



## The Sunshine Coast *Start a Beautiful Relationship*



The Sunshine Coast, in southwest British Columbia, extends 177 km (110 mi) along the Strait of Georgia from Howe Sound to Desolation Sound. In this west coast geography of deep sea inlets, coastal bays and inter-connected lakes, First Nations people navigated their canoes along fresh and saltwater highways, Prohibition-era rum smugglers hid out in secret coves and the 19th century Union Steamships ferried passengers, goods and mail along the Sunshine Coast until 1959. The region's myriad waterways, Coastal Mountains and old-growth forests draw visitors from around the world to ride whitewater tidal rapids, dive amid a sunken mermaid and WWII ships, climb sheer granite cliffs and hike some of the longest, most varied and scenic trails in Canada.

Accessible by BC Ferries service at its north and south ends, the Sunshine Coast is part of the BC mainland, but has all the laid-back charm of an island, far removed from the urban rush. Attracted by the natural beauty and unrushed lifestyle, a high per capita population of artists make their homes on the Sunshine Coast. Divided into two regions, the Upper Sunshine Coast's communities in the north range from Powell River and Lund to Saltery Bay, including Texada and Savary islands. Lower Sunshine Coast villages extend from Earl's Cove to Port Mellon in the south, and include Gibsons, Sechelt and Pender Harbour. Sunshine Coast communities put out the welcome mat for guests at everything from cozy B&Bs to lakefront cottages to chic oceanfront resorts with fine dining rooms and high-end luxury spas.

**Population:** Sunshine Coast region: 29,551. (Source: [BC Stats](#), 2009). Largest communities: Powell River (12,957), Sechelt (8,454), Gibsons (4,182). (Source: [BC Stats](#) Municipal Census Populations, 2006)

**Weather:** The Sunshine Coast, along with Vancouver, eastern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, is located in the [Georgia Basin](#) within the protected rainshadow of Vancouver Island. This means more sunshine, less precipitation and mild year-round weather, from an average maximum winter low of about 6°C (43°F) to summer highs of 22°C (72°F). Winters on the Sunshine Coast are mild enough that it's possible to snowshoe on the Knuckleheads or Dakota Ridge in the morning and golf that afternoon.

**Economic Drivers:** Forestry has been one of the region's historic [economic mainstays](#), with tourism and the cultural arts gaining ground as emerging sectors, along with fishing, aquaculture, retail and high tech. Mining is significant as well, with the largest open pit sand and gravel mine operating outside of Sechelt. [Howe Sound Pulp and Paper](#) in Port Mellon, producers of wood-fibre based paper for the past century, is BC's longest running pulp and paper mill.

**Local Celebrities:** Powell River hometown hockey player [Brad Bombardir](#) played for the Stanley Cup-winning New Jersey Devils. Musician Colin James, singer Terry Jacks and Oprah Winfrey have all reportedly enjoyed [Powell River](#) getaways, while famously private [Joni Mitchell](#) divides her time between Los Angeles and a home on the Sunshine Coast. [Molly's Reach](#) cafe in Gibsons is famous the world over as the setting for the iconic CBC-TV series [The Beachcombers](#) (1972 to 1990). The movie [The Last Mimzy](#) (2007) was partially filmed in Roberts Creek. Gibsons was the location for the 1993 Stephen King movie [Needful Things](#) and for the movie [Desolation Sound](#) (2005).

**Claims to Fame:**

- The Town of [Gibsons](#), named Most Livable Community in the World (under 20,000) in 2009.
- Home to the highest per capita population of [artists](#), artisans and crafters in Canada.
- [Inland Lake Provincial Park's](#) award-winning 13 km (8 mi) wheelchair accessible lakeside trail.
- The spectacular 180 km (112 mi) [Sunshine Coast Trail](#) offering access points all along the way.
- The colourful, creative community of [Roberts Creek](#) known as the Gumboot Capital of the World.
- The Powell River [Hulks](#), 10 WWII concrete ships forming the world's longest floating breakwater.
- Up to 30 km/hr (19 mi/hr) tidal rapids in [Skookamchuck Narrows](#), a world whitewater wonder.
- Mile 0 in [Lund](#) of the 15,202 km (9,446 mi) Pacific Coastal Highway 101 ending in Quellon, Chile.
- Canada's first sunken statue, the 3-m (10-ft) tall bronze Emerald Princess, in [Mermaid Cove](#).
- Magical [Chatterbox Falls](#), one of 60 waterfalls in the beautiful anchorage of Princess Louisa Inlet.
- The [Powell Forest Canoe Route](#), eight lakes and five portages through 20 forest recreational sites.
- *National Geographic*-endorsed, full-fledged dive centre, [Suncoast Diving](#), in Sechelt.
- World famous fjords, wildlife and recreation in the boaters' paradise of [Desolation Sound](#).
- The [Patricia Theatre](#) in Powell River, Canada's oldest continuously operating movie theatre.

**Best Beaches:** Donkersley Beach, Willingdon Beach and Palm Beach in Powell River, Haywire Bay, Saltery Bay Provincial Park, Sechelt's Davis Bay, Sechelt seawall, Shelter Point Park Beach on Texada Island and tropical-feeling white sand South Beach on Savary Island. North and South Thormanby Islands (surrounded by beautiful white sand), Welcome Beach in Halfmoon Bay, and Bonniebrook and Secret Beaches in Gibsons.

**Major Attractions:**

- Heritage Walks through the [Powell River Townsite](#), named a National Historic District in 1995.
- Wetland tours, exhibits and workshops at the [Iris Griffith Interpretive Centre](#) near Ruby Lake.
- Luxury spa getaways at [Painted Boat Resort & Marina](#) and [Rockwater Secret Cove Resort](#).
- Championship play at [Myrtle Point Golf Club](#) and the [Sunshine Coast Golf and Country Club](#).
- Hiking around waterfalls and boardwalks on the [Duck Lake](#) trail circuit.
- [Mountain biking](#) on the Bunster Hills Trail and the Lyon Lake Loop.
- [Guided kayak adventures](#) to Mitlenatch Island to birdwatch and see coastal cactus in bloom.
- Diving amid a sunken WWII destroyer escort in [Sechelt Inlets Marine Provincial Park](#).
- Phenomenal rock climbing on sheer rock cliffs up to 600 m (1,969 ft) in the [Eldred Valley](#).
- Spring snowshoeing in the back bowls of the [Knuckleheads](#) and [Dakota Ridge](#).
- The Sechelt First Nations "[Talking Trees Walking Tour](#)" through Porpoise Bay Provincial Park.
- All-weather boating from the safe anchorage point at [Smuggler Cove Marine Provincial Park](#).

**Arts & Culture:**

The diverse, densely populated Sunshine Coast artistic community proudly displays its "creative naturally" philosophy, flying purple banners throughout the region to mark studios and galleries that participate in the free, year-round [Purple Banner](#) art tour. The region is the birthplace of Canada's longest running summer writers' festival, the [Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts](#) that attracts Canada's literary luminaries to Sechelt each summer, while the annual [Gibsons Landing Fibre Arts Festival](#) is in its 11th year celebrating fibre art crafts. The [Sunshine Coast Festival of the Performing Arts](#) is an annual celebration of

choral, classical, folk music and dance. Summer through fall, Sunshine Coast communities come alive with music during the [Pender Harbour Jazz Festival](#), the [Gibsons Landing Jazz Festival](#), the [Annual School of Celtic Music](#) in Roberts Creek, and the [Bonfire Music Festival](#) in Pender Harbour. The rich First Nations culture of the Sunshine Coast is on display through cedar basketry, carved masks and prehistoric stone sculptures at the [House of Chiefs Museum](#) in Sechelt. At the two-floor [Sunshine Coast Museum & Archives](#) in Gibsons Landing, visitors can explore the model of a Coast Salish village and the romantic 19th century history of Union Steamships. Also, every weekend, a variety of wonderful local and off-Coast musicians perform in many pubs, restaurants and coffee shops.

In 2004, Powell River was named a Cultural Capital of Canada. This Upper Sunshine Coast community marks its proud status with an annual array of cultural events, including the [Powell River Artists' Studio Tour](#), the [Powell River Film Festival](#), classical concerts by the [Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific](#), and [ballet, chamber choir](#) and opera performances at the 400-seat [Max Cameron Theatre](#). The extraordinary [International Choral Kathaumixw](#) is a five-day choral festival with up to 40 world choirs competing each year in Powell River. Fittingly, [Kathaumixw](#) (pronounced Ka-thou-mew) is a Coast Salish phrase meaning "a gathering together of different people." The two-day Art in the Park event at Willingdon Beach in August mixes sunshine and sand with art, music and a grand poetry slam.

#### **Festivals & Events:**

- [Dakota Ridge Snowfest](#) in February
- [Annual Oyster Festival](#), April in Powell River
- [April Tools Wooden Boat Challenge](#) in Pender Harbour
- [Shellfish Festival](#), May in Lund
- [Texada Annual Fly](#), July at Gillies Bay Airport
- Savary Island Triathlon, July
- [Sea Cavalcade](#), July in Gibsons
- [Powell River Sea Fair](#), July
- [Howe Sound Outrigger Race](#), July in Gibsons
- [Sechelt Arts Festival](#), July
- Creek Daze, August in Roberts Creek
- [Festival of the Rolling Arts](#), August in Sechelt
- The Blackberry Festival, August in Powell River
- Davis Bay Sandcastle Competition, August in Sechelt
- [Hackett Park Craft Fair](#), August in Sechelt
- Gibson's Landing Salmon Festival, September
- Halfmoon Bay Country Fair, October

For a complete list of Sunshine Coast festivals and events, go to [www.sunshinecoastcanada.com/visit/events.php](http://www.sunshinecoastcanada.com/visit/events.php)

#### **Transportation Links:**

- The southern entry point for the Sunshine Coast is a 40-minute sail aboard BC Ferries to [Langdale](#) from the Horsehoe Bay ferry terminal in West Vancouver.
- A BC Ferries terminal in [Comox](#) operates daily 1 hour and 20 minute sailings from Vancouver Island to Powell River at the Sunshine Coast's northern end.
- The upper and lower regions of the Sunshine Coast are connected by a 50-minute ferry ride from [Earl's Cove](#) to SALTERY Bay, 25 minutes from Powell River.
- BC Ferries packages the [Captivating Coastal Circle Tour](#), a four-day tour of the Sunshine Coast from top to bottom, with attractive discounts on ferry fares.
- [Malaspina Coach Lines](#) offers bus service from Vancouver International Airport (YVR) and downtown Vancouver to Gibsons on the Lower Sunshine Coast all the way north to Powell River.

- [Pacific Coastal Airlines](#) provides regular flights from YVR's South Terminal to the Powell River Airport (YPW).
- [West Coast Air](#) offers scheduled floatplane service and charters between Sechelt and Vancouver Regional Airport, Victoria and Nanaimo.
- [Tofino Air](#) operates scheduled floatplane service and charters between Sechelt and Vancouver Regional Airport and Vancouver Island, including Victoria.
- [KD Air](#) flies from Vancouver to Gillies Bay on Texada Island and offers popular charters to Gibsons and Sechelt.
- Highway 101, the Pacific Coastal Highway, links the upper and lower communities of the Sunshine Coast.
- Texada Island is accessible in 30-minutes via [BC Ferries](#) service daily from Powell River's Westview ferry terminal to Blubber Bay.
- Savary Island, just minutes from Lund, Gambier and Keats islands close to Gibsons, and the Thormany Islands off Halfmoon Bay are all accessible by water taxi.

For more information on getting to the Sunshine Coast, visit [www.sunshinecoastcanada.com/sunshine-coast/transportation.php](http://www.sunshinecoastcanada.com/sunshine-coast/transportation.php).