

## WHAT TO DO IN VANCOUVER 2022

Hello and Welcome to Vancouver! As the “local” member of the organizing committee, I am happy to give some recommendations for sightseeing during your stay ‘*TN Notes*’. The following ideas are from the conference hotels’ list of suggested activities, but *I have added my insider’s information* and flagged my \*TOP RECOMMENDATIONS, all while re-organizing the activities into things you could do if you duck out of the conference for a couple of hours (but why would you do that?), things that might need a half day, and excursions that would better be tacked on a day or two before or after the conference! - *Torsten Nielsen MD/PhD* (and if you don’t trust me, there is a tourist infocentre right inside the entrance to the conference venue!)



### THINGS YOU COULD DO WITHIN A COUPLE OF HOURS

**GASTOWN:** Vancouver’s very first neighbourhood, growing from a single tavern founded by “Gassy Jack” Deighton, to its modern mix of old and new. Visit the famous steam clock, native art galleries, souvenir stores, and some of the city’s best casual restaurants and bars. 0.4km/0.25mi. 5 minute walk. *TN Notes:* *This is the older part of town, just east of the conference centre and Seabus terminal. The value here is that it is very close, the restaurants are slightly cheaper than those right beside the conference centre, and there are lots of souvenir shops.*

**\*STANLEY PARK:** This urban park is Vancouver’s most visited attraction, boasting 1001 acres of natural beauty. Walk, cycle, or run the seawall, a paved oceanfront trail that starts across the street from the hotel, and circles the entire park. Enjoy freshwaters lagoons, old-growth forests, and ocean beaches. 2.4km/1.5mi. 45 minute walk. *TN Notes:* *If it’s not raining, this is highly recommended! In particular, you could ride a bike all the way around the Seawall in about an hour, with spectacular views back towards the conference centre, north towards the mountains and once you get under the Lions Gate Bridge, west toward Vancouver Island. The western side of the park has beaches as well. You can circle back past Lost Lagoon to get back towards the conference centre. See e.g.: <https://averagejoecyclist.com/stanley-park-seawall-bike-trail-guide-video/>. Where to get a bike? There are Mobi bike-share rental racks close to the conference hotels, at either end of Canada Place street: <https://www.mobibikes.ca/>. It is possible your hotel might also have some available, and there is a company called Cycle City Tours that can set you up with bikes for self guided, or guided tours. Of course, the other option is just walking! From the conference centre promenade you will be able to see a peninsula called Brockton Point that is the eastern tip of Stanley Park; it has its own great views as well as a collection of First Nations totem poles and interpretive display. Walking there from the convention centre, along with waterside, will take about 45 minutes each way. There is also a one hour horse-drawn carriage tour of the park that departs from near its entrance (30 minute walk from hotel); the infocenter can help arrange that for you.*

#### **\*FLY OVER CANADA**

An indoor flight simulation ride that takes you on a scenic journey across Canada. Discounted tickets available at concierge desk. Located across the street at Canada Place. 5min walk. Open Daily 9:30am-10pm. *TN Notes:* *This is located at the north end of the conference centre, a short walk you will probably want to take at some point. There is a 10 minute pre-show about British Columbia, and then a main show which is an IMAX screen you view from a projecting gantry with some wind and spray to simulate flying. It’s quite fun and the show itself highlights Canada (there is also a show about Hawaii if that interests you instead or in addition). You could do the whole thing in an hour excursion from the conference, or after sessions are over as this runs until 8 pm; it’s also a great rainy-day choice. You can probably get walkup tickets but if you have a narrow time window you can book your spot online ahead of time: <https://www.flyovercanada.com/>. Note that for in person walkups, 20% off coupons are available from the tourist info desk as you walk in, and apparently even without one you can show your conference badge to get a discount. There is also an adjacent free display about the Port of Vancouver that is quite well done – the entrance is not super obvious but it might be worth popping in to learn about all the stuff you can see from Canada Place. This month there is also a King Tut immersive/virtual experience on site at Canada Place.*

**\*SEABUS:** Take a ferry across the harbour to Lonsdale Quay Market in North Vancouver. It is located 2 blocks away, at Waterfront Station. The Seabus runs every 10 minutes (peak periods) and every 15 minutes (off peak periods). *TN Notes:* *This is a great way to get a cheap boat ride and (unguided) harbour tour. You will see these Seabus boats constantly plying the water just east of the convention centre. A 2-zone fare is \$4.45 each way, when you simply tap in with a credit card (and kids under 12 are free). No need to worry about the schedule – just walk to Waterfront station immediately east of the convention centre, tap in with your credit card and follow the signs onto the Seabus. On the North Vancouver side there are parks with walkways on both sides of the terminal, and at Lonsdale Quay you can get a nice photo op of the mountains or back toward the convention centre from the giant Q sign viewing deck, if you can find your way up there (also restaurants and shops).*

**ROBSON STREET:** Robson Street offers a variety of brand name stores and great restaurants. Access to the 90- store Pacific Centre Mall is available from Nordstrom's Robson Street entrance. 0.8km/0.5mi. 12 minute walk. *TN Notes:* The Vancouver Art Gallery is walking distance from the conference at the very centre of downtown Vancouver on Robson Street, and has a nice gift shop; current exhibits are at <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/current-exhibitions>

**YALETOWN:** Vancouver's newest district is known as a hotspot for restaurants, clubs, bistros & boutiques. This is a very modern and upscale neighborhood, where old warehouses have made way to a wide array of shops, and restaurants. *TN Notes:* This is along the Canada Line connecting to the airport, two stops south of the Convention Centre

## HALF-DAY EXCURSIONS

**GRANVILLE ISLAND:** Offering a large public market (including a dedicated kids market), seasonal outdoor entertainment, restaurants, artisan workshops, craft studios, theatres and galleries. 4km/2.5mi. 12 minutes by taxi. *TN Notes:* Actually the best way to get to Granville Island is via bus #50 from Waterfront station, or (weather permitting) walking the full length of Hornby St thru downtown Vancouver and get the AquaBus across. Another option is the Expo line subway to Main St/Science World to catch the little harbour ferries from Olympic Village dock and sightsee from the water as they take you to Granville Island (which, among other things, has a "Kids Market" area).

\* **CAPILANO SUSPENSION BRIDGE:** Visit the Capilano Suspension Bridge, which spans 450 feet across and rises 230 feet above the Capilano River. Explore boardwalks and elevated walkways through beautiful first and second growth temperate rainforest. Year-round shuttle from Canada Place or organized tours available. Express Entry tickets available at concierge desk. 9km/5.4mi. 25 minute taxi or shuttle. *TN Notes:* This would be a great way for you to learn about what the natural rainforest is like if you only have a short time in Vancouver. There is, for example, a treetop canopy walk amongst the Douglas Firs (the world's second tallest species of tree) as well as a walkway built into the cliffside, along with nature displays. The direct shuttle bus (a full sized bus with Capilano Suspension Bridge on the side) departs / returns from right in front of the conference centre quite often: <https://www.capbridge.com/shuttle-schedule/>. In November, you don't need to book tickets in advance and lines will be short. They hand out free light rain coats to keep you dry, making the visit worthwhile unless it is heavily raining. The main drawback is that it is fairly expensive. Closing time is 5 pm, except from the last Saturday of CTOS when it becomes 9 pm and their annual "Canyon Lights" display starts.

**GROUSE MOUNTAIN:** Ascend the mountain on the scenic Skyride (aerial tramway) or by testing your fitness level on the aptly-named "Grouse Grind" hiking trail. Enjoy a variety of attractions that change with the seasons, including year-round dining options. Summer months offer grizzly bear viewing, the world-famous lumberjack show, helicopter rides, ziplining, and much more. Shuttle from Canada Place available May-Sept. 12km/7.5mi. 30 minutes by taxi or shuttle. *TN Notes:* This is a famous attraction but likely not worth going to in November – the hiking trails will be closed and the mountaintop is likely to have too many clouds to give you any view, at a time of year when there is not enough snow for skiing. *UPDATE:* actually the weather is looking great for Nov 15-19! You can see this mountain across from the convention centre, and if the top is out of the clouds then the view from up there will be spectacular (access via #236 bus from Lonsdale Quay, connecting with the Seabus). Cypress Mountain, just to the west, is open for skiing 09h-16h from Wednesday Nov 16 onwards, albeit with only a few runs open and not much snow so far: <https://cypressmountain.com/downhill-conditions-and-cams>. Getting there requires a car with snow tires, or catching an 08h30 am shuttle from the Art Gallery and making a whole day of it.

**VANCOUVER AQUARIUM:** Located inside Stanley Park, this aquarium has over 20,000 sea creatures from all over the world, from the tropical seas to arctic waters, including dolphin, sea lions, otters and sharks: 3km/1.9mi. 35 minute walk. *TN Notes:* This is a nice aquarium and a great family activity. It is indeed a half hour walk there & again to get back, and not easily accessed by transit (taxi if weather is bad). It is also fairly expensive

**MUSEUMS and GALLERIES:** The Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver Museum, and the Maritime Museum all offer glimpses into Vancouver's history, while the Vancouver Art Gallery showcases historical and contemporary exhibits. *TN Notes:* The Museum of Anthropology focusses on our first nations, with a spectacular collection of totem poles among other things (some can't be seen right now while seismic upgrade construction is underway). This is on the University of British Columbia's main campus, accessible from the #44 express bus connecting Waterfront Station with UBC. Also on campus is the Beatty Biodiversity Museum, including a full blue whale skeleton you can view in the atrium for free. The Vancouver Museum and Maritime Museum are located at scenic Kitsilano Point, a short walk from Granville Island and reachable by harbour ferries.

### HOP-ON HOP-OFF BUS:

Visit the most popular attractions on your own time to get a great overview of the city highlights including historic Gastown, Chinatown, Robson Street, Stanley Park, English Bay, the Granville Island Public Market, and Yaletown. Tickets are available at the Concierge desk. \$59 per person. *TN Notes:* evidently this is not running in November, but another company (Landsea Tours) is offering a half day (Stanley Park and Granville Island) and a full day (add Capilano Suspension Bridge and a downtown building with a viewpoint) tour. This is not hop-on hop-off however: you have to start at 10 a.m. and commit to the whole thing. Tickets and info available at the infocentre near the CTOS registration desk).

### CITY TOUR:

This tour covers the city's highlights and offers an excellent orientation to Vancouver. Includes Stanley Park, the Granville Island Public Market, Gastown, Chinatown, and English Bay, providing stops at some of the sights. 2.5-3.5hr. From \$64 per adult or \$115/hour for a private tour.

## LONGER EXCURSIONS

### SEAPLANE TOURS

Take a panoramic flight over Vancouver for wonderful city, mountain, and ocean views, or opt for a longer flight to land on a remote alpine lake, or fly off to tour Victoria or Whistler for the day. Prices start at C\$99 for a 10min flight. *TN Notes:* There is a seaplane airport attached to the Convention Centre West and you will see and hear these taking off and landing during daylight hours (only). The weather is nice and tours are running in November, so you could take a 20 minute sightseeing flight which will have especially spectacular views of the mountains, ocean and city this week. Somewhat longer flights are an option if a group of 4 is willing to book – talk to the people at the tourist infocentre desk when you walk in to the conference centre. The other main value here is as a quick way to get to & from Victoria, as per below

### VICTORIA & BUTCHART GARDENS

**Coach and Ferry Tour** - Tours depart daily between 7 and 9am, then travel by coach and ferry to Vancouver Island. This tour includes free time at the world-famous Butchart Gardens, and also downtown Victoria. Visit the historic buildings, museums, and great restaurants, or opt to have afternoon tea at the Fairmont Empress Hotel

(reservations required). The tour is fully narrated, and the price includes coach and ferry transportation, as well as gardens admission. Tour length is 12.5-14.5 hours. \$241 per person

**Seaplane or Helicopter** - Due to lengthy travel times by coach and ferry, opt to fly one-way or roundtrip from fully narrated to Victoria's Inner Harbour in just 35 minutes. Prices start at \$449 roundtrip per person by seaplane. Helicopters range from \$470-700 roundtrip per person. Seaplane seat sales and exclusive 15% discount available on Helicopter to ALL Accor Loyalty members - See Concierge.

#### **WHALE WATCHING**

The Salish Sea provides excellent whale watching opportunities due to its resident and transient killer whale (orca) population. In addition to orcas and other types of whales, you may also see seals, sea lions, porpoises and bald eagles. Trip is 3 to 5 hours. Departures from Granville Island or Steveston Village. Starting at \$155 per adult. *TN Notes: This one I probably wouldn't recommend as the transient whales have all passed through by November, leaving only a few resident orcas around. Also you have to spend a lot of time to get set up to go and another while on a sometimes rough and long ride to find the whales, which by law you cannot approach too closely.*

#### **WHISTLER VILLAGE (Full Day)**

**Motorcoach Tour** - Guided tours depart daily and drive up the magnificent Sea to Sky Highway, with stops at 1000ft Shannon Falls and scenic viewpoints. Ample time is allotted for exploring Whistler village, taking an adventure tour, or to ride the World's highest gondola, the Peak to Peak. Total length is 10-11 hours. From \$194 per person. *TN Notes: Whistler is nice but the ski season isn't projected to start until November 24. CTOS week falls in a bit of an awkward transition time at Whistler where the summer activities have shut down but the winter ones haven't started up. The bus ride is scenic if the weather is good and you travel during the day, else it's just a bus on a dark road, 2 hours each way).*

## **DINING OUT**

Conference delegates will be able to get food at the poster reception and at the gala banquet. However, there are many excellent restaurants in the immediate neighbourhood. Vancouver is particularly well known for Asian fusion cuisine and for high quality seafood.

Vancouver Magazine released their annual restaurant award list on October 4:

<https://www.vanmag.com/restaurant-awards/2022/vanmags-2022-restaurant-award-winners/>

Even more recently (October 27, 2022!) the Michelin guide released its inaugural reviews of Vancouver restaurants:

<https://guide.michelin.com/ca/en/british-columbia/restaurants>