

Stanley Park views: "Girl in a Wetsuit" surveys Burrard Inlet. The Lions Gate bridge. Part of the 9-km (5.5-mi) seawall



Ever-evolving neighbourhoods reveal a kaleidoscopic vision of this liveable, loveable city

BY DORIS ECKER + PHOTOS KK LAW

Cambie Street

When it was chosen as the neighbourhood for Vancouver's impressive art-deco city hall in the 1930s, Cambie Street was still considered the boonies. Fast forward 80 years to find a hip urban streetscape, still with almost unparalleled mountain and city views, and only a quick SkyTrain ride, walk or cycle across Cambie bridge from downtown. Around Broadway, bright new big-box stores offering household wares, clothes, electronics and organic groceries give way to a variety of locally focused businesses. Whether it is specialty cheeses

or organic fruit, friendly oenological advice or crafty beers, real bookshops or a spot of flamenco and tapas you're after, you can "Get it in Cambie Village," as a neighbourhood slogan has it. For those who want to stroll, bus or drive the extra mile, the "horticultural jewel" of Queen Elizabeth Park beckons with even more splendid views, a tropical conservatory and a chance to let out your sporting spirit on the tennis courts, the putting green or by just meditating over a glass of local wine with a top-of-the-city view.

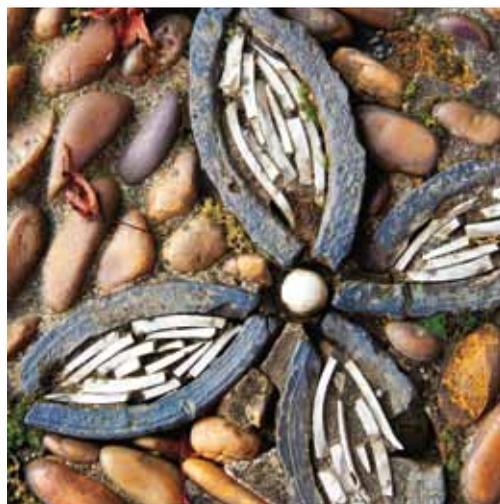
Chinatown

Enter Canada's largest Chinatown through its ornate Millennium Gate, the emblem of the neighbourhood's journey through time, and follow the lead of the Chinese-English street signs and dragon-decked lampposts

along Pender, Keefer and Hastings streets into a world where East meets West and old and new harmoniously coexist. The air is redolent with seductive aromas; the people a delightful mix of cultures; the architecture an eclectic mirror of Chinese tradition, Vancouver history and urban rejuvenation. Open-front markets beckon with pyramids of fresh fruit, and mind-boggling varieties of greens and dried fish. Whatever ails you, the herbalist will mix you a cure, and the tea specialist will recommend the perfect brew to restore your spirits. Snack or feast your way through the multifarious delights of Chinese cuisine at the summer night market or in buzzing restaurants. Browse, marvel and choose from colourful displays of trinkets, treasures, Chinese inspired fashion and kitchenware. Focus your energy on historic bricks and mortar, like the



Dr Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden: Chinatown's peaceful microcosm



photogenic Sam Kee sliver of a building or the headquarters of the Chinese Benevolent Association, organizer of the annual Chinese New Year Parade. Relax in the timeless oasis of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden.

Commercial Drive

Skid road for huge logs, Edwardian suburbia, little Italy, Latino wave, counter-culture central, green zeitgeist — “The Drive,” as the Grandview area between Venables and East Broadway is best known, has been there, done that, and amalgamated it all into this ever-popular, multi-racial ’hood with a huge community spirit. Rastafarian or Buddhist, couch potato or activist, vegan or omnivore, doctor or grocer, The Drive has space for everyone and a festival or event to match. The June Car Free Day brings everybody out on the roads for a buoyant street party. Local food and community are the raisons d’être of the weekly summer

farmers’ market at Trout Lake and the May Stone Soup Festival. The Dyke March and the East Side Pride are exuberant odes to individuality and community. The October Parade of Lost Souls celebrates the spiritual world beyond with fire dancers, crazy costumes and cheerful drumming. During the Garden Tour and Culture Crawl, both annual events, private neighbourhood gardens and artist studios open to visitors. First Thursdays offer free live entertainment; any time, it’s a worthwhile SkyTrain ride to enjoy the eclectic venues and vibe of this quirky neighbourhood.

Downtown

Harmonic convergence on a pedestrian-friendly scale — that’s the essence of the city’s vibrant downtown core. Historic buildings and the sparkling façades that inspired author Douglas Coupland to call Vancouver “City of Glass” meld into an appealing streetscape that holds its own

against mountain and water views. Take a walk from the bustling cruise-ship terminal, along the waterfront past the green-roofed Convention Centre West — temple to 21st-century sustainability and smart-city ambition — to the forested jewel in Vancouver’s crown, Stanley Park. Or stroll through time, past the relief-encrusted Art Deco Marine Building, the old-world 1900s Holy Rosary Cathedral, the contemporary Colosseum-shaped Central Library and the sky-piercing Shangri-La, BC’s tallest building. Brand and luxury shopping options range from classy boutiques in historic buildings to weatherproof malls. Sightseeing warrants sustenance, and downtown’s culinary landscape delivers: pan-Asian and West Coast fine dining, modern Mediterranean, glitzy cocktail lounges and original street-food carts. For classics lovers and dance-floor aficionados, it’s an easy amble to the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Orpheum and Granville Mall entertainment venues.

Sightseeing: cycle the West End seawall. Cross False Creek in a mini-ferry from downtown south to Granville Island. Paddleboard on False Creek



Gastown

Hip meets heritage in Vancouver's oldest neighbourhood. About 140 late 19th and early 20th-century buildings of this National Historic Site have found life in the present tense as designer boutiques, cutting-edge restaurants, cheerful souvenir shops and art galleries. No wonder this picturesque-yet-cool destination was recently voted fourth of the world's 50 most stylish neighbourhoods by *Complex* magazine. Put on your tourist hat in cobbled Maple Tree Square, site of Vancouver's first saloon, in Gaoler's Mews, the first lockup, and in Blood Alley. Take a picture of the replica 1875 steam-powered clock, buy yourself a jazzy souvenir, and get acquainted with First Nations art in one of the high-end galleries. Be seduced by designer shoes, dresses or handmade jewellery. Lunch on a smart patio and keep your cell at the ready to broadcast possible celebrity sightings. If you are the

just-hanging-out type, sit on a bench for some primetime people watching, grab a pint of local brew or a stiff drink at one of the award-winning watering holes, and sit in one of the independent coffee shops and ponder the marvels of urban evolution that Gastown epitomizes.

Granville Island

Granville Island captures Vancouver's essence — water-enhanced beauty, brisk commerce and a focus on all things local and sustainable. Just a quick mini-ferry ride from downtown, the pedestrian-friendly peninsula looks towards English Bay and the city skyline. Recalling 1930s beginnings on "Industrial Island," refurbished warehouses and colourful metal sheds house visitor-friendly studios devoted to ceramics, glass and metal ware, fine wood and paper works, or beautiful fabrics. Seven days a week, chefs and gourmands shop the Public Market for sustainable seafood, all-natural

sausages, handmade crafts, farm-fresh produce and local honey. Outside buskers draw appreciative crowds with music, acrobatics and stand-up comedy. No need to drag the kids along to the micro-brewery or the artisan-sake maker; they will feel perfectly at home among the toys and activities at Kids Market. Island eateries employ freshest farm-to-table and Pacific sourced ingredients. Live theatre, stand-up comedy and seasonal events such as jazz-festival concerts are on the menu at several indoor and outdoor venues.

Kitsilano

First there were Chief Khatsahlano and the Squamish people, then came the turn-of-the-century summer campers, the Greek community, the hippies and Greenpeace, the yoga hipsters and upward-moving outdoor lovers. They've all made their mark on the handsome seaside neighbourhood commonly called Kits, where



Coal Harbour photo ops: Canada Place. "The Drop" and "Digital Orca" at the Vancouver Convention Centre

life's a beach, real estate's hot, shopping's a breeze and being a locavore is a way of life. Kits Beach is the destination for sun worshippers, beach-sports enthusiasts and people watching. Serious shoppers saunter along Fourth Avenue and West Broadway to check out sleek boutiques, fancy tea-and-coffee shops and the latest surf-and-yoga wear. From June to September, Vanier Park's green, picnic-friendly expanse is home to the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival. Year-round, the adjacent Museum of Vancouver showcases Vancouver's evolution in vibrant exhibitions, the Vancouver Maritime Museum lets you drift through Canada's nautical history, and the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre explores the universe at large. The think-global, eat-local mantra is echoed in the Kitsilano restaurant scene, which indulges fine-dining epicureans and gourmet vegetarians as well as connoisseurs of Greek cuisine and Asia-philes.

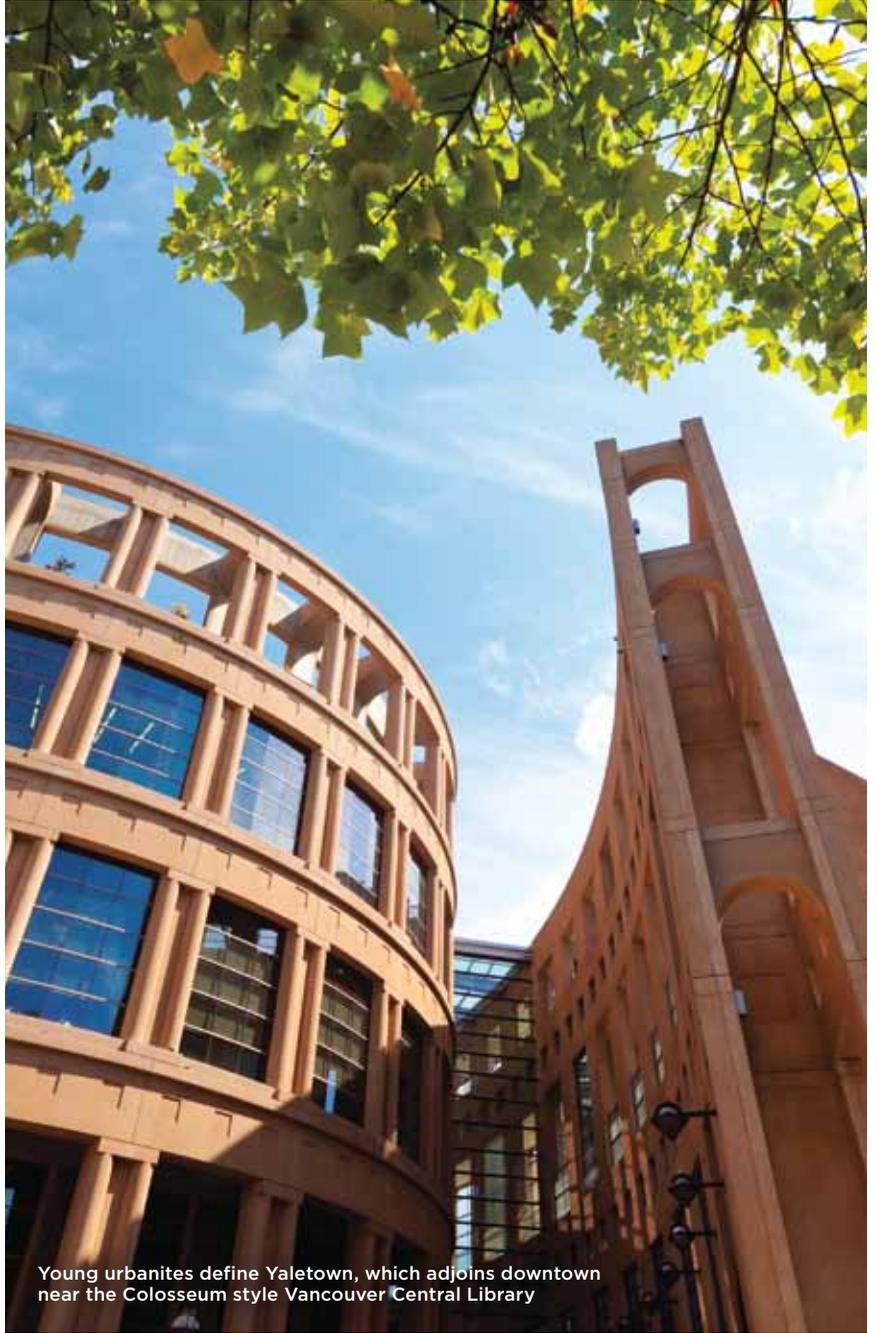
Main Street

Originality is the word on the street in this up-and-cheerfully-running neighbourhood. Blissfully devoid of big-box chain stores, former blue-collar SoMa (South Main) between 7th and 33rd avenues is home to an urban indie spirit in funky boutiques, quirky vintage shops and original specialist stores. Generation pre-X, X and Y, hipsters and heritage buffs, philosophers and party fans mix and mingle at cozy cafés and friendly character pubs. Unique groceries, delis and neighbourhood restaurants cater to all culinary creeds and cravings, from the down-to-earth-local to the exotic. Having done its duty as a former post office and RCMP headquarters, the splendid 1916 Heritage Hall at mid-Main still proudly fulfills its community mission by hosting concerts and craft fairs. The 40-hectare (100-acre) Mountain View Cemetery that connects this 'hood with up-and-coming Fraser Street is a beguiling cross between stroll-and-cycle

friendly parkland and a fascinating history lesson in multiculturalism. Community spirit and the art of remembrance are celebrated here during the annual All Souls event.

Robson Street

You can't really get the wrong end of the strip on Robson. From Denman to Granville, day and night, restaurants, bars and cafés are abuzz with latte- and cocktail-loving fashionistas, shop-happy tourists and the see-and-be-seen crowd. On Robson Square, the neoclassical-revival-style Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) harbours works by renowned Canadian artists, temporary exhibitions of international standing, a classy shop and café. History buffs will relish the story of the double ménage-à-trois that led to the murder of the VAG's original architect, Francis Rattenbury. More opportunities to indulge in fact, and fiction, are found a few blocks further down at the contemporary Vancouver Central Library.



Young urbanites define Yaletown, which adjoins downtown near the Colosseum style Vancouver Central Library



A statue of "Gassy" Jack Deighton overlooks Maple Tree Square in Gastown



South Granville

Art has been in the air on Vancouver's Gallery Row for decades, ever since beloved BC painter Emily Carr returned from Paris in 1912 and set up her studio in the former "mud wallows" at Broadway (see also pages 50 and 53). Just follow the colourful, art-inspired street banners from Granville bridge to 16th Avenue and its many galleries, high-end antique dealers and sophisticated specialty stores. Whether you are mad for modern photography, collect classic furniture, adore Asian artefacts or favour First Nations jewellery, the range of mediums and styles for sale here artfully mirrors the city's cultural tapestry. Take time out from your gallery hop to taste the art of West Coast cuisine, an eggy brunch or fine pan-Indian fusion cooking. Let it all settle during a hammam spa treatment before celebrating the performing arts at the refurbished Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage (starring in "On Fire," page 34).

West End

Embraced by sandy beaches along English Bay, Stanley Park and the Coal Harbour waterfront, this gem of a neighbourhood has plenty of character and community spirit. Bustling Denman Street attracts foodies and fashionistas. Turn down tree-lined side streets to find heritage buildings, and peace and quiet in leafy gardens. Walk further west into the wildlife-rich 400 hectares (1,000 acres) of Stanley Park. Head east into quirky urban Davie Village where all things LGBT reign, from rainbow flags to hot-pink garbage cans, in colourful bars and clubs, at the Qmunity centre and the Pride Society, organizers of the fabulous Pride Parade. West End beaches are the place for people watching and for ringside seats at the Celebration of Light fireworks.

Yaletown

From railyard and ragtrade district to dot-com central and upmarket waterfront

condo-land; at downtown's south end, Yaletown has become a trend-setting urban community retaining fragments of its eclectic past. Shining glass condo towers join converted warehouse lofts as stylish des-res options. The face-lifted ex-industrial setting makes a popular movie-set location. Chic salons, upscale groceries and stylish boutiques pamper, clothe, feed and furnish local residents. Old loading docks have been rejuvenated as trendy brewpubs and swanky restaurants, where high-tech mavericks and hipsters meet. Dance and jazz festivals and other arts and cultural events find a home at the Roundhouse, a former locomotive hub turned community centre, and on the lush expanse of adjacent David Lam Park. See and be seen on the manicured waterfront, where lavish yachts and tour boats share the False Creek waters with kayaks, dragon boats and mini-ferries serving Granville Island. ■