an oceanfront park with a mix of rocky bluffs, forest and grassy meadows. Get close to marine life during a stunning sea kayaking adventure. Sample ciders on a family-owned farm, cycle trails traversing cathedral canopies of native oaks, and explore islands that blend breathtaking wilderness with cosmopolitan city. This Vancouver Island bike tour lets you soak up all the beauty that can be found where the land meets the sea.

### 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

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills on Pender Island and is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance with the hills.

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

**Average Cycling Time:** 00:30 - 04:00

### Climate Information

#### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 64°/46°, Jun 70°/50°, Jul 75°/54°, Aug 74°/54°, Sep 69°/52°, Oct 58°/46°

#### Average Rainfall (in.)

May 1, Jun 0.8, Jul 0.5, Aug 0.9, Sep 1.1, Oct 2.0

## **DAY 1: Victoria/ VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Victoria city ride**

Meet your VBT trip leaders and the rest of the group at the Hotel Grand Pacific and Spa in Victoria, B.C., at 1:30 p.m. Your trip leaders will be wearing VBT staff garments. Please buy lunch on your own before this meeting and come dressed for bicycling.

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: Dinner

## **DAY 2: Cycle along the North Saanich Peninsula / Ferry to Pender Island / Cycle to Hope Bay / Explore Brooks Point Regional Park**

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 gentle rolling hills to Hope Bay. Later, you'll enjoy lunch featuring tasty local specialties. Continue cycling 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. Cycle back to the resort and unwind in your cozy oasis overlooking Bedwell Harbour. Gather for dinner at the hotel tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Patricia Bay Park 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) | Brooks Point to Poets Cove — 3 km (2 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: 3 — 42 km (2 — 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 3: Cycle to Port Browning / Sea kayaking**

After a leisurely breakfast at the resort, cycle to Port Browning through old growth forest. See why Pender Island is known as the Hawaii of Canada due to its sub-Mediterranean climate.

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, continue cycling to the hotel, where you will have time at leisure. 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.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Poets Cove to Port Browning — 12 km (7.5 miles) | Sea kayaking (includes safety talk) — 2.5

hours

Afternoon: Port Browning to Brooks Point and Poets Cove — 19 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

The ride from Poets Cove to Port Browning is on quiet paved roads with some hills. Return to the hotel using the same route, with the option to ride via Brooks Point and enjoy an independent stroll along the coastline and admire the incredible views, perhaps for the second time (you had the opportunity to come here the day prior).

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 — 31 km (7 — 18 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. Linking the Swartz Bay ferry terminal, where you will alight, with the capital of British Columbia, Victoria, is the Lochside Trail. 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 to the Galloping Goose Trail, a more rural route designed to link the country to the city and people to nature. As you spin along this trail, admire fields of golden corn and cathedral canopies of green leaves, including Garry Oaks—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. If you would like an appointment at the spa, advance booking is highly recommended.

Tonight's dinner is on your own at one of the hotel's dining venues or at the nearby marina.

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, 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 join the Galloping Goose Trail and cycle north toward Brentwood Bay and Butchart Gardens.

The afternoon's return ride follows the Lochside Regional Trail back to the hotel. The ride is mostly flat with one hill (0.5 km) out of the gardens and a second hill (1 km) as you enter the village of Brentwood Bay. There is another ascent as you join the Lochside Regional Trail and a small hill before your descent to the hotel.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

### **DAY 6: Travel to Victoria / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends**

After breakfast, a complimentary shuttle to Victoria International Airport is provided this morning, between 7:00–8:00 a.m. (travel time approximately 45 minutes). The exact time will be communicated to you by your leader while on tour. We recommend a flight out of Victoria no earlier than 10:00 a.m.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **Hotel Grand Pacific (Day: 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.