

Vancouver: an inside perspective

A few weeks ago I was looking through one of the magazines in my house when I saw an article listing the top ten cities in the world to visit. Since I have a strong interest in travelling I took a look and to my great surprise, there among great cities such as Rome, Florence, Paris and Vienna was my home town of Vancouver. I couldn't believe it, I mean all my life I've lived in this city and never once would I have considered comparing it with any of those cities. Full of curiosity I started reading the article to find out just what there could be in this city of mine that deserved so much admiration. After reading I started thinking and realised that although I still didn't feel it could really be compared to these great European cities, I supposed there was something special about it. The more I thought the more memories started to swell inside my head and the more I realised that although I might have taken it for granted the past 19 years of my life, Vancouver really isn't that bad a place to live. For this reason, and the fact that I'm sure many people here know little to nothing about it, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you all a little about this place I call home.

Vancouver is a city located on the south west coast of Canada nestled between the Pacific Ocean and the snow capped coast mountains. It has a population quickly approaching 2 million inhabitants, making it the third largest and fastest growing city in Canada. Although throughout my life I've moved to several different towns in the Vancouver area, part of me has always been connected to the city. Whether it's my childhood memories of widow shopping at the giant department stores at Christmas or getting hopelessly lost with my friends as we try to find our way around in a car for the first time, there has never been a time when Vancouver hasn't been a part of my life. Sure it rains a lot and maybe there's not all the same kind of history, art and beauty you find here in Italy but Vancouver does have a its own special flair. It's a city with a unique atmosphere which easily melds together people of all races, religions and beliefs. Where whether you're the coffee addicted, poetry reading, bohemian type, the outdoorsy, fit as can be, yoga obsessed or the overly pierced, brightly dressed, Raver you can find a home. It's a city where you'll never have a hard time finding a coffee shop open, no matter what time of day or night, and where the weather forecast stays the same about 360 days a year: Cloudy with a chance of showers and a slight possibility of sun later on in the day. Basically it's a city with a little bit of everything, where you can choose to enjoy the busy city life or, if need be "get away from it all" by enjoying the abundance of nature no more than a maximum of a few hours drive from down town.

One of what I think is the best things about Vancouver is its spectacular natural setting. I feel it's very unique to find such a big city planted right in the middle of such amazing natural beauty the way Vancouver is. In Vancouver you have the mountains close by for snowboarding and skiing in the winter; the lakes and rivers for swimming, canoeing and kayaking in the summer; the ocean for surfing, sailing, suntanning and all kinds of beach sports; and as much forests and wilderness as you could ever hope for hiking, mountain biking etc. However if you are more the type who prefers the action and movement of city life, Vancouver is far from lacking. Vancouver is a city known for its indulgence in the arts and with attractions ranging from world wide competitions, to the many film, music and art festivals, to the hundreds of concerts and tours that take place here there's hardly a night you can't find something going on. It's true that the possibility for rain may turn many people off things like the giant outdoor tours, but take my word that a mosh pit is about ten times as fun when there's mud involved. Vancouver has also recently become a hotspot for film and television production, even adopting the title *Hollywood North*. A huge number of movies and TV shows are being shot there, so if there's nothing else that sparks your interest there's always the possibility of spending an afternoon doing a little "star spying". Apart from all the special events that take place there, even everyday Vancouver has a lot to offer. Whether it's a day spent Shopping on Robson's street, cruising through ethnically unique Chinatown, taking a walk in historic Gastown, or just chilling in a one of the many, many, Starbucks coffee shops you can always find something that appeals to you. I feel that Vancouver; although not Paris, New York, or Rome, does offer something special to both it's locals and tourists. Sure, maybe to me it will never live up to the beauty, and history I've been lucky enough to experience here in Italy, but I suppose that upon reflection it also has a lot of good points and hopefully you now have at least a brief idea what life there is like.

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