Vancouver Round Trip: Inland to Island

1185 km
Total Distance

16 hrs
Est Driving Time

Overview

British Columbia is one of those places that needs to be seen to be believed, and a tour by motorhome is easily one of the best ways to do it. Even if you were to pick up a motorhome in Vancouver and simply drive through the province never leaving the vehicle, you’d still be in awe of all of the sights and attractions. Fortunately however, you can get out and experience it all you like! In fact, you can do it all several times over with each season offering something new and spectacular. Summer in Canada is oh so incredible but a winter motorhome road trip in BC is just as fantastic - perhaps even more so for snow worshippers. From the big city of Vancouver and its charms, to hot springs, hiking trails, and high waterfalls, there’s no end to the adventures. You’ll cross bridges, visit the largest (and fan-favourite) ski area in North America, try your hand (feet) at surfing, and learn a little about this part of the world’s cultural heritage in this dazzling campervan itinerary.
The feeling of starting out on a motorhome road trip is unlike any other - it brings the promise of adventure, memories, and surprises at every turn, and there are few places better suited to begin than Vancouver. The city itself is a mix of scenery and vibrant cosmopolitan life, and you can easily spend a few days here simply exploring before you set out. Once you're on the road, this leg offers scenic waterfalls, relaxing hot springs, historic tunnels and an exhilarating ride over a furious section of river known as ‘Hell’s Gate’. Make sure your camera is at full battery and get ready for an incredible first leg of your campervan road trip.

Vancouver is the type of place that even self-confessed city-cynics will still love. Located right on the waterfront of English Bay and decorated with a stunning mountain range poking out behind the skyscrapers, it’s a city of scenery, adventure, and culture. Stanley Park is perhaps one of its more well-known attractions, and is an idyllic spot to hire push bikes and cruise around its winding paths before settling down for a picnic. Or, drive over (or take a cute ‘ferry’ ride for a toonie [two Canadian dollars]) to the Granville Markets on Granville Island to spend an afternoon perusing everything from arts and crafts to jewellery, clothing, flowers and of course - endless amounts of delicious food and drink. FlyOver Canada may sound like a cheesy tourist attraction down on the city’s bustling waterfront Canada Place, but it truly is an incredible must-see experience that will double your excitement for the trip to come, and make you add the rest of the country to your motorhome road trip wishlist. The Vancouver downtown area is compact and easy to navigate on foot, so be sure to set some time aside simply to wander the streets, check out a few stores, pay a visit to the magical steam clock and get a feel for the city’s atmosphere that makes this place one of the top-rated places to live in the world.

Leaving Vancouver, you’ll take the Trans-Canada Highway 1, heading southeast.

If you’re travelling during the warmer months (roughly between May and October), your first stop
should be the Bridal Falls, just 90 minutes from Vancouver. Here, take the short walk up the track to the mesmerising Bridal Falls cascades, which drop 60 metres across a wide swathe over river onto rock below, giving them a ‘veil-like’ appearance and their whimsical name. It’s a gorgeous spot for a picnic break, but note that the falls are not open during winter. Should you arrive in the midst of summer and are looking for ways to cool off, the Bridal Falls Waterpark just down the road is the ideal way to splash up some fun with the family. With plenty of slides, pools, and a massive hot tub, the waterpark is a great way to get out of the camper for a little while and enjoy the sunshine. Just be sure to check if the park is open prior to arrival.

After leaving Bridal Falls, head back down Highway 1 before taking a right onto BC-9 to head north.

Unwind, relax and try not to be too tempted to never move again with a visit to the Harrison Hot Springs Resort. With five mineral hot pools at the heart of it all, the resort has been welcoming tired travellers and road trippers to its healing waters for more than 100 years. You can experience any number of activities, from kayaking, golfing, and fishing, to spa treatments and simply lazing about in the steaming pools for hours on end. There are plenty of dining options on site, and you can park your motorhome rental at the Harrison Springs RV park to extend your stay just that little bit longer.

Head south again down BC-9 before turning off onto BC-7, and eventually turn off towards the town of Hope and the Othello Tunnels.

Back in the 90s, the Canadian Pacific Railway built a series of tunnels through the hard granite stone of the Coquihalla Provincial Park. While trains no longer use this route (and the rails have been removed), it is now a gorgeous attraction you can explore on foot or two wheels. Not only will you pass through the tunnels, but over the rushing Coquihalla River, on a family-friendly 3.5-kilometre round trip. The site is a popular spot for filmmakers, and no doubt you’ll add a few photos and films to your own collection during your visit.

Roughly an hour north of the Othello Tunnels, you’ll find the Hell’s Gate AirTram, a jaw-droppingly beautiful ride from the Cascade Mountain Range to the Coast Pacific Mountain Range. This gondola-style experience passes over the Fraser River, including its most treacherous point, ‘Hell’s Gate’. It’s one of the steepest fully suspended trams in North America, and it’s open throughout the warmer months from April to October to offer unforgettable views of the mountain ranges, and to give you access to a number of observation decks, a suspension bridge, and a fantastic ice cream shop for those hot days.

Finally, continue north another 90 minutes until you reach Lillooet.
Leg 1 Highlights

Vancouver  Harrison Hot Springs  Othello Tunnels

Leg 2  Lillooet - Squamish

189 km  Total Distance  03:00:00  Est Driving Time

It doesn’t look like much on the map, but these 189 kilometres of adventure-by-campervan have the power to create memories that will stay with you forever. You’ll start with a taste of what British Columbian towns have to offer with the historic and beautiful Lillooet, before tackling an impossibly beautiful hike to three lakes, each more picture-perfect than the last. You’ll make your way through the small town of Pemberton and take even more photos on a short walk to Nairn Falls, all before falling in love with Whistler, the town that will charm you 10 ways any day of the year. A word of advice: Do not, under any circumstances, rush this leg of the road trip, as you’ll want to spend as much time in these spots as possible!

A town of under 3,000, Lillooet is the perfect example of a classic British Columbia town. Its residents lead healthy lifestyles, living for the outdoors and exploring the surrounding scenery on foot, skis, and sleds - basically anything but four wheels! You can start with the town’s culture, taking the self-guided Golden Mile of History walk that introduces you to gold rush memorabilia and First Nations artefacts. Or, try the Jade Trail walk through the downtown area to learn more about its relationship with BC’s official stone. The Miyazaki House and Lillooet Museum round out the historic attractions in town, at which point you can check out the scenic ones. Through summer, it’s a hiker’s paradise, with trails roaming along the edges of the Fraser River, and a particularly stunning trip up Red Rock for a view over the town. Come winter, it’s all about the
snowmobiling, back-country skiing, and ice climbing, so you’ll never be short of activities to try during your motorhome road trip, no matter the season.

**Joffre Lakes** is the stuff of hiking legend, and if you can fit it in, take the day to trek to all three lakes for the kind of scenery that is exclusively British Columbian. Located just off BC-99 on your way south, the trio of lakes is handily located and one of the easier hikes in the region. The first lake is just minutes from the car park, and even from here you can see the gleaming Matier Glacier at the top on a sunny day. The bright, turquoise-coloured middle lake is much further up, and will take another 90 minutes or so to reach. This is a great spot for a photo opportunity where a fallen log juts out perfectly into the lake, so you can stroll out and stand where it meets the water and be completely surrounded by its immense viridian hue. Finally, hike the extra 30 minutes to the final **Upper Joffre Lake**, where you can sit for lunch and take in the epic glacial views. The hike is best from June through to September, rated as intermediate in terms of difficulty, and is a 10-kilometre round trip, so allow for plenty of time to get there, take a hundred photos, and get back again.

**Pemberton** is a little further down the road, and is well worth a stop to stretch the legs and grab a bite to eat. Mile One is the restaurant most well-known and loved amongst locals, and it’s a particularly good stop for those who have just completed the **Joffre Lakes** hike and are keen for something substantial. The **Pemberton Distillery** is a must for fans of fine craft spirits (including its own organic absinthe), **North Arm Farm** is a fantastic spot through summer where you can pick your own berries, and the range of outdoor adventures such as fishing charters and horseback riding is seemingly endless.

You don’t have far to drive before reaching **Nairn Falls**, another of the province’s impossibly beautiful cascades within arm’s reach of the main road. There’s an easy 3-kilometre round trip route that will get you there, and one of the best parts is that you can do it at any time of year. The falls are 60 metres high and offer an impressive display of raging torrents from a viewing platform just above them. In mid-winter, the frozen ice and snow only add to the attraction’s mystique.

From here, it’s a short drive to **Whistler**, home of Whistler-Blackcomb and host to the 2010 Winter Olympics. The two mountains together create the largest ski resort in North America, and it is regularly voted as the number one resort, as well. But don’t let those features fool you - this place is just as idyllic and magnetic through the summer as the winter. Should you arrive in winter, make a beeline for the mountains, whether that’s for skiing and riding, or other adventures such as snowmobiling, dog sledding or cross country skiing. Come summer, it’s a mountain biking haven, and brings in the crowds for its golf courses, **Peak 2 Peak gondola**, frisbee golf courses, ATR tours, tree-tops adventures, and epic hiking trails. Throughout the year, you can go ziplining, relax in the award-winning **Scandinave Spa**, enjoy locally made beer at the **Brewhouse** or **Whistler Brewing Company**, or attend one of the countless events held in the village almost every other week. Book a spot for your campervan at the Whistler RV Park and prepare to be awed by this magical place in the valley amongst the mountains.
**Leg 2 Highlights**

Joffre Lakes  
Nairn Falls  
Whistler

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**Leg 3 Squamish - Tofino**

- **340 km** Total Distance  
- **04:00:00** Est Driving Time  

**Driving time:** 4 hours (plus 2 by ferry)

The motorhome road trip adventure continues with this leg that will take you down one of the most stunning roads on the planet and across to Vancouver Island. You'll struggle to keep your eyes on the road as you navigate through Canada's unofficial outdoor recreation capital and to various attractions such as the Sea to Sky Gondola, the Brackendale Eagles Provincial Park, and the Britannia Mine Museum. You'll only need two or three days to complete this portion of the trip, but you'll definitely need your camera and hiking boots!

Your drive from Whistler down through this entire leg will be one for the photo albums. The Sea to Sky Highway - Highway 99 - is amongst one of the most beautiful in the world, and is an attraction in itself. The road curves along the valley floor between soaring mountains, many of which will retain a smattering of snow at the tops throughout the year. You'll drive alongside Howe Sound as soon as you leave Squamish, looking out over islands and bays along the way. There are a handful of viewing areas, so be sure to make the most of them should you wish to stop for photo opportunities!

Squamish is the kind of place you might ordinarily drive through without much more than a stop to refuel or stock up on groceries - and exactly the kind of place where there's so much more to it than
that. It calls itself the Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada, and it's tough to argue otherwise. The first thing you may notice when approaching the town is the **Stawamus Chief** - the ginormous granite cliff towering over the town. You're going to hike it. This 700-metre rock is a tough but short trek to the top for astonishing views, and of course the more adventurous can organise to rock climb up the cliff face. The nearby **Shannon Falls** are worth a visit, or you can spend your time mountain biking some of the best terrain in the province. For fans of BC’s unrivalled scenery, arguably the best way to see it is from the sky with a ride on one of **Sea to Sky Air**’s breathtaking flights. Interestingly, **Squamish** is also one of the best places on the planet to see wintering bald eagles, so make your way to the **Brackendale Eagles Provincial Park** anytime between December and February to spot some of these majestic creatures.

Just 10 minutes south of central Squamish is the **Sea to Sky Gondola**, an unmissable attraction throughout every season of the year. This 10-minute ride will take you up to the Summit Lodge, where you’ll discover flawless views of **Howe Sound, Squamish, The Chief**, and more. Explore the area with a walk across the 100-metre **Sky Pilot Suspension Bridge**, or take a hike on one of the many scenic walking tracks at the top. Afterwards, grab a bite to eat in the lodge before heading back down and continuing on with your adventure.

Driving up to the **Britannia Mine Museum**, you’ll marvel at the building’s unique tiered architecture against the cliff face, but it’s tough to see from the road what treasures you’ll find within. This National Historic Site is an award-winning attraction that will give you a glimpse of the mining industry behind much of the region’s history. You can explore the museum, try your hand at gold panning, and take a mine train underground and see real mucking machines and working drills. This is another family-friendly activity that’s open year round, just remember to bring a jacket even during warmer months as it can get pretty chilly underground!

The last part of this leg is all about enjoying the beauty of the **Sea to Sky Highway** down to Horseshoe Bay, where you’ll jump on a two-hour ferry ride that’s as scenic as it is practical. This quick trip will introduce you to Vancouver Island, where you’ll dock in Nanaimo and continue your sight-seeing journey by campervan across to Tofino.

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**Leg 3 Highlights**

![Stawamus Chief](image1.png)  ![Shannon Falls](image2.png)  ![Brackendale Eagles Provincial Park](image3.png)
Leg 4  Tofino - Vancouver

Driving time: 4 hours (plus 2 by ferry)

The final leg of your Vancouver campervan round trip will let you experience one of British Columbia’s top surfing destinations - or simply relax after an adventurous journey with a great book by the beach. There are more hikes to be done, views to be marvelled over, and photos to be taken.

Explore the small seaside city of Nanaimo prior to leaving the island and head back over towards Vancouver before making a final stop at one of the top attractions for the entire drive.

Tofino is all about the wilderness - lakes, beaches, rainforest, and a maze of hiking trails in every direction, open year-round in this temperate climate. Find a park to stay in the Crystal Cove Beach Resort where you’ll be right on the waterfront, in the perfect spot to start each day with a swim. As the number of campsites in and around Tofino is limited, it’s best to reserve your spot ahead of time. Tofino is renowned for its surfing, and whether you’re a seasoned pro or a total newbie, it’s an ideal place to don a wetsuit and dive in. Chesterman Beach, Long Beach, and Cox Bay Beach are just a few of the top spots to get your surf on, and there are a number of rental places and schools where you can pick up gear and a lesson or two to get you started. After a big day on the water (or even just lazing on the beach), fill up at the famous Tacofino taco truck and stop in at the Tofino Brewing Company for a cold one (or two if you’re not driving). Either during your stay or on your way back towards Nanaimo, be sure to stop for a hike in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. There are any number of treks to choose from, but arguably the most famous is the Rainforest Trail, a quick 2-kilometre round trip that will introduce you to shades of green you never even knew existed.

Known as ‘The Harbour City’, Nanaimo is a thriving compilation of city living and beachside lifestyles. Stroll along the Harbourfront Walkway, trek through Neck Point Park, or aim to wander
the shoreline at Pipers Lagoon Park when the tide is at its lowest. Get to know Nanaimo a little better with an afternoon exploring the Old City Quarter uphill from the waterfront, and enjoy a meal on the water at the floating restaurant hut that is Penny’s Palapa. You can even spend a day exploring the charming Protection Island, where only a few hundred people live, and most of them get around by golf cart or simply on foot! If you happen to be there on a rainy day, the Vancouver Island Military Museum and White Sails Brewing both offer an enjoyable break from the drizzle outdoors.

Jump back on the ferry towards the mainland, and continue on driving back to Vancouver, your final stop. Before you get there however, you’ll need to make one last discovery - one of the city’s most famed attractions...

At last, the Capilano Suspension Bridge awaits you just out of West Vancouver before you hit the Lion’s Gate Bridge. Hanging 70 metres above the raging Capilano River, this 120-metre bridge is one of the most popular sites in town, and certainly one of the most jaw-dropping. Aside from simply crossing the bridge on foot and enjoying the thrill of the sight (as well as taking a bunch of photos), you can also try the treetops adventure walk, stroll around the cliffwalk, and learn more about the region’s cultural past at the Story Centre. Complimentary guided nature walks also leave every hour, which is a great way to discover even more as you wander through the park. This is the perfect final stop on an incredible motorhome road trip before you return to Vancouver, tick off any last few sights you missed during your first visit (or go back to some of your favourites), and return your campervan back to the depot.

It will have been a whirlwind of scenery and sights, adventures and action, and no doubt it will have passed by more quickly than you thought possible. From Vancouver to the inland of BC, across to the island and back again, this motorhome road trip is one for the memory books. No doubt you’ll feel a little nostalgic and sad over the idea of it coming to an end, but as with all trips, the best way to beat the blues is by starting to plan your next grand campervan tour!

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### Leg 4 Highlights

- Tofino
- Tacofino
- Nanaimo