

Now's the time to visit cosmopolitan Vancouver,
when autumn casts its warm glow on the city's vibrant waterfront.

peak season

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a gusty breeze romps

down Robson Street, Vancouver's main shopping drag. Crimson maple leaves cartwheel along the sidewalk and cluster in the doorways of trendy boutiques. The weather is fair, but the breeze hints at the chill of days to come. And passersby suddenly wonder how they'd look in that coat on the window mannequin.

Vancouverites savor fall as a season of shorter days with lingering warmth, a sensuous segue from summer sunshine to winter rains. Regularly named one of the world's most livable cities, Vancouver combines an ocean-tempered climate, a richly diverse population, and a singularly gorgeous setting. Extensive inlets define its central peninsula, creating an abundance of shoreline. To the north, the Coast Mountains stand as rugged reminders that this metropolis of 2 million residents lies at the edge of wilderness. The grand surround of water and mountains imparts a sense of expansive space, even where condo and office towers crowd together.

In a land lush with spruce and fir, autumn color comes not in vast sweeps but as vivid accents, blazing like torches against a velvety ever-green screen. The maple leaf, emblem of flag and country, flares in a range of hues all over the city. Alders, ginkgos, hawthorns, and other deciduous trees add their bold shades. Virginia creeper cloaks entire



A Stanley Park maple echoes the eye-catching red of Brockton Point lighthouse (opposite, top) against the mountainous North Shore. For more than a century, horses have pulled carriages on popular tours through the park. Around it, a 5½-mile-long seawall promenade curves from Coal Harbor to English Bay. Opposite, bottom: Compact water taxis ply False Creek (actually an inlet), which is edged with housing, parks, marinas, and the varied attractions of Granville Island.

walls in scarlet, while ubiquitous burning bush lives up to its name.

The verdant tip of the peninsula, thousand-acre Stanley Park, contains a forest, monuments, and (at the Vancouver Aquarium) beluga whales. But its most appealing feature must be the 5½-mile seawall path that curves around it, passing beneath stately Lions Gate Bridge. Legions of walkers, joggers, skaters, and cyclists flow along it year-round. And they don't stop there: The promenade has been extended to form more than 13 miles of waterfront walkway.

While its mild climate and compact core invite self-propelled sightseeing, the city presents plenty of alternatives, including harbor cruises, horse-drawn carriages, and hop-on-hop-off trolleys. Strangers strike up conversations on the water taxis that connect popular stops on the False Creek inlet. "This is the coolest job in town," declares a goateed water cabbie, dropping passengers off at Granville Island. Known for the dazzling variety of selections in its public market, the island also harbors art galleries and

A year-round ski tram leads to Grouse Mountain's southern views of Vancouver. Lending authenticity to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden (opposite, top), Chinese artisans used imported materials to create the city-center refuge that opened in 1986. Below: The Capilano Suspension Bridge, sturdier than the 1889 original, hangs 230 feet above its namesake river.

studios, restaurants, theaters, and shops. Here, The Sandbar restaurant's terrace, tucked under the Granville Street Bridge trestles, shows the many ways restaurateurs enable outdoor dining all year: a glass wall to banish wind but preserve views, retractable awnings, fireplaces, propane heaters, lap blankets, even a heated floor.

In Yaletown, on the north side of False Creek, brick warehouses have become enticing shops and restaurants, with outside tables on old loading docks. Rooms at the hip Opus Hotel come in five artful decors. "We want it to feel like a friend with a great sense of style gave you the keys to his apartment," explains general manager Daniel Craig. Two Yaletown restaurants honor Vancouver's passion for seafood: Blue Water Cafe serves everything from B.C. sablefish to just-shucked oysters. Nearby, Coast restaurant offers adventurous dishes in a soaring contemporary space. (Naturally, both have heated patios.)

In the Pacific Northwest manner, fresh local foods, regional wines, and multicultural influences converge in an alluring dining scene. West Restaurant and Aurora Bistro showcase the



best of fall fare, such as wild mushrooms and tender root vegetables, as well as small-batch B.C. wines you won't find in stores. Lift restaurant serves food to match its striking views of Coal Harbor.

The area's impressive public gardens also mark the season. The Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden mirrors fall's contemplative mood. "A Chinese garden tells you how to live," says tour guide Julian Law. "Everything is balanced—yin and yang." Covered walkways meander past reflecting pools, traditional latticework, carefully framed foliage, and symbolic rocks.

Two prime attractions lie across Burrard Inlet, on the North Shore. Intrepid walkers cross Capilano Suspension Bridge for a rare chance to get up—way up—into the evergreen forest, on tree platforms linked by footbridges. An urban-area ski resort, Grouse Mountain draws throngs even outside of snow season, for hiking, picnicking, dining at Altitudes Bistro (3,700 feet), and, above all, the jaw-dropping panorama: Views stretch from Washington state's Mt. Baker to neighboring Vancouver Island and beyond. From this height, downtown skyscrapers resemble scale models. Brilliant sunshine turns the sea into a sheet of hammered silver. Below, a phalanx of Canada geese heads south for the winter. And a visitor feels sure that, like the geese, he'll return year after year to this captivating city. 🌿

More info: page 198