



The Pacific Province

Established 1871
6th Province

Did You Know?



- British Columbia sometimes experiences a weather swing known as a “west coast special.” Because of the quick temperature change, British Columbians can sometimes ski and golf in the same day!
- The Victoria Bug Zoo is a mini-zoo located in downtown Victoria. It houses 50 different species of insects and spiders and has the largest collection of tropical insects in North America.
- The Nine O’Clock Gun is a cannon that faces Coal Harbour in Vancouver. Ship captains used to set their *chronometers* (extremely accurate timekeepers used to navigate at sea) by the cannon, which was fired every night at 9 p.m. The cannon is still fired daily at this same time.
- The Capilano Suspension Bridge is the longest suspension footbridge in the world. It stretches 137 metres (450 feet) across and stands 70 metres (230 feet) above the Capilano River in Vancouver.
- Native legend tells of a mysterious monster known as the *N’ha-a-itk*, or “lake demon,” who lives in the waters of Lake Okanagan. Today the monster is called Ogopogo, and sightings are reported every year.
- British Columbia is sometimes called Hollywood North because, after New York and Los Angeles, it is the largest film and television production centre in North America.
- The international environmental protection organization called Greenpeace was founded in Vancouver in 1971.
- A quarter of the world’s bald eagles are found in British Columbia.

Quick Facts



Capital city: Victoria

Population: 4,751,612

Total Area: 944,735 square kilometres (364,764 sq miles)

Population Density: 4.80 persons per square kilometre (13.00 per sq mile)

The Place



Climate

British Columbia's climate ranges from an interior region with long, hot summers and cold winters to a southern coastal region that enjoys mild weather. Overall temperatures in July range between 16° and 22°C (60° and 74°F), while January sees temperatures from -15° to -10°C (5° to 14°F). The coastal regions receive more rainfall than inland British Columbia. The coast gets anywhere from 130 to 380 centimetres (51 to 150 inches) of rain per year, and Vancouver Island receives the most rainfall. Temperatures on the coast average between 16° and 21°C (60° and 70°F) in July and around 0°C (32°F) in January.



Average Seasonal High and Low Temperatures

Spring: 11/1°C

Summer: 22/10°C

Fall: 10/1°C

Winter: -2/-9°C

Geography

British Columbia is often referred to as a paradise because of its remarkable natural beauty. Located between Alberta and the Pacific Ocean, British Columbia is the westernmost of Canada's 10 provinces. British Columbia has a total area of 944,735 square kilometres (364,764 square miles), making it the third-largest province and about four times the size of the United Kingdom.

Most of the province is covered by the Canadian Cordillera mountain range and by a part of the Rocky Mountains. Much of this mountain area is covered by forests as well, and British Columbia grows the largest trees in Canada. The northeastern corner of the province is called the Peace River district and is mostly made up of prairie land. Runoff from the mountains forms many rivers, lakes, and *fjords* (narrow inlets of ocean between steep cliffs). The most well-known rivers are the Fraser and Columbia rivers, which flow into the Pacific Ocean, and the Peace River, which runs to the Arctic Ocean.

The *Haida Gwaii* (Islands of the People), formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands, is a group of more than 150 islands off the coast of northwestern British Columbia. They are mountainous and cover an area about 300 kilometres (186 miles) long and 100 kilometres (62 miles) wide. The two main islands are Graham Island in the north and Moresby Island in the south. Earthquakes are common in the islands.



Wildlife

The coastal river and lake regions of British Columbia are home to many waterfowl, including wood ducks, trumpeter swans, snow geese, and gulls. Fish are also plentiful. Salmon and herring flourish in the coastal waters, and trout and sturgeon in the rivers further inland.



Flora and Fauna

Common Animals

Bighorn sheep
 Black bear
 Caribou
 Gray wolf
 Grizzly bear
 Moose
 North American elk
 Red fox
 Red-winged blackbird
 Tundra swan

Common Plants

Douglas fir
 Garry oak
 Western hemlock
 Western red cedar

Endangered Animals

Badger

Endangered Plants

Deltoid balsamroot

Burrowing owl
 Night snake
 Pacific water shrew
 Rocky Mountain tailed frog
 Tiger salamander
 Townsend's mole
 White-headed woodpecker
 White sturgeon

Dwarf sandwort
 Golden paintbrush
 Silver hair moss
 Southern maiden-hair
 Tall bugba
 Toothcup meadow-foam
 Water-plantain buttercup
 White meconella

Environmental Issues

Parkland and Wilderness Protection

British Columbia has more than eight hundred protected parklands. About 24 million people visit provincial parks each year. Provincial parks are used for outdoor recreation and camping. However, many areas are protected wilderness reserves and are set up as *refuges* (safe places) for wildlife. British Columbia tries to reach a balance between recreation and conservation.



Salmon Farming and Pollution

Salmon is the leading farming *export* (good sold to another country) in British Columbia. These fish are caught in the wild and also grown in fish farms. Salmon farmers build hatcheries in open-ocean net pens or cages. Because of the large number of fish grown in farms, many wastes are expelled into the surrounding area. These wastes build up and harm the marine and plant life in the ocean. The hatcheries also lower the oxygen in the water, causing further damage to the *ecosystem* (community of living things). Government inspectors examine salmon farms to make sure farmers are following regulations.



Resources and Industries

Agriculture

Only a small percentage of British Columbian land is farmed, but that small amount of farmland is very productive. The Peace River area is known for grain farming, while ranching is common in the *plateau* (high, flat area) region in south central British Columbia. Many different kinds of fruit are grown in the province. Raspberries, blueberries, and cranberries are common in the Lower Fraser Valley. Apples, plums, and cherries are the top crops in the Okanagan Valley. British Columbia is also one of the largest dairy-producing provinces in Canada.



Manufacturing

Wood processing drives the manufacturing industry in British Columbia. The province sells large quantities of lumber to the United States and Asia, where it is used in the construction of buildings. The province is also known for its production of pulp and paper. Local markets focus on food and beverage processing.



Mining



Gold, copper, and zinc are all mined in British Columbia, and *molybdenum*—a soft, silvery-white metal used to strengthen steel and make airplane and missile parts—is produced. British Columbia has many coal and natural gas mines. Most of the coal mines are located in southeastern British Columbia near Fernie. The majority of the products mined in the province are sold outside of British Columbia to countries like Japan and the United States.






History



Time Line

Thousands of years before European explorers come, native inhabitants live along the coast of what is now British Columbia		
AD 1700		
1778	Captain James Cook lands on what is now Vancouver Island	
1792	Captain George Vancouver surveys the coastline of Vancouver Island, which is later named after him	
1800		
1805	Fort McLeod is the first fur-trading fort built in British Columbia	

1846	The Treaty of Washington establishes British Columbia as a British territory	
1849	The Vancouver Island colony is created	
1858	Gold is discovered in the Fraser River, bringing thousands of fortune-seekers to British Columbia; mainland British Columbia becomes a colony	
1862	A smallpox <i>epidemic</i> (outbreak) devastates the <i>aboriginal</i> (native) population	
1866	Vancouver Island and British Columbia colonies join to form one colony	
1871	British Columbia becomes the sixth Canadian province	
1885	The Canadian transcontinental railroad is finished, connecting British Columbia with Central Canada	
1900		
1912	Coal miners on Vancouver Island begin a two-year strike	
1917	Women are allowed to vote	
1935	Unhappy with their living and working conditions, jobless men in British Columbia begin the On to Ottawa Trek to present their concerns to the federal government	
1942	All Japanese British Columbians are forced to move inland to internment camps during World War II	
1949	<i>First Nations peoples</i> (native bands or tribes) are allowed to vote in provincial elections	

1958 British Columbia celebrates its colonial *centennial* (100th anniversary)



1960 *First Nations peoples* are allowed to vote in federal elections

1986 The World's Fair, Expo 86, is held in Vancouver



1999 The federal and provincial governments sign the Nisga'a Agreement, transferring ownership of about 2,000 square kilometres (772 square miles) of land along with the right to govern themselves to the Nisga'a Nation



2000

2006 Officials announce the creation of the Great Bear Rain Forest, intended to preserve 1.8 million hectares (4.4 million acres) of coastal wilderness

2010 Vancouver hosts the 2010 Winter Olympics



PRESENT

Living off the Land

When the first Europeans arrived, half of the *aboriginal* (native) population of Canada lived in what is now British Columbia. Nations such as the Tsimshian and the Nisga'a lived along the northern coast. Women in these *bands* (tribes) held a lot of power, often becoming chiefs. In fact, the powerful Haida nation traced their family ancestry back



through the mother's line. These coastal peoples' lives depended on the sea. They were fishermen and also hunted seals and whales. In the wintertime they lived in *longhouses*, large wooden structures built to house as many as 10 families and often decorated with paintings or carvings. To celebrate births and marriages or to honour the dead, the fishermen held a *potlatch*, or a large party that includes feasts, dancing, storytelling, and singing. The *potlatch* usually went on for several days, and people gathered together from many villages to celebrate and give each other gifts.

Other native bands, such as the Interior Salish and the Kootenay, lived further inland. These people moved from place to place with the seasons in search of food. They did not build permanent homes and moved regularly. They gathered berries and used spears and bows to hunt animals such as deer and elk. They built *tepees* (cone-shaped tents) out of animal skins. The *tepees* were easy to put together and take apart, so the people could take their homes with them when they moved.

Exploration Explosion

In the late 1700s, the Spanish reached the west coast of what is now Canada. But Spain never sent any settlers to the area. They were the first European explorers to discover the region, but Britain was not far behind. Captain James Cook landed on Vancouver Island in 1778 and established a fur trade with *aboriginal* (native) peoples that lasted for 50 years. With the fur trade thriving, Russian fur traders soon travelled to the area. The Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company ran the fur trade in Canada and set up forts that later became permanent settlements. So many British and French settled in the land that they soon far outnumbered the Spaniards, and Spain gave up its claim to the land.



Gold Rush Days

In 1858, gold was found on the banks of the Fraser River in Fraser Canyon, and the first gold rush began. More than 30,000 people from America, Europe, and Asia swarmed British Columbia, trying to strike it rich. The second gold rush started three years later in the Cariboo region of British Columbia. The gold industry transformed the region. Mining *boomtowns* (quickly growing towns) appeared, such as Yale and Barkerville. As a result of all the money and people pouring into the area, the British created the new colony of British Columbia. Roads were quickly built and a local government set up. However, the new colony was not managed well. By 1866, British Columbia was in so much debt that the government chose to unite it with the colony of Vancouver Island and combine the two economies. The new colony was called British Columbia, and in 1868, Victoria became its capital.



Hobo Jungles

In the mid-1930s, during the Great Depression, many people were out of work and lost their homes. In 1931, around a thousand people in Vancouver were homeless. The majority of the homeless lived in small shacks made of old boards, cardboard boxes, or even parts of old cars. Large groupings of these shacks became known as "hobo jungles" and were often clustered around the harbour, under bridges, or in immigrant areas such as Chinatown. The federal government set up relief camps where unemployed men could go for shelter, food, clothing, and work. The city periodically tried to clear out the hobo jungles, but the people had nowhere else to go.



In 1935, more than one thousand men, unhappy with the terrible living and working conditions in the province, began the On to Ottawa Trek. They wanted to present their

concerns to the federal government. But the prime minister refused to help them and sent them home. The homeless men then organized a strike in protest. The strike caused a riot, in which dozens of people were injured and arrested. These events caught the attention of Canadians across the nation. Unhappy with how the government failed to deal with the strike, the people voted in a new government that promised to improve conditions for the nation's poor.

Asian Immigration

The gold rush years brought immigrants from China, while *migrants* (people who move from one area to another) from Japan and India began arriving in British Columbia around the turn of the century. They worked hard, and Chinese workers were largely responsible for the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which linked British Columbia with the eastern provinces. After the completion of the railway, the government severely limited Asian immigration and made those who immigrated pay a high tax just to enter the province. Asians were barred from getting better education and better employment.



During World War II, when Canada was at war with Japan, the Security Commission Council ordered all Japanese living on the west coast to move to work camps further inland, where they were forced to work in road crews or on other people's farms. The government seized and sold Japanese-owned businesses, homes, and farms and then kept the money. In 1949, at the end of the war, these people were given the choice of going back to Japan or staying in Canada. Most people decided to stay.

Cultural Burst

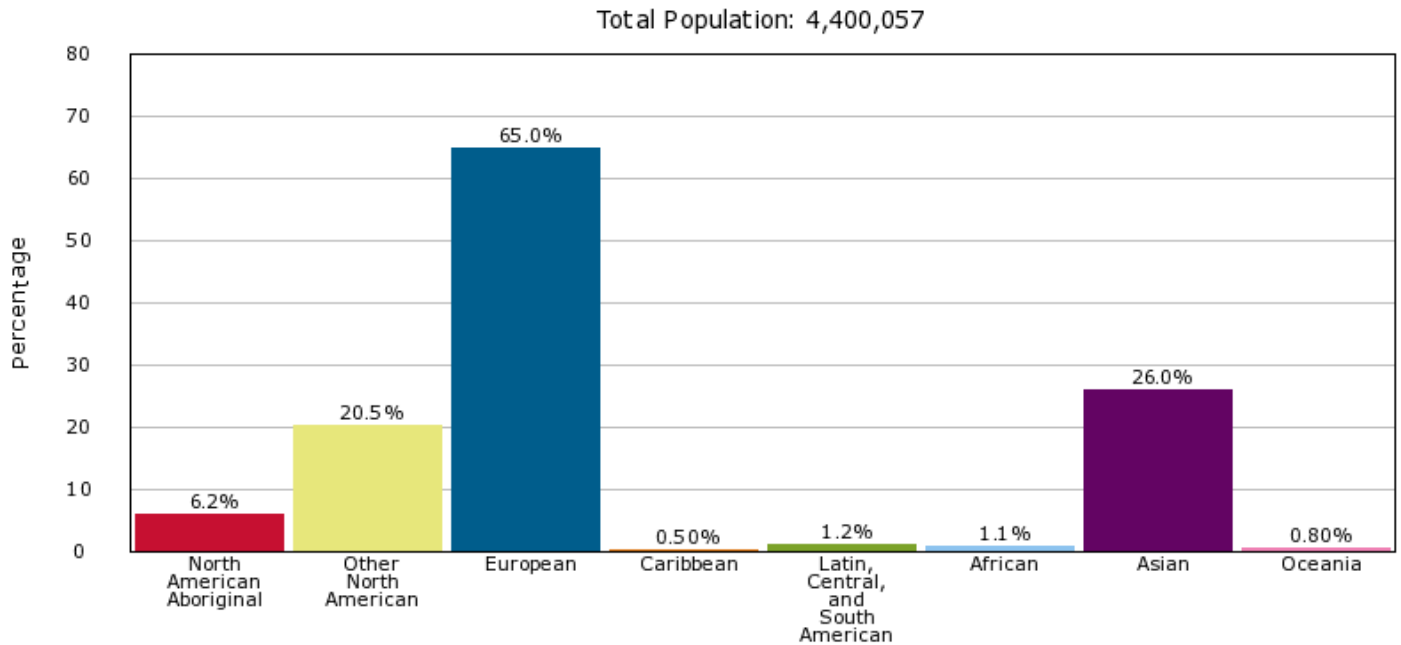
In the post-war years, the government relaxed immigration laws. People from all over the nation and the world came to British Columbia to take advantage of the growing economy in the province. Today, thousands of immigrants from around the world arrive in British Columbia each year. Many of these newcomers settle in the Vancouver area. Vancouver is called a "city of neighbourhoods" because of the many different ethnic communities living within its boundaries. Vancouver has the second-largest Chinatown in North America, after San Francisco's. Other important ethnic sections include Little Italy, Japantown, and Punjabi Market.



The People

Population

The majority of British Columbians live in the southwest and south central portions of the province, most of them in city centres. More than half of the people in British Columbia have British ancestry, though this number is getting smaller. Many people of Asian ancestry also live in British Columbia, particularly in and around Vancouver. The majority of these fast-growing populations come from China and India. After English, Chinese and Punjabi are the two most spoken languages in the province. Vancouver continues to grow as more retired people move there to enjoy the mild winters as well as the city's culture and diversity.



Canadians may belong to more than one group. Totals may not equal 100%.

Government

Federal

Senators: 6

Liberals: 3
 Conservatives: 3

Members of Parliament: 42

Liberals: 17
 Conservatives: 10
 New Democratic Party: 14
 Green Party: 1



In Canada, members of Parliament are elected from across the country. The leader of the party that wins the most seats in the House of Commons becomes the prime minister. The prime minister is the head of government in Canada. The monarch (today, Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom) is leader in name only. She appoints a governor-general to be her representative in Canada. The role of this governor-general is largely ceremonial. In Canada, there are two separate lawmaking bodies, the House of Commons, which is made up of elected members, and the Senate, whose members are appointed by the governor-general under the advice of the prime minister. The House of Commons debates and votes on *bills* (proposed laws). The Senate carefully examines the *bills* and decides whether to approve, change, or reject them. For a *bill* to become law, it must be passed by both the House of Commons and the Senate and be given *royal assent* (approval) by the governor-general.

Provincial

Capital: Victoria, population 344,615

Province Abbreviation: BC

Premier: Christy Clark (BC Liberal)

Lieutenant-Governor: Judith Guichon

Members of the Legislative Assembly: 85

Female MLAs: 32

The lieutenant-governor of British Columbia represents the monarch (queen of the United Kingdom) and calls on the leader of the party with the most votes to be the premier. The premier chooses the members of the Cabinet from the elected Members of the Legislative Assembly, who represent voters. These members are then appointed by the lieutenant-governor. Each is placed in charge of a department such as education, health, or aboriginal affairs. The Cabinet members advise the premier, while the Legislative Assembly makes the laws.

Key Issues

BC Liberals

The Liberal party of British Columbia is separate from the federal Liberal party. The party first came to power in British Columbia in the early 1900s. From the mid-1950s on, it had a long series of ups and downs, returning to the *legislature* (lawmaking body) once more in the early 1990s. For the last few decades, the party has worked hard to develop its own goals specific to its home province. Party members came up with their own official name, the BC Liberals, as well as their own logo and colours (red, blue, and yellow). The British Columbia Young Liberals is a youth organization associated with the party that encourages young adults to become involved in the issues and politics shaping their province.

Health Care and Tobacco

In 2000, the government of British Columbia brought a case against several cigarette companies, accusing them of knowingly hiding the dangers of smoking. The tobacco in cigarettes can cause health problems that use up many needed healthcare resources. The cigarette companies argued that the government should only be allowed to pass laws relating to local issues. The British Columbia Supreme Court sided with the government, paving the way for the cigarette companies to appeal to Canada's highest court.



First Nations, Métis, and Aboriginal Peoples

About a third of the native population of British Columbia is under the age of 15. A quarter of the *aboriginal* (native) population lives on reserve, but the majority live in and around city centres such as Victoria, Prince George, and Vancouver. There are close to two hundred First Nations *bands* (nations or tribes) in the province, including the Gitksan, Haida, Nisga'a, and Squamish.

By the 19th century, the First Nations peoples in British Columbia had lost almost all of their ancestral land to European settlers and the federal government. They have been fighting to get their land back ever since. In 1986, the Sechelt Nation was the first in British Columbia to be granted its own local self-government. Fourteen years later, the provincial and federal governments signed the groundbreaking Nisga'a Treaty, which gave the Nisga'a Nation the right to govern itself and transferred about 2,000 square kilometres (772 square miles) of land to the Nisga'a Nation. Their right to self-government is now protected in the Canadian constitution.

Famous People



Nelly Furtado

- *Michael Bublé* - Singer
- *Nelly Furtado* – Singer
- *Ryan Reynolds* - Actor
- *Rich Harden* – Major League Baseball player
- *Kim Campbell* – First female prime minister of Canada
- *Hayden Christensen* – Actor



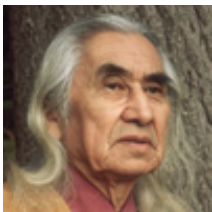
Ryan Reynolds

- *Steve Nash* – Professional basketball player
- *Evelyn Lau* – Author
- *Carey Price* – Professional hockey player
- *Diana Krall* – Jazz musician
- *Joshua Jackson* – Actor
- *Judith Forst* – Opera singer



Diana Krall

- *Bryan Adams* – Singer
- *Dan George* – Salish chief
- *Seth Rogen* - Comedian, actor, and producer
- *David Suzuki* - Environmentalist



Dan George

Cultural Notes



Totem Poles

For thousands of years, First Nations peoples all along the coast of North America have developed the art of totem pole carving. British Columbia is famous for its many totem poles, including many of the tallest and largest ones in the world. The word “totem” comes from the Ojibwa word *odoodeman*, meaning a “family symbol.” Totem poles are usually carved out of large cedar trees. The designs centre around families and clans and may recount familiar legends, clan family histories, or important events such as the death of a chief. The figures are arranged one on top of the other all the way up the pole and are often painted bright colours. Native peoples gathered to celebrate the raising of a new totem pole. Together they helped raise the pole and performed dances in honour of the event.



Ice Wine

British Columbia is known around the world for the *ice wine* it produces. *Ice wine* is a kind of wine made from frozen grapes that have been left on the vine long after the other grapes are picked. When they are crushed, these frozen grapes release only a few drops of juice, so *ice wine* is hard to make and is usually very expensive. *Ice wine* has a sweet taste, and people usually drink it for dessert after the meal. In British Columbia, it is produced in the Okanagan region, southern Fraser Valley, and southern Vancouver Island. The Inniskillin and Jackson Triggs wineries are the most well-known in the province. Wines from these two vineyards are regularly among the top-rated, world-class wines.



Fun Facts & Contacts

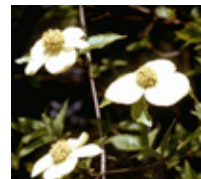


Official Emblems

Provincial Flower

Pacific Dogwood

This delicate white flower grows on a tree and is protected by law in British Columbia.



Provincial Bird

Steller's Jay

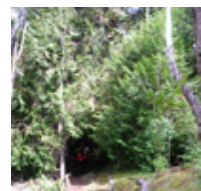
This bright blue bird likes to visit campsites and picnics in search of food. It usually travels in a flock and lays glossy, oval eggs in shades of green and blue.



Provincial Tree

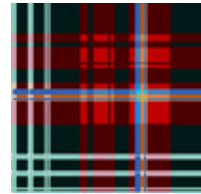
Western Red Cedar

This large tree belongs to the evergreen family and is native to southwestern Canada. It can grow to be 60 metres (197 feet) tall, with a trunk diameter of 6 metres (20 feet). *Aboriginal* (native) peoples used its wood to make canoes, totem poles, and armour.



Provincial Tartan

The blue represents the Pacific Ocean, the green symbolize the forests of British Columbia, the red stands for the Maple Leaf (Canada's national symbol), the white is the colour of the Pacific dogwood, and the gold represents the crown and sun on the provincial Arms.



Provincial Coat of Arms

The *Union Jack* (the flag of the United Kingdom) represents Canada's colonial ties to Great Britain. The wavy blue and silver lines stand for British Columbia's location in between the Pacific Ocean and the Rocky Mountains. The stag stands for Vancouver Island and the ram for British Columbia, which eventually joined together to form the province of British Columbia. The lion is a traditional symbol for the British monarchy, and the dogwood is the official provincial flower.



Major League Sports Teams

- Vancouver Canucks (NHL)
- Vancouver Whitecaps FC (MLS)
- BC Lions (CFL)

For More Information

To learn more about British Columbia, see www.gov.bc.ca. Or contact Tourism BC, 12th Floor, 510 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC, V6C 3A8; phone (800) HELLO BC; web site www.hellobc.com.

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British Columbia

EXTREMES

Lowest: The lowest point in BC is sea level, at the Pacific Ocean.

Coldest: Temperatures dropped to -58.9°C (-74°F) at Smith River on 31 January 1947.

Hottest: Temperatures reached 44.4°C (112°F) at Lillooet on 16 July 1941.

Highest: Mount Robson stands 3,954 metres (12,972 ft) high.

