



MY CITY*

VANCOUVER

BLESSED BY NATURE, WITH A VIBRANT FOOD AND ARTS SCENE,
SANDRA HARRIS'S CANADIAN HOMETOWN HAS MUCH TO OFFER

** There's no better way to get to the heart of a city than through the people who live there. Every month we ask someone, clearly in love with their city, to take us on a personal tour and tell us what makes it so special. You may feel inspired to visit one day or to rediscover the charms of a city closer to you, but for now just sit back, relax and enjoy some armchair travel.*

How long have you lived in Vancouver?

I'm a bit of a Vancouver boomerang as I've lived here twice. I'm originally from Edmonton, Alberta, a mid-sized city in the prairies. It was a wonderful place to grow up but I needed to get away from the long, cold winters. I've lived in Cape Town and Toronto and been back in Vancouver since 2011. I can't stay away!

Tell us what makes your city unique.

It's a great place to live because it's laid-back while also being active. There's a lot of culture but Vancouver is really about getting outdoors, whether it's running, biking, swimming, skiing or sailing. All of these can be done all year round, even skiing. You might have to drive 90 minutes to Whistler and take a gondola up to the ski area, but it's doable.

What's it like in summer?

The best weather in Vancouver is mid-July to mid-August when you get long, hot, sunny days. The city is almost surrounded with water and the beaches, parks and restaurant patios are all jammed with folk enjoying their free time with friends and family.

What time of day do you most enjoy and why?

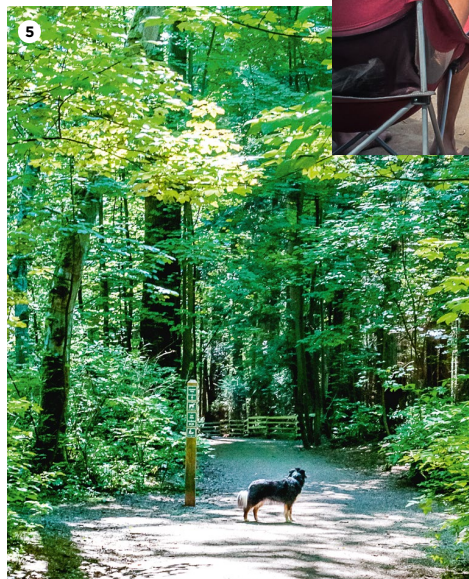
I'm a morning person so I love watching the sun come up. I go for a walk along the seawall and grab a coffee and maybe stop and write in my journal.

What's the nature like?

The city is surrounded on two sides by water and mountains. To the west is the ocean and to the north are mountains. Whistler is well known for skiing but our secret is three local mountains that are only 30-45 minutes away: Mount Seymour, Cypress Mountain and Grouse Mountain. Each has skiing and snowboarding in winter and hiking in summer. The past few winters I've taken up snowshoeing. There's nothing like a winter snowshoe with friends to a remote lodge with a hot chocolate for a reward.

Where's your favourite outdoor space?

Vancouver is known for Stanley Park, an urban oasis right next to downtown. However, my favourite »



- 1 Vancouver's marvellous, mountainous skyline.
- 2 Truly lovely False Creek harbour.
- 3 Sundae Sundays are best spent at Earnest Ice Cream.
- 4 Holding court: a volleyball session at Kits Beach.
- 5 Nothin' but a hound dog... at Pacific Spirit Regional Park



“There’s a culture of being outside and doing things and you can’t help but get caught up in it”



outdoor space is Pacific Spirit Regional Park, near the University of British Columbia. With more than 750 hectares of forest trails, it’s where you’ll find the locals. My poodle Pepper loves it, too.

Tell us about the colours of your city.

Green for all the parks and plants and trees. Even in rainy November, it’s still green. It gives us the freshest air - I always take a deep, deep breath when I get off the aeroplane after a trip.

What about the people who live there?

Being on the Pacific Rim we have a huge influence from all over Asia and Southeast Asia. You’ll also hear many English, Irish, Aussie, New Zealand and other Commonwealth accents. In terms of industry, the tech and film industries are booming. Many of your favourite TV series and movies are filmed here. It makes for a very dynamic and young-feeling city.

Where are your favourite places to go with friends?

We put together a simple picnic of bread and pastries from Pure Bread or Livia Sweets, cheese from Benton Brothers, and some fruit and hang out at Kits Beach. In the evening we’ll gather for drinks and tacos at Tacofino. Dessert has to be peaches and cream ice-cream from Earnest Ice Cream.

Tell us about eating out in Vancouver?

Vegetarian, pescatarian, vegan- whatever your taste or diet, you’ll eat well here. We have Japanese, Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Korean, Vietnamese, Mexican and Italian restaurants as well as great cafés serving unique salads and pressed juices. Farmers’ markets are located throughout the city selling seasonal, organic produce.

What’s your favourite way to get around?

You don’t need a car here. Between the Canada line subway, light rail transit, buses and bikes, you can get pretty much anywhere. We even have a small boat ferry system to get back and forth across False Creek between downtown and Fairview Slopes. It’s a lovely way to see the city. We’re following many European cities in creating a bike culture with lots of bike paths and rental bike stations all around.

What’s the shopping like?

Independently owned shops are my favourite. I like the way people create a unique space with their own style and I enjoy the personal connection you feel when you shop there and take the time to chat with the



owners. In the age of same-day home delivery, I like to support my regular local haunts. For the shops (and restaurants) you won't find anywhere else, wander up and down Main Street, Commercial Drive and Fraser Street and explore Gastown and Mount Pleasant neighbourhoods.

Where do you like to escape to?

Depending on how much time I have, I might go for a walk along Kits Beach; watching the volleyball players is always fun. Or rent a kayak and go for a paddle along False Creek. For a day trip, I like to take the ferry over to Bowen Island which is only a 20-minute ride away but feels like a different world. Imagine a rural, hippy getaway where you can practise yoga in a geodesic dome, go ocean kayaking, hike up Mount Gardner or linger on the beach. A longer ferry ride will take you to your choice of larger islands off the west coast of Vancouver, each with its own distinct vibe.

Tell us one of the city's best-kept secrets

In August we have the outdoor mural festival with beautiful public art in many alleys and streets (vanmuralfest.ca).

What do you miss most if you've been away?

I miss the fresh, clean air and the ocean and the mountains. As much as I love to travel (and I do!), I always relax as soon as I'm home again.

What would surprise a newcomer to your city?

When you hear 'Canada' you think snow and cold, long winters. A newcomer would be surprised by how warm and temperate it is here. They may also be surprised at how easy it is to be active. There's a culture of being outside and doing things. You can't help but get caught up in it and before you know it, you've joined a running club, learned to ski, and are taking sailing lessons.

Where would you recommend somebody to stay?

If you want to splurge, I'd recommend the Fairmont Pacific Rim. But if you want something more 'neighbourhood-y' among the locals, my favourite is Avalon Guest Suite (avalonguestsuite.com). It's a short walk to the shops and restaurants in Kitsilano and the beach, and Julia and Mike are lovely proprietors.

What keeps you in your city and where else would you like to live?

First of all, family and friends. Secondly, the natural beauty and how easy it is to be outdoors and active. And finally, the varied cultures: it's many cities in one. If I couldn't live here, I would live in London. As much as I love the outdoors, I also enjoy museums, theatre, history and the buzz of a large city. My fantasy would be to live part of the year in Vancouver and part in London. A girl can dream, right? »



- ① Two wheels good, four wheels bad. Cars are not a necessity in Vancouver while bikes are *de rigueur*.
- ② Tacos to take away at Tacofino.
- ③ Outdoor comfort food at Burgoo Mount Pleasant.
- ④ Inside Livia Sweets, one of Sandra's favourite spots to pick up picnic treats.
- ⑤ Morning dog walkers at Trout Lake.
- ⑥ Snazzy motor boats for hire offer gull's-eye views of the city (Bond fantasies, optional)



2



SANDRA HARRIS is a photographer and writer. After spending a few years putting her creative life on the back burner, she left management consulting and picked up a camera. You can find her at raincoastcreativesalon.com and on Instagram: [@sandrat212](https://www.instagram.com/sandrat212)



3



4



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SANDRA'S PERSONAL TOUR

Favourite shops

MUCH & LITTLE

For women's clothing gifts and household goods. Shop owner Sarah has such great taste - I'm always tempted by something. muchandlittle.com

SPOOL OF THREAD

I've started sewing and this place has all the gorgeous fabrics I want. Definitely not your average fabric shop. spoolofthread.com

Favourite market

TROUT LAKE FARMERS' MARKET

You'll find me here every Saturday morning buying local, seasonal produce. After, I have lunch from one of the food trucks. Falafel from the Chickpea Food Truck with Dickie's Ginger Beer is a favourite.

Favourite restaurant

ALEPH

I love the Silk Road mezze platter with hummus, baba ganoush, labne, zaatar, honey and saj bread. And the pomegranate mojito is perfection. alepheatery.com

Favourite café

MATCHSTICK COFFEE ROASTERS

I like the original location on Fraser St where my lunch of choice is the smoked salmon sandwich with poached eggs.

Favourite gallery

POLYGON GALLERY

You can take the seabus from downtown over the Lonsdale Quay to this fantastic photography gallery. thepolygon.ca

Best view

FROM THE TOP OF QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK

Sunrise, sunset, any time of day! Then frisbee, golf, pitch and putt or tennis if you're feeling active.

Favourite way to spend an hour

Rain or shine, I love going to Jericho Beach for a walk.

Place to see by night

Every summer you'll find me at Kits Beach, watching the fireworks festival over English Bay. Go early and enjoy a sunset picnic before the show.

One thing you have to see

The full moon rise on a moonlit kayak tour in Deep Cove. deepcovekayak.com

- 1 Get a wake-up call at Matchstick Coffee Roasters.
- 2 Kits off at Kits Beach.
- 3 Foodie inspiration at Middle Eastern restaurant, Aleph.
- 4 A popular morning at the farmers' market