

# Vancouver B.C.

## An Olympic Experience— This Winter and Beyond

by C.J. Birch Maile

Vancouver, B.C.—the hip seaside community in the shadow of the North Shore Mountains—attracts the eyes of the world this winter. British Columbia’s largest city struts its stuff as approximately 2,000 athletes representing more than 80 nations converge for the Olympic Winter Games. In excess of 2-million spectators are expected to swarm the various venues. Millions of television viewers will vicariously get in on the fun.

Amid the competitive thrills and international pageantry, Vancouver emerges as a worthy destination no matter the season or the reason for a visit. Noted for its densely populated modern city center and recreational opportunities that stretch from “sea to sky,” Vancouver possessed an international vibrancy long before the Olympics hit town.

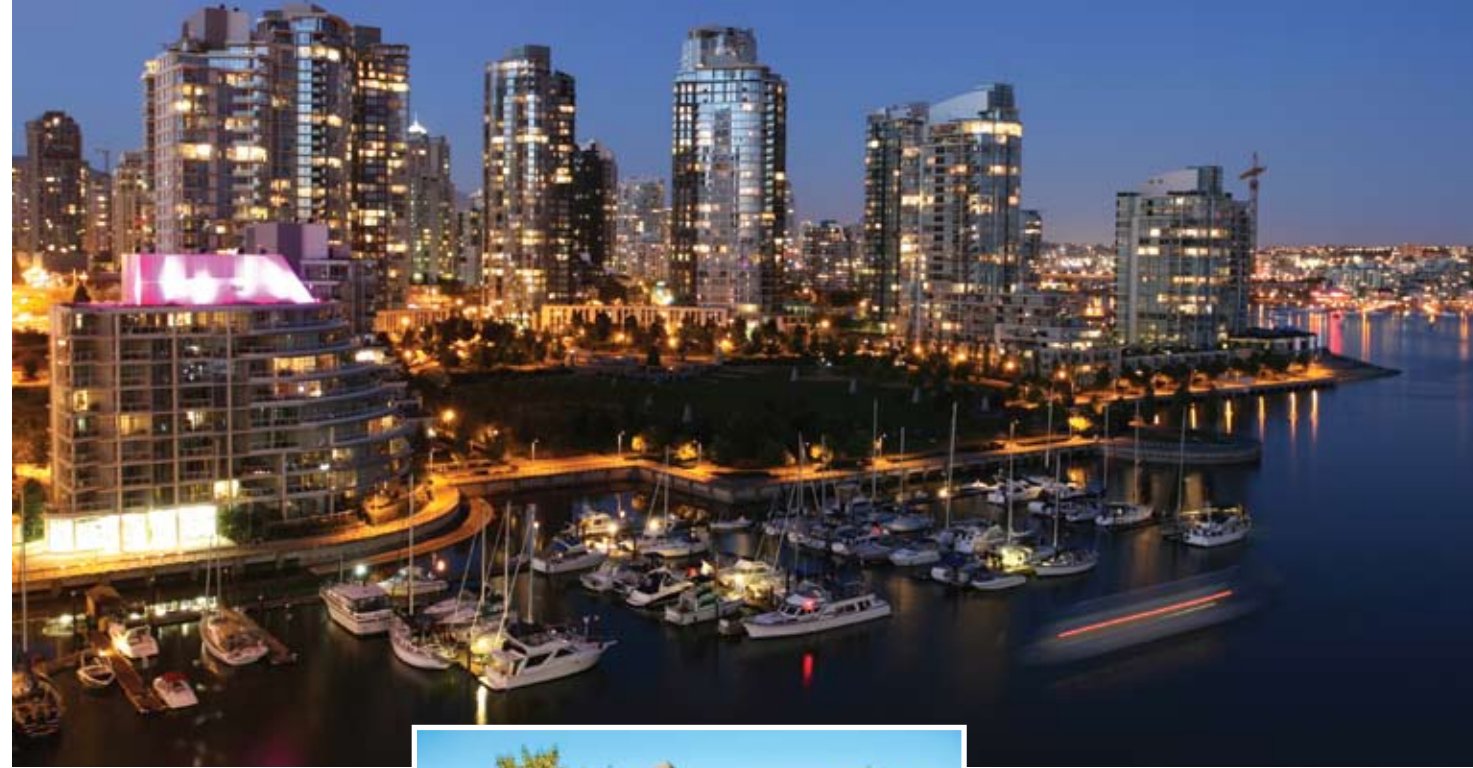
The city still reflects its historic ties to the Old English Empire. The Victorian era—Vancouver style—lives on in Gastown. This is the oldest part of Vancouver. The streets are still paved with cobblestone and adjoining brick buildings, adorned with Classical facades, date to the turn of the last century. Its original focal point was Vancouver’s first saloon, owned by one Gassy Jack Deighton, and the neighborhood is still chock-a-block with pubs and clubs. The nightlife is legendary.

Just west of Gastown, remnants of Vancouver’s first upscale residential neighborhood still exist. In the West End, elegant Edwardian structures and formal gardens mingle with

modern high-rises. This is a best of all worlds area. Eclectic architecture, fine restaurants, upscale shops and urban bustle are all set against a backdrop of sea and mountain.

Ethnic neighborhoods contribute much to Vancouver’s sophisticated charm. The city’s Chinatown has long been renown. With Hong Kong’s 1997 transformation from British Crown Colony to Chinese Administrative Region, the city’s Chinese population swelled giving Vancouver’s diversity quotient an extra boost. The presence of tens of thousands of these residents in downtown neighborhoods and nearby Richmond provides the Chinese district with an air of authenticity and makes it a great place to eat, shop and wander.

In South Vancouver, Little India, a four-block area reminiscent of a Punjabi bazaar, centers on 49th Avenue and Main Street. This is the place to find all things Indian—spices, silk, incredible edibles and high-content-gold jewelry that puts our 18-karat alloys to shame. Equally beguiling is Little Italy on Commercial Drive in East Vancouver, the Greek district on West Broadway in the chi-chi Kitsilano neighborhood and the Persian shops along Lonsdale Avenue in the city’s northern reaches.



Chinatown

Visitors must also save time for Granville Island, one of North America’s most interesting amalgams of humanity. The former industrial site is a jumble of public market, street performers, arts and crafts fair, theaters, special events, restaurants and more conventional retail. It attracts more than 10-million people annually—even in non-Olympic years.

Beyond its urban core, Vancouver boasts Olympic-size fun all through the year. Vancouver’s mild climate makes it easy to enjoy its many beaches and public parks. The mountains are within a half-hour by car. North America’s largest ski area and Olympic venue Whistler/Blackcomb is a lovely two-hour drive along the scenic Sea-to-Sky Highway. All of its 8,171 acres will be open to skiers and boarders before and



Snowboarder Chris Dufficy



Skier Sean Pettit

after the games. More than 90% of the mountain will be open during the Olympics.

For those who’d like to revisit the Winter Game experience *and* enjoy Vancouver in summer, Whistler presents a rare opportunity to train like a pro and play in the summer snow. Six private and public ski and snowboard camps offer intermediate to advanced skiers and boarders the opportunity to work on a tan while improving their abilities. The largest and most elaborate, Camp of Champions includes the world’s largest private terrain park and was designed by Steve Petrie, who built the Olympics’ half-pipe. Its founder, snowboarding pioneer Ken Achenbach, has been pursuing the sport for 30 years. The camp also includes mountain biking and lots of extra-curriculars, from paintball to a zipline. Just one more reason there’s always a world of fun waiting in Vancouver. ■

### IMPORTANT DATES:

Cultural Olympiad, January 22 - March 21  
Winter Olympic Games, February 12 - 28  
Winter Paralympic Games, March 12 - 21

### CROSSING THE BORDER:

U.S. citizens need to know that whether you’re attending the Olympics or planning to spend your summer in Whistler’s snow, a passport or other proof of citizenship is required when crossing between nations.



Gastown’s steam-powered clock



Granville Island public market

SNOW BOARDER AND SKIER: DICE K. MARUCA/AMP OF CHAMPIONS